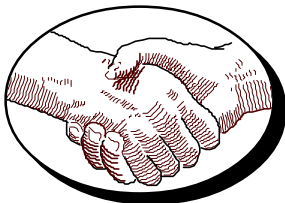


Community Business and Trade Service

A photograph of a business meeting in a modern office. A man in a light blue shirt and tie is smiling and looking towards the camera. A woman in a purple top is also smiling and looking towards the camera. They are sitting at a dark table with papers and a calculator. A hand is pointing towards the man. The background shows a window with a view of a city.

Business Meeting Guide

Community Business and Trade Service



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Introduction

In this edition of the *Community Business and Trade Service* we are going to look at some corporate business issues: making the most of our time, management skills, teleconferencing, implementing change, effective trade shows, legal responsibilities and vicarious liability, and much more.

It is hoped that the reader will gain from some of the insights and suggestions presented here – that these pages will provide valuable information and become both a ready reference and a springboard for discussion.

This booklet does not have all of the answers. It is, however, provided as a resource to get us thinking about improving the success of our business – thinking “outside the box”. Let me give you an example of how this works...

There was once a moral/ethical dilemma that I have been told was actually used as part of a job application: “You are driving along in your car on a wild, stormy night. You pass by a bus stop, and you see three people waiting for the bus: an old lady who looks as if she is about to die, an old friend who once saved your life and the perfect man or woman that you have been dreaming about. Which one would you choose to offer a ride to, knowing that there could only be only one passenger in your car?”

Think about it – you could pick up the old lady, because she is going to die, and thus you should save her first; or you could take the old friend because he once saved your life and this would be the perfect chance to pay him back. However, you may never be able to find your perfect dream lover again. The candidate who was hired (out of 200 applicants) had no trouble coming up with his answer. He simply answered: “I would give the car keys to my old friend and let him take the lady to the hospital. I would stay behind and wait for the bus with the woman of my dreams.”

This book is to help you to “think outside of the box”. Don’t throw it out — read it through, keep it for reference, and consider also supporting the advertisers who have made this second edition of the *Community Business and Trade Service* possible.

— Lionel Hartley PhD, Editor <www.writers.net/writers/8067>

Making Meetings Productive

Managing a meeting is like playing a game of golf. You have to plan in advance, know the rules of the game, concentrate on the skills you have learned and keep your goal in sight.

Let's apply this to our business:

1. You have to plan in advance

Most of us wouldn't start a game without taking our golf clubs.

Preparation may only take just a few minutes, but a little preparation goes a long way toward making a meeting successful.

Just think of the time that you will be spending in the meeting – time that you want to be productive.

Whether your meeting is with a handful or a company-full you need to have in your bag a few golf clubs before gathering the people together.

Putters • What is the desired outcome of the meeting? If it's over and you are delighted with it, what would you have as a result? Consensus? New ideas? Progress reports? Action? Once you know what you want, you can state your desired outcome.

Irons • Share the meeting objective with all participants both before the meeting and again at the commencement. By periodically reminding them of the objective, you will find it easier to stay on track.



Illustration: Lionel Hartley

Woods • For every agenda item, once again, plan ahead about what you want as an outcome: sharing information, collecting information, problem solving, or decision making.

2. Know the rules of the game & use the skills you have gained


If you're playing golf, the easiest way to ruin the experience is to have the golfers fighting or complaining.

The same is true of meetings. If you're playing golf you want the ball to be moving forwards. If you're chairing a meeting, try to keep the dialogue moving forward by listening to all viewpoints and not letting one view dominate all others.

In golf you don't use the same club every time you hit the ball. You could dispense with your caddie if you did. Manage the time and discussion so that speakers are changing and all participants are engaged. As with golf, if you're feeling bored, so are others. If you're tired of hearing a

particular voice, you're not alone. As with golf, you don't decide the outcome of the game while you're at the first hole. Likewise, if you want active participation, handle conflict promptly and avoid evaluating what people say until it's time to make a decision. And when you get to a decision point, say so publicly. State the decision (hit the ball), and then move on



starts. We have achieved something! Golf is just exercise unless we improve our game. Many people are frustrated with meetings if nothing changes as a result of them. So identify who does what and when, and follow it up. And remember that the clubhouse is calling you – so likewise, finish your meetings on time by honouring the time commitment that you made to the participants. Consistently ending meetings later than promised will result in early leavers or absent members. 

3. Keep your goal in sight

Good golf ends in better than it

Business Meeting Etiquette

Business etiquette is essentially about building relationships with colleagues, clients or customers. In the business world, it is these people who can influence your success or failure. Etiquette, and in particular business etiquette, is simply a means of maximising your business potential by presenting yourself favourably.

Business meetings are one arena in which poor etiquette can have negative effects. By improving your business meeting etiquette you automatically improve your chances of success. Comfort, trust, attentiveness and clear communication are examples of the positive results of demonstrating good etiquette.

The article will focus on a few key examples of business meeting etiquette for both informal and formal business meetings.



Informal Meetings

Informal meetings are generally more relaxed affairs and may not necessarily take place in the office

or meeting room. Even so, a sense of professionalism and good business etiquette are still required. There are seven points to consider with informal meetings:

- Business etiquette demands that the person calling the meeting (henceforth ‘the chair’) should be the most senior or the one with the most direct or urgent interest in the topic at hand.
- The chair should decide the time, place and agenda. These details should be confirmed with everyone to make sure all are in agreement and no inconvenience is caused.
- The chair must make the purpose of the meeting clear to the attendees, how long it will last and what is expected of them, i.e. particular information or preparation of documents. Failing to relay the proper information is bad business etiquette as it could cause embarrassment.
- Punctuality is a must. Keeping people waiting is considered the height of poor etiquette as it abuses their time.
- The chair should strive to ensure the meeting stays within a set framework or agenda so that it is kept as short and effective as possible. S/he must keep circular disagreements and the like to a

minimum.

- The chair should [pre-]appoint someone to record the proceedings; documenting major decisions or action points. This can later be distributed to the attendees for reference.
- If the results of the meeting have an effect on others who were not present it is considered proper business etiquette to inform them.

Formal Meetings

The business etiquette of formal meetings such as departmental meetings, management meetings, board meetings, negotiations and the like can be puzzling. Such meetings usually have a set format. For example, the chair may always be the same person, minutes, agendas or reports may be pre-distributed or voting may take place.

Here are ten business etiquette guidelines that are applicable to any formal meeting:

- Prepare well for the meeting as your contribution may be integral to the proceedings. If you are using statistics, reports or any other information make sure it has been handed out at least three days prior to the meeting.
- Dress well and arrive in good

time. Your professionalism is linked to both.

- Always remember to switch of your mobile phone.
- If there is an established seating pattern, accept it. If you are unsure, ask.
- Acknowledge any introductions or opening remarks with a brief recognition of the chair and other participants.
- When discussions are under way it is good business etiquette to allow more senior figures to contribute first.
- Never interrupt anyone – even if you disagree strongly. Note what has been said and return to it later with the chair’s permission.

- When speaking, be brief and ensure that what you say is relevant.
- Always address the chair, unless it is clear that others are not doing so.
- It is a serious breach of business etiquette to divulge information to others about a meeting. What has been discussed should be considered as confidential.

The underlying principles of the all the above business meeting etiquette pointers are good manners, courtesy and consideration. If these principles are adhered to the chances of offence and misunderstandings are greatly reduced.

– Courtesy, Kwintessential Ltd. ©

Managing Group Dynamics in Meetings

I think my fourth grade teacher, Mrs. Sadist, taught me what not to do as a group leader. When freckle-faced Pat Shanhan threw a spitball, the whole class had to stay in for recess. Rather than exert peer pressure on Pat, it just made us focus our resentment on her. And when Billy Larenson was caught napping, the teacher called on him, just to embarrass him in front of the class.

Unfortunately, some leaders took their lessons in leadership from people like Mrs. Sadist. They run lousy meetings and don’t have a clue about how to manage group dynamics. “Our department meetings are a nightmare!” a friend confided over coffee last week.

“The department head doesn’t have a clue about how to handle the group, so it’s pretty much a free-for-all. She’s losing respect, too, because everyone wants her to regain control.”

A large group can be intimidating even for a seasoned manager. Here

are some tips I've used to lasso unruly group members without alienating the group.

The dominator

This person uses a meeting for his or her personal forum on every agenda item. You need to cut him off but if you do it too harshly and wound his self-esteem, he will have hurt feelings and the group will side with him.

Strategy: Look for a place to interrupt him, quickly summarise his point of view and turn to the group and say, "Does anyone else have an opinion about this?" or "Joe, I'd be interested in your opinion about this."

The wallflower

You know she has good ideas but she's just too shy to share them in a group setting.

Strategy: Set her up with a little encouragement. "Susan, you've had experience with this in your last position. What can you tell us?" "Susan, you were telling me about an idea you had last week. Why don't you share it with all of us?"

Side conversations

In a big group, two people will often huddle together and start buzzing about something. If you

embarrass them, you'll look like Mrs. Sadist. Besides, they may be discussing a great idea about the topic.

Strategy: Pause a little longer than normal before you make your next point. Sometimes that will cause them to stop talking (however, avoid giving them an evil glare). Call on someone who is sitting next to one of them. That will startle them enough to stop, without embarrassing them. If all else fails, "Hey, you two. You must have a good idea over there. How about filling the rest of us in?"

Griper

This one is tricky, since he or she may have a legitimate point and you don't want to shut down honest dialogue.

Strategy: Summarise the basic concern the person is griping about. Use neutral words such as "She thinks the policy isn't fair." Turn to the rest of the group and say, "What about this concern? Let's examine it. Does anyone else feel this way?" If no one else joins in, the group can often diffuse the griper and you won't have to do a thing. If the person is a chronic griper, it's time for a private one-on-one conversation about what is

at the bottom of his or her discontent.

The quiet group

Groups can be reticent for many reasons. For instance, the topic may be an emotionally charged issue that could divide the group, or the leader may dominate the conversation, or the group may be resistant to a new change.

Strategy: If your group is usually quiet, chances are you are the problem. Perhaps you talk too much or have intimidated people in the past when they had an idea that disagreed with your own. Your best strategy is to let others lead the discussion and reduce the frequency of your comments. Ask more questions and make fewer judgements.

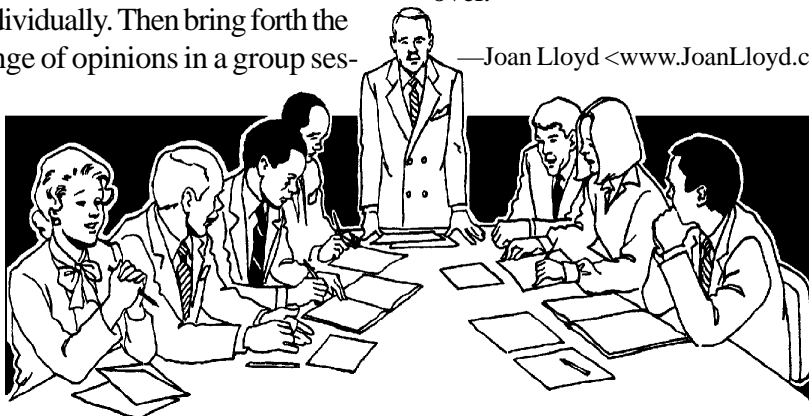
If the topic is political, don't force a discussion in a group. You will have more luck talking with people individually. Then bring forth the range of opinions in a group ses-

sion, without attributing comments to specific individuals. This will allow people to discuss the pros and cons of a solution without feeling politically vulnerable.

If you don't know why your group is quiet, it's time to ask them. The next time you meet, tell them that the only agenda item will be an evaluation of the group meeting format. The goal of the meeting will be to redesign your meetings to make them more effective.

Effective presentation skills are one of the most coveted skills in the new working environment. Presenting your ideas powerfully and effectively demands content knowledge, delivery skills and an awareness of the tools that can take an ordinary presentation and turn it into a powerful platform for delivering meaningful messages that will be around long after the meeting is over.

—Joan Lloyd <www.JoanLloyd.com>



Resistance to Change

No matter whether a change is of major proportions or is objectively rather small, the change manager must anticipate that people in the organisation are going to find reasons to resist changes. It is a basic tenet of human behaviour that *Any belief or value that has been previously successful in meeting needs will resist change*. This applies even if there are better more successful alternatives to meet those needs.

Resistance to change takes many forms. The more obvious forms consist of active resistance, where people will object, or refuse to co-operate with the change. Other, more subtle forms of resistance, however, are more difficult to deal with. Some examples of “resistance symptoms” include:

1. At a staff meeting everyone agrees to utilise a new procedure, but several weeks later you discover that the procedure has not been implemented.

2. New computers are introduced into the workplace. While all staff insisted that they have their own machines, virtually nobody is using them for the purpose for which they were intended.

3. A change in job responsibilities takes place for an employee. The employee consents to the change by saying: “You’re the boss, and if that’s what you want...” Later the employee only changes what he is



doing enough to appear co-operative, but is in fact doing most things the way he was before the change. It is very important that the change-manager anticipates and plans strategies for dealing with resistance. This applies not only at the introduction of the change, but there must be follow-through, so that the change-manager monitors the change over the long-term, being alert for difficulties as they appear.

It is helpful to have an understanding of why people resist change,

because understanding this allows us to plan strategies to reduce resistance from the beginning. Also, some of the reasons that people resist change do not seem to make sense to the casual observer. At times they can seem nonsensical and illogical. They are, nonetheless, important.

Some Reasons Why People Resent or Resist Change

1. One major reason why people resist change is the potential for loss on a personal level. Note that objectively there may be little threat, but people may act as if there is one. Some of the things people feel are at risk during change processes are: security, friends and contacts, money, freedom, pride and satisfaction, responsibility, authority, good working conditions, or status.

You probably will have noted that many of the above bear a very close resemblance to a list of basic human needs. The general principle is that whenever a change is perceived as creating some threat to the employee having his/her needs met, the more likely resistance will occur.

2. While a feeling of threat is a primary reason why people resist change, there are other factors that can mobilise people into resisting any changes from a status quo.

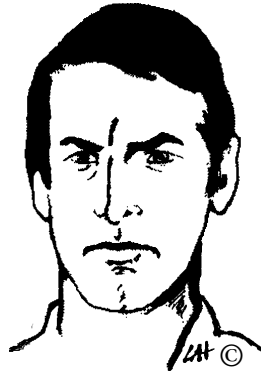


Illustration: Lionel Hartley

These include: change not needed - status quo is working fine, proposed change does more harm than good, lack of respect for person responsible for the change objectionable way of implementing the change, negative attitude towards the organisation before the change, no opportunity to have input into change, change perceived as implying personal criticism, change simply adds more work and confusion, change requires more effort than to keep status quo, bad timing of the change or a desire to challenge authority hearing about the change secondhand.

3. The uncertainty principle states that when people are faced with ambiguous or uncertain situations, where they feel they do not know what to expect, they will resist moving into those situations. In other words, if people don't know what is to come, they get antsy, and resistive.

Summary: If you have read the above, and feel a bit overwhelmed by the many reasons people resist change, keep in mind that most if not all of these issues can be resolved for people through an effective change implementation strategy.

Why People Accept or Welcome Change

While you are likely to encounter people who resist change for the previously stated reasons, you will also encounter people who accept or welcome change. By knowing why people might accept or welcome change you will be better able to formulate a communication plan to foster acceptance.

1. Personal gain – people will be more likely to accept change when they see the possibility that they will gain in some of the following areas: increased security, money, more authority, status/prestige, better working conditions, self-satisfaction, better personal contacts, or less time and effort.

2. Other factors – provides a new challenge, likes/respects the source, likes the way change is being communicated reduces boredom, provides opportunity for input, improves future, or the perception that the change is necessary.

To conclude, the main role of the change manager is to work towards reducing the resistance towards change, and increasing the enthusiasm and level of commitment for the change. In general, most people will have mixed reactions towards proposed change, so the change agent can be helpful in highlighting the positive aspects in a realistic manner.

Understanding the Change Process

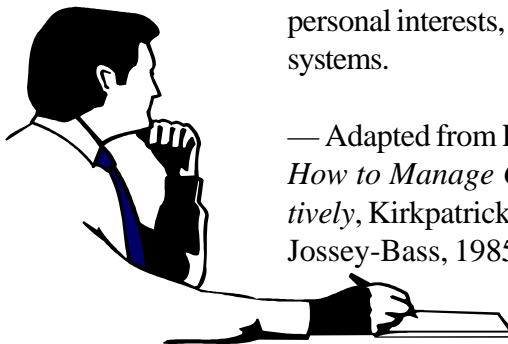
Organisational change will succeed to the extent that individuals in the organisation, themselves change.

Change management requires understanding how **individuals** change since organisational change is based on changes in each employee. The implication of the steps below is that individual change tends to happen over an extended period of time, as people adapt and assimilate change. That means that those involved in facilitating or leading organisational change must expect there will be extended periods of adjustment in the organisation. In other words, the watchword is patience.

Steps in the Personal Change Process

Preparation Phase:

1. Contact Stage: The earliest encounter a person has with the fact that change may take place or has already taken place.
2. Awareness Stage: The person knows that a change is being contemplated.



Acceptance Phase:

3. Understanding Stage: The person demonstrates some degree of comprehension of the nature and intent of the change.
4. Positive Perception: The person develops a positive view toward the change.

Commitment Phase:

5. Installation Stage: The change is implemented and becomes operational.
6. Adoption Stage: The change has been used long enough to demonstrate worth, and a visible positive impact.
7. Institutionalisation: The change has a long history of worth, durability and continuity and has been formally incorporated into the routine operating procedures of the organisation.
8. Internalisation: Persons are highly committed to change because it is congruent with their personal interests, goals or value systems.

— Adapted from Robert Bacal, *How to Manage Change Effectively*, Kirkpatrick, Donald, Jossey-Bass, 1985.

Anger Management

Anger is one of the most misunderstood and overused of human emotions. First, anger is a reaction to an inner emotion and not a planned action. Second, anger is easier to show: everyone gets angry. Third, the feelings underlying the anger reaction make us feel vulnerable and weak; anger makes us feel, at least momentarily, strong and in control. Fourth, angry behaviours are learned over the life-span and therefore can be unlearned and replaced with healthier patterns of coping. Fifth, anger can be an immediate reaction to an isolated event or it can be a response after numerous events. To repress anger is unhealthy and yet to express it impulsively, as we so often do, may give momentary relief but inevitably will carry negative consequences.

To alter our angry responses, we need to understand from whence it comes.

There are a variety of factors that increase the probability of an anger reaction. First, if we have seen our parents get angry first and resolve an issue after, we are more likely to use the same approach. Thus, types of anger are learned. Second, if we are frustrated and feel stressed, we are more likely to react with anger. Third, if we are tired, we are more prone to react in an angry fashion. Fourth, if we tend to hold our feelings inside rather than talk them out, we are more likely to have an angry outburst as the pressure increase much like a pressure cooker.



Styles Of Anger

Each of us develops our own special style of anger:

The “Mad Hatter” Driver: This person yells, curses, and offers gestures to other drivers when s/he is in a hurry and frustrated.

The Sulker: This person shuts down in a chair and stops speaking and looking at others.

Safe Haven Abuser: This person takes her/his frustration out only on the ones s/he loves.

The Distracter: This person disregards the object of his annoy-

ance by reading the paper, forgetting to run an errand, or playing the radio too loudly. When s/he is confronted, the response is: I didn't know; I forgot; I'm tired.

The Blamer: This person blames everybody for everything and rarely accepts responsibility for his own short comings.











The Avenger: This person believes s/he has been given the right to seek vengeance in any way for anything by using the excuse: they deserved it.

Conclusion

Anger reactions have been likened to a train running out of control and about to derail. A little anger can motivate us to take action in positive ways. A lot of anger will make us "red with rage." The price for out-of-control anger is that it will drive away those whom we love the most and it may endanger our employment.

References: Constance McKenzie, *Anger – What Is It and Why* <www.selfhelpmagazine.com> Salubrity™ Seminars, *Seminar – Dealing With Anger And Frustration* <www.geocities.com/info_seminars>

Anger Check List — How Is Your Anger?

-  People tell you that you need to calm down.
-  You feel tense much of the time.
-  At work, you find yourself not saying what is on your mind.
-  When you are upset, you try to block the world out by watching TV, reading a book or magazine, or going to sleep.
-  You have trouble going to sleep.
-  You feel misunderstood or not listened to much of the time.
-  People ask you not to yell or curse so much.
-  Your loved ones keep saying that you are hurting them.
-  Friends do not seek you out as much.
-  You are drinking alcohol or smoking marijuana almost daily to help you calm down.

Scoring: 0 - 2 Manageable – you could benefit from relaxation training. 3 - 5 Moderate – you need to learn more about what stresses you, and learn stress management techniques. 6 + Out of control – you have an anger problem that could benefit from learning anger management techniques. <www.geocities.com/info_seminars/angertest.htm>



Teleconference Meetings

It's hard enough to have a successful meeting when everyone is sitting around the table looking at each other. Complicate matters even more by putting people in multiple locations with no visual contact and it's surprising that the modern-day teleconference works at all. The following are some tips that might help you facilitate multi-site meetings:

Manage Participation

- a) Ask each contributor to state her/his name and location before each comment. Make a list of members and track their participation. It's an easy visual cue to identify high and low participators. Ensure that everyone has the opportunity to give input.
- b) Maintenance behaviours build group cohesiveness and Task behaviours help the group get the job done. When participants don't know each other or are not meeting face-to-face, they tend to focus on Task behaviours. As the facilitator, you may need to supply additional Maintenance behaviours (encouraging, gate-keeping, acknowledging, harmonising, tension relieving, etc.) to help build group unity.

Arrange the environment

- a) Set start and stop times and stick to them. If members join-in late, leave early or go overtime, clarify expectations and consequences. Consider time zones and rotate meeting times so that each location gets the good time slots.
- b) Each location should have a designated teleconference room that is properly equipped (working phones, flip charts, etc.). Set up the room so that participants can see and talk to each other, not just the phone.
- c) Identify "Site Scribes" who will flip-chart important ideas and actions to be taken by people at their site. The Site Scribe would also facilitate the involvement of people in their location.



Ground Rules:

a) These are especially critical in multi-site meetings. The “core group” should develop the list of expected or acceptable behaviours. Begin each meeting by reviewing the rules and asking if anything needs to be amended or added.

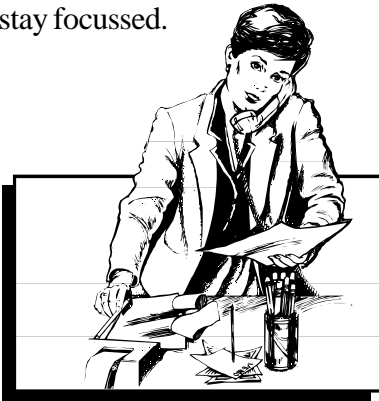
b) Forward ground rules to new members and one-time participants prior to the meeting. Ground rules apply to all participants.



Identify outcomes:

a) Always have an agenda that is sent out prior to the meeting. Indicate who submitted the item and its urgency.

b) Write agenda items as objectives. State what you want as an end result of the discussion (e.g. ideas, feedback, decision, or decisions). This will really help the group understand their task and stay focussed.



Cheat sheets:

Develop a “Who’s Who” list. Include a current picture and short bio for each member. For fun, add action shots, baby pictures or site-group photos. Participants could include personal or non-work related things about themselves. It’s nice to know the voices on the other end of the phone are attached to real people.

Teleconferencing is an essential part of today’s work environment but it offers different challenges from face-to-face meetings. These simple techniques can help turn your teleconference from madness into magic.

– Linda Tarrant,
<www.lindatarrant.com>

Balancing Talkers and Listeners

Whether you've been in community for a day or a decade, you've probably noticed that when it comes to meetings, some people talk more and some people talk less. In my work as a consensus teacher, one of the most common questions people ask me is how to get the discussion to balance out. The following are some ideas you can try out as a facilitator or a participant in an open discussion, along with some formats to try as alternatives.

First of all, while the people who talk a lot are often seen as the problem, their energy and desire to be involved can also be seen as very positive. So you may want to emphasise soliciting increased involvement from the quieter people rather than making big efforts to squelch the contributions of those who are more easily vocal.

As the quieter people speak up, the noisier ones will naturally take up less space.

In my experience, most interruptions happen because someone is enthusiastically bubbling over, not because they actually intend to keep a less-assertive person from speaking. If you observe that happening, gently but firmly saying something like, "Hey, I want to hear what you have to say, but I also want to hear Susan out first," is usually enough to get their attention and preserve space for the quieter person to finish.



Many facilitators, when faced with a bunch of hands in the air from people wanting to speak, will consciously call on the people who haven't been heard from yet. Some facilitators make this explicit by getting advance agreement from the group on a ground rule that no one can speak twice on a subject until everyone who wants to, has spoken once. Or as an item starts to draw toward a close, you can ask, "Would anyone who has not spoken yet, like to say anything?" Or sometimes simply calling for a moment of silence can open up space for new voices to emerge.

Specifically calling on quieter members is also an option, however it is one that should be carried out with care. Not everyone is ready to be put on the spot in public. On the other hand, when we talked recently in my co-op household about the awkwardness arising with two people who often choose to be silent in meetings, it turned out they'd rather have the rest of the group come out and ask them directly for their input, instead of looking at them and wishing they would speak! Since people are different, it's best if you can talk it over with the particular people involved to see what would work best for them. Some people genuinely are content to speak less, but you'll never know that for sure unless you have a conversation about it.

For some folks, what will be most accessible is offering input in a form different from standard rational analysis. They may need to write on a flip chart or draw pictures, or get a sense of safe space in which to share from the heart. By welcoming input in as many diverse forms as possible, you open yourself up to the most group wisdom. Even doing your best to encourage quieter people to speak up, there

will be times when a more “dominant” person goes on and on, and using your best judgement you will see a need to intervene. Because it feels impolite to interrupt someone else, less experienced facilitators are often reluctant to step in, but step in you must if you are to serve the group fully. Find a method that works for you: wait until the person takes a breath, then insert a short question or a summing up or simply “Thank you.” If you are uncomfortable even thinking about doing this, try practising with a friend ahead of time.

Alternate Formats

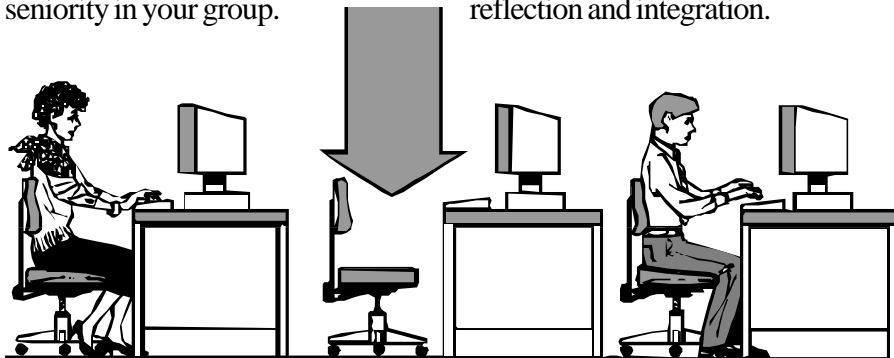
If you've tried a bunch of these suggestions and you're still not satisfied, or you just want a change of pace, consider using a different format than the “open discussion” that most groups default into.

A full “go-round” allows each person to take a turn going around a circle. (If time is limited, you can divide it up evenly and have a timekeeper offer a signal when the end of someone's portion is approaching.)

Some corporate meeting organisers require consecutive speakers to be of alternate genders. The same approach can be used to (Cont. p23)

(Continued from p18) ensure airtime for those who are traditionally less empowered in other ways, such as alternating between ethnicities or ages or people with more Vs. less seniority in your group.

“frame of silence” around each speaker. This Quaker tradition allows the words of one speaker to sink in before the next person begins, thus encouraging more reflection and integration.



Use of a talking object is especially popular in groups who operate without facilitators. A ball, stone or other item is placed in the centre of the circle, and whoever wishes to speak picks it up and holds it; no one else may speak until the object has been transferred. A variation on this is to allow open discussion to proceed as usual, while making a talking object available for anyone to grab who is having trouble getting a word in edgewise. When that talking object is picked up, whoever is holding it automatically has the floor as soon as the current speaker is finished.

In general, but especially when using a talking object, consider having a norm of furnishing a

Feedback

If you need it, there are very direct forms of feedback available to encourage people to only use their fair share of airtime. Give everyone seven beans at the start of the meeting, and require the deposit of one bean every time someone speaks; when you’ve run out of beans, you’ve run out of speaking turns for that meeting. Spin a web by throwing a ball of yarn to each speaker in order, unravelling the yarn as you go, so that a visual diagram of who speaks how much is created. Ask one observer to sit on the side tallying up how many times each person speaks; at the start of the next meeting, post the chart off to the side, written large

enough for everyone to see. While doing any of these at every meeting would probably feel too artificial, they can be useful devices to shift the energy, and for occasional interventions and reminders. Keep in mind that probably everyone at the meetings has good intentions of everyone participating, it's just that they get forgetful or intimidated in the moment, or want to participate in different ways. If

you need to, search out people at either end of the noisy/quiet spectrum for a good one-on-one talk. Many folks will be less scared in private than they would be in front of the group, and therefore less defensive. Work on really understanding where the other person is coming from, and search out how you can be their ally.

— Tree Bressen, Walnut Street Co-op, Eugene, Oregon.

Anti-discrimination: Vicarious Liability

Under federal anti-discrimination law an employer, regardless of their size, may be legally responsible for discrimination and harassment which occurs in the workplace or in connection with a person's employment unless it can be shown that 'all reasonable steps' have been taken to reduce this liability. This legal responsibility is called 'vicarious liability'.

'All reasonable steps' is not defined in the legislation because what is reasonable for a large corporation may not be reasonable for a small business. Rather it is worked out on a case-by-case basis. However, it does mean that employers must actively implement precautionary measures to minimise the risk of discrimination and harassment occurring.

Where is vicarious liability applicable?

The vicarious liability provisions of the legislation only apply where the alleged discrimination and harassment occurs in connection with the person's employment. This means the employer may be held vicariously liable for the actions of

employees if they have not taken all reasonable steps to prevent the discrimination and harassment from occurring both within the usual work environment and at employer sponsored functions such as seminars, conferences, work functions, Christmas parties, business or field trips.

Whose conduct is covered?

An employer may be vicariously liable for the conduct of: individual employees or groups of employees; directors, supervisors or managers; workplace participants (where two people work on the same premises, but have different employers); agents (eg. insurance salespersons operating on a company's behalf); contract workers or people being paid commission: a partner of a company harassing another partner; members of organisations which grant occupational qualifications; a person employed by a trade union harassing a member; or a person operating an employment agency who harasses someone who uses the agency.



Liability of individuals

The vicarious liability provisions of the legislation do not preclude individual persons from being held liable for their own discriminatory or harassing behaviour in the workplace or in connection with their employment. It may be that both the employer, who has been found to have not taken all reasonable steps to prevent the discrimination and harassment from occurring, and the individual, who is the alleged discriminator or harasser, will be held jointly liable for the behaviour.

For employers to consider:

When deciding what level of preventative action is reasonable, an employer should consider: the size and structure of the organisation; available resources; the nature of the work undertaken; gender imbalances in the workplace; the employment of women in non-traditional areas; the number of junior staff; the workplace culture; cultural diversity in the workplace; any history of harassment; any relevant provisions in industrial awards or agreements; working hours; level of supervision; and any other relevant factor, such as geographic isolation of the work

location, duties which require working in close physical proximity, live-in arrangements, etc.

Taking steps to prevent discrimination and harassment

It is recommended that employers take the following ‘reasonable steps’ to prevent harassment and reduce their vicarious liability:

obtain high level support from the chief executive officer and senior management for the implementation of a comprehensive strategy to address discrimination and harassment; develop in consultation with staff or their union a written policy which prohibits discrimination and harassment; consult relevant parties including staff, employer organisations, unions, industry and professional associations, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and/or State and Territory anti-discrimination agencies, when developing anti-discrimination or anti-harassment policies; regularly distribute and promote the policy at all levels of the organisation; translate the policy into relevant community languages where required so it is accessible to employees from non-English speaking backgrounds; ensure that managers and supervi-

sors discuss and reinforce the policy at staff meetings (verbal communication of the policy is particularly important in workplaces where the literacy of staff is an issue); provide the policy and other relevant information on discrimination and harassment to new staff as a standard part of induction; periodically review the policy to ensure it is operating effectively and contains up to date information; display posters on notice boards in common work areas and distribute relevant brochures (these may be obtained from the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, State and Territory anti-discrimination agencies and/or relevant unions); train all line managers on their rôle in ensuring that the workplace is free from discrimination and harassment; ensure that line managers model appropriate standards of professional conduct at all times; include accountability mechanisms in position descriptions for managers; ensure that selection criteria for management positions include the requirement that managers have a demonstrated understanding of and ability to deal with discrimination and harassment issues as part of their overall responsibility for

human resources – competence in this area can be tested at selection interviews; check that managers are fulfilling their responsibilities through performance appraisal schemes; conduct awareness raising sessions for staff on discrimination and harassment issues; remove offensive, explicit or pornographic calendars, literature, posters and other materials from the workplace; and develop a policy prohibiting inappropriate use of computer technology, such as e-mail, screen savers and the Internet.



Taking steps to deal with complaints

It is recommended that employers take the following ‘reasonable steps’ to deal with discrimination and harassment and reduce their ‘vicarious liability’: implement an internal system for dealing with complaints of discrimination/harassment or adapt existing

grievance procedures for this purpose and ensure that the organisation’s policy on discrimination and harassment provides employees with advice on what to do if they are discriminated against or harassed.

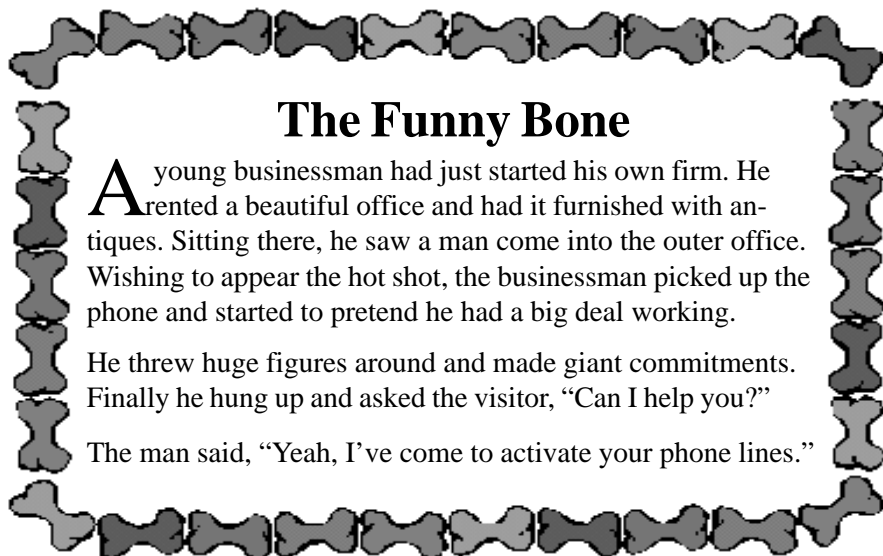
Employees should be given information on: how to deal with the discrimination or harassment themselves - employees should not be pressured into pursuing this option and should only confront the harasser directly if they feel confident enough to do so; speaking to their supervisor, manager or other contact officer who has responsibility for dealing with discrimination or harassment; lodging a formal complaint through the organisation’s complaint/grievance procedure approaching an external organisation such as Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission or a State or Territory anti-discrimination agency. Depending on the size of the organisation, appoint anti-discrimination and harassment contact officers of both sexes at various levels who are responsible for: providing employees with information on discrimination and harassment and clarifying any questions or concerns they

may have; providing confidential advice on the options that are available for dealing with discrimination/harassment; providing advice to an individual who wishes to confront the discriminator/harasser themselves; provide employees who have been discriminated against or harassed with access to counselling services or employee assistance programs. (costs should be fully borne by the employer); and provide employees who have harassed other staff members with information and training to ensure the discrimination or harassment does not occur again.

— Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
<www.hreoc.gov.au>

An all Reasonable Steps Checklist Could Include:

Preparing and promoting a written policy on workplace discrimination and harassment – training staff to identify and prevent workplace discrimination and harassment – establishing an effective internal complaints procedure – appointing trained harassment contact officers – treating all complaints seriously and investigating them promptly – ensuring that appropriate action is taken to address and resolve complaints – monitoring the workplace environment and culture, such as holding staff surveys or reviewing recruitment practices.



The Funny Bone

A young businessman had just started his own firm. He rented a beautiful office and had it furnished with antiques. Sitting there, he saw a man come into the outer office. Wishing to appear the hot shot, the businessman picked up the phone and started to pretend he had a big deal working.

He threw huge figures around and made giant commitments. Finally he hung up and asked the visitor, “Can I help you?”

The man said, “Yeah, I’ve come to activate your phone lines.”

Customer Service 101

If You Don't Know the Steps, You Can't Do the Dance

Developing and maintaining a living customer driven vision.

Your customer driven vision statement ambitiously defines where you need to be, starting now. Like a lighthouse beacon, it continuously provides reliable guidance throughout your organisation. It provides direction, inspires actions throughout the organisation, and guides decision making at every level.

It becomes and stays alive when your people know and believe in it. This is best accomplished by having them participate in developing it.



Identifying your most valuable customers and their specific needs and expectations.

Customer driven organisations aim to satisfy all their customers all the time. Reality suggests that this will not always happen. In our world of down-sizing, right-sizing, re-engineering, or whatever the latest 'ing' is, clearly we are and will continue to be working with limited resources. It is useful to remember Abe Lincoln's statement:

*"You can fool all the people
some of the time,
and some of the people
all the time,
but you can't fool all the people
all the time."*

Lincoln's adage pragmatically applied to customer driven businesses would read:

*You can satisfy all the customers
some of the time,
and some of the customers
all the time,
but you can't satisfy
all the customers all the time.*

It makes sense to optimise your limited resources to ensure that the "some of the customers" who are satisfied "all the time" are the twenty percent who produce eighty percent of your profits.

Jan Carlzon gained fame by turning money-losing Scandinavian Airlines

into a winner using management by walking around and managing the “moments of truth.” Less well known is his first recognising that business travellers were the key to profits. He identified the desired customers within Scandinavian Airlines’ goal of being “The best airline in the world for the frequent business traveller.” Identifying the most desired customers enabled Carlzon to focus the “walking around” and “moments of truth” on their “right” customers.

Knowing which customers are contributing the most to your financial health is critical in all aspects of planning and execution. This information enables establishing practical priorities for utilising your resources. Once you know who your most profitable customers are, you are ready to identify their needs and expectations.



Establishing A Customer Knowledge Base

We already suspect that our customers want everything. However, while customers may want everything, they only buy certain things. Identifying what your desired customers need involves building a customer knowledge base that identifies the critical factors that your target customers use in their purchase decisions. A customer knowledge base focuses on what it will take to satisfy customer’s needs and expectations.

Establishing a customer knowledge base relies on objectively *Asking*, *Listening*, and *Responding*.

Asking: The questions may be framed in many ways. However, they always cover two central themes: 1. What do you need and expect from us to earn your loyalty? And 2. Which of these needs and expectations matter most to you? Valuable customer information is available through informal focus groups at trade shows and company sponsored meetings. Many companies waste opportunities schmoozing customers at such meetings when they could get far greater returns by setting up Asking and Listening sessions. The best

customers want to participate in your company's direction, not be schmoozed with wine and baubles.

Listening: Effective listening starts with an unbiased listener, representative samples of customers, appropriate questions, and accurate interpreting of the customers' feedback. Your direct involvement and the use of neutral third party specialists can ensure good data collection design and objective listening.

Responding: Asking the customers what they need immediately raises their expectation that something positive is going to happen. Responding with appropriate timely actions is critical. It is far worse to ask and do nothing with the information, than it is to not ask at all. This is especially so with negative customer feedback.

Finally, customer knowledge must be current to be useful.

Customer needs and expectations are fluid and therefore require constant monitoring.

A year or two old data may be already too aged to be useful in planning. Week-old data may already be obsolete.

Developing and implementing operational plans to satisfy these customers.

Planning already began with vision clarification, customer identification, and customer needs identification. Implementation plans contain the goals, measurable objectives, and supporting action items that will: lead the organisation backward from the vision; focus the people on doing the right things right; provide the resources to do the right things right; co-ordinate all resources on meeting the customer's expectations the first time, every time; create an environment that will motivate and stretch employees to great customer driven performance; measure, recognise, and reward outstanding performance – result in delighted customers, both internal and external customers.

Developing the plans is easy once the people know and believe in where they are going. Implementing the plans becomes the challenge. Now is the time to "just do it!" The key to successful implementation is leadership that: uses the vision as the driving force for the entire organisation; demonstrates through their daily actions that this is not just another POTY (Program of the

Year); gains credibility by modelling the accountable behaviours – leading by example; executes unbiased and timely measurements of both plans and customer satisfying performance targets; recognises and rewards appropriate customer satisfying behaviours; and implements all the above efficiently enough to make a profit while doing them.

Being driven by the needs of the desired customers enables your company to invest its resources on the critical dimensions that the customers have identified. Consequently you can concentrate your resources on doing the right things right. The result is a win-win situation. Your customers experience increased satisfaction resulting from having their needs met. Your owners experience increased profitability resulting from optimum utilisation of resources. Your people gain the pleasure of playing on a winning team.

Implement the plan by hiring, developing, empowering, and rewarding the people.

Hiring: experienced leaders know that how someone's qualifications

look on paper isn't necessarily how they will perform on the job. Skills can be developed, attitudes are more difficult.

Southwest Airlines' CEO Herb Kelleher hires for attitudes. "We'll train you on whatever it is you have to do, but the one thing Southwest cannot change in people is inherent attitudes." Perhaps he shared a flight with Paul Dickson who suggests: "Never try to teach a pig to sing – it wastes your time and it annoys the pig." When hiring, refer to your vision and ask: What kind of people will we need to accomplish our vision?

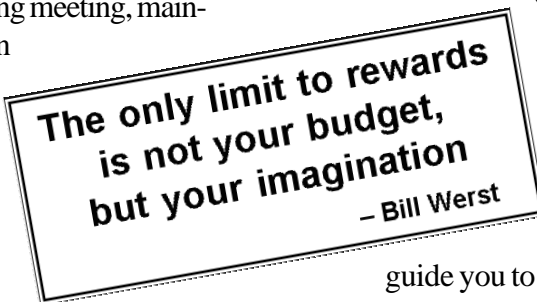
Developing: most service technicians receive weeks of technical training and maybe a half day on handling customers. Small wonder that we find these people focusing on products rather than customers. They are doing what over ninety-five percent of their training taught them to do – fixing things rather than customers. Successful leaders share one-on-one time with all new hires during their first three days on the job. Whether you're responsible for twenty-five or one thousand people, imagine the impression it makes on new people when they get to meet you on the first day and

learn the customer driven vision directly from the 'Boss'.

Empowerment: this issue is filled with anxiety for many managers. It's like handing your car keys to your sixteen-year-old for the first time. You had them [hired them]. You raised them [trained them]. But, can you trust them? Successful leaders have learned that they can. The following mental exercise may ease you through this anxious period. Unless you prefer to be everywhere at once – on the concourse, in the plant, attending every engineering meeting, maintaining hands-on inventory control, chairing every executive session, reviewing every PR release, editing every statement that an employee makes to a customer, policing the parking lot and the mailroom – you must let go. So you might as well make the leap of faith by entrusting your people to do their job.

Rewards: all rewards champion desired performance behaviours.

Therefore, insure that salary raises, bonuses, performance reviews, and recognition awards all resonate customer satisfaction results. Use every opportunity to reward people for their success – a pat on the back, donuts at the next staff meeting, an e-mail, a share of the savings or profit. The only limit to rewards is not your budget, but your imagination. If people expected to make millions of dollars they probably wouldn't be working for you. While money is necessary, most people excel with appreciation.



**The only limit to rewards
is not your budget,
but your imagination**

– Bill Werst

You can not overdo rewards so long as they are sincere. Common sense will guide you to appropriate rewards for your people. If you worry about the quality of your own common sense, ask your people to design the rewards. They have lots of common sense. Perhaps the biggest reward, and certainly the cheapest, is to listen to your peoples' ideas and suggestions about work improvements. They deal with the real issues every day. They know which machines

need repair or replacement. They know which policies and procedures slow their productivity. Feedback from empowered and rewarded people will turbo-charge your organisation's intelligence.

Measure and track what your customers think of the products and services they get.

A.T. Kearney, Ltd of Toronto, Canada, found that eight in ten customers aren't getting the service they expect. A Wall Street Journal survey of 2000 American consumers found that only five percent thought that suppliers were listening to them and striving to do their best.

Darts in the dark – companies basing their customer satisfaction measurement and tracking on the volume of complaints are truly playing 'darts in the dark'. They only get feedback from a customer when they "stick" one and that customer yells. At best, this customer feedback allows them to react to individual problems rather than be proactive to customer needs. At worst, customers may simply stop complaining because they gave up and are looking for a new supplier.

Driving in a fog – companies that rely on market share and current volume of orders as indicators of customer satisfaction are 'driving in a fog'. By the time declines in these lagging indicators are reported it may be too late to respond. In addition, many variables besides satisfaction may effect market share and volume. Consequently, a rise or drop in either indicator does not provide a clear direction for corrective action.

Keep customer satisfaction measurement and tracking very simple. Recognise that customers' needs and expectations are the only legitimate foundation for any customer satisfaction measurement and tracking system. Factor in the relative importance of these needs and expectations, as the customers have identified them, and work backward to create a measurement system that asks: Are we meeting your expectations, especially the most important ones?



There are five basic ways of asking: mail surveys, personal interviews, focus groups, customer comment cards, and mystery shoppers. The best method, or methods, of measurement will vary with the dynamics of your company and its customers, products, and services. Selection of the appropriate method will depend on what you specifically intend to measure and how you intend to use the data once you have it. Select the appropriate approach with the same common sense a good carpenter uses in selecting a tool. A hammer is a great tool for driving nails, but lousy for drilling holes. Use your professional network or hire a professional to determine your best measurement process.

Whichever measurement method you use, it will need continuous use over time to render the desired results. Examining customers' views over time enables you to benchmark and track the feedback so that you can: identify patterns and trends; avoid overreacting to individual customer compliments and complaints; gain timely feedback on performance changes — both planned and unplanned changes; proactively identify opportunities for improvement; and

identify and reinforce people and process improvement.



Continuously work to update and improve each of the above areas.

Common sense managers constantly:

Review your vision statements — visions are sketched on paper, never on stone. If you etch your vision statement on stone you may be creating an organisational tombstone. Your vision statement needs to be adaptable to accommodate changing customer needs. Always be prepared to refine your vision statement.

Update your customer evaluations and expectations — customers' buying habits, expectations, and needs *change!* Continuously listen to what your customers have to say, not what you want to hear. Update your plans — whatever you planned three months ago has probably changed. Review your plans against benchmarks and

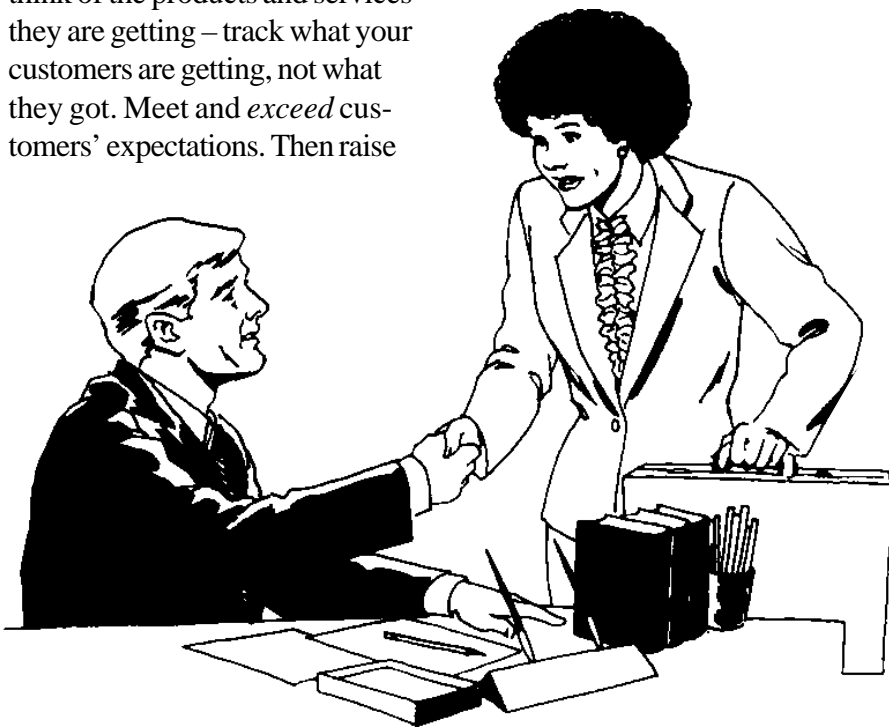
adjust accordingly. The only absolute about a plan is the fact that you need one.

Reassess your hiring, developing, empowering, and rewarding efforts – if any one area is not working, fix it. If all the areas are working, improve them. The old adage “If it ain’t broken, don’t fix it.” was probably passed on to you by a competitor. In marketing, don’t believe it. Winners are always improving. If we’ve always done it this way, it’s probably wrong. Measure and track what customers think of the products and services they are getting – track what your customers are getting, not what they got. Meet and *exceed* customers’ expectations. Then raise

the bar. Companies that continuously raise the bar end up competing against themselves.

Start all over again . . . and again – keep improving. Accept continuous customer driven quality improvement as the only path to success. Stay off the POTY (Program of the Year) and other wasteful organisational fads. It’s easy. It’s fun. It’s common sense.

– Bill Werst, Growth Associates,
<www.growthassociates.org>

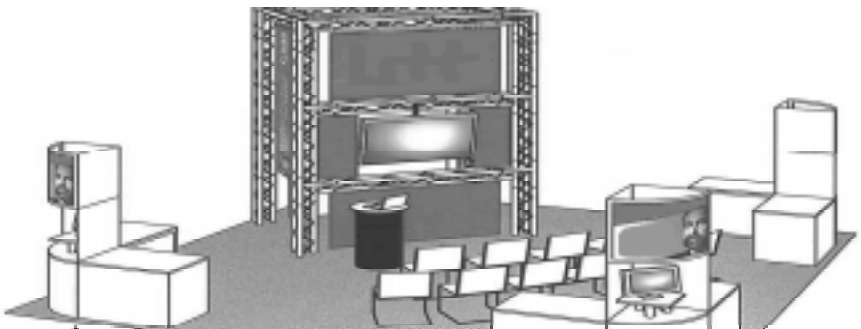


Cutting Down Your Trade Show Budget

Whenever a recession threatens the economy, companies immediately look at where they can cut budgets. Without much forethought, the first to hit the block is inevitably training, followed closely behind by marketing. Why? Both are viewed on the balance sheet as expenditures rather than income generators, so obviously they're hot contenders for elimination. This is a very myopic way of thinking, especially for companies who want to remain globally competitive. Instead, at times like these when resources are under severe scrutiny, look at this as a golden opportunity to analyse your strategies. Put your activities under a microscope and closely examine what you're doing and why you're doing it. Often during times of plenty, the finance reins loosen up and some highly creative juggling takes place when budgets exceed their estimations. Obviously, we enjoy the abundant mentality and wish that it could last forever. But just as with all things in the universe there has to be a balance, and shortages add stability to plenty. Whenever highs exist, lows are inevitable.



So, instead of reacting to the highs and lows of the marketplace, what can you do to maintain a steady balance? Marketing and training are definitely keys to your success, so let's examine five benefits and how they relate to your tradeshow you often discover that many of your actions are done out of habit rather than being productive and profitable. Think about some of the shows that you attend. How do they really fit into your marketing strategy? Are you attending them just because



you've always done so, or because your competition is there? These are often your weak links, the shows that utilise unnecessary time and energy. Think about doing away with the "nice to be at shows" and rather opt at putting all your energy into the more profitable events that attract larger quantities of your target market.

Another weak budgetary link is associated with excessive employee spending at shows, such as dining at the finest restaurants and ordering the highest priced items just because the boss is paying. Consider setting up a *per diem* allowance and make employees accountable for expenses. You might even reward them with the difference if they under spend their stipend.

Exhibit a global competitiveness mindset

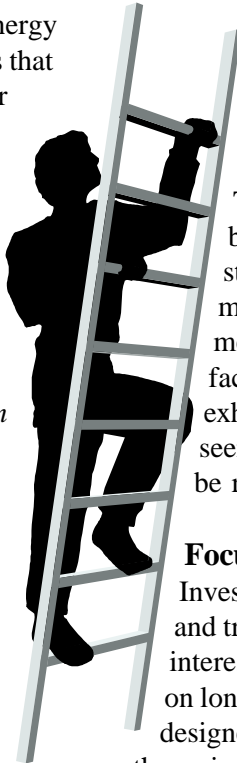
To be a contender in the global market place and establish a vanguard positioning, you have to be out there come rain or shine. And, tradeshow's signify an essential marketing strategy when it comes to visibility. Exhibiting demonstrates that you're a serious player in the industry. However tough, it's important to keep tradeshow's as one of your major promotional strategies. Rather

consider reducing space than totally pulling out a show, provided of course, that it's the right show for you. Unfortunately, if you stop exhibiting completely, the "buzz" on

the show floor says publicly that you must be in financial trouble. This may be completely false, but it's people's perceptions that count. They're the reality they believe. As the old adage states, "out of sight, out of mind." And, since memorability is a key factor associated with exhibiting, if you're not seen, how can you possibly be remembered!

Focus on long-term results

Investing in both marketing and training means that you're interested and willing to focus on long-term results. Neither is designed to give a "quick fix," rather using them continuously in an organised and planned manner, will produce results. They're like a dripping faucet, so long as the drops constantly fall into the tub, it will fill up. However, if you maintain a "turn on, turn off" approach, that is train and market in times of plenty and discontinue when there's a shortage, then your results are likely to mirror your actions. Look at how you can



keep an operational equilibrium to avoid the highs and the lows. Develop a consistent marketing and training strategy.

Inspire loyal workers

Often companies are reluctant to invest too much in training staff for fear that once trained, they'll leave for "greener pastures." Since there are no guarantees in life, that's always going to be a risk, but does that mean you shouldn't develop your people to be the best they can be? Absolutely not! The reasons employees leave may be many. Employees may leave because of frustration or stress. They might feel unappreciated or undervalued. It could be that they believe your company is heading for an iceberg and want to "jump ship" before it sinks. Maybe they feel that their salaries are not in line with the jobs they are performing. Or they could feel that they don't have enough authority, growth opportunities, or direction in their careers. Training is often the key to help inspire loyalty.

Improve performance

Employees are the backbone of your company. Without them, your company cannot stay afloat. The relationship between employees and employers has to be a partnership; if they feel their needs are being

ignored, they will leave you. But when both sides work on the same wavelength, share the same goals and ideas, the company will be on the right track for success. What better place than the tradeshow floor to exhibit this mentality. Your exhibit staff represents your internal customer-service team and your company ambassadors. They stand for your entire organisation. These people have the awesome responsibility of making or breaking future relationships with attendees, prospects and customers. Their attitude, body language, appearance, and knowledge help to create positive or negative perceptions in the minds of visitors. Make sure that they're well trained and can do what you expect of them. Training shows that you recognise your team's importance in the company and look to develop their skills to improve performance.


Exhibiting is a powerful extension of your company's marketing strategy and your people are the backbone of your company. Eliminating your marketing and training budgets during times of recession is tantamount to profitability suicide. So consider looking at other places to make those cuts!

– Susan Friedmann
<thetradeshowcoach.com>

Résumé Mistakes

Here are some real-life examples:

“My intensity and focus are at inordinately high levels, and my ability to complete projects on time is unspeakable.” “Education: Curses in liberal arts, curses in computer science, curses in accounting.” “Instrumental in ruining entire operation for a Midwest chain store.” “Personal: Married, 1992 Chevrolet.” “I have an excellent track record, although I am not a horse.” “I am a rabid typist.” “Created a new market for pigs by processing, advertising and selling a gourmet pig mail order service on the side.” “Exposure to German for two years, but many words are not appropriate for business.” “Proven ability to track down and correct errors.” “Personal interests: Donating blood. 15 gallons so far.” “I have become completely paranoid, trusting completely nothing and absolutely no one.” “References: None, I’ve left a path of destruction behind me.” “Strengths: Ability to meet deadlines while maintaining composer.” “Don’t take the comments of my former employer too seriously, they were unappreciative beggars and slave drivers.” “My goal is to be a meteorologist. But since I possess no training in meteorology, I suppose I should try stock brokerage.” “I procrastinate—especially when the task is unpleasant.” “I am loyal to my employer at all costs ... Please feel free to respond to my resume on my office voicemail.” “Qualifications: No education or experience.” “Disposed of \$2.5 billion in assets.” “Accomplishments: Oversight of entire department.” “Extensive background in accounting. I can also stand on my head!”

Cover letter: “Thank you for your consideration. Hope to hear from you shortly!” 

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**Community Business
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