

SALES AND SERVICE

Excellence

THE MAGAZINE OF TEAM LEADERSHIP

JULY 2011



**Culture
and Brand
Asking
Questions**

**Team Culture
Boost Team Performance**

**Robert Whipple
Consultant**



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Sales and Service Excellence

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MARKETING/BRANDING

Culture and Brand

Make and keep brand promises.



by Sara
LaForest and
Tony Kubica

IT'S ONE THING TO MAKE A PROMISE—quite another to keep it. Yet, people make promises every day. Some keep them. Some companies like AT&T, Bank of America and US Airways have good intentions, but can't keep them because their strong culture and strong brand are misaligned. And, some businesses have no sincere intention of keeping them at all, regardless of what they say.

How are you and your business at keeping your promises? Well, how you answered this question just defined your brand and your culture. The two are connected, and this connection can be either: *Strong and reinforcing*—they are in alignment; *Strong but negatively reinforcing*—they are competing or dissonant, weak because they have not been defined and developed.

Creating the Promise—Your Brand

To grow your business, you must identify your target market—the market niche you want to focus on and the position you want to hold within that market. You need to know: What prod-

ucts or services you want to provide to your market; what you can do and what you do not want to do; and your competition and why you are different. This provides the essential elements for branding your company.

Branding presents you to the marketplace. It defines you in the mind of your customers and prospects. It creates the promise: what your clients can expect from you when they do business with you. Think of Apple, Google, Zappos,



Amazon.com, Nordstrom—we know what to expect from them, and we are rarely disappointed.

Branding expresses this promise in the: logo, Website concept and content, tag line, ads, marketing materials, and all forms of internal and external expression/communication about the company. There is a consistency that

should carry over to all methods of interacting with the customer and the prospect. Regardless of how your prospect and customers enter your sales cycle, they should see, feel, and interpret who you are, what you stand for and what they can expect based on your branding.

So, you have their attention with relevant and compelling branding. But you're not done.

Creating the Culture

Now it's time to deliver: to keep the promise made in your branding.

Culture is the way work is done in the company—how people work together, how you build your teams and processes to deliver on your promise. It represents how strongly you believe in your promise and builds your reputation.

Culture is grounded in the understanding and practices around *Purpose/Mission, Vision and Guiding Values*. It drives how decisions are made, how responsibility is assumed, and your behavior in front of customers and your team. It should be reflected in the standards and consistency with which you deliver your product/service.

Are organizations with a strong positive culture and good brand expression perfect? Far from it. They are just

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much better than their competition, as they know how to course correct when required, and they know why they exist as a business.

Brand + Culture = Growth

Without a strong base (your culture and brand) it is nearly impossible to deliver high quality products and services to your market (you end up delivering excuses).

Companies with a strong brand and culture are market leaders, local or international. A positive brand and cultural alignment is a powerful competitive strategy!

To boost performance and growth, concentrate on building a *strong brand expression* (the promise) and focusing your culture in delivering on that promise. Identifying your market and building a strong base (culture and brand) to deliver to that market is a *competitive differentiator*. Many of your competitors (and could-be competitors) will not take the time to do this. And your clients and customers will notice and will reward your efforts.

To improve your sales, improve your influence. Sales are about *relationships*. If you want to increase your sales, you must increase your *influence*—the ability to achieve your objective (sales) when you have neither the control nor the authority to achieve your goal alone. This is the place where the salesperson resides. The challenge is how to do it.



All salespeople need certain basics: a good product or service that provides value to the customer; a clear idea of why your product or service is *the best solution for the customer*—your differentiator; a clear value proposition—why is the customer better off buying from you, now; and a promise that you can back it up—drives customer satisfaction.

Many people make the mistake of defining *influence* as a form of *manipulation*. Not so. Influence is not about manipulation; it's about mutuality. And mutuality drives off the *Law of Reciprocity*: if I provide something of value to you first, you are likely to provide something of value to me. The caveat—as long as what you provide me is something that I value and my company values.

10 Barriers to Influence

We see the potential to gain influence in a sales situation squandered away—for 10 reasons we call the *Barriers to Gaining Influence*:

1. Fear. Fear stops you from using influence in a sales situation. And fear appears in many forms. It can be the fear of failure, fear of being rejected, fear of appearing foolish, fear that you are not good enough. Regardless of what you are afraid of, fear stops you dead in your tracks. You don't succeed, you don't exert influence because you're con-

vinced *before you start* that you may not succeed.

2. Inability to develop real relationships. *People work with, buy from, and support people they like.* You can't influence people to buy from you if you haven't developed a positive relationship—unless they buy on price alone.

3. Poor responsiveness. The faster you respond, the more responsive you appear. And if response matters to the person you want to influence, you make a positive impression.

4. Overselling. *Overselling is annoying, and it communicates uncertainty* in your position. When a person says *yes*, and you keep trying to convince them, *what are you communicating?*

5. Quitting at No. Nobody likes rejection. Yet in sales, *no* is often the response we hear. Sure, *no* can mean *no*, but it can also mean: *no, not right now; or no, I'm not yet convinced—I need more information.* Often, an *objection* is not a *rejection*—it's a request for more information. Don't let *no* be a lost opportunity.

6. Perfectionism. You may think that unless your proposal or request for information is perfectly framed, it can't move forward. Wrong. *Perfection sends an unintended message that you are indecisive*, and can create immobilization. While you may believe you are striving for perfection, the prospect wonders what's taking you so long.

7. Over-expressing personal beliefs. When you express a personal, political, or social belief when you are selling, people find it annoying. Expressing personal beliefs compromises the very relationships you want most to build.

8. Lack of focus. It's difficult to make a sale or to garner much respect if you go from one prospect to another; one idea to another; one sales strategy to another and finish nothing. Often your buyer will just give up, quit listening or no longer support your efforts.

9. Poor impression management (lack of executive presence). This isn't just about *looking* the part—it's about *being* the part, managing your image. Unsuitably presented, tired, poorly poised, uninformed and, sloppy you present a poor and unconvincing image.

10. Ingratitude. People like recognition and appreciation; they like to be noticed in a positive way. If you don't recognize and express appreciation for others, your chance of influencing them is remote.

Is one of the Top 10 Barriers holding you back from influencing others and gaining more sales? These behaviors inhibit sales performance. If you see these in yourself and refuse to address them, you won't exert the influence necessary to advance sales. **SSE**

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ACTION: Eliminate barriers to gaining influence.

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Old Rules Are Dead

Reinvent brand, reignite business.



by Timothy R. Pearson

IN A POST-RECESSION WORLD OF constant technology-driven change, one thing remains mired in the past: the way products and services are marketed and sold.

In *the old ways of marketing*, these were *the old rules*. Budgets define strategy. A brand is just a brand. It's all about the qualitative research. Advertising is the answer. Marketing results can't be measured. Technology isn't for everyone.

These rules were based on several widely accepted beliefs, primarily that *marketing is more an art than a science*. As with most assumptions, this one has proven to be untrue, particularly in this technology-rich informational era.

From research frameworks and traditional concept development to planning, budgeting, distribution channels, and media placement, marketers have not kept up. In fact, marketing has not advanced in many ways, which may be why chief marketing officers don't get a seat at the leadership table. As a result of rapid advancements in technology and the depth and breadth of information available to power and propel profitable sales and increase revenues, *marketing should have changed*. But it hasn't. It remains rooted in the recent past.

New Age of Marketing

Marketing in this data-abundant, Internet-oriented world order requires more than a superficial understanding of the customer or consumer—and more than simply *getting on* the new technology. It requires understanding that *the old ways of marketing are dead*. They can be found stuffed and hanging on the walls of offices. The fundamentals have changed, as have the means and methods to define targets, to create more productive encounters that provide more opportunities to sell, to develop deeper and more significant insights, and to exploit singular points of difference.

Old paradigms must be challenged. *The new way* of doing things can help you reinvent yourself to win in the global marketplace. It requires that you throw out most of what you hold dear and embrace technology, a new role, and real accountability—wholeheartedly. *Reinvention* requires *real change*.

Six Rules of Reinvention

Reinvention begins at a brand's core essence. It is not change that is *artificially created or imposed externally*, nor change for its own sake. Rather, it is rooted in *six essential rules* (and 23 principles) that encompass a new way of examining and scrutinizing marketing and undertaking and *optimizing growth initiatives*.

Here are the six new rules:

Rule 1: The core is everything.

Reinvention begins with understanding what a product or service is at its core. Often lost in go-to-market processes and sales methods is the need to define the true core essence of the product or service being marketed. Knowing and



understanding the core essence makes a product or service more relevant and creates a touchstone for all the work that follows. Everything that is undertaken must be true to the essence.

Rule 2: You have nothing without the foundation. Reinvention is both art and science. Once you determine the core essence of a brand, product, or service, you need to develop the foundation for creating and reinventing the brand. In marketing, we tend to think of branding as "building a house." This tenet deals with *creating the architecture* and *laying the foundation* for the brand house—that's part of the science.

Rule 3: There are many choices, but only one customer. Reinvention does a product or service no good if it's not *effectively and efficiently conveyed and shared with the key audience—the potential buyer or acquirer*. Determine the plan for going to market and create the metrics to ensure or exceed a targeted ROI. Here, the focus is on planning, creating consistency, developing messaging, and determining channels to reach that key audience—the buying customer.

Rule 4: Do the right things for the right reasons. Reinvention requires an

understanding of the circumstance and context in which the product or service is taken to market. There are no shortcuts or easy fixes. Before putting the brand house "up for sale," there is a need to ensure there are no unexpected or unanticipated barriers or constraints. These could involve regulatory issues; reputational concerns; customer, client, or prospect relationships; and even entering into partnerships that elevate or accelerate acceptance and purchase of the product or service.

Rule 5: Infrastructure is more than just pipes. Reinvention begins with a product or service, but it does not end there. It directly impacts and shapes the operating infrastructure that supports it. As the product or service is taken to market, it becomes important to focus on the type of support necessary for the successful implementation of the plan. There is no "magic bullet," but there are avenues that must be explored and optimized, requiring a clear and undiluted understanding of the role marketing is to play in the company or enterprise and the creation of the right type of marketing organization.

Rule 6: Lead and others will follow. Marketing must demonstrate leadership to ensure that *reinvention* is seen as contributing to the bottom line, and does so. And, it must continue to contribute over a long period with ever-increasing efficiency and effectiveness to drive profitable revenue growth.

Memo Marketers Missed

Today, marketers must reinvent their brands. They need to know what those brands are at the core because if they don't, their target audiences won't know either—and they won't buy the products or services, initially or with the frequency that you desire. Remember, the all-critical goal is profitable sales, growing brands, and increased market share.

The *memo that marketers missed* is the one that requires them to break out of old routines by: applying the six rules and 23 underlying principles of *reinvention*, viewing what they do as essential, recognizing that marketing is accountable for results, and providing leadership. You only make money when they *sell* something, and you can't *sell* something unless you *market* it first.

Are you up to the challenge and the reward of reinvention? **SSE**

Timothy R. Pearson is president of Pearson Advisors Partners, a marketing management consulting firm, keynote speaker, and author of The Old Rules of Marketing are Dead (McGraw-Hill). To learn more, visit www.pearsonadvisorsandpartners.com.

ACTION: Follow these six rules of reinvention.

Natural Dialogue

Stop scripts, use the secrets.



by Ari Galper

DO SALES SCRIPTS ANNOY you? You know that you have to say it, but you also know that people hate hearing it. *We all know one when we hear one*, and it can defeat the purpose of having one. Prospects recognize your tone, robotic language, and cheery voice. Then you wonder why they say *they are not interested in whatever you have*. Wouldn't it be nice if instead of a *sales script* you could *engage the prospect and open them up to a dialogue* about their situation?

Sales scripts often start with a greeting, a few buy-in questions, a pitch and then *the big close*. Yet, prospects or people receiving a call such as this immediately turn off. They are sick of people calling and offering things they don't need. The intention of trying to enroll the customer and build the rapport is a worthy goal; but by structuring a call and controlling a prospect, we place excess pressure on prospects, making them feel uncomfortable. They want to *feel in control* when they buy; when you use a script, prospects lose that power. So the walls of objection and rejection soon come up. *Nobody wants to be sold*.

People want to buy from you. But they don't want to be sold on anything that doesn't fit their situation. They want to know that their best interests are being taken care of, but from their perspective, not yours. If you can break away from using a sales script and be genuine with people, this will resonate in your voice, your language, and even the flow of your call. By breaking free and getting back to your natural self when you are cold calling, you'll get that connection with people and get to the heart of the issue. Can you help this prospect solve a problem? If so, then you might arrange an appointment or close that sale. But how can you expect to do either of those things without first finding out if you can truly help that individual.

Turn Script into Dialogue

Here are five ways to turn your script into a natural dialogue:

1. Get rid of any mention of you. Nobody cares about *who* your company is and *what* you do! When you start talking about yourself, the other person shuts down and stops listening. So,

focus your call *entirely* on the prospect.

2. Start by asking for help. Ask the prospect for assistance. You don't know if what you have is for everyone, so *ask them for help in finding out if it is something that they would be open to discussing*. Ask, "Could you help me for a moment?" See how they react. If you ask nicely and treat them with respect, they'll be *much more willing* to talk.

3. Eliminate all assumptions. Take out *all assumptions* embedded in your script. The more you assume to know about prospects, the more they'll feel that they're being led down *your path*. Call with an open mind. Ask yourself *what don't you know about them*. This puts you in an open, respectful frame of mind to have a *natural dialogue*.

4. Be comfortable with silence. Integrate *pauses and silence* into your script or message. The more you are

comfortable with silence, the more you show how much you are prepared to work with prospects and make them *feel comfortable* about the situation.

5. Slow down, calm down. Prospects need time to absorb what you offer. Any message spoken *too fast* won't get heard, and any message delivered with *too much enthusiasm* can trigger alarm bells. Hold your excitement until *after you learn if you can help the prospect solve a problem* (then become more optimistic).

Is your script helping you, or destroying your chances of having a deep and insightful dialogue with your prospects? Think how you might be coming across and *change your results for the better!* **SSE**

Ari Galper is the authority on Trust-Based Selling and creator of Unlock The Game®, a new sales mindset. Take a Free Test Drive by downloading a free audio seminar at www.UnlockTheGame.com.

ACTION: Have natural dialogue with prospects.

SALES/HERO

Unsung Heroes

Prominent or eminent?



by Zig Ziglar

REMEMBER THIS CLASSIC tribute to the unsung hero by Dr. Joseph R. Sizoo:

"Glamour is not greatness, applause is not fame, prominence is not eminence, the man of the hour is not apt to be the man of the ages, a stone may sparkle but that does not make it a diamond, and man may have money, but that does not make him a success. It is what the unimportant do that really counts and determines the course of history. The greatest forces in the universe are never spectacular. Summer showers are more effective than hurricanes, but they get no publicity. The world would soon die but for the fidelity, loyalty and consecration of those whose names are unhonored and unsung."

As I read this, I'm reminded of the difference between *prominent* and *eminent*. *Prominent* is associated with being highly visible. It suggests full or large, principal, most visible or striking to the eye, conspicuous. *Eminent* suggests high, lofty, exalted in rank, high in office, as an *eminent* historian, poet, or scholar.

We often see that *the individual who is frequently behind the scenes is often the one who can achieve an eminent position in life*.

To become an unsung hero, play the game of life (and sales) like you play the game of golf. In golf, the objective is to hit each shot well and to get into

position to hit the next one. This is the smart way to approach a demanding game—concentrating on hitting each shot forces you to *focus on the current shot and forget about past mistakes*.

Unfortunately, in golf and in life, you and I hit some *bad shots*, or things don't go *our way*. However, *you need not let a missed shot or a bad break today keep you from doing your best tomorrow*.

Failure is an event, not a person; yesterday really did end last night. A *bad shot* or a *bad break* should not influence the *next shot* or the *next action* you take. In fact, in golf when you miss a



shot you should say to yourself, "I can't believe I did that! That is totally out of character for me. I just won't do that again." Then, as you step up to make the next shot, say, "Remember how you hit that last seven iron on number eight? Here's your chance to do it again!"

If you've *missed a sale, fouled up a relationship, or made a poor decision*, do not let that be the measuring stick for future behavior. Step up to the next shot, remind yourself of your past successes, and *paint a new picture of success and accomplishment in your life*. The combination of *mental imaging* and *self-talk* can make a difference. Paint the picture of success before the next shot in golf or the next step in life. You will find it to be helpful. Think about it. Do it, and *I'll See You at the Top!* **SSE**

Zig Ziglar is known as America's motivator. He is the author of 29 books and numerous audio and video recordings. Visit www.ziglar.com.

ACTION: Become an unsung hero at work.

Team Culture

Boost team performance.



by Robert T. Whipple

THE CULTURE OF A TEAM governs its effectiveness. Most teams have a culture that allows adequate performance despite many unfortunate outbreaks of tension and sometimes childish behavior. It is unfortunate that more teams do not experience the exhilaration of working in a supportive culture that produces excellent results. The methods of building high-performing teams are well documented, but most teams do not go through the rigor required to get to *peak performance*.

In 1965, Bruce Tuckman described *four stages* that teams go through: *Forming*, *Storming*, *Norming*, and *Performing*.

Forming is a critical time for any team. This is when the team is trying to figure out its role and goals. Members are not sure of their status or contribution at this point, and personal bonding is a key element to the success of the team. It is advisable for the group to go offsite for some initial team-building activities. Many leaders avoid this step because often team-building activities involve a kind of game atmosphere that does not feel like "work." In fact, team building is real work that may be fun at the moment, but it is serious business that can result in *millions of dollars of profit* if done well or *millions of dollars in damage control* if not done at all.

During the *storming* phase, there is a power struggle where members vie for position and influence. It is up to *the team leader* to help the team move fast through this awkward time. Usually the *storming* stage is short simply because it is painful. People want to get out of the rut of consternation and move on to getting the work done.

In the *norming* phase, the team decides the degree of effectiveness it will ultimately enjoy. If individual and team behaviors are agreed upon with conviction, the team will begin to perform with excellence. They identify the individual skills brought to the team by the diversity of talent, the goals of the team, the ground rules of expected behavior, and the consequences of failing to comply with team expectations.

Requisites for High Performance

To become high performing, teams require two things: 1) a common goal, and 2) trust. If these requisites are in place, the rest of the team dynamics (like excellent communication) will sort themselves out. If either of these is missing, the team will sputter and struggle to meet expectations. A key rule fostered by most teams that is often compromised is to *treat each member with respect*. There is a disease that sets in most teams where members subtly undermine each other.

People often make jokes in team meetings. Keep your antenna up and you will discover that, for most groups, the majority of jokes are sarcastic digs about other people in the room. Everyone knows they are only jokes, and they laugh, but deep down



some damage is done.

Smart groups have a *conscious norm* that they will enjoy humor in meetings but never make a joke at someone else's expense. It may seem like a small thing, but over time this practice helps improve the function of any team. It is easy to accomplish. The leader just needs to set the expectation and remind people when they slip up. In coaching some groups with a particularly bad habit on this, I have suggested that any time a person makes a joke that is a dig, he or she has to put \$5 in a kitty. The money is used later by the group for a party. This small change can actually change the entire culture of a team.

Now that you are sensitized to this, just keep track in a few meetings with some hash marks on a piece of paper. You will be astonished how pervasive this problem is and also how certain people are addicted to the practice.

Then, *solve the problem* and begin enjoying the benefits of better teamwork.

Patterns that Lead to Success

In coaching teams, I find that there are patterns that lead to success and other patterns that lead to extreme frustration and failure. One condition rises above all the others when it comes to dysfunctional teams. When some team members believe other members are not pulling their fair share, the team will have major problems. Sadly, this situation is common, almost universal, yet there is a simple cure that is 95 percent successful at preventing this condition or stopping it if it happens. The cure is to have an agreed-upon *Charter* for the team upfront before behavior problems surface.

During the *forming* stage, team leaders need to document four parameters of how the team will operate: 1) a list of the talents and skills each member of the team can contribute; 2) a set of solid, measurable performance goals for the team; 3) a set of agreed upon behaviors that members agree to follow; and 4) a statement of the consequences that will occur if a member fails to live up to the behaviors.

When teams take the time to document these four items, the chances of success are much higher. Item #4, the most powerful item, is the one that is most often omitted from a charter. The reason it has power is that when the team is forming, usually all members have good intentions to pull their weight for the good of the team. If they agree that letting the team down by slacking off and having others pick up the slack will result in some unhappy consequence (like being voted off the team, or having no points on an assignment, or having to do extra clean up work, or some other penalty) they are far less likely to practice "social loafing." If they are tempted to goof off, then the penalty they have already agreed to is quickly applied, and the bad behavior is quickly extinguished.

Without a good charter, most teams end up in the frustration of having one or more people believing they are doing more than their fair share of the work. When a good charter spells out the expected behaviors and the penalty for non-compliance *before the team experiences a problem*, it greatly reduces this common team malady. **SSE**

Robert Whipple is CEO of Leadergrow and author of *The TRUST Factor, Leading with Trust is like Sailing Downwind and Building Trust Online*. Email bwhipple@leadergrow.com or visit www.leadergrow.com.

ACTION: Create a performance culture.

Live Communication

Practice four success elements.



by Jodi Glickman

IN TODAY'S DIGITAL WORLD, you are constantly wired in, scanning emails, listening to voice mails, sending text messages, tweeting and instant messaging. And yet much of your workday is still made up of live, one-on-one conversations—all of which have the ability to propel, or stunt, your career. And while your digital prowess climbs, your ability to communicate live may be sinking—with devastating consequences.

Business is always personal. Hone your ability to talk to someone in person, face-to-face, when you have a problem, when you need help, when you need to know how you're doing, or when you need to service a customer or make a sale. Effective, strategic communication leads to more meaningful work, better feedback and continued momentum—and results in better relationships with your boss and colleagues.

To improve your live communication, observe these **four key themes**:

Generosity. Generosity is as vital a skill as drive, ambition and leadership. Generosity shows when people share information readily, share credit easily, or work to make others' lives better or easier. Giving a teammate a shout out on work well done, keeping your boss in the loop on new business development efforts, or pitching in to help out a team in need are ways to demonstrate generosity at work.

Simply asking people if they have a moment to speak before starting a conversation shows generosity. *The more good you add to other people's lives, the more benefits come your way.* By being considerate of other people's time and generous with your time and expertise, people will want to work with and for you and want to promote and compensate you well. Generosity fuels success.

Initiative. Taking initiative means being *strategically proactive* and using the LEARN strategy to help shape your assignments: *Learn* new skills, *Excel* at things you are good at, *Assist* others, *Redirect* unwanted work and *Network* to create chances to work with people who are highly regarded. You then open the door to engaging, meaningful and productive work that showcases your talents and propels you forward.

Forward momentum. Always think

two steps ahead to what comes next. The report is finished, *who now will distribute it?* The project has been completed, *how will we evaluate its success?* Professionals who anticipate *next steps* for their managers keep the ball rolling and continue to add value. *Business is all about building and maintaining meaningful and productive relationships.* You can use *Forward Momentum* to sustain those relationships by keeping your interactions *open-ended and active.* The *goodbye* is not an end point but the start of *your next conversation.* Promising to keep someone posted, reaching out after the next milestone, or just staying in touch keeps momentum active. *It's always easier to keep one door open than to have to walk through a new one.*

Transparency. This includes sharing bad news rather than hiding behind it, acknowledging gaps in information and

highlighting problems in advance. And despite your desire to have the answer to everything, transparency is critical when answering a question you don't know the answer to. Rather than struggling to come up with an answer you don't have, concede what you don't know and then promise to go find the information immediately. Just as customers expect and value transparency, colleagues expect it from one another.

Today, communicating effectively face to face is often *the* precursor to career success. You become a skilled communicator when you focus attention to generosity, initiative, forward momentum, and transparency. **SSE**

Jodi Glickman is founder of Great on the Job and author of Great On the Job: What to Say, How to Say It. (St. Martin's Press). Twitter at @greatonthejob.

ACTION: Practice face-to-face communication.

SALES/DEBRIEFING

Replicate Success

Improve post-decision debriefs.



by Richard M. Schroder

THERE'S NOTHING QUITE LIKE *the feeling of closing a sale.* Salespeople tend to celebrate first and then *try to understand why they won so they can replicate their success.* There is more to be learned from losing, yet most salespeople don't know how to gather accurate and meaningful information from prospects to *learn from losses.*

Salespeople often ask prospects why they lost a deal, but *rarely get a straight answer.* Salespeople learn *the complete truth* about 40 percent of the time; hence, in 60 percent of situations, salespeople lack an accurate understanding of *why they lost.* Prospects are seldom *candid* because they don't want to hurt the salesperson's feelings; they fear confrontation or criticism from sales reps; and they often have issues with the sales rep or sales process that hinders their candor.

Salespeople inhibit feedback when they're caught off guard by a *bad news call*, are unprepared for conducting a debrief, don't know the right after-sale questions to ask (and how to ask them).

Improve your post-sales etiquette and *get more candid feedback* from prospects' post-decision in seven ways:

1. Give early notice that you'll conduct a debrief (regardless of outcome). To make prospects comfortable and

elicit honest, actionable feedback, let the prospect know *early in the sales process* that regardless of the outcome, you'll conduct a post-decision debrief.

2. Schedule a separate debrief call. Don't debrief on the same call as when you hear about a loss. Prospects then have one goal in mind: to get you off the phone quickly. Instead, schedule a separate debrief call after you accept the loss, and let the prospect know that you won't try to change their decision.

3. Use a debrief guide. Using a *questionnaire* maximizes feedback and keeps the conversation focused. Sales-

people who use a debrief questionnaire have a 15 percent higher close rate than those who do not.

4. Take responsibility. If you don't want candid feedback, prospects can tell. Don't get defensive or angry, don't debate or try to resell them.

5. Take notes. Tell prospects that you'll take notes. This makes them feel important and compelled to talk. A debrief should last 10 to 15 minutes.

6. Probe for specifics. Ask: *How do you mean?* or *Say more.* Or ask, *How can I improve on this?*, *How can I make it better?*

7. Consider having someone else conduct your debriefs. You might ask an insider or someone outside of your company. Consider hiring an outside third party to conduct Win/Loss interviews on behalf of your sales team.

By *conducting better debrief calls*, you can greatly *increase your close rate.* **SSE**

Richard Schroder is president of Anova Consulting Group, speaker and author of From a Good Sales Call to a Great Sales Call (McGraw-Hill). www.theanovagroup.com

ACTION: Improve your post-decision debriefs.

How to Say 'No'

Do it the right way to win.



by Carl Van

WE ALL HAVE TO SAY NO AT times. Some people find it easier than others. Almost all of us struggle with the right way to say it. People who hate to say *no* find it hard to do, and sometimes do something much worse than hurt someone's feelings. They either don't say anything, which passively sends an incorrect message of *yes*, or they say *no* in a way that the other person doesn't know what is being said, sending a message of *maybe*.

People who don't mind saying *no* don't find it hard to do, but can lack the skills to do it gracefully and often instill hard feelings unintentionally.

For those of you who have no problem saying no, but need guidance on how to say it effectively, *here are six tips*.

Tip 1: "I'm sorry" doesn't have to mean you are really sorry. A little empathy can go a long way.

Tip 2: Repeat back to the other person their point of view. That will allow them to listen to yours. Once you prove to someone you understand their point of view, by repeating it back to them, they can stop explaining it.

Tip 3: You don't have to prove to someone that the situation is their fault. Most people just want empathy, not for you to take the blame. If possible, take their side as much as you can, but return to the situation at hand.

Tip 4: Show the other person you *wish* it could be different. Telling someone, "I wish I could do this for you; however, I just *can't*" is more powerful than, "I *won't* do this for you since I don't have to."

Tip 5: Help solve the problem in another way if possible. If alternatives are not the answer, the fact that you offered them shows you care. Most people, when told *no*, can take it better if it comes from someone who seems to genuinely care.

Tip 6: Avoid the word *but* when empathizing. When you say, "I understand, but . . ." what the other person hears is, "I don't understand."

Using these tips, you can say *no* and avoid conflict. The following examples show how a different approach can save you from an unpleasant situation.

Scenario 1: Pat is a hotel clerk who is trying to help Mr. Donnelly. It's late at night and he needs a hotel room.

Mr. Donnelly: Look, I really need a room tonight. You're the sixth hotel I've been to and I'm getting *really tired*.

Pat: I'm sorry, there are no rooms; we're completely booked.

Mr. Donnelly: Please? I'm exhausted.

Pat: I understand, but that doesn't change the fact that we have no rooms.

Mr. Donnelly: But I'm exhausted.

Pat: I see, but how is that our fault? You should have made a reservation.

Mr. Donnelly: Can't you do something for me?

Pat: (Turning the terminal toward Mr. Donnelly) Look, we have no rooms! Notice how Pat said she was sorry, but she didn't really convey that very well. She was also concerned with proving Mr. Donnelly was at fault. She offered no real solution, and certainly did not



appear that she *wished* it were different.

Apply the Six Tips

The next example shows how Pat does when she applies the six tips.

Mr. Donnelly: Look, I really need a room tonight. You're the sixth hotel that I've been to and I'm getting tired.

Pat: Oh, I'm very sorry, there are no rooms; we have a conference here and we're completely booked.

Mr. Donnelly: Please? I'm exhausted.

Pat: Mr. Donnelly, I understand that you are exhausted. I know you don't want to have to keep searching for a room at other hotels. I see how tired you are and understand what you are going through. Believe me, if I had a room, I would definitely give it to you. The truth is . . . I just don't have a room available. I'd do it if I could . . . but just can't. Can I help you find a room somewhere else?

Mr. Donnelly: Ugh. Okay, yes, please!

Pat's approach led to a much better result. Mr. Donnelly isn't thrilled, but he is ready to move on.

Scenario 2: Debbie is a sales person at a department store. The store has a very strict policy about not accepting refunds over 30 days.

Mr. Adam: I want to turn this in for a refund, please.

Debbie: This was purchased over 30 days ago, so I can't do that.

Mr. Adam: I didn't know that when I bought it.

Debbie: I understand, but you should have read the return policy then.

It's right there on the sales receipt.

Mr. Adam: Who reads sales receipts?

Debbie: People who want refunds.

Mr. Adam: Come on. It's been 34 days. What's the big deal?

Debbie: I understand, but 30 days is the limit. Sorry. You're going to have to be reasonable about this.

Mr. Adam: (Now angry) I am being reasonable!

Notice how Debbie failed to empathize with the customer. She blamed the customer for not understanding the policy. She even went so far as to imply the customer is an unreasonable person.

The next example shows what happens when Debbie approaches the situation with the six tips in mind.

Mr. Adam: I want to turn this in for a refund, please.

Debbie: I'm very sorry Mr. Adam, but since this was purchased over 30 days ago, no refunds are allowed.

Mr. Adam: But I didn't know that.

Debbie: I understand that. It's on the receipt, and often people don't really read their receipts, so I can understand that you didn't know about the policy.

Mr. Adam: Well I have to return it. I can't use it now and it's expensive.

Debbie: Mr. Adam, I really do understand. This is an expensive item and you are now realizing you can't use it. I truly wish the store policy were different and wish there was some way to make an exception. The policy is quite firm, however, and there is just no way to provide a refund. Can I help you find something you can exchange it for that might be acceptable to you?

Mr. Adam: Oh . . . okay. Do you have a catalog or something?

Hopefully that sounds a little better as well. Remember, saying *no* doesn't have to create bad feelings if you show a little empathy. Follow these simple tips and you might just get a little less resistance from people. **SSE**

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ACTION: Apply these tips when saying no.

Evolution to Revolution

This is the theme of our sales research.



by Howard Stevens

THE THEME FOR THE RESULTS of the last *World Class Sales Benchmark Research*, conducted by Chally Group, is the *speed and drastic changes customers are requiring of salespeople*. These changes force managers to look at the role of sales in a new light.

The changing dynamics between buyers and sellers are also driven by larger societal trends: proliferation of information, mobility of the work force, ease of communication, and globalization of markets. Such trends have altered the way we live and work.

Customers making the decision to buy anything is, first of all, a decision to outsource the particular product or service rather than produce it themselves. The best sales forces see their goal is to be the outsource of preference and to add value to the customer's business.

Salespeople also know that they have to walk in the customers' shoes to fully understand their business. Then they can more clearly see what customers need to satisfy their own clients. If customers decide to insource a service, they must appoint a manager to supervise and monitor that part of the business. The salesperson is thus a surrogate executive—an outsourced manager.

New Requirements, New Culture

Think of how differently you purchase things now. Recall how you purchased a television in 1990. Without the internet and easy access to information, your search for a TV likely began with a newspaper and a trip to an electronics store. When you encountered a retail salesperson, you were early in your buying process. You were probably still in education mode and wanting to learn about the products that were available.

By the time you encounter a salesperson today, you've likely educated yourself on the alternatives and started to narrow your choices. And, with the increased complexity of the products (high-definition formats, flat-panels), you've also amassed a list of technical questions that you expect the salesperson to answer with confidence. You are a more sophisticated, savvy, demanding buyer. You are less tolerant of the typical deer-in-the-headlights salesperson who is no more useful than the tag on the retail display that you can read for

yourself. You expect salespeople to be skilled, knowledgeable, and value-added. If salespeople can't understand and resolve your concerns, you'll quickly discard them and move to another salesperson or to another electronics store.

Since 1992, we've conducted *World Class Sales benchmarking studies* to learn what it takes to become a top sales organization. Our research elicits opinions to identify sales force best practices as measured by the customers they serve.

This research confirms that the power has clearly shifted from the seller to the buyer, and buyers are using that power to turn up the heat on the salespeople.

These changing customer expectations are apparent. Customers expect salespeople to change with them, to transform themselves into professionals who are adept at identifying and satisfying their new buying needs.

MARKETING/BRANDING

Bold Brand

Be brave and win.



by Shaun Smith and Andy Milligan

ASK YOURSELF, WHAT DOES MY BRAND stand for? If you, your CEO and your receptionist don't provide the same answer, your customers won't likely know either. And, today that is a very dangerous place to be.

How can you build a BOLD brand—one that represents something meaningful in the minds of customers and employees, challenges current assumptions, and dramatically differentiates you from competitors?

We surveyed the leaders of 14 brands that are transforming their markets and delighting their customers. Some are well known, like Zappos; some are less known, like Chilli Beans; some are new like Virgin Galactic and some are old like Burberry, but all share some common characteristics. We discovered unique cultures, innovative marketing, dramatic customer experiences, and a purpose that goes beyond simply making a profit. *Bold is an attitude of mind, but it is defined by how you behave.* What do these brands actually do?

Bold companies stand up, stand out and stand firm. They know no compromise, nor timidity. Their leaders show bravery in thought and execution and find new ways to measure success. Is



Having researched customer purchasing behavior, we can enumerate the **seven needs of customers** that define the role of the new sales professional: *Need 1: Be personally accountable for our desired result—the outsourced manager. Need 2: Understand our business—especially how we can win our own customers. Need 3: Be on our side—manage your organization to prioritize our needs and assure that they are met. Need 4: Design the right applications. Need 5: Be easily accessible. Need 6: Solve our problems. Need 7: Be creative in responding to our needs.*

Contact us to learn how to submit information on your customers. We'll survey your clients, and you'll receive a comprehensive benchmark report. **SSE**

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ACTION: Become a world-class sales team.

your company bold enough to deliver a Wow factor like Zappos, or to put purpose before your bottom line like Six Senses Resorts? Are you challenging conventional wisdom to win in your market like Umpqua Bank or Burberry?

Bold companies do business in their own unique way. Building a business is now about rethinking the end-to-end experience and redefining the customer-company relationship. Bold brands also rethink the employee-company relationship and create communities of fans inside and outside the company. As Tony Hsieh of Zappos says,

"Culture and brand are just two sides of the same coin."

These brands transform their markets and change the rules. To win the future, you need to challenge your current beliefs. Bold brands believe in what they stand for and let their actions follow their beliefs (often

actions and beliefs become disconnected from each other and from what consumers want).

Your company is Bold when you: have a clear brand positioning that differentiates you; deliver experiences that are remarkable; achieve Fandom—customers and employees who genuinely love the brand; and have a reputation for not only challenging the rules but also delivering on your promise.

Can you answer *yes* to any of these points? If not, learn from Bold companies and their leaders. **SSE**

Shaun Smith and Andy Milligan are brand and customer experience experts. Shaun is partner in Smith+Co. Andy is a Partner in The Caffeine Partnership. They are co-authors of *BOLD*. Visit www.boldthebook.com.

ACTION: Become a bold company and brand.

Be Professional

Observe seven new rules.



by Subroto Bagchi

THE TERM *PROFESSIONAL* comes from the Latin word *professio*, meaning to *take an oath or a vow—a promise to abide by a certain code of conduct* and to build affective regard for the group. Recently, the term *professional* has come to mean different things, but the central idea has not changed. What has changed is the rate of explosive growth in new professions and the extent to which people in them must interact across borders.

In an interconnected world where one person's decision can affect millions worldwide, *any professional failure can create a huge negative impact*.

Given the potential and pitfalls, the common definition of a *professional*—one who uses specialized knowledge and skills to gain employment—is inadequate. I argue that there are **three basic requirements**: 1) *the capacity to work unsupervised*, 2) *the ability to certify that the work is complete*, and 3) *an abiding sense of integrity*. Competence without integrity is dangerous. As a professional, you have a work-life of four decades, and once you embrace these tenets, you can become self-aware, knowing: *who I am, where I come from, what my strengths are, how well I handle adversities, how well I seek help, and how well I rein in my emotions under stress*. The journey of the four decades—from entry-level to leader—calls for mastery in managing four things: resources, volume, complexity, and rainmaking.

These *four elements* are in every profession. But now, we see a baseline shift—**seven new rules** for being professional.

1. Understand the principles of governance. As organizations grow, their capacity to govern the actions of every individual shrinks. This means, a true professional must know the principles that govern him without being told and watched over. It is no longer enough to be smart and intuitive and competent, but additionally, one must know where the boundaries of law rest, not just domestically but beyond. I am no professional if I do not know my legal responsibilities, my requirement of disclosure and what liability my actions can cause to the corporation and extended set of stakeholders.

2. Make sustainability part of your job. If you are a product manager at P&G or Unilever and are designing a new line of detergents or packaged food, you can't presume that packaging is simply a matter of clever design that helps your products fly off the shelves of a super market. They may get sold in countries that do not have any recycling capability. Worse, disposed of packaging material is a huge economic waste because the poor cannot afford to throw things away. Folks at Danone learned it from Grameen Bank Founder Mohammad Yunus, who asked them to consider putting Danone's special formula nutrient in an *edible cover*. It illustrates how much *sustainability* is becoming a critical issue. *Every professional today has a carbon footprint*. It is not enough to be a good surgeon, engineer or lawyer. Each must know how we may impact the environment and how we may be able to help.

3. Include as many people and organizations in your decision-making as possible. The concept of *inclusion* started when quality guru Deming asked Americans to drop the *product-out* mentality and practice a *customer-in* mindset. But it went further when the idea of *community involvement* and *corporate social responsibility* gained momentum. The current definition of *inclusion* goes well beyond that. Starbucks must now align itself with the Rainforest Alliance. In a world in which every professional act could have far-reaching impact, we must continuously ask, *how do I protect the interests of people who may be twice, thrice or even ten times removed from me?*

4. Cultivate multi-cultural sensitivity. We no longer *produce nationally and sell internationally*. Value creation in every field is a distributed process. An Apple device just says *Designed in California!* Half of Symantec's patents are filed by engineers from outside the U.S. Companies like GE and Microsoft rake in higher revenue from sales outside the U.S. It is becoming routine for self-employed doctors, lawyers, engineers, writers, clothing designers and other creative professionals to be globally mobile. This means *collaborating across cultures*. Beyond *being polite*, you need to know how to raise issues, negotiate energetically, work with teams that have little in common except one project. You must understand the

nuances of a multi-cultural existence and be effective in a manner that goes beyond the ability to use chopsticks and say "thank you" in six languages.

5. Understand Intellectual Property. The source of competitive advantage for Nike, Coke, Dockers and Intel is *intangible* in nature. Our lives are increasingly governed by copyrights, trademarks, and patents. Ironically, you may get free services from a Skype or a Gmail, but you may not use their logo without their consent. As more free things show up in the real and the virtual world, more people are concerned about their property rights. An attendant issue is *ownership of data and privacy*. Professionals must, while protecting their rights, *guard against contravention*.

6. Be a rainmaker. *Rain-making* means an *unusual ability to create value* through deal-making and personal contacts. A *rainmaker* is more than a great salesperson. A chief technology officer who influences standards by serving on an industry body or a surgeon who can build a point of view on a certain issue that becomes so viral that the institution he works for gets noticed and receives funding for path-breaking research can have immense impact on the revenue.

Rainmaking is a non-trivial, non-random professional quality that some people hone and harness over time. *Rainmaking* calls for *building a personal brand and ambassadorship*, on behalf of an employer and professional community.

7. Learn from some unusual sources. Govindappa Venkataswamy, founder of the world's largest eye hospital, *Aravind Eye Care* in India, cited MacDonal'd's as his most admired organization. He said that that they show the path to bringing down cost by leveraging volumes and delivering a billion predictable dining experiences at affordable prices. Dr. V decided to drastically reduce the cost of eye care *by taking advantage of the high number of blind people in India to maximize the number of operations every surgeon performs*. Last year, Aravind Hospitals operated upon 300,000 people, and 70 percent of them did not have to pay.

A great professional, like Dr. V, must constantly learn from unusual sources, try that learning, and then create newer knowledge and build a legacy. **SSE**

Subroto Bagchi co-founded IT services company, MindTree, and is the author of The Professional (Portfolio | Penguin). Visit www.mindtree.com.

ACTION: Obey these new rules of professionalism.



Service Compassion

Even geeks can master it.



by Don Crawley
and
Paul Senness

EVERYONE WHO HAS EVER HAD TO CALL for technical support after buying some new technology has a story to tell about how awful the experience was. Some are horror stories like these:

- You speak to an IT expert by phone describing the problem in detail, and then are asked to send them an email describing the problem in more detail.

- The technical support person makes you feel like a knucklehead so that you have to defend yourself intellectually to make them believe that you understand what a hard drive or desktop is and didn't put your coffee cup in the CD-ROM tray.

- You call a company's support number and are told that you have an ID-10-T error. This is an acronym for an idiot, used by smart assess to describe a common computer error caused by a user who has "no idea about what they are doing."

Rare is the computer expert who shows a profound awareness of another's suffering combined with the desire to alleviate it. Geeks need to know that outstanding customer support is not just a matter of having great technical knowledge. It also requires great human relations skill. Techies need to get with it or risk a corporate crash and burn.

You can learn to deliver a great user experience if you combine the technical aspects of the job with an *empathetic* (and occasionally sympathetic) ear.

Here are five strategies you can try:

1. How people feel really matters:

Great customer service is about your end-user's experience. When they feel good about technology and the support you provide, they are more likely to take full advantage of the technology. Your human-relations skills are on the front line in helping users achieve that good feeling about their technology.

2. Communicating between the generations is a special problem: Experienced, knowledgeable people must work with younger generations, and young whiz kids have to deal with older less tech-savvy people. Everyone must be respectful, not condescending, and professional without using pet-phrases and slang, friendly without becoming too serious or threatening.

3. Emotional maturity and intelli-

gence are crucial: Often you have to deal with *angry people*. Ask your end-users how they feel. Do your front-line customer service people recognize and respond effectively to the emotional needs of the customers? Do they control their emotions properly? Do they achieve the desired emotional response and outcome? Train them! Test them. Monitor their performance.

4. Learn what your end-users want and address the needs actively: End-users care about the same things you do when they contact you for assistance: dependable, reliable, friendly, and timely service. This means you must provide reliable and accurate service consistently with accurate answers and follow-through, with the needs that are identified and presented to your people. Document all the incoming questions. Develop effective

strategies. Arm your people with them so that *everyone is capable of satisfying the challenges* that come in the door.

5. Listening, problem-solving, gaining agreement, apologizing and fixing with style are vital! Every interaction must be positive. Every step requires your people to *demonstrate they really care and are ready to be creative in order to succeed and achieve a satisfactory outcome without exception*. Empower your people, and give them your full attention.

Create a technically competent team of professionals who understand that the human aspect of their jobs is just as important as the technical aspect. **SSE**

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ACTION: Master the art of service compassion.

SERVICE/OUTCOMES

Drive Positive Outcomes

Focus on what you want.



by Laura Goodrich

SUCCESSFUL SERVICE AND sales professionals focus on the client/customer and the positive outcomes they want from interactions. They have clear expectations and control the inner game.

How can you realize greater success? More important than *the words you say to others are the words you say to yourself*. Before meetings, go into a pattern of *self-repair*—is my tie straight? Do I have spinach draped across my teeth? Do I look good?

I learned this lesson early. When I started as a TV host I had no experience in front of the camera, and it showed. Every time they pulled up the camera I'd get anxious. The producers grew frustrated. Finally, I called in a coach. He asked, "Laura, what are you focusing on when they pull up the cameras?" I said I was focusing on doing a great job.

He countered, "What do you think about when you coach or speak?" I said I think about *connecting* with them, understanding them, and fully hearing them. Light bulb! He didn't have to say another word. I was focusing on *myself*, being *self-conscious*, and not on *connecting* with them. The producers could see it—so can your customers!

Once I shifted my focus to connecting—to the positive outcomes I want-



ed for the audience—everything changed. It can work for you, too. Successful sales and service pros *focus on the customer and desired positive outcomes*.

One barrier to success is *70 percent of our thoughts are focused on what we fear and hope to avoid*. Unaware, you may focus on a crabby customer, lost sale, and missed opportunity. *Don't do that!* Positive or negative, you get more of *whatever* you focus on.

If you seem to attract disgruntled customers, *you may be focused on what you don't want* and get more of it. You react in the moment with fear.

Try this: Expect a fluid day, and your expectations will propel you into action to smooth ruffled feathers *before* things get disheveled. You extend a confident smile and self-assured demeanor that leaves people feeling secure.

The distinguishing factor between good and great service and sales is focusing on the positive outcomes in all areas and at all times. It's a matter of awareness and discipline. Focus on what you want in every conversation, every stressful situation, every interaction with customers, coworkers, leaders—every challenge and change.

It's hard to do this alone. So pull in the right friends and colleagues and commit together. With *practice* and *persistence* in focusing on what you want, you can create positive outcomes. **SSE**

Laura Goodrich is a speaker and author of Seeing Red Cars (Berrett-Koehler). Visit www.seeingredcars-book.com, email laura@onimpactproductions.com, or call 952-856-6071.

ACTION: Focus on what you want.

Asking Questions

Seek first to understand prospects.



by Michael Beck

MASTERING THE ART OF Asking Questions is not simply a matter of habitually using questions in interactions—it's about learning how to ask the right questions at the right time.

Whether you're having sales conversations, coaching conversations, or working to develop others, learning how to ask good questions can be the difference between success and failure. Asking the right questions at the right time means asking questions in such a way as to better understand the other person, their needs and motivations.

Since the questions asked and the flow of an effective conversation varies from person to person and from situation to situation, the best way to illustrate the *Art of Asking Questions* is by way of example. So, what follows are three different sales conversations.

Conversation One

Here is a sales conversation, conducted by *someone not skilled in the Art of Asking Questions*:

Bob, I'm calling about the great widgets my company sells. Do you have a few minutes?

Sure.

Are you familiar with our brand? No, not really.

We offer widgets that solve many problems and have some great features. The new V210, our mid-grade model, consumes 20 percent less energy than the competition and is 10 percent smaller. It comes in three different colors. Can I schedule a time to show it to you? What's the price?

It normally sells for \$199, but I can offer it to you at a 25 percent discount for \$149.

Do you have something you can send me?

Sure, I'll send it to you today.

Great! I'll give you a follow-up call in about a week.

Thanks, that would be fine.

You already know the outcome of that conversation. The likelihood of closing a sale is slim, and the salesperson will keep trying to reach the prospect again until he gets discouraged and gives up.

Conversation Two

The next example is the same conversation conducted by *someone who is better skilled at the Art of Asking Questions*, but is not quite there yet:

Hi Bob, my company helps companies like yours solve their widget problems. Do you have a few minutes to talk?

Sure.

Do you currently use widgets in your business?

Yes, we do.

Have you been pleased with the ones you have?

Well, for the most part we are, but nothing's perfect.

The newer design of widgets has a number of improvements over older models. Would you like to hear more about some of the improvements?

Sure.

Well, there are three key features. We have several models available. Do you have a budget in mind?

We haven't been actively looking up until now. Can you send me some information?

I'd rather come by and show you first-hand so you can really see what I'm talking about. Which would be better for you, Tuesday morning or Wednesday afternoon?

How about Tuesday morning.

Great! I'll see you Tuesday morning!

While this salesperson may make a sale, it's far from a sure thing. Even though the prospect set the appointment, the salesperson really doesn't know anything about the prospect or the prospect's motivations.

Conversation Three

Here's the conversation with *a salesperson who is skilled in the Art of Asking Questions*:

Hi Bob, my name is Paul and I help companies like yours solve their widget problems. Do you have a few minutes to talk?

Sure.

Do you currently use widgets in your business?

Yes, we do."

How often do you use your widgets?

Pretty much every day.

To what extent? How much?

About four hours every day.

It sounds like you rely on them heavily.

Yes, absolutely.

What aspects of your widgets work best for you?

Well, they've been reliable. We've had them for four years. Also, we need the automated feed feature and that's been a life-saver. And the supplies are easy to find and affordable.

Sounds like they've served you very well. Have you had any problems with them?

Well, the only problem is that they sometimes misfeed.

When you say *they sometimes misfeed*, how often does that happen? Once or twice a day.

Are there any features or functions you wish they had?

It would be nice if they had a bigger bin so we didn't have to restock them so often.

Anything else? Would it help if they could automatically stack the finished product?

Can they do that?

Ours can do this. I think it would make sense for us to get together. I can show you a widget I have that has a 99 percent reliability record,

high-speed automatic feeding without jamming, a large bin, and automated stacking. Do you have 25 minutes on Tuesday morning or would Wednesday afternoon work better for you?

Let's do next Tuesday morning.

This last sales conversation unfolded very differently because the salesperson asked good questions that uncovered what mattered to the other person, along with some motivations for making a change. Having a conversation like this helps the prospect to clarify what features he needs and highlights problems and desires. Both parties know exactly why they are getting together and the likelihood of closing a sale is high.

Master the Art of Asking Questions

When you master the *Art of Asking Questions*, *you learn to ask questions that uncover motivations*—and you'll then do a better job of selling, coaching, and developing others. **SSE**

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ACTION: Practice asking good questions.

Integrated Marketing

Spend less and get much more.



by David M. Mastovich

WHAT DO LEADERS THINK when they are asked to commit more resources to messaging and selling? While field people talk about different disciplines like marketing, public relations, sales, communications and advertising, decision makers tend to lump them together and ask: *Do we really need to do that? How much will this cost me? How will we know if it is working or not? Isn't (name or department) responsible for that?*

Marketing and messaging professionals are quick to passionately explain why their recommendations are vital. However, they often do not focus enough on the ROI in terms CEOs and CFOs are accustomed to hearing.

Leaders lose patience with departments or vendors that don't communicate with each other. *Each function or area sees things in their own biased way.* For example, Sales thinks they're king because they bring in business—others may find them arrogant and demanding. Advertising sees themselves as full of big ideas—others may see them as full of something else. PR talks about framing the message—other departments may wonder *what they really do.* The result is a perception among leaders that these areas are *inefficient cost centers with overlapping efforts.*

Leaders become frustrated with mixed results attributed to the type of work and workers involved. Phrases like "You know those creative people," or "He's a marketing guy—they are different," are used to explain it away.

How can organizations overcome this vicious cycle of frustration?

Five Steps to Integration

Leaders need to champion the idea of *creating a true integrated marketing and PR program* and then focus on five strategic initiatives to make it happen:

1. Develop mutually agreed upon target markets to focus messaging and selling efforts on. Often, target markets are described in *broad or general* terms. Drill down each target audience into manageable market segments; then ensure each department knows and agrees on the segmented target markets.

2. Find out what each target market wants by asking them, through multiple channels: Engage a market research

firm; your Sales team can ask customers or prospects what they think and track the results. *Corporate Communications* can survey employees. Ask your internal and external customers what they think and act accordingly.

3. Develop a consistent message and require that each department live by it. Be vigilant about *message integrity and consistency*, but also be flexible. Tweak the messaging for each target market but ensure that the theme and key message points are still being conveyed.

Consider secret shopping so that you are more aware of what your customers are really seeing and hearing.

4. Work with each department or vendor on clearly defining their goals and the market forces that impact their ability to achieve those goals.

PERFORMANCE/COMPENSATION

Soar or Sink?

Five ways to earn pay.



by Linda Henman

I'M NOT SO CONCERNED ABOUT CEOs—and other executives and peak performers—getting paid large salaries as much as I am about *them being worth it.* Those who earn their money are easy to spot.

Those at the top have three major responsibilities: *Develop the business, grow talent, and make decisions that drive innovation.* There is much shuffling at the top. Too often Boards don't make wise decisions about CEOs and other managers and leaders, and these executives, in turn, don't make wise hiring decisions. But if leaders do a better job, companies can do a better job, which means individuals can do a better job. These leaders create companies where customers want to do business and people can do their best work. That leads to financial health.

A good leader has five qualities:

- **They have strong strategic thinking**—and match the strong strategy with the tactics and talent to see it through. CEOs who constantly react to events, instead of planning for the future, remain followers—not leaders.

- **They consistently make good decisions.** When leaders make good decisions, little else matters; when they make bad decisions, *nothing* else matters. A decisive CEO who can't hit the target is the same as an indecisive CEO



Develop a summary of each department or vendor's specific roles and their strengths. Then, convey these key points to boost *understanding and respect across functions.*

5. Instill a marketing ROI focus.

Challenge your marketing people to provide rationale in terms of *Marketing ROI Success Metrics.* Ask them to work with Finance to build the metrics. Then, report the success metrics. *Everyone* needs to understand the marketing, selling, and messaging goals and processes.

Once you develop an *Integrated Marketing, PR and Selling program*, you'll reap the benefits of *positive marketing ROI.* SSE

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ACTION: Take these five steps to integration.

who doesn't even know where to find it. The results are the same.

- **They hire smart.** They link talent to their strategies so they ensure the company hires the best and the brightest and compensates them fairly. They give these people a chance to thrive.

- **They attract and retain top talent to achieve excellence.** They focus on execution of plans and strategies, and they don't skew the mission by placing value on tertiary issues that have little to do with execution of strategic goals.

- **They have a results orientation.** Too many leaders talk about how to motivate the troops. Those who excel hire people who are self-motivated, define

clear objectives, hold people accountable, and then get out of the way. Couple these practices with challenging, rewarding work, and the organization ends up with both *better results* and more motivated employees.

It all comes down to *leadership vs. management.* Managers come in different flavors: good, bad, neutral, ineffective, overbearing, innocuous, and more. But true leaders move people to perform at levels that allow them to beat the competition.

Leadership doesn't necessarily come with a title or a status. Responsibility and accountability come with that title, but *leading requires the ability to take people to places they wouldn't have gone if you hadn't been in the picture.* Leaders offer *golden opportunities* for the people who work with them; those who don't simply hope for *golden parachutes.* SSE

Linda Henman, Ph.D., helps executives select the best people to put their strategies in motion. She is author of *Landing in the Executive Chair.* www.careerpress.com

ACTION: Ensure your leaders earn their pay.

Conversion Optimization

Convert Website visitors into customers.



by Khalid Saleh

IF YOU WANT TO INCREASE online sales, you must *connect* with your consumer in new ways and *adapt* to the changing online market. Simply driving traffic to your website does not translate into customers or revenue. *Conversion optimization* eliminates the holes in your sales funnel and boosts the percent of online visitors that *convert* into buyers.

Apply these six principles of conversion optimization:

1. Understand your visitors through persona creation. Get to know the *persona* of the people visiting your website. Ask why your website is only converting 2 percent of the total visitors. *What is causing the other 98 percent of visitors to move on to other sites, only to be converted later?* Conversion optimization begins with gathering market information, and then using it to shape how your website interacts with its visitors. After in-depth market research, analytics assessments, usability and field studies, and online behavioral monitoring, *develop empathy toward your visitors by using the data to create four to seven personas that humanize and individualize a specific target market.* These *hypothetical individuals* will guide every aspect of your website and help you relate to customers individually.

2. Deal with fears, uncertainties, and doubts (FUDs). FUDs are the site elements or experiences that can increase visitors' anxieties, deflate confidence, and result in a loss of confidence and trust of the site. *Fears* primarily stem from a person's concerns with security and privacy. *Uncertainties* relate primarily to the usability of the site, navigational errors, and site failures. *Doubts* arise along with questions and concerns visitors have about the product or service they are contemplating purchasing. *A successful website will address every concern and question that consumers can have.* By looking to the personas you created for your site, you should *consider what would prevent them from moving forward with a purchase, or what FUDs arise when a visitor enters, and navigates your site.*

3. Create confidence and trust. If you can establish trust with your online visitors, they will be more likely to purchase your product or service—not just

once, but repeatedly—and may even recommend you to others. Converting a first-time customer is important, but long-term customer loyalty is much more valuable. *First, introduce them to your value proposition.* You must convince the visitor quickly that *you offer a value that is unique and unmatched anywhere else.* Every element on your website, from the home page to the product pages, should support the value proposition. Ensure that visitors have *all the answers to their questions and concerns* to earn enough of their confidence to *convert them to a customer* at least one time.

Once a customer decides to purchase from you, they need to have *a wonderful shopping experience.* Trust takes place only after that experience is complete. This includes sending the shipment in a timely manner, ensuring that the



product is in perfect condition, and making an exchange or return easy.

4. Understand the impact of the buying stages. As with brick and mortar store visitors, many website visitors are browsing, looking for information, comparing products or simply killing time. Understanding the stages that a buyer goes through before purchasing is a key to conversion optimization.

Visitors in the first two buyer stages of *need recognition* and *information search* haven't yet determined what they need or the best solution. If your website can educate them, you can create *trust*, establish your company as *the expert*, and drive your brand into their consideration.

In the *evaluation stage*, visitors approach the conversion point. They have decided what they need, but have not yet selected the *vendor* or the *product*. To convert visitors into customers, present them with *what makes both your product and company best suited to fulfill their needs.* Clearly re-state the value proposition; use incentives or promotions; and make the *transition to purchase* simple and easy.

At the end of the conversion funnel, the *purchase stage*, visitors will likely become customers *if you present the right information to them.* Although visitors in this stage are easy to convert, many are lost due to a process breakdown, usability issues, lack of trust indicators or increased fear, uncertainty, or doubt.

The *post-purchase evaluation* has to do with the feelings of regret and remorse customers experience *once they purchase a product.* They may wonder about the delivery, or return policy. *Have systems in place that address post-purchase concerns.* For example, you might send e-mails to confirm orders, shipment announcements, and customer feedback requests.

5. Use incentives. *Incentives can change customer behavior, break loyalty with competitors, and overcome FUDs.* They may involve lower prices and greater savings, freebies, or product bundling. While you can dramatically increase conversion rates by offering incentives, it may not always be the best decision for ROI. You don't want to *incentivize* your way out of business, or train your customer base to rely on incentives. Recognize that your value proposition goes deeper than various incentives. *Value proposition* defines your company while *incentives* complement that value. *Incentives* motivate consumers and boost sales. But, your company should be known for the deep values you offer, such as customer service and reliability, and not necessarily the weekly blowout sales.

6. Engage users. Use several methods to *drive increased visitor frequency, and keep them actively engaged* while on your site. *Social media* like Twitter and Facebook are tools used to engage customers after they leave your site. *Blog-ging* can create a following of loyal customers, and facilitate *search engine optimization.* Informational *videos* are a great way to keep visitors on your site and trust your site as the market leader.

Many other media and interactive activities can add to the user experience; however, you need to set specific key performance indicators to measure visitors' levels of engagement.

At the heart of *conversion optimization* is the belief that *customers should be the focal point of any marketing effort.* By keeping your customer *personas* at the forefront of your online campaign and by committing to *conversion optimization,* you'll enjoy an *upward spiral of success.* SSE

Khalid Saleh is president of Invesp, a conversion optimization company, and co-author of Conversion Optimization (O'Reilly). Visit www.invesp.com.

ACTION: Convert more visitors to customers.

Social Media

Turn it into intelligence.



by Ashish Gambhir

ANY MARKETER KNOWS THE truth of these words from Jeff Bezos: *Make a customer unhappy in the real world, they might tell six friends. Make a customer unhappy on the Internet, they can each tell 6,000 friends.*

Social media has changed the way companies market their products and think about the customer experience. Customers are tweeting, posting, emailing, communicating, and commenting on their experience. One bad (or good) guest experience can be shared easily and broadcast to thousands of prospective and existing customers, magnifying its effect.

The reach of social media is amazing: Facebook boasts 640 million users; Twitter receives 95 million Tweets each day; Yelp has 50 million monthly users; Foursquare check-ins exploded by 3,400 percent in 2010; 90 percent of consumers online trust recommendations from people they know.

These numbers bring to mind all the potential *fire drill scenarios* that keep us up at night. Beyond this concern with social media, however, is a world of opportunity for valuable customer feedback that can be used to improve sales, marketing, and operations.

Feedback from social media is a must-have *touch point* to understand customer satisfaction, but it is not enough. *To derive bottom-line value from online customer feedback, you need to convert it into actionable business intelligence.*

That is what Minneapolis-based Parasole Restaurants did. Using the new BrandAnalytics social guest satisfaction platform, Parasole, a premier restaurant concept generator and developer (founders of Oceanaire Seafood Room, Buca Di Beppo), garners the deeper level of social guest satisfaction intelligence needed to catapult their customer experience to the next level.

Giving the customers pizza—their way. In Nov. 2010, Parasole opened Mozza Mia, an upscale pizza shop and mozzarella bar. From day one, Parasole monitored every online mention about the restaurant, working with newBrandAnalytics to mine the Internet for customer satisfaction feedback. Parasole identified three strengths: authenticity, flavor profile, and ambiance. Parasole also realized a

key concern: *customers wanted the ability to build their own pizza.*

“Gaining this intelligence enabled us to revise our menu to exceed our customers’ expectations,” says Sarah Nerison, Social Media Marketing Manager at Parasole. “It also helped us hone in on how we should promote our new menu. We learned what messages would be most impactful. And, we knew where to engage them in a conversation about our new menu.”

Mozza Mia posted the news about their new “Build Your Own Pizza” on their Facebook page: *“Ask and you shall receive. We now offer a ‘Build Your Own Pizza’ at Mozza Mia! Beginning with a freshly baked crust, red sauce and shredded Mozzarella cheese, then it’s up to you to build your own creation!”*

Says Nerison, “We introduced the build your own pizza on April 1, 2011

and already 10 percent of our pizzas ordered are *build your own*. We’re enhancing the experience of our guests by listening to them and eliminating any reason they would have to not be pleased with our pizza options.”

Employees take ownership for improving customer service—trouble spots pinpointed from online feedback. Social media gives everyone an influential voice, and *enables companies to hear that voice in real time.* Parasole learned that sharing this real-time customer voice directly with management and staff *dramatically increased the team’s ownership of the employee/customer relationship and the customer experience.* SSE

Ashish Gambhir is the EVP of newBrandAnalytics, the leading provider of social business intelligence solutions. Visit www.newBrandAnalytics.com.

ACTION: Turn intelligence into performance.

MARKETING/BRANDING

Social Media

It drives tri-branding.



by Bob Kelleher

SOCIAL MEDIA HAVE TAKEN the world by storm and become a huge engagement, staffing, and retention tool: 73 percent of companies are currently recruiting in social networks, and another 9 percent plan to begin. For recruiting, they use these social media: LinkedIn 78 percent, Facebook 55 percent, Twitter 45 percent, blogs 19 percent, and YouTube 14 percent.

Social media is also used as a branding tool. *Tri-branding means using social media to link product and employment brand, and to get customers to sing your praises or live your brand.*

When I work with new clients, I first help them define who they are. Why do people *stay* with their company? Why do people *want* to work for their company? Who are their stars? What are the common behaviors and traits their stars possess? I often ask them: *What do BMW, Apple, and Southwest Airlines have in common?* They are exceptional at *linking employment and product brand.* Apple hires the most creative people to make the most creative products. BMW hires people who are driving enthusiasts to build the ultimate driving machine. Southwest Airlines hires people who have fun in their DNA.

These three companies also excel at



tri-branding. Beyond linking product and employment brand, *they also get their customers to be brand ambassadors.* For instance, I’m a Droid user, and I continue to be surprised at the number of iPhone friends who take delight at “trumping” my Droid apps with their own Apple apps. They’re actually living the Apple brand.

To drive your tri-branding efforts, *leverage social media in two key ways:*

- **Branding.** Leverage social media to boost brand, to tweet, post, and blog job openings, and to share what a great place your company is.
- **Communicating.** Boomers, Gen X, and Gen Y communicate differently. To engage and reach Gen Y employees, you need to *speak their speak.* You need to be sending text messages, tweeting, generating video pods to reach them.

Many companies fear the realistic downside of social media (employees saying the wrong thing, badmouthing the employer, inadvertently *sharing private information*). But if you want to engage and communicate with this generation, you must embrace social media by creating *your own* You Tube channel where your Gen Y employees articulate your firm’s values. Have your employees join LinkedIn groups to share job opportunities and become your brand ambassadors. Hire people who are connected, as branding will be a chance to involve and engage *your most socially connected employees.* SSE

Bob Kelleher is CEO of The Employee Engagement Group, speaker, consultant, author of *Louder than Words*. Visit BobKelleher.com, rkelleher@employeeengagement.com.

ACTION: Use social media to drive tri-branding.

Top Sales Talent

Know the management goal.



by Scott Hudson

DO YOU REALIZE THAT: TWO out of three salespeople who fail in their jobs could succeed in other roles; fewer than 15 percent of “superstar” salespeople succeed in management; and 70 percent of strong inside salespeople are good at maintaining client relationships, and yet fail when asked to develop new business with outside accounts?

The goal of *Sales Talent Management* is to identify the right talent early, screen out mismatches before they are hired, retain high-potential talent, and identify and develop talent for the future. An audit of a sales talent pool provides you with easily accessible decision-making tools that enable you to select, align, engage, develop, and retain the sales talent necessary to drive strategic goals.

What Makes a Great Sales Force

In our *World Class Sales Benchmarking* study, we identify critical sales practices of exceptional sales forces as measured by their customers. Each salesperson is rated on 15 critical evaluation points. Three years of purchase volume for each salesperson is correlated to identify factors that drive buying decisions.

Our interviews identify three major needs customers expect vendors and sellers to address (although customers are not confident they can get them): 1) Customers want to narrow their focus to the few things they do best, and outsource the rest without the added overhead costs of supervising their suppliers; 2) Customers want sellers to know their business well enough to create products and services they could not have designed or created themselves; and 3) Customers want proof—hard evidence—that suppliers have added value in excess of price.

Critical salesperson skills. Having researched customer purchasing behavior, we can enumerate these new buying needs. This list of expectations defines the role of the new sales professional: Be personally accountable for our desired results, understand our business, be on our side, design the right applications, be easily accessible, solve our problems, and be creative in responding to our needs. Customers believe sales forces that excel at these seven factors

will best fill their three basic needs. By benchmarking the top 10 sales forces, we identified the critical success factors for *World Class sales*, and the standards of sales excellence. Benchmarking pinpoints how the best sales forces manage customer satisfaction, understand their customers’ businesses and deliver the benefits their customers want.

New Culture Needed

To transform your sales force to be the *outsource of choice*, a seller must refocus the culture. Creative engineers or technical experts who invent new products can’t sustain a competitive advantage. Too many new products do not match customers’ priorities or are too difficult to understand or use; and sometimes they are simply not needed.

The focus must change from *product to benefit or business result*. Grandiose products and services with more capacity, features, or options are often just seen as overpriced. Products and services must be *simple to use and manage*.

The focus must also change from *price and delivery to utility and ease of use*, not only of the product but also in doing business with the seller. The outsource of choice will take responsibility for managing the relationship, or the partnership between seller and customer. This will require the role of the salesperson, and sales managers who train and develop the salespeople, to change.

Top sellers are changing from *peddlers to relationship managers*, from *order-takers to consultants*. In some cases, order taking, service, technical support, and product expertise are not even directly provided by the salesperson.

Using a TQM-styled approach, top sellers are analyzing their customers’ needs and problems: reorganizing their processes, developing new skills, creating new measures and new standards, and continuously improving. The basic tenet of TQM requires the biggest investments to be in *people and measurement*. Adding value requires three critical elements: 1) **Measure** (identify the needs of customers); 2) **Develop the added**

services to wrap around your products to guarantee *customer business improvement*; and 3) **Measure again** for continuous refinements and proof for customers that their business was improved.

Top-ranked sellers rigorously address **seven process areas**: 1) *customer-driven culture*, 2) *recruiting and selection*; 3) *training and development*, 4) *market segmentation*, 5) *sales processes*, 6) *IT*, and 7) *organizational integration*. The priority and type of solution for each process area varies according to the specifics of the product and market. For example, *sales force segmentation or specialization* is a priority when different customers require specialized added values that are inappropriate for other customers.

Match Salesperson to Customers

All good salespeople must have certain vital skills and motivations. The degree and type required, however, will vary according to what customers need in order to use the product or service. The best strategy is achieved by matching salesperson skills, focus, and motivation to best serve these needs. We have identified four different types of customers, and they respond most positively



to four different types of salespeople.

So, in making personnel decisions, **sales leaders need to take seven steps**: 1) identify salespeople most adept at developing new business (*hunters*) versus those best suited to managing existing customer relationships (*farmers*) or handling strategic accounts, or developing into a sales subject matter expert. 2) determine who has the predictive skill strengths required to succeed in a management role; 3) identify skill gaps that can be remedied with training or coaching; 4) discover who can transition to new roles (*solutions sales* versus *transaction sales*); 5) identify where sales talent might best be deployed to support key account goals; 6) determine who can play a new role to meet the demands of an evolving customer; and 7) ascertain the most critical development needs by employee, team, and position.

The best sales practice companies provide a *manual of best practice options* and application criteria. SSE

Scott Hudson is VP of Sales and Marketing for Chally Group Worldwide. Call 937-610-4313 or visit www.chally.com to participate in Chally’s 2011 Research.

ACTION: Improve your sales talent management.

Let Your Clients Brag

Have them talk to your prospects.



by Tom Hopkins

TOP SALES PROS KNOW THE value of a good client. Each client's business not

only adds to your *personal bottom line*, but it can lead to even more business through referrals. Learn how to leverage clients to earn more business—even from non-referred leads. You can *let your clients brag for you* in two ways.

First, ask for permission to use the client's name. Simply ask, "Jim, when I'm talking with another VP of Sales about how we can help them, would it be okay with you if I mentioned your name and experience with us?" If Jim is a satisfied client, he won't balk at this unless his company has a policy against it (few companies do). Once you have Jim's permission, you can name-drop to a prospective new client.

Only drop names of *actual clients*. If you are new and don't have a client base yet, get names that are authorized for use from other salespeople or higher ups. They have received permission and know that this person or company is happy with your product or service.

Second, have your client talk with a prospective client for you. To do this, you need to have a satisfied client agree to take or make a call on your behalf. They might agree to take a call during a meeting you have with a potential new client. If they're happy with your product/service and you've created a nice relationship, it's *very do-able*.

Don't ask them to do this for every potential new client—just a *key prospect* or large sale. Having the two of them make a connection could benefit each of them as well as move your sale forward. You, the person who brought them together, then achieve a double win! First, you earn the opportunity to serve both accounts. Second, you provide them with the potential for reciprocal or appreciative benefits beyond the service you provide.

The simplest way for using a satisfied client's name is to have him or her write how happy he or she is with the decision to own your product or service. Once you get him or her *happily involved*, you earn the right to ask for a *testimonial letter*. Just say: "I'm so pleased that you're enjoying the benefits of our new Whatzit 5000. And, I appreciate the chance to service your account." (If they aren't

perfectly satisfied with the product/service, don't do this.) "Since you're so happy with the Whatzit, would you please write a *short letter about your experience* that I might show *other prospects*?"

If he or she shows any hesitation, say this: "In fact, to save you time, I would be happy to write up something about the time we've shared that you could simply put on your letterhead."

Why should you do this? First, you'll be sure it gets done in a timely manner. Second, you'll write a much better letter than he or she will. Many people do not mind giving endorsements or testimonials, but don't want to do the work. So, *write it yourself*. Draft words that work to your advantage. Then, be ready with something like this: "Dear Jim, the time we shared during the acquisition of our

new Whatzit 5000 was a pleasure. I appreciated the detailed research you did into our history, plans for future growth, and current needs. You addressed our concerns in your excellent presentation, and we're so happy we went ahead with the Whatzit. It is perfect for us. Our staff is excited about the new equipment, and we look forward to working with you for many years to come." He or she will be happy to approve such a letter for use with other potential clients—it is painless for them and priceless for you.

Work on the ways clients can do the bragging for you and you'll close more sales, with more ease. **SSE**

Tom Hopkins is author of Selling in Tough Times (Hachette Books, 2010). Visit www.tomhopkins.com.

ACTION: Help your clients brag about you.

MANAGEMENT/FRANCHISE

Internal Franchise

Unleash the power of people.



by Martin O'Neill

IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR A new competitive edge, I encourage you to *turn your company into an Internal Franchise*. If you want to maximize your profits, teach each and every employee to act like they own the business.

To create a *culture* where people become *internal franchisees*—they take personal ownership and see the company's success as their own—you need to bottle your company formula so it can be taught to others by taking these three-steps:

1. Define your operating model: How do you do things? How do you go to market? How do you cost, price, market, sell, serve, manufacture? Get clear on all these points.

2. Find entrepreneurial employees who will learn, execute, teach, challenge, and improve your operating model. Engaged employees whose personal success is aligned with their organization's success are key to successful Internal Franchises.

3. Build a culture of ownership. Create and nurture the cultural attributes and beliefs where everyone acts as a steward and even as an owner.

Your people *are* the company, and when they have a chance to *take responsibility and succeed*, they'll do it. Maximum growth and business development occur when you empower each and

every one of them to think and act like an owner. This single transformation can renovate and invigorate everything you see and do like nothing else.

You can learn the concept of *franchising*—and internalize and leverage it. A franchise is a *proven way of doing business*. Once you get licensed, you simply have to *learn the procedures and follow the steps*. In an *Internal Franchise*, you create your operating manual; give it to your employees; and then coach, mentor, train, motivate, inspire, cajole, and even entice them to operate the business at the highest level possible.

Don't: view this process as a way to *manipulate people*; try to do this without

building some consensus; start then stop the change initiatives; delegate the initiatives; or ignore growth of an *Internal Franchise*. You must be engaged and involved, or you lose credibility.

Do: Engage your next generation of leaders; be as transparent as possible when building your operating model; be explicit on the extent of the possible rewards; make your operating model the focal point; listen to your people—they *have many answers* (even though it sometimes hurts to listen); and create a sense of urgency—any change initiative that lingers without progress will die.

A company with an *Internal Franchise* has an empowered culture *where people act in the best interest of the company*. This sense of ownership drives success and creates a *bond that is cast in trust*. **SSE**

Martin O'Neill is CEO of Corsum Consulting, a speaker and consultant, and author of Building Business Value (Third Bridge Press) and The Power of an Internal Franchise. Visit www.corsum.com.

ACTION: Create an internal franchise.

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Ken Shelton, editor



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