

# Tips from the Top

Leader to leader advice, insights, information



## Management and Strategy: Shake it Up - Letting Your Creative Self Loose

Small business success relies much on creative thinking: from developing new leads to solving cash flow issues to mediating employee conflicts, small business owners must rely on creative solutions to various challenges. There is no formula to creative thinking, but the process essentially involves changing your perspective and seeing things from a different angle.

[Read More](#) >>

## Finance: Collecting Receivables in Small Claims Court

If you have exhausted your in-house efforts to collect on a receivable, do not let the money go uncollected – it is your right to collect! Small claims court is your next option.

[Read More](#) >>

## Sales and Marketing: Mobile Apps for Customers

As a third-party administrator for COBRA, Flex and HRAs, we strive to make it easy for clients and policy holders to access their information quickly. Last year we deployed an application to allow clients to access their accounts remotely by iPhone or other mobile technology.

[Read More](#) >>

## Management and Strategy: Three Levels of Leadership

I just ran across an old Harvard Business Review article called “Covert Leadership” by Henry Mintzberg. He described how leadership is generally exercised on three different levels:

[Read More](#) >>

## Human Resources: Groups Need to Support the Company Vision



**THE ALTERNATIVE BOARD**  
Change Perspective. Improve Business. Enjoy Life.



Marcy Turkington



Dick Cipoletti  
The Alternative Board  
110 Birch Drive  
Newton  
NJ, 07860  
USA

[CONTACT US](#)

When creating groups and/or teams in your company to head up special projects or steer a process, be sure to start them off with a copy of the company vision statement.

[Read More](#) >>

## Human Resources: Hold Yourself Accountable

I recently realized that I did not give my staff formal performance evaluations because I had never been evaluated myself. I didn't know where to begin, but my TAB facilitator gave me several different types of forms and shared a wonderful process.

[Read More](#) >>

## Targeted Tips

### Cash is King!

Experts say the economy is on the rebound, but many business owners are still experiencing limited cash flow. Whether it's due to a decrease in sales, slow paying customers, or an upswing in business that requires new hires and operational expenses, this issue of Tips from the Top is packed with ideas for filling your cash coffers.

### Staying on Top of Receivables

For many businesses today, receivables are a challenge. The earlier in the cycle you reach out to customers to receive payments, the better. Use your finance people, project managers or office manager – whoever makes sense – to nudge a customer into paying. If you aren't able to get them to pay, eventually you will need to call them personally. Either way, reviewing your receivables weekly will help your cash flow.

By - James Cillesen, Interstate Electrical Contract, Wheat Ridge, CO

### Banks Need Business Too

If your cash flow is tight, it may seem counterintuitive to ask for a loan or refinancing, but many banks are opening up to new business. We had a couple TAB members receive attractive refinancing proposals even though they had very tight cash flow. In both cases they were able to show the bank that their businesses had started to grow again and, if they could solve the capital constraint, they would be in a good position for further growth. In addition, I was able to provide positive comments that helped the bank become comfortable with the TAB member as a new client. Your TAB coach can likely do the same.

By - Peter Begin, TAB-Greater Hartford

### Cutting Costs with Open Discussion

Our three major partners had determined that our buy/sell agreement was out of date, and some of the language did not accomplish what we wanted. Instead of simply asking our attorney to rewrite the agreement, each partner made a list of key concerns. After talking through the differences, we quickly came to agreement on the needed revisions. As a result, our attorney's first draft covered everything, and we saved time and money.

By - Quentin Baker, Baker Engineering & Risk Con., San Antonio, TX

### Less Skilled Labor Saves Time and Money

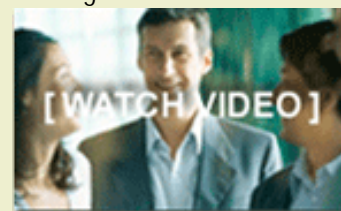


Private Appointment

[SCHEDULE A MEETING](#)

### Member Testimonials

Hear what our Members have to say about the benefits that TAB has brought to their business.



### What Members Say

**Bill Truex**

President  
Budget Home  
& Office Cleaning

*"Through TAB, I've gotten advice ranging from financial to human resource to marketing and strategic direction. My business is stronger in a tougher market and continues to grow. This is the best business group investment I have made. Each month my board provides ideas and perspectives that I cannot get anywhere else - my coach then helps me implement them and the entire process holds me accountable to myself and to the others."*

One of our TAB Board members runs a service business. Each evening his techs return to the shop, dump their equipment and loose supplies, and go home. The next morning it takes up to 45 minutes for the techs to get organized before they can get out on the job again. Our board proposed hiring a less expensive warehouse employee for two hours a day to help unload the trucks and organize the supplies and equipment. The result is a savings of \$9600/year and faster service in the field.

By - Bob Ryan, TAB Twin Cities, East Metro board

### Time to Look in the Mirror

A customer not being aware of our excellence is not the fault of the customer. After years of stellar work for a customer, it's disappointing when they open up bids for a product or service you have been providing. However, this situation mandates us to look at the real cause of the problem in the mirror. If we have competitive advantages, we need to communicate them clearly and effectively to our prospects and customers. We do them and ourselves a disservice by not doing so.

By - Craig Smith, Retained Earnings, Appleton, WI

### Admit Your Mistakes

It is inevitable that you will make a mistake with customers at some point (we are, after all, only human). While it would be easy to provide excuses as to why things went wrong, try telling your customers the truth. Most of the time, you will find that the customer is very appreciative of the honesty and often they empathize with making a mistake.

By - Thomas Flaherty, Pro Cabinet Solutions, Littleton, CO

### When You Can't Afford Raises

Based on economic circumstances, this year we have decided not to give employee raises. Instead, we will award employees a bonus based on percentage of salary for the prior year. This does not commit us for future years, and we will not be obligated to pay additional future salary if the business cannot afford it.

By - Sharon Dietrich, Cygnus Automation Inc., Bohemia, NY

### Protect Key Development Budgets

When asking managers to cut costs, don't pull the rug out from under your most valuable initiatives. Make sure they know that your key development budgets – training, recruiting or whatever – are to be maintained so that future growth of your company is not inhibited.

By - Rick Seiler, Seiler Instrument & Manufacturing Co., St. Louis, MO

### Put On Your Play Clothes

I used to have a hard time separating personal time from work time – especially since I have family in the business – but I found a simple way to signal to my brain that work is over and it is time to relax. I simply change my clothes when I arrive home. This doesn't mean that business issues never come up in the evenings, but my state of mind while in my "play" clothes reminds me that these evening interruptions are the exception and not the rule. This has allowed me to more easily disengage from my business and better enjoy time with my family.

By - Marty Watts, V-Kool, Inc., Houston, TX

[More Tips](#) 

## About The Alternative Board®

The Alternative Board® (TAB) is an exclusive, membership-based organization that helps business owners achieve more – more profitability, productivity, and personal fulfillment – through an unmatched combination of peer to peer insight, private coaching with TAB-certified coaches and TAB proprietary tools, and resources that connect business owners to thousands of their peers around the world.

You can learn more about TAB, which has been helping business owners succeed since 1990, by visiting [www.tab-nwnj-pm.com](http://www.tab-nwnj-pm.com).

Share

This:

Unsubscribe

