

# Tips from the Top

Leader to leader advice, insights, information



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### Sales and Marketing

#### 7 Traits of Successful Sales People

Traits of successful salespeople have been the subject of study for ages. What is it, exactly, that separates a top salesperson from the pretty good, the average, and those who are barely getting by? You might consider factors like work style, motivators and education: all play important parts in a salesperson's career.

### Human Resources

#### 5 Ideas for Employee Bonus Pools

Financial bonuses can be a great way to motivate excellence and reward your employees. Many business owners struggle with how to determine the amount of the bonus pool, as well as how to fairly allocate the pool among employees. There is no single answer to this question, as demonstrated by the following actual examples submitted by TAB-Winnipeg Board 402.

#### Saving on Health Insurance

Offering health insurance is a costly proposition for small companies, but it's a benefit that employees expect. Thus, it's important to spend some time strategizing your approach. If you're offering traditional health insurance, start looking at your insurance plan at least five months before your renewal and discuss various options with your agent. If your agent isn't able to strategize or offer many options, you might consider changing agents.

#### Retirement Benefit Options

Employer pre-tax contributions in lieu of annual employee bonuses or a cash profit-share is an increasingly used option in employer sponsored retirement plans. Besides increasing the overall plan assets and help in satisfying certain testing criteria, it also reduces the employer's tax obligation. More significantly, it signals to employees that saving for their future is an obligation their employer takes seriously.

## Targeted Tips

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When opening a new geographically remote location, consider using a service like RingCentral ([www.ringcentral.com](http://www.ringcentral.com)). In just a few minutes you can set up a new local phone number that can be forwarded to your existing office. Your staff can answer from the home office, and you can begin your new business without the need for office space or any other requirements.

By : Patrick Allmond, Owner, Focus Consulting Inc., Oklahoma City, OK

#### Continuous Improvement

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By : Tom Schmidt, Owner, Greenwood Advisors, Aurora, CO

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If you have just renewed your insurance or have started a new policy, it may take several weeks (even months) before your actual policy is delivered (even though binding coverage has begun). When the policy does arrive, make sure someone in your organization is tasked with a thorough review of the policy against the proposal from your agent to examine for holes in coverage, or exclusions that may be a surprise when you have an occurrence. Hopefully you kept a copy of the insurance proposal along with your notes, so if a problem occurs you can re-construct the dialogue leading up to it, along with the representations made by the agent in selling the policy.

## VIDEO TESTIMONIALS



Hear how TAB can help you and your business.

[Watch Video](#)

## Featured Facilitator / Business Coach



**Marcy Turkington**

(973) 940-2020

[Email](#)

[Read Bio](#)

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## Upcoming Events

**Business Over Breakfast**  
7/11/2011 8:00 AM

[Business Owner Roundtable & Speaker Event](#)

Joint top business owners and our guest expert Chip Reichhard from Sandler Sales, as we discuss using Linked In for Business Growth, including: Marketing, sales, competitive research, & employee recruitment efforts to take your business to the next level.

[View Event](#)

[View All Events](#)

### Test Grammar Skills Before Hiring

Any employee who will be communicating with customers or other external resources needs to have the ability to string together a set of coherent sentences with good spelling and punctuation. You can test candidates during hiring by having them write something similar to what you would have them do as part of their job. This exercise will also let you see if they ask questions to clarify the instructions. Alternatively, you can search online for "English and grammar tests" and choose a standardized test.

By : Bev Snyder, Owner, Stonebraker Rocky Mountain Firework, Denver, CO

### Implementing Your Vision

After much thought, you have finally drafted a vision that portrays your company's strengths and how your company will be distinguished in the future. Now comes the tough part: creating buy-in and bringing your vision to life. Our board brainstormed a few techniques to make a company vision more than just words on a piece of paper.

– Display your vision with pride. Post it in your office, use it on internal and external communications, include it on paychecks.

– Reinforce the behaviors that support your vision. Hold meetings to introduce and reinforce your vision, recognize employees whose actions further the vision, provide employees with tangible examples of what the vision is and isn't, base bonuses and financial incentives on behaviors that maximize the vision.

– Ensure all external communications support your vision. Consider including the vision on your website and on social media sites, take special care to ensure that all images on your website reinforce the vision.

By : Genelle Brakefield, Owner, Ekon Benefits, St. Louis, MO

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## 5 Ideas for Employee Bonus Pools

Date : July - 2011

Category : Human Resources

By : TAB-Winnipeg Board 402, TAB-Board, The Alternative Board

Company A – Keeps payroll to 22 percent or less of revenue (or other percentage determined from industry benchmarks). If salary expense is below 22 percent, the difference is put into a bonus pool. Payout of bonus pool among staff is mostly subjective – based on service, overtime worked, existing salary and value-add to the organization. In addition, 10 percent of the bonus pool is allocated to a corporate charity.

Company B – Bonus is based on performance, with applicable criteria for each department. For example, employees from one department receive bonuses based on sales, while bonuses in another department are based on efficiency.

Company C – After meeting operating expenses, the General Manager's bonus is 10 percent of anything remaining. There is also an ad hoc pool for other staff.

Company D – The bonus pool is an ad hoc number picked by the owner based on recent company performance. The owner distributes the pool based on a subjective evaluation of each employee's contribution.

Company E – 15 percent ROI is deducted from profits. Everything remaining goes into the bonus pool that is split equally (in thirds) between staff, ownership and the General Manager.

No matter what strategy you use, having a clear bonus policy is a must. Make sure the rules are spelled out in the employee manual or in the employment agreement. This should include how often bonuses are distributed, how the bonus pool is determined (without including the specific amount of the pool), and how recipients are chosen (if bonuses are not given to everyone). Don't forget to explain how long someone new must be employed before they are eligible for a bonus, as well as what happens when someone leaves.

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## Saving on Health Insurance

Date : July - 2011

Category :

**By :** Ronald Cook, Attorney, Ronald Cook Attorney at Law, Smithtown, NY  
<http://www.roncooklaw.com>

Offering health insurance is a costly proposition for small companies, but it's a benefit that employees expect. Thus, it's important to spend some time strategizing your approach. If you're offering traditional health insurance, start looking at your insurance plan at least five months before your renewal and discuss various options with your agent. If you're agent isn't able to strategize or offer many options, you might consider changing agents.

As an alternative, look into an HSA (Health Savings Account) or HRA (Health Reimbursement Arrangement). These plans come with a higher deductible, but the costs are extremely low compared to traditional health insurance plans – especially with the huge rate increases of late. With an HAS or HRA plan, employer premiums are lower because you actually self-insure a portion of the premium. If a specified percentage of your employees, say 70 percent, reach their deductible limit, your portion of the premium kicks in. For most employers this scenario is unlikely, making the savings may very worthwhile.

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## Retirement Benefit Options

**Date :** July - 2011

**Category :**

**By :** Christopher Dieringer , National Administration Inc., Appleton, WI  
<http://www.nai-net.com>

Employer pre-tax contributions in lieu of annual employee bonuses or a cash profit-share is an increasingly used option in employer sponsored retirement plans. Besides increasing the overall plan assets and help in satisfying certain testing criteria, it also reduces the employer's tax obligation. More significantly, it signals to employees that saving for their future is an obligation their employer takes seriously.

In addition, technology advancements over the last few years have provided the ability for company 401(k) plans to include a self-directed brokerage account option. This option allows the plan to include investment choices other than the traditional mutual funds, such as direct investments in publicly-traded stocks, EFT's or bonds. For knowledgeable participants who understand the risks of investing, the self-directed brokerage account option provides the opportunity to achieve better returns than passive investments offer, and often at a lower investment cost.

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## 7 Traits of Successful Sales People

**Date :** July - 2011

**Category :** Sales and Marketing

**By :** Jolan Turkington , Achieve Business Solutions  
[www.AchieveNextLevel.com](http://www.AchieveNextLevel.com)

Traits of successful salespeople have been the subject of study for ages. What is it, exactly, that separates a top salesperson from the pretty good, the average, and those who are barely getting by? You might consider factors like work style, motivators and education: all play important parts in a salesperson's career.

Personality traits, however, are where things really get interesting. Perhaps no other professional is more negatively stereotyped than the salesperson – from the used car salesman to the Hollywood agent, salespeople are seen as egotistical and pushy. But as Steve W. Martin shares in his recent post on the Harvard Business Review network, the most successful salespeople aren't the exaggerated characters stereotypes belie. In a long-term study of 1,000 high technology and business services salespeople, Steve W. Martin found the following key personality attributes in the most successful:

1. Modesty
2. Conscientiousness
3. Achievement Orientation
4. Curiosity
5. Lack of Gregariousness
6. Lack of Discouragement
7. Lack of Self-Consciousness

[Learn more about the study.](#)

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By : Patrick Allmond, Owner, Focus Consulting Inc., Oklahoma City, OK  
<http://www.allaboutfocus.com>

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By : Cornell Meyer, TAB Facilitator, Board 406, St. Louis Metro  
<http://www.tab-stlouismetro.com>

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