



Tips FROM THE Top[®]

Business insights
from those at the top
for those at the top

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- **A Warm Welcome for our Newest Member!**
- **Preserving the Whole**
- **What Type of Leader are You?**
- **Customer Advice**
- **Reference Checks—Getting People to Open Up**
- **Business Growth**
- **Asking for the Referral**
- **Calendar of Events**

TAB MEMBERS IN FOCUS

A Warm Welcome for our Newest Member!

Please join us in welcoming our newest TABBoard Member!

Mike Lawlor, **Superior Shower Doors**, located in Newton, NJ —Unparalleled excellence in craftsmanship, design expertise, quality and service have led Superior Shower Doors to attaining brand recognition as one of the top sources in New Jersey for both residential and commercial markets.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Preserving the Whole

There comes a time in the life of every business when painful people decisions have to be made. Whether it is a result of a downturn in the business or moving in a different direction, every business owner must come to grips with the necessary reality of cutting staff. Don't rely on wishful thinking and hoping that the situation will change without having to make the tough decisions.

Rather, focus on the decision in light of preserving the whole company. It is better to take the distasteful medicine now to preserve the jobs of the rest. Your company will be stronger for it. You'll get on with making the company more viable — and the remaining staff will know that these decisions are made with everyone's best interests in mind.



THE ALTERNATIVE BOARD[®]

Achieve Success with Peer Advice and Coaching



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

FEBRUARY WEBINAR

What Type of Leader are You?

Entrepreneurs fall within a wide spectrum of **leadership levels**, depending on the maturity of the company, the industry and the leaders themselves. One thing that all leaders agree on is the need to take time out of working *in* your business to work *on* your business. Spend time every week on ensuring you move toward your company vision and commit to continually learning and evolving.

eLearning (using online seminars and events) is a low to no cost way to hone your skills and that of your staff. Achieve Business Solutions and The Alternative Board offer monthly complimentary interactive eSeminars on a variety of topics.

Our February 19th eSeminar **Boosting Your Bottom Line with Marketing Best Practices** will give you the tools & techniques to increase your revenue while reducing your marketing costs. To reserve your seat email us at request@achievelevel.com, or call 866.426.8073. First time eSeminar attendees participate for free.

SALES

Customer Advice

When your business involves a certain level of expertise (and most do), prospective customers frequently seek advice on what they need to purchase from you. How do you draw a line between a sales quote and free consulting? How do you communicate the difference to the customer?

- Change the title of the person who does the technical specifications. If their card says “salesperson,” you will never be able to charge for their work. If the client seeks in-depth advice, the salesperson can refer them to the technical expert— and mention that they charge for that work.
- Ask key questions to determine whether the customer is prepared to purchase. If they answer “no” to inquiries about whether they have budgeted for your services, looked at alternatives, or done their own research, explain that you can consult to help them through that process.
- Do an assessment. Include the things a customer typically thinks of before buying, and others he typically misses. Charge a reasonable flat fee for the assessment.
- Bundle levels of services into pricing levels. Have a very low level (or free) for a “quick look,” but make it plain that more in-depth discussions cost money.

Business to Business Board Meeting

Tuesday, February 5, 2008

**CEO & Business Owner
Development Online Seminars
Boost Your Bottom Line -
Marketing for Success**

Tuesday, February 19, 2008

4:00 PM

For more information, or to register, please visit our [Events Calendar](#)

Business to Consumer Board Meeting

Wednesday, February 20, 2008

QUICK TIPS

Controlling Unexcused Absences

I implemented a policy that has worked well to control unexcused absences in my stores. Any employee who is absent without prior approval is not allowed to work the rest of the week's schedule unless they bring in a note from their doctor for themselves or the family member they are the caregiver for. This policy goes into effect if the employee misses three days within a three-month timeframe and remains in effect for the next nine months

*Douglas Clements
M.R.S. Hobby Shops
Salt Lake City, UT*

- Set the expectations as part of your marketing. “First visit free” or “one hour no-cost review” puts a limit on what you will contribute.

TAB San Antonio Board 405, San Antonio, TX

HUMAN RESOURCES

Reference Checks—Getting People to Open Up

One way to get a former employer to open up about a candidate's weaknesses in a reference check is to say, “We really like Joe and want to make sure we provide him with effective coaching early on. What areas should we be focusing on with him in the first 90 days?” This will get the former employer to disclose areas needing development without feeling like he's criticizing the individual. Then, you can decide how important this area of weakness is to the position.

TAB Board 402, Hartford, CT

SALES

Business Growth

No matter whether you have one employee or 51 employees, always run your business as if it had 50 plus. Get policies and procedures in place early on and enforce them. Building a culture of responsibility, professionalism, and following the rules will pay off big time as you grow. Not doing it will cause you endless problems.

Greg Runnoe, GLR Enterprises, Green Bay, WI

OPERATIONS

Asking for the Referral

Asking current customers for a referral can sometimes be forgotten. We've added a message to our phone system that keeps the topic on the forefront. We ask callers to leave a message and if they have been referred by someone to please leave that person's name so that we can thank them appropriately.

This reminds current customers that we value referrals or perhaps it reminds them of that referral program we have in place. It also lets new customers know that we will deliver a high level of service so that they will refer others in the future. It's a great way to pave the way for new customers.

Dean Hoff, American Pride, Mercer Island, WA

The Best Toys to Have

When I hire effective staff I think of them as “wind up” toys—just wind them up with the right motivation and instruction, and they go to work with initiative. What I don't want are “pull” toys, the kind I have to keep pulling on with reminders and frustration to get their jobs done.

Bob Burns

Osmosis Development

Garden City Park, NY.

Let Go of Your Ego

As a small business owner, I often get caught in the trap of being the “go-to guy” that everyone wants to deal with directly. The best way to deal with this is to realize that part of the evolution of a business is relinquishing your ego. The growth of your business will always be limited until you get past this issue.

Mike Greene

Greene Moving & Storage

Manchester, CT

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The Alternative Board® brings business owners, CEOs and presidents of non-competing businesses together in boards, where members can present challenges and opportunities to the board for seasoned, practical advice from other owners who understand one another's perspective and contribute meaningful solutions. The boards consist of up to 10 members, meeting monthly under the guidance of a TAB-Certified Facilitator. Over 300 TAB Boards are operating each month across the United States, Canada and South America. Since its inception, thousands of businesses have benefited from membership in The Alternative Board®. For more information on The Alternative Board®, visit www.TABBoards.com

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Tips from the Top are now available in a searchable online format to registered AchieveNextLevel users, allowing readers to now search for best practices in hiring, marketing, growing and leading their companies

To access the free resource portion of the website, you must **register first**. Once you are logged in, simply [Click here](#), or go to My Community (from the right hand side of the screen) and then My Documents and you can view the Archive of Tips from the Top.



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