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Tips from the Top

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



Mar. 2010 · Excerpt Edition

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THE ALTERNATIVE BOARD

Change Perspective.
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Social Media Matters

Think Social Media is for other businesses? Think again. Facebook is now the most used application on the planet. In one message posting Twitter can undo years of work a company has put into building its brand and loyalty (just ask Southwest Airlines how Kevin Smith's sharing of his treatment on a recent flight impacted their loyalty). And get ready for the latest. Chat Roulette. [Visit our blog](#) to hear more and to join the conversation.

Marcy Turkington, Achieve Business Solutions with The Alternative Board

Our Facilitators



[Marcy Turkington](#)
Certified Facilitator &
SBL Certified Coach
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Understanding Your Internal Processes

Do you know how all of your various departments function? I thought I did but when my board and facilitator pushed me to document all of our internal processes, I realized that I didn't know as much as I thought I did.

For instance, for one particular department, I realized that I really didn't understand how it works which, of course, is critical to the success of our business. So I invested some time learning that, in fact, it didn't operate as well as it should. There were all sorts of problems: employees didn't come forward with suggestions, people were doing personal activities on their computers during work hours, issues were buried so I wouldn't find them and so on.

Since discovering all of this I have started implementing improved technology that automates almost everything. I've put into place new processes and procedures and insist on reports that tell me everything that is going on. Employees can no longer hide anything, and I've already found "lost" business and been able to recapture it. This has been a painful, expensive process but our new technology will pay for itself quickly.

Perhaps you need to do the same. Take some time to know what is working and what isn't in your business. This is a good time to invest internally in our companies.



[Dick Cipoletti](#)
Certified Facilitator & SBL
Certified Coach
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Learn how other
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Paper, Strategic
Business Leadership!

Kevin Adams, Direct Dental Plans of America, Denver, CO

Is It Time to Review Your Web Site?

Recently someone pointed out that our Web site failed to provide a form to supply measurements for ordering one of our most common products. And they spotted an omission on one of our supplier's sites, it neglected to mention the company's address!

As a result, we decided to undertake a thorough review of our Web site and have found even more required changes. I recommend that you do the same...and, perhaps, ask your fellow TAB Board Members to assist you.

Rick Mand, Integrity Saw & Tool, Fond du Lac, WI

Offer Free Advice

Twice a year I send a direct mail postcard to current customers and prospects as a reminder to bring their boat in for servicing. The Spring card reminds them to have their boat prepped before the summer launch while the Fall card focuses on winterizing. Recently, I began adding a short boat maintenance tip to help my postcard stick-out and to differentiate myself as the local boating expert as well.

Responses thus far suggest that my free advice is working. In time I hope customers Will begin to anticipate the arrival of my next postcard and another free tip.

James Merten Jr., Merten Marine Ltd., Oshkosh, WI

Don't Confuse Customer Service with Concessions

Managers often confuse issuing a credit or refunding a portion of the purchase price with providing good customer service. In reality, issuing a credit or giving a refund is NOT providing good customer service. It may temporarily alleviate an issue or conflict with a customer, but offers no long term benefit. In fact, it may be detrimental to the company by "training customers that a complaint equals a refund." Companies should focus on fixing the cause of the problem to prevent future occurrences. If a refund or credit is warranted they should always attempt to get something from the customer in return. For example, instead of issuing a credit for past services, give the customer a discount on future business.

Randy Weissman, Storage Banc, Saint Louis, MO

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12:00 pm**

**March 10 2010
07:30 am**

**March 16 2010
12:00 pm**

**March 17 2010
07:30 am**

Location: KNBT Bank,
Stroudsburg PA
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CRM—Making a Difference in Your Business

I recently rolled out an online based Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool. The initial purpose was to track inbound emails from customers, however, the more I work with the tool the more uses I see for it. Now I look at it as a potential for monitoring accountability, key performance indicators and tracking for turning around customer issues. If your organization doesn't have a CRM tool, I highly recommend that you investigate them. It has only been a few weeks since I implemented the tool and I am already seeing results from it.

Michael Herring, Best Skins Ever, Arvada, CO

Expectations

When hiring a new employee, besides preparing a job description signoff, hand them a list of "20 things we expect from you each and every day". This ought to include items like "have a good, positive attitude" and "be on time." Then have the president and the new employee sign it. You'll be surprised by the impact it has on an employee's performance.

Craig Noto, SA Quality Fence, San Antonio, TX

Focus on the Positive

Managers often use employee performance reviews to highlight areas needing improvement. But why do we focus on an employee's weakest points? There is greater value in defining his or her strengths and then developing a plan to build on them.

If you were coaching Shaquille O'Neal, would you tell him to work on his 3-point shot?

Edward Rishebarger, Burnside & Rishebarger, San Antonio, TX

Thanks for the Referrals

We always ask our existing customers for referrals. When they come through for us, we give them a gift certificate for their next purchase from us. Not only does this help you develop new leads, but it allows you to market to your existing customers.

Rich Moriarty, George Tiemann & Co., Hauppauge, NY

ABOUT THE ALTERNATIVE BOARD®

The Alternative Board® is comprised of members who are business owners, CEOs or presidents who run businesses in non-competing fields. The support and real-world advice from one another-and from your personal TAB business coach-make a bottom line difference. Our TAB Board will give you a distinct edge by helping you create, implement, adjust and stay on track to achieve your personal and professional goals.

You can learn more about TAB, which has been helping business owners succeed since 1990, by visiting www.TheAlternativeBoard.com.

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