



Tips Top[®]

FROM THE

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

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HUMAN RESOURCES

The Tail Wagging the Dog is Intolerable

This month, two of our board members discussed their decisions to not let “the tail wag the dog.” Both had terminated “irreplaceable” employees. In one case, the employee had technical expertise in an important area of the business—expertise that will be difficult to replace. But, he had become sloppy and inconsistent in his work and brought on his termination by finally becoming insubordinate.

In the second case, the employee was a very hard worker and had worked for the business longer than anyone except the owner. But, his attitude toward virtually all of the other employees was so negative they had to literally navigate around him during the business day. He brought on his termination by making a statement about another employee that was so hateful it immediately became the final straw. In both cases, the business owner experienced a deep sense of relief following the termination. Each of the owners committed to the hard work of bringing a replacement up to speed and, within a few days, became convinced his organization will actually be stronger as a result of the termination of the “irreplaceable” employee.

TAB Delaware Board, Hockessin, DE

MARKETING

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Achieve Success with Peer Advice and Coaching



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Smart Advertising

After several meetings with our yellow pages reps, I was getting tired of their typical “You need to take a larger space this year, or pay more for less.” Finally, I set up a meeting to “review their latest proposal.” When they came in, I said:

“Here is MY proposal. We will increase from two facing three-quarter pages to two facing full pages. For that we will pay you exactly 50 percent of what we paid last year. My alternative is to see how I do without yellow page advertising next year.” They took it!

TAB San Antonio Board, San Antonio, TX

OPERATIONS

Improve Sales and Reduce Problems

Our company designs and installs graphic designs for vehicles from automobiles to 18-wheelers. On certain sales calls that are close to a decision, we are now offering a free one-hour consultation with the designer in order to get in front of them again. To date, we have experienced a 100 percent close rate. The customer is able to get better information about the best materials and enhanced designs, participate in the solution and can often see a rendering of the design on a laptop computer. The designer has a clearer idea about the specifications and potential production challenges. The production department ends up with a better design that is easier to install. Our sales people are getting an education about the best products and materials to use in different circumstances so they don't have to go back to tell the customer what they thought would work needs to be changed. We can better manage customer expectations about process and delivery. This has turned out to be a win all the way around with more sales, happier customers and potential cost reductions.

Jimmy Burds Colographic Inc., Commerce City, Colorado

OPERATIONS

Making Your To-Do List Positive

In a board meeting, a member brought up the topic of “to do” lists and immediately you could feel the entire room get “heavy.” Everyone dreads those lists. However, when I shared that I called my “to do” list a “prosperity list”, eyes got bright and smiles came to their faces as they instantly saw the power of a simple name change. The things on our “to do” list are in fact things that will help us prosper— so call it what it is!

TAB Denver West Board, Denver, CO

STRATEGIC

Upcoming Meetings, Online Events & Workshops

Members Only TABBoard Meeting

—

Board 410

Tuesday November 4th, 2008

TMBrennan Inc.

Members Only TABBoard Meeting

—

Board 411

Wednesday November 4th, 2008

RHM Technology Inc.

Open Webinar: “Next Level

Technology” – What Every

Business Owner Needs to Know

Tuesday, November 18th, 2008

[LEARN MORE](#)

Informational Open Board Meeting

Augusta, NJ

Thursday November 20th, 2008

[LEARN MORE](#)

TABTalks Radio:

Wowing Your Customers while

Increasing Your Bottom Line!

Monday, November 24th, 2008

[LEARN MORE](#)

QUICK TIPS

Promotional Ideas

I recently heard about two creative and successful sales techniques. One person bought several pairs of inexpensive shoes and mailed a single one to several prospects with a note, “Trying to get my foot in the door!” Another, who was unable to get a reply after repeated phone calls, sent a prospect a bag of peanuts with the note, “You’re driving me nuts!”

Getting Different Perspectives

When you can't seem to make a decision on something, it may be because the "right answer" is blocked. You can't see the answer because you are looking at the issue from the wrong (close-up) perspective. Try looking ahead to where you expect or want to be and look at the problem from that perspective. You may find the action you should take becomes clearer by visualizing how the decision you make today will look a year from now.

Kim Marks, The Marks Design Group, San Antonio, TX

A FINAL WORD FROM THE TOP

Thriving During Uncertain Times

Leadership often requires dealing with uncertainty, and with the swings taking place in the global economy, changes in technology and a record-setting electoral race, there is much room for speculation as to how small business will be impacted. To position your company to take advantage of the opportunities presented by these events, follow these key points:

- Challenge your employees to find new ways of doing business, or new business for your existing ways
- Revisit and update your SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) statement; if you don't have one, now is the time to create this essential business tool
- Use Google Alerts to keep up on your competitors, trends in your industry and in your customers' markets & industries
- Think of yourself as your biggest competitor – what would you do to put yourself out of business today, and then protect your position by revising or reinventing your business model
- Prepare your budgets using 3 scenarios – best case, anticipated case and worst case
- Communicate – talk to your employees about what is happening to ensure they remain focused and productive

While no one can predict the future, the most successful businesses take a leadership position by anticipating change and remaining agile throughout the process.

Marcy Turkington, Achieve Business Solutions with The Alternative Board

Fran Cassidy

AXA Financial

Melville, NY

E-mail Etiquette

Have you ever had a customer call you on the telephone, irate because an hour has passed since they sent you an e-mail? E-mail is best used to manage your communications time, not be an additional source of interruptions all day long. One solution is to use this "out of office" message for automatic response to every e-mail:

"I review my e-mails regularly, and make it a priority to respond to them within 24 hours. If you need an answer sooner than that, please call my office."

TAB Enterprise Board 313

San Antonio, TX

Hidden Credit Card Charges

Are you being nailed with hidden charges from credit card companies? Look at your company credit card statements— per transaction charges are going up largely unknown to the general public. Charges can be variable based on payment type— in person versus called in and can be based on the type of card (whether air miles card is accepted, etc.) Bring in a competitive supplier to look at your current supplier, have them perform an audit and come up with a competitive bid.

TAB Winnipeg Board

Winnipeg, MB

LINKS OF INTEREST

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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