

SALES AND SERVICE

Excellence

THE MAGAZINE OF TEAM LEADERSHIP

MARCH 2009

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Times
Beyond
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Mark Eaton
Sales Consultant



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Sales and Service Excellence

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SALES/SUCCESS

Master the Sales Dance

Step smartly into your success!



by Diane Marie Pinkard

CONSIDER ACCOMPLISHED sales professionals to be like talented artists. When they perform to their highest ability, their steps transcend that of a beautifully choreographed dance. Their graceful moves harmonize with the natural flow of human nature, and echo what the universe so badly wants and needs. The process of facilitating life is, quite simply, dancing to the heartbeat and soul of humanity. And there is no better place to practice these moves than to walk out center stage onto the sales floor.

Eight Personal Insights

Allow me to share eight personal revelations that fueled my motivation and provided me with the catalyst to master the sales dance:

1. If personal growth intrigues and excites you, then learning about sales is the best experience you can have for achieving your goals. See yourself as being in the business of human resource development. Delving in and learning more about yourself will better align you with your own human spirit. The more self-awareness you

possess, the easier it will be for you to connect with others and the more savvy you will become about the complexities of human nature. The more knowledgeable you become, the less you will allow yourself to be offended by others who may have hidden agendas or wish to see you fail. You'll be able to recognize that their behavior is about them, not about you. Embarking



on a journey of personal growth will greatly improve your ability to intuitively relate to others in a good way, and also to sell.

Yes, your personal growth and professional growth travel hand in hand! Learning sales will give you the exposure to challenge yourself and learn freedom of expression so you can better

communicate and connect in a very satisfying manner. Sales professionals are not born—they are developed and transformed because of their passion for people and their love and curiosity about human nature. They possess a personal drive to teach and train themselves. Salespeople are eagerly searching for their empowered presence. They have the desire to invest a lot of time and effort into their own evolution. And there's no better investment than investing time in yourself and your personal development.

2. The first person you have to learn to sell to is you! Before selling successfully to the world, you should learn to sell successfully to yourself. This means learning to identify with your own character and makeup; it means getting in touch with your own personal truth. I define my personal truth to be what I say to myself when no one else is listening. By experimenting with this process, you too will discover your real makings. I refer to this concept as a "self-talk"—what we say to ourselves when we are quiet, listening to our inner voice, which is constantly chattering to us. These are the tapes we play back to ourselves in our head, over and over again. So, if you don't like the messages you're hearing,

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Marketing Offices:
Leadership Excellence
1806 N. 1120 W.
Provo, UT 84604
1-877-250-1983
1-801-375-4060

Sales & Service Excellence:
Ken Shelton, CEO, Editor-in-Chief
Sarah Hayes, Circulation Manager
Nancy Low, Marketing Manager
Rob Kennedy, Business Manager
Michele Christensen, Public Relations
Geoff Pace, Sales

Contributing Editors: Debbie Allen, Curtis Bingham, Tom Hopkins, Dave Kahle, Richard Ilesley.

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change the record and play it repeatedly! Find your authentic self. Whatever you do in life, don't envy or try mimicking someone else. Discover your own touch of greatness. Then unveil this hidden secret to the world. Believe that everything you need is within you, because it is.

3. Create your dream or vision, and commit your heart to it. It is your thoughts that form your life, and it is your inner feelings that will manifest the results you want for your life. You design the blueprint for your life, for your future. So visualize your path, your journey to success. Program yourself for what you want your life to be, and make it happen! Your success starts with planting the idea or seed of how you want things to be. By aligning your inner desires and passions with your self-talk, ultimately your desires will be realized. Be imaginative, be creative, and be disciplined in your process. Be true to your heart, lock in your intent, and remain unbending for achieving your desired outcome. It will pay off in spades.

4. Creating positive intentions will set you up for brilliance and success. Create and nurture a healthy self-image about the profession you have chosen. Repeat affirmations that will make you a winner. Try doing your positive self-talk in front of the mirror, or your home video camera, until you love what you see. Sell

yourself to yourself! Yes, *you* are the best product you have to offer—so learn how to market you. In this same vein, here's an important query for you to ponder: If you don't believe in yourself and your capacity to achieve, how can you expect anyone else to believe in you?

5. Learn to use small windows of time effectively. Taking 15 minutes a day to improve yourself and enhance your attributes is better than taking no time at all. Your small efforts accumulate and will produce benefits that will spill over into the rest of your life. This tiny morsel may seem inconsequential, but practicing it day after day can make a world of difference. I call this "special time with me!" Use this quality time as quiet time to reflect, to keep a journal, or to read or listen to a self-empowerment presentation. Savor this precious break to inspire personal power and self-development.

6. Don't wait until you feel better about yourself or believe you have what it takes to finally achieve success. Instead, be self-actualized, and your new positive beliefs will automatically follow suit. Move forward, even if you are afraid. Don't wait until you are not. Otherwise, one of two things will happen—or worse yet, both.



First, you can be sure the day will never come when you finally feel better about yourself. Second, you may never overcome all of your fears. Welcome your fears; view them as a stimulating wake-up call to broaden your horizons.

7. Become a topnotch student of human nature. Examine personality traits, body language, and personality types. Analyze what triggers emotions, actions, and reactions in people. Enjoy the rich phenomena of life. Find out what makes people tick.

8. Your best advertisement and promotion is you! Choreograph your own A-1 introduction. Envision your first seconds with a contact as your own 30-second ad. How you view yourself is exactly how your customers will see you. So why not fashion yourself to be captivating and inviting? Simply make yourself the unforgettable character. Set yourself apart from the rest of the pack. Be exceptional at what you do, and you'll stand out from the crowd. Let people remember you because of your effort to connect with and relate to them.

Ponder personal qualities for success. These qualities were stellar in our showroom. I suggest you reprint the following list and make them a motto for living your professional life. And practicing these concepts in your personal life won't hurt either. Honor these keepers and practice them 24/7. • Be forthright. • Be open-minded and willing to grow and change in order to prosper. • Be genuinely caring and show it by listening, educating, and facilitating. • Be loyal to a philosophy of self-dignity for yourself and a healthy respect for others. • Be true to yourself. Be who you really are. • Have fun and enjoy the sales dance. • Treat people like they matter—always. • Come from the heart.

Embrace these endearing words and keep them alive in your heart as you continue on your own journey. Tap into your own rich, God-given resources; discover what is important to you. Find your own touch of greatness; discover your uniqueness and define your purpose for being brought to this earth. A healthy relationship with yourself allows you to achieve amazing personal growth and also opens up many avenues for you to inspire others as well as delight in the world around you. Have faith in yourself that you have the capability to accomplish amazing things. Believe in *you*; believe in the best product you have to offer. **SSE**

Diane Marie Pinkard is author of Just Treat Me Like I Matter. The Heart of Sales and is a speaker consultant and coach. Visit www.heartofsales.com, call 866.552.2510 or email info@heartofsales.com.

ACTION: Master the sales dance.

Marketing Power

Don't ignore the small stuff.



by Thomas P. Marshall

WHEN YOU CONSIDER WAYS to increase revenue, think beyond traditional advertising/marketing strategies and techniques. Don't ignore the small stuff. Just because flyers or signage or email newsletters are low cost doesn't mean you should ignore them.

Many of the things you may ignore can pay big dividends over time.

Power of the Business Card

When was the last time you paid attention to your business cards—to what they say and their impact on others? Business cards—when created and distributed with a little imagination and finesse—can boost revenue.

As Jay Levinson and Seth Godin point out: "Astute guerrillas use business cards to position themselves and reposition the competition. Even if your business requires a fairly sedate card, you can add a specialty."

Levinson notes: "A business card can double as a brochure, circular, ad, and listing of your services or products. It can open to become a mini-brochure."

A guerrilla business card presents much valuable information. To stand out, it's in color, the paper stock is unique (thicker than normal), and is readable horizontally (the reverse side, however, can be vertical). A business card can be a marketing weapon.

Observe Eight Tips

Here are eight tips to maximize the full potential of your business cards:

1. Use the reverse side. Why waste that valuable space by leaving it blank? Even if your cost per card is doubled, printing on both sides—A and B—of your cards can pay off. What can you say on Side B? Well, it's a great place to print your elevator speech or pitch.

An elevator speech is created just in case you get in front of a promising prospect and have limited time to make a pitch. You can also use it when introducing yourself to people, on the phone, leaving a voicemail message, on your outgoing voicemail message, on your business card, on your Web site, and in your marketing materials. But

don't talk about your organization. Stress the benefits you can provide—how you offer value, benefit, and quality. It takes no longer than 10 seconds. But you can go longer—when you print your pitch on Side B. Just don't set the type too small, and on Side A print: PLEASE SEE OTHER SIDE.

2. Print something interesting or useful on side B. You might list your most popular products, services, or programs. Prospects might discover that their favorite one comes from your company or a subsidiary.



- Promote a new product or service.
- Include a map on how to find your place of business, or list your divisions, branches, outlets, Web sites.
- List key departments or executives and their phone numbers.
- Include a brief testimonial from a satisfied customer or member.
- Print an excerpt from a favorable write-up about your firm or product.
- Include helpful conversion tables: metric, weights, measures, etc.
- Print a mini press release. You could reprint the headline and opening sentence on the back of your card and invite people to visit your Web site.

3. Use your business card as an active selling tool. Jay and Seth suggest: "Print a double-sided card; on one side print the phrase 'Present this card for _____.' When you talk to a prospect, fill in the blank. For example, if you are a rep for a printing firm, you might write: 'Present this card for a 10% discount.' The prospect appreciates the savings and keeps the card, due to its increased value."

4. Make your card twice as big. Most business cards are 3.5 X 2 inches. But at modest extra cost, you could double

the size to 3.5 X 4 inches and have the top half fold down to the standard size. When opened, you'll have space for twice as much copy and illustration.

Think of it as a miniature poster, billboard or print ad. Have a one- or two-line headline at the top and then some body copy. At the bottom, invite prospects to visit your Web site or dial a toll-free number for full details. It's a low-cost but effective way to promote a particular product, service or program.

5. Carry different cards to give to different people. You can carry more than one business card at a time. Why not have two, three, or four different cards—perhaps color-coded so you can tell at a glance which card to offer. You might have one card promoting a particular product or program, another card promoting a particular service, a third card announcing something new, and a fourth card with a special discount offer. Hand out only one card at a time—whichever card is most appropriate for the prospect. Carry only a few cards of each type in a jacket pocket, with a slightly larger supply in your attaché case or glove compartment.

6. Use business cards to conduct customer surveys. What do customers like—or dislike—about your company, products, services, programs, prices, employees, locations, Web site, advertising or anything else? Use business cards to survey customer satisfaction.

On Side B, you might say: *Please let us know your comments, complaints, or suggestions in regard to our products, services, employees, prices, hours, policies or anything else. Call 1-800-000-0000 toll-free or visit www.yoururl.com. Thanks!*

7. Print side B in a foreign language. In many countries, people rely heavily on business cards, especially for introductions. So it's common to print Side A in English, with the same information in a foreign language on Side B for foreign-speaking customers or prospects. Including the name and extension of a staff member speaking that language distinguishes you even more.

8. Encourage everyone to distribute cards. Ensure that your staff members have their own business cards. Marketing to your staff is as important as marketing to your customers. They are your ambassadors. Invite them to give their cards away every chance they get. This makes them feel important, valued, and loyal—and boosts your bottom line. **SSE**

Thomas P. Marshall is a Certified Guerrilla Marketing Coach with G Marketing (www.gmva123.com) and author of Hand-to-Hand Marketing. Email tom@gmofva.com or call 1-800-909-7648.

ACTION: Use your business card effectively.

Beyond Fear

Focus on opportunity.



by Nadine Keller

FEAR RESONATES IN TODAY'S market. Few of us are anxious to buy anything.

What are you to do? Working harder, making more calls, cutting prices, and pushing for the close may be counter-productive. Consider six strategies:

1. Focus on the opportunity. Down markets bring opportunity. Decide to act on this opportunity and prosper. Redirect the voice in your head that says "this deal will never close" or "sales will be down this year." Cultivate a positive attitude, as your thoughts affect the conversations you have with your clients and prospects. Counter negative thoughts with positive ones. Write them down, and read them daily. Keep your team positive, productive, and constructive. Over-communicate. Listen. Share success stories, brainstorm roadblocks, and concentrate on clients and prospects.

2. Develop a strategy for this market. The game has changed. How clients perceive value is different. Ask your clients: *What impact are you expecting? What are you hearing from your clients? What are you most concerned about? What opportunities are there for you? What adjustments are you making?* Review what you learn. What opportunities does it provide? Brainstorm the implications on your value proposition. Consider how you might tailor your product and sales approach to align with challenges your clients face.

3. Know that your clients and prospects are feeling insecure and vulnerable. Beyond selling your product, service or ideas, you are selling safety, security, and reassurance. Minimize the sense of risk clients feel when making buying decisions. Provide prospects with references and success stories, or allow them to test your product or service in advance. Remind clients of past successes and help them justify their decisions to senior managers so everyone feels comfortable.

4. Ask questions and listen with the intent to learn and solve problems. Get clients talking in order to understand their problems and worries, think them through, and develop solutions. Buyers are looking for quantifiable and emotional ROI. Is their time well spent

with you? How do they feel after they speak with you? Do you work with them to help solve their challenge? Employing consultative, client-focused skills will position you for business now, and later. Good times often disguise bad sales habits. Coach, reinforce, or re-train salespeople.

5. Demonstrate your understanding of their unique needs. Clients will buy from providers who "get them." They feel more secure when they believe you understand their needs. For example, clients appreciate that you help them to look good in front of their boss, or to understand the technical aspects of your product. Communicate your understanding of their needs, through your behaviors and words.

6. Concentrate on best opportunities. Sales cycles are longer in down markets. Screen for best opportunities and focus

your efforts. Spend more face-to-face time with clients. Show them that you understand their challenges by being flexible and patient. When prospecting, concentrate on your sweet spot—profiles that are aligned with your offering. Now is *not* the time to try new markets.

Help each salesperson adjust their sales strategy, allocate their time, and still meet or exceed their sales goals by looking differently at their sales plans.

Plan to make the most of your sales opportunities. Down markets provide you with a chance to: know your clients better; approach prospects that you once viewed as untouchable; and displace order-takers who survived solely due to good market conditions. **SSE**

Nadine Keller is a sales coach and trainer and founding partner at Precision. Visit www.precisionales-coaching.com or call 860-778-9944.

ACTION: Focus on your opportunities.

SALES/CLOSE

Close More Sales

Guide prospects off the fence.



by Dave Mattson

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS IN sales. As companies struggle to meet their sales numbers, it can be the worst of times—and yet present opportunities to serve customers and clients in new ways.

To move prospects and clients off the fence, get them to take action, and close more sales, apply seven strategies:

1. Create a sense of urgency. Set the consequences of your customers not taking action. Note what they have to lose by inaction. Forget features and benefits and talk about the hard value of your product and service in measurable terms. Practice articulating this. Consider offering time-sensitive discounts or creating a one-time deal.

2. Reward your best customers. Extend exclusive benefits to loyal customers. These can be incentives or value-based goods and services. Selling additional products and services to existing clients is more cost effective than developing new clients. Many of your clients would use more services if you asked them for the business.

3. Ask and tell. Ask for a list of upcoming projects or purchasing decisions. Often, your clients don't understand your full line of products and services. By having them explain what is going

on, you can use your product knowledge to decide how to best apply it.

4. Sell internally. Cross-sell within client organizations. Ask for the names of other people working elsewhere in the company. Ask for the names of those in charge of purchases and projects within your expertise. Inquire what expectations the client has for the year and then ask, "What additional business might I be involved with?" Use that number to forecast sales and check that reality with the number in your account plan.

5. Do lunch. Take your clients to lunch, thank them for their business, and express your appreciation. Review the history of the account with the client. Ask: *How long have we been doing business? How satisfied are you with our services? How could we improve? Would you give us a reference letter?*

6. Stop "closing" sales and open business relationships. When you close a sale, what are you closing? Are you finished with the customer? Have you closed the door to further opportunities? No! View closing a sale as the opening of a new relationship.

7. Do the post close. Find out if there are other areas in your new customer's company that can also use the product or service you just sold and ask for the name of persons to contact. Ask your new customer for referrals. Meet the principals of the company if you haven't already done so. **SSE**

David Mattson is CEO of Sandler Training, providers of the Sandler Selling System. Visit www.sandler.com.

ACTION: Guide your prospects off the fence.

Recession Isn't Forever

Find and keep performers to lead the next expansion.



by Sharon Birkman Fink

AMID ECONOMIC TURMOIL, when employers are faced with hard choices on whether to reduce their workforce and management ranks, it's easy to forget that identifying and retaining quality performers remains the major challenge. Cutting first, without assessing who the "hi-po" employees are at every level and how to keep them, eliminates muscle and not fat. Business conditions will inevitably turn from contraction to expansion, and companies that have identified and nurtured their best talent will be best positioned to take advantage.

When conditions change, you must confront three challenges:

- First, extreme job mobility will likely return, creating the potential for major talent loss—particularly if recession has created pent-up demand for job change. On average, for example, the job tenure for employees is four years (compared to 15 years in 1980), and half of newly hired executives leave their jobs within three years.

- Second, companies often do not know who their "hi-po" employees are. Fewer than one in five U.S. companies has programs in place to identify future management talent, and half of all companies haven't even considered putting such a plan in place.

- Third, demographic shifts will continue. Although millions of baby boomers are wondering during the current market crisis whether they can afford to retire, retirement for these workers (many of whom have risen to management positions) is inevitable at some point. Since they represent half of the current workforce, the pool of available senior managers will shrink, even as it creates a replacement need.

Identification Is the Challenge

Smart companies need to deploy development solutions that identify, train, develop, and retain the best talent before the replacement need becomes critical. Many companies track retention, but—to manage the turnover issue within the context of retaining the best talent—you need to discover why cer-

tain employees stay and thrive, while others leave. Identifying peak performers is not so easy. Often, employees who may appear to be falling short may have excellent growth potential but have been on one career path for decades and are ready for a change. They often assume, however, that their only choice is to find another job that closely matches what they have been doing. If such a job isn't apparent in their organization, leaving for another employer seems the only choice.

The fact that these employees don't look for new internal opportunities isn't necessarily a mark against them. Some of the skills that people use to get ahead—such as aggressiveness and self-promotion—may reduce their ability to perform as future leaders or managers because they have alienated co-workers in their push for promotion. And Millennials value workplace norms that focus on group interaction and social networking rather than individual advancement. They view working in and contributing to team efforts as a means to creativity and satisfaction. This certainly benefits the organization, but doesn't fit the traditional mode of promotable candidates.

Testing Is the Answer

You can best identify, build, and retain a promotable talent pool by using personality testing to identify qualities that make a difference in performance and discover individuals not previously tapped for leadership roles. Personality assessments show where potential top performers are strong and weak, pinpointing their motivations and aspects of their style that can inhibit their growth. By identifying which candidates have the potential to excel, personality testing makes developing leaders a systematic process.

The best personality tests analyze and report what motivates workplace behavior, and identify the needs that drive behavior in positive and productive directions. Testing describes desires, strengths, motivational needs and stress reactions for the individual

and provides recommendations. Tests can help the companies that use them fit employees where they will be most comfortable and most likely to succeed. The result is greater job satisfaction, and greater employee retention.

Training Is the Tool

Next, individuals with the appropriate attributes to lead in specific capabilities—whether as a sales manager or a CEO—can be developed to advance in leadership positions. The focus should be on measuring and understanding whether the person's personality traits mesh with specific needs, and then providing appropriate mentoring, interaction with coworkers, and education and training to enhance how a person's personality traits mesh with job requirements. This allows that person to work with or lead others effectively. The right combination of training and testing help companies fit

people where they will be most comfortable and most likely to succeed.

Of course, you want to retain the *right kind* of employees—those who can grow into greater responsibilities and contributions.

Testing offers recommendations for how employees can fulfill their motivational needs while contributing

to organizational success. Testing identifies whether people work better alone or on a team, prefer a structured or flexible workplace, take initiative or need guidance, think in details or the big picture. Personality testing highlights those characteristics.

Improvement Is the Goal

Online methods of conducting and analyzing the tests can make the training process simpler and more effective. When economic conditions improve, testing and assessment can be used as a recruitment tool to help you understand how job candidates will interact and communicate with other employees and clients. This keeps the retention pipeline full. People are more likely to stay and perform to their potential in careers and positions that are aligned with their interests and styles. Such people are best qualified to spur improvements in quality and service to keep you competitive. **SSE**

Sharon Birkman Fink is CEO of Birkman Intl., providing unique assessment tools. Call 713-623-2760 or email sfink@birkman.com. Visit www.birkman.com.

ACTION: Try using personality assessments.

Performance Purpose

Exert influence to make a difference.



by Jay Forte

YOU CAN HAVE GREAT INFLUENCE in improving the quality of life and the sustainability of the planet by what products you make and by how you conduct business, control resources, and value your employees as people.

For years, the corporate mission was profit; pressure from the market, stockholders, or owners kept the focus on the bottom line. Today, each organization is connected to its world through its employees, policies, attitudes and approach—and subjected to public review and scrutiny in media, blogs, chat rooms, and social networks.

Much of this change has to do with a new type of thinking employee who is the visible face of organization to the customer. They are no longer hidden behind machines, making products. Our products *are* our service, and this service is great or poor depending on the performance (engagement, attitude and passions) of our employees.

News of social and financial catastrophes emotionally affect employees. They bring their feelings to work and demand their leaders respond with a renewed social conscience. What is your response? How can you use your influence to make a world of difference?

- **Look at your organization.** What are the needs of your people? How well do you know them? What could you provide to improve their quality of life? Does your benefit plan meet their needs? Seek to offer greater personalized or customized benefits. In times of personal catastrophe (storms, floods, recession), organize a response to ensure your employees are secure, safe, and well. Be available to discuss national challenges and events. Share information to keep people safe.

- **Look at your community.** Next review the needs of your community. As you identify needs in line with your business purpose, you can create a powerful impact and create a sound financial and societal response.

- **Look at the environment.** Does your business have a positive effect on the environment? Do you run your business efficiently? Each of us alone can't control global warming or other environmental issues, but we can create great collective awareness. Conduct a full

environmental review of your facility or operations. Are you using the most efficient lighting, paper, water, heating, and cooling? Minor changes to fixtures, layout, or hours can reduce energy consumption, show environmental responsibility, and reduce expenses.

- **Look at humanity.** Random killings, terrorist strikes, and discrimination against women, minorities, and gays make the news daily. You can make a presence with your response to human needs in desperate areas. You can also work to end discrimination locally by learning how to hire people based on their talents and strengths—not based on gender, religion, ethnicity, or other bias. When you commit to an employee-focused workplace, you value each person and their contributions.

SALES/CONSTRAINTS

Sales Constraints

What's holding us back?



by Lea Strickland

ARE YOU OPERATING AT peak performance? Do you spend more dollars for less return? When you invest to expand capacity, does it translate into more results (revenues and profits)? If not, you're investing in the wrong option.

Here are 10 constraints: 1) lack of clear business objectives; 2) lack of specific performance objectives for teams and individuals; 3) the goals for teams and individuals don't match the organizational objective; 4) compensation (tangibles and intangibles) reward the wrong behaviors; 5) lack of corrective action for poor performers; 6) lack of role definition in achieving objectives; 7) investing in places that don't expand capacity; 8) inability to execute the strategy because of skill sets, funding, or structure; 9) perception of company, product, service, or technology does not support pricing or positioning; and 10) poor quality in product or service.

Nine Common Traps

Many managers get caught in traps:

- **They fail to align internal operations and external perception.** How you select objectives, pursue strategy, and structure resources—people, money, and systems—determine ROI and profits.

- **They grow revenues but fail to set gross margin and profitability goals.**



By reviewing these areas, you inspire your people. Employees are proud to work for organizations that take social responsibility—they spread the word and become recruiting tools. They are fired up when asked to step up and take responsibility for things that make a difference with others and with the planet. The more you engage them in this process, the greater innovation and ownership they provide. They also find business opportunities as they create environmental and societal responses.

Social conscience is great for business—it makes a world of difference. **SSE**

Jay Forte is a speaker, consultant, talent strategist and author. Visit www.humanmetricsllc.com or www.fire-upyouremployees.com or call 401-338-3505.

ACTION: Have a performance purpose.

Pursuing every sale, regardless of cost of obtaining the sale, and not considering the cost of servicing high-maintenance customers hurt the bottom-line.

- **They use the same tactics in changing or new markets.** They assume that "more is better." Before you add more sales reps, determine whether the current sales force would make more sales if they had better tools, products, service, training, and after-sale support.

- **They invest in activity that isn't revenue-producing, capacity-expanding, or necessary.** Balance investments in technology, sales, marketing, and product development with investment in core infrastructure.

- **They spend on image and "wants" rather than "content."** High-end real estate, luxury bars, and first-class travel are unwise investments.

- **They allow compensation and benefits to grow too rapidly.** Add benefits only as profits and cash flow increase.

- **They don't deal with underperformers who drain morale, resources, and ROI.** Underperformance saps the motivation of others who see slackers getting paid for not doing the job.

- **They don't deal effectively with valued employees who need a new skill set or growth experience.** You might move this person, develop a transition plan, or identify new options.

- **They fail to identify the reason for poor performance.** Invite your people to point out the issues. Be open to the good, bad, and ugly news.

You can overcome what's holding you back, avoid traps, and boost sales. **SSE**

Lea Strickland is CEO of FOCUS Resources and profitability consultant. Visit www.focusresourcesinc.com.

ACTION: Avoid these constraints and traps.

Everyone Wins

Trust your teammates.



by Mark Eaton

TRUST IS ESSENTIAL IN BUSINESS. Daily people talk about the importance of trust, yet few know how to create it. Trust comes when people know they can count on you, when people know you're there for them. When people protect each other, there is trust. When you commit to others' well-being, you get extraordinary commitment in return.

In the NBA, basketball players follow the concept of "sticking together." They know by protecting each other, working collaboratively and standing united against the competition, their chances of winning greatly increase.

In business, the only way you can do your job effectively, be creative, and be innovative is when you know that someone has your back. When you're confident someone is watching out for you, you're more willing to take risks to increase the bottom line. Unfortunately, in most companies, people are just there to collect a paycheck. There's no creativity, no innovation, and no risk-taking—all because there's no sense of trust among team members. After all, if you know no one is backing your ideas, why try to implement them? The chance of failing is too great.

Pro basketball offers the perfect learning example: In basketball, one person's job is to guard the basket. As long as that person is doing his job, his teammates up the court can take risks and try to steal the ball from the other team. If they're unsuccessful with the steal and the competition happens to get by them, they can count on the person guarding the basket to protect the team and keep the rival from scoring.

If the team members can't count on each other, they're not going to take risks. They'll play it safe, stay in front of their man, do their best to not let him score, and stay in a defensive mode rather than taking an offensive position and going for the score.

The same is true in business. People may have some good ideas, but they don't voice them because they don't feel protected. They don't feel that sense of trust or appreciation, so they stay under the radar and do just enough to not get fired. They become

clock-watchers who only care about themselves and their own agenda. As a result, you have people who know only how to complain and whine rather than take action and responsibility. Now you no longer have a team; you only have divisiveness.

If you want people in your company to think of new ideas and execute them, then they need to feel supported. Protecting your teammates is a key ingredient. If you don't have that trust, then things quickly fall apart. If you want your company to grow, to change, to innovate, to succeed, and to rise to the top of your industry, then you can't afford to have a bunch of people playing it safe. You need the creativity and entrepreneurial spirit that comes when trust abounds.



If you're ready for your company to go from a "playing it safe" rookie to an innovative all-star champion, observe these three suggestions:

1. If you're an employee, step out and take risks. What would it be like if everyone on your team felt safe? If you want to be invaluable, be the person people can count on. If you want to have enduring relationships, look out for others. Put others first. When you protect others, they take risks. They know they won't be criticized should they fail. When you protect others, you create an environment of safety and freedom. That's what supports innovation and the immediate response required in a world and market characterized by incessant change. When you protect others, you sometimes give up an opportunity or put yourself on the line. But when you do that, you show people you care. Therefore, let people know that they have your trust and support, even if that's not the prevalent culture. Remember that change has to start somewhere.

2. If you're a manager, become a protector. Encourage your people to come to you with ideas. When you decide to implement one of the ideas, let your employees know you completely support them. Win or lose, you're there for them. If you must, think of your employees as your children. As a parent, your first priority is protecting your young. Like children, adults do their best when they feel cared for and safe. So if you want peak performers, create an environment where everyone feels safe. The ideal manager is like the coach who stands up for his team. The manager who creates a culture of trust is creating a space where people take risks and exceed expectations.

3. Observe how behavior changes in a culture of high trust. One glimpse of trust starts a wellspring of performance and confidence. If your supervisor said to you, "That's a great idea. Take this project on. You have my complete support," how would you feel? You'd likely feel a sense of shock, then a sense of eager anticipation. You'd be excited and quick to tell others on your team what just happened. Your co-workers would think, "Wow. I have an idea, too. I want to talk to the boss about it." So one simple gesture of trust can create a sense of energy and enthusiasm in the workplace, which is really what everyone wants. The more management communicates with their staff that they're creating an environment of trust, the more ideas and innovation that people will bring to the table.

The Keys to Performance

Trust and loyalty distinguish a team from a group. They're what make relationships irreplaceable and irresistible, and people invaluable. When you fight for another person and transcend your self-interest, you change the world.

Trust comes when people know they can count on you, that you're there for them no matter what. When people protect each other, trust is inevitable. It's that simple. When you commit to protecting others, you can expect a big commitment in return.

Trust sets people on fire. When you defend another, you find fresh courage. Fighting for someone else and doing more for others than you do for yourself bring out the best in yourself. And that's where you find the win. It's called the magic of teamwork. **SSE**

Mark Eaton is a speaker and coach who shares the four commitments that bring about teamwork, success and change. Visit www.7ft4.com or e-mail info@7ft4.com.

ACTION: Create a high-trust culture.

Time to Coach

Become a coaching leader.



by Cathy Earley

COACHING PEOPLE SHOULD be part of your daily activities to deliver results, but *is it?* One in three leaders believes that coaching is too time-consuming. This is puzzling since most leaders agree that coaching pays off.

Coaching can be very time-consuming if you get overly involved in your team's work, believe you need to solve everyone's problems, or engage in long discussions of employee performance. Real coaching is *helping others figure out the best way to achieve goals, build skills, and produce desired results.*

Most leaders are expected to coach, but only one in four say that their compensation is tied to their coaching. So, they struggle with competing priorities and see coaching as a long-term development activity, something they must do *in addition to* the "real work," not a tactic for executing imperatives.

Some leaders believe in the power of coaching to drive team productivity, effectiveness, and engagement. They coach employees regardless of mandates. They don't think of coaching as an event to schedule or a reaction to a performance issue. They don't turn the role of coach on or off. It is a daily practice for getting the work done *and* developing their teams for increased job satisfaction and the future talent needs. They are *coaching leaders.*

Coaching Leaders Just Do It

In coaching, focus on five things:

1. Establish trust. Without trust, well-intentioned coaching skills often backfire. A coaching conversation can turn into an interrogation; a check-in can feel like micromanaging; and an expression of concern looks like meddling. Effective coaches talk to their team members honestly and often. They get to know each team member to create a trusting work relationship.

2. Build coaching partnerships. *Partnership* implies joint accountability. Set the expectation that team members must ask for help, listen to feedback, provide candid upward feedback, and follow up on agreements. Everyone has unique values, experiences, talents, and aspirations even if they share similar education or are all the same age.

Effective coaching depends on one-on-one pairings, not demographic trends.

3. Ask for feedback. If you don't ask for feedback to learn the best coaching approach for each team member, you'll waste time trying to be all things to all people. Without feedback, you may never know what works. You may think that you're a great coach, while your direct reports feel your coaching is a waste of time and that you're only interested in giving advice.

4. Delegate effectively. You need to delegate the problem or task (*what* has to be done) by clearly describing the desired outcome and all parameters or constraints (scope, timing, resources, decision-making authority, internal politics). Then your team can determine the best course of action based on their expertise. It takes less time to help employees think through the best

way to reach a destination than it does to clarify the assignment repeatedly.

5. Ask more questions. The more questions you ask, the less likely you'll fall into micromanaging or irrelevant advice. This collaborative approach also shows your willingness to partner. Questions provide a sounding board for employees to explore their own ideas and provide the "stretch" that many employees want from a coach.

Coaching leaders *coach continuously.* Through ongoing dialogue and trusting partnerships, their coaching becomes a natural part of their interactions. Daily they apply their coaching skills strategically, effectively, and *efficiently.* **SSE**

Cathy Earley leads the Coaching Practice for BlessingWhite. Visit www.blessingwhite.com, email cearley@bwinc.com or call 908-904-1000 x8108.

ACTION: Use these five tips in your coaching.

MANAGEMENT/FOCUS

Tough Times

Respond with focus.



by Lee J. Colan

LEADING A COMPANY DURING a slow economy has challenges: What should you change, stop, or continue doing?

Your greatest opportunity to create a sustainable competitive advantage is during a tough economy.

Three Responses

There are three common responses to tough times:

1. Survival vs. opportunity.

The *survival* response assumes, "We just need to stay afloat." Behaviors include: reducing headcount, decreasing development, and controlling expenses, resulting in employee cynicism and sacrificing the long-term capacity to sustain growth. These fear-based, defensive responses reflect the *change equals loss* paradigm.

A better alternative is the *opportunity* response. The assumption is, "Here is an opportunity to improve." This results in upgrading the workforce, strategic cost-cutting, greater employee commitment, and sustained growth.

2. Control vs. involvement. The *control* response assumes, "We know what is best for employees." This results in working *in* the business, not *on* the business, and tight-lipped management that creates distrust and expands blind spots, squelching ownership behavior.



People resist the abyss between *where we are now* and *where we will be.*

The *involvement* response assumes, "We must harness ideas to manage effectively." You work *on* the business and solicit employee input for solutions. You induce more ownership behavior and reduce blind spots by addressing four questions: Where are we going? (strategy). What are we doing to get there? (plans). How can I contribute? (roles). What's in it for me? (rewards).

3. Panic vs. focus. The *panic* response assumes, "We must do something different." This leads to an obsession with

closing the next deal and creating new initiatives, eroding service and creating the "ship is adrift" syndrome. It's five times more expensive to win business from new customers than from current customers. Also, employees want clear direction, not new initiatives, in tough times.

Focus is a great alternative to panic. Focus assumes, "Let's keep doing what we do best." This response reinforces customer service and customer relationships, and sustains your marketing efforts, resulting in improved perception of market position and stronger, more profitable customer relationships.

Put your resources where you are strongest. The most profitable 1/5 of your company is 16 times more profitable than the remaining 4/5. Look at your most/least profitable salespeople, products, service lines, and divisions. **SSE**

Lee J. Colan, Ph.D., is a leadership advisor and author of *Engaging the Hearts and Minds of All Your Employees* (McGraw-Hill). Visit www.theLgroup.com.

ACTION: Respond with focus.

Collaboration

Start working together.



by Kevin Cullen

ABRAMHAM MASLOW'S hierarchy of human needs manifests itself in the behavior of people in observable ways.

Since our work is breakthrough performance, we often partner with a leadership team comprised of people from a targeted operation, facility, or plant. When these teams are designed to be effective, they are comprised of a mixture of senior management, supervisors, and hourly employees.

Since breakthroughs are most likely to be achieved when front-line people are involved, we often work with members of the production facility who command lots of well-deserved respect from their fellow workers. They have a strong desire to broaden and expand their reach into other areas—they want to make a difference.

At this level, the team will have to deal with tiers of management, including union/management concerns, corporate politics, posturing, and impacts to the community. These challenges require the players to include many points of view and find creative and inclusive ways of solving problems without getting bogged down by the confluence of so many different views, perspectives, and positions.

In these situations, leadership teams have to expand. It would be easier to close the door and ignore the different factions and viewpoints and make unilateral decisions “in the best interest of everyone involved.” However, closed-door decisions do not and will not work. Such behavior cordons off the essence of what is required to produce breakthroughs: involvement, creativity, spontaneity, and openness.

As we satisfy these needs, we pass through five levels that broaden our perspective and awareness of a larger set of concerns. This progression culminates with *self-actualization*—becoming the best of who we are meant to be. The highest levels are about being more outwardly directed. We turn our attention outward toward others, as opposed to focusing on our own needs, enabling us to imagine how we might and contribute to a worthwhile cause and make the world a better place.

In coaching leadership teams, we've discovered *three distinctions* that facilitate teamwork and collaboration:

1. Alignment versus agreement.

One difficulty we see is a tendency to think that everyone must agree on everything. Not so. Teams do not need to agree on everything.

Agreement and alignment are not the same. *To agree* is to have the same views and emotions; to harmonize in opinion or feeling; or to come to one opinion or mind. *To align* is to bring into cooperation with a group, or to join with others in a cause.

To agree, others must see eye-to-eye about something. Their opinions and views must match, or they must resolve differences and come together as one mind. Agreement requires united accord and dispels contention.

That is a tough challenge for most teams. *Aligning* allows individuals to have their differences and still select a way to go forward without necessarily agreeing with everything and everyone. Debate can be healthy; however, most groups get caught in the trap of having to agree.

In regard to agreeing and aligning, teams need to work through three areas: 1) large issues—deal breakers that nearly everyone must agree on; 2) matters that people *should* agree on, but agreement is not required to move things forward; and 3) small matters that can be left to a few people who dot the i's and cross the t's.

In the second area, when someone raises a concern or objection, the next question needs to be: “Is this a deal breaker?” If so, debate needs to happen. If the item is not a deal breaker, the decision can get made and things move forward. The group aligns rather than agrees. You can avoid countless hours of analysis and paralysis if you can distinguish a “must have” from mere preferences.

Most people will get on board for a trip without being keen on all ports of call. They can be aligned without having to agree. Resolving matters through alignment is an effective way to make decisions. Having to get everyone to agree to every line item is ineffective. Perhaps two items out of 10 need agreement, while eight items can move forward with alignment.

2: Having a commitment to stand for one another. Opposing groups like union and management don't give up

their positions easily. When our work takes us into a union environment, we are cautioned and warned about the delicacy of the relationship: what things can be discussed and what to avoid, what words are “hot buttons.”

Invariably, the first concern of union leaders is a commitment to take care of the needs of their members. Once they are assured that their members' needs and rights are not at issue or threatened, they are usually open to exploring how they can improve the situation through collaboration and partnership and move forward as a united team to achieve higher production, improved safety, higher quality, lower costs, and the best profitability. The distinction of “having a commitment to stand for one another” allows for amazing and powerful collaboration. It allows everyone to become a leader in new ways and brings out the best of everyone who agrees to operate inside it.

3. Inventing a future together.

When failed mergers, acquisitions, expansions, divisions, facilities, and consolidations come under scrutiny, everyone can lose motivation and become resigned and cynical. Often decisions are made with no regard as to the potential for turning things around. In some situations, we ask: “Is there a way for this to turn out as a win for the company and all involved at the local level?”

Have you explored every alternative and is this decision final? Surprisingly we find that decision-makers often never consider these questions and make decisions without giving local stakeholders a chance to weigh in and turn performance around.

The alternative is the owners/managers and workers creating new ways to work together to achieve success. By agreeing to create a new future together, “opposing” groups can find a way to work together and inspire people.

To produce breakthrough results in companies, new opportunities must be invented and implemented, and people must come together and focus on what it will take to succeed. That requires collaboration, and collaboration requires disparate groups to align without having to agree on everything; commit to stand for one another; and invent a successful future together. **SSE**

Kevin Cullen is a Partner in King Chapman & Broussard. Visit www.kcbcg.com or call 713-223-7230.

ACTION: Seek alignment and work together.



What's Your EQ?

Assess emotional intelligence.



by Jarik Conrad

YOU ARE THE VP AT A HOTEL chain. You arrive at the office Monday morning faced with a difficult dilemma—what to do about Peter, a director of sales.

Peter worked his way up through the ranks. He is smart and dedicated, but he has trouble controlling his emotions. He has frequent outbursts and often talks down to people. His peers hate working with him, and one promising direct report has threatened to quit, again. What should you do?

For many managers who deal with this issue, once the behavior becomes too obvious to be ignored, it comes down to an ultimatum—either the troubled employee shapes up, or ships out. It does not have to be this way. You can prevent these problems.

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to recognize and manage your emotions, while recognizing and effectively responding to the emotions of others. This concept became popular with the release of Daniel Goleman's book on the subject, but it has been sharply criticized in some circles. One reason is claims by some proponents that EI was the cure-all for the world's problems. While this is not a true statement, imagine a leader without it—cold, disrespectful, rigid, unforgiving, and unpredictable. Who would want to work for or live with that person?

EI has also been criticized because people fall into the "either/or" trap, which questions whether EI or IQ is the key to success. Many people discuss these constructs as if they are mutually exclusive, but the recipe for success includes both ingredients. In fact, EI better enables people to take advantage of their IQ. Imagine a person with high levels of both—intelligent, optimistic, flexible, respectful and caring. Who would not want to work for or live with such a person?

To improve your EI, take four steps:

1. Incorporate EI into your hiring processes. Develop interview questions designed to assess self-awareness, interpersonal skills, stress management, adaptability, optimism and happiness. It is better and cheaper to be proactive on the front end than reactive once a person with attitude problems is hired.

To help you to set behavioral expectations for aspiring candidates, ask them: What was your most stressful work experience? How did you manage it? Tell me of a time when your ability to empathize with customers or co-workers enabled you to solve a problem.

2. Assess the EI of your leaders and future leaders. Since we all face unique challenges, an assessment—such as the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQi), the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT), or Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI)—would be ideal to pinpoint specific opportunities for leaders and aspiring leaders. The EQi provides a sense of how people assess their EI, the MSCEIT measures EI abilities, and ECI measures how others assess your EI.

3. Ensure performance appraisals consider how the job gets done. Stress

the importance of interacting with others effectively. Help them to see how to maximize their contributions without minimizing the contributions of others. Give weight to items like communication, teamwork, and flexibility.

4. Make emotional intelligence a cornerstone of succession planning. Along with the standard technical and educational requirements, document the "soft" criteria necessary for effective performance in key positions.

Infusing everyone with emotional intelligence will dramatically increase the likelihood of having a great combination—people who do the right things, while doing things right. **SSE**

Jarik Conrad is President of Conrad Consulting Group and author of *The Fragile Mind*. Visit www.ConradConsultingGroup.com.

ACTION: Assess your emotional intelligence.

SALES/PROFESSION

Pro Sales Selling is a profession.



by Tom Black

AVITAL ELEMENT OF YOUR Attitude is to remember that you are a professional. After all, sales is a profession.

What do most people think of when you say the word *salesperson*? Pushy, high-pressure, conman, charlatan, cheat, dishonest, crooked, twist your arm, say anything to get the sale. Sadly, some salespeople are all of those things!

Salespeople generally have a bad image, because there have been so many bad ones. A professional attitude will set you apart. You can change the image of the pushy, plaid-suited, greasy salesperson. Make up your mind that you're going to be proud you're in sales, and then act like it. It is impossible—yes, impossible—to give a great presentation when you don't believe you are a great professional salesperson.

Robert Louis Stevenson said we all sell something—a product, an idea, or a service. The best attorney is the best communicator, not the one who knows the most law. The best preacher or priest is the best communicator, not the one who knows the most about the *Bible*. The best teacher is the best communicator, not the one who knows the most about the material he or she is



teaching. At the primary level, sales is just effective communication.

Some of the most successful people in all professions got their start in sales: **Harry Truman**, U.S. President—sold clothing; **Billy Graham**, Evangelist—sold Fuller Brushes; **Carli Fiorina**, former CEO Hewlett Packard—Ma Bell salesperson; **Ken Starr**, attorney, **Bruce Henderson**, founder of the Boston Group, and **Rick Perry**, Governor of Texas—sold books door-to-door in college; **Mark Heard**, CEO of Hewlett Packard—NCR salesperson; **Greg**

Daily, CEO of iPayment—sold Christmas trees. That's just a short list of the greats who got their start in sales—be proud you're in that fraternity.

Don't Be Afraid of Change

Be willing to accept change. In *Who Moved My Cheese*, Spencer Johnson discusses the three stages of change: preparing for change, gaining change skills, and achieving a change.

In *The Origin of Species*, Charles Darwin said: "It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the ones who are most responsive to change."

I've seen many salespeople fail because somebody "moved their cheese" and they refused to change. You can embrace change, knowing that change gives you new opportunities. If a caterpillar becomes a butterfly and an ugly duckling becomes a swan, think of what change can do for you. **SSE**

Tom Black is the author of *The Boxcar Millionaire*. Visit www.tomblack.com or call 615-377-7752.

ACTION: Look for opportunity in change.

Beyond Bullsh*t

Engage in more straight-talk.



by Samuel A. Culbert

BULLSH*T HAS BECOME THE Etiquette of choice in corporate communications. This first occurred to me after reading an essay by Princeton philosopher Harry Frankfurt. I now find it difficult to describe communications at work using any other word. Bullsh*t is the WD-40 lubricant that allows people to get along and be effective.

Setting out to define *bullshit*, Frankfurt differentiates it from lying. He sees *lying* requiring people to first give serious consideration to the truths they know and then, self-interestedly, decide to say something different with the intent to mislead. In contrast, Frankfurt asserts, *bullshit* entails little, if any, serious consideration of the truth. The communicator's focus is on what the people being addressed need to hear (or see) in persuading them to go along with, support, or not to obstruct the agenda being pushed. Your focus is on saying and doing whatever is necessary to move a project along, not on thoughtful consideration of the truth you know or a high fidelity representation of it. Instead, the thinking is about what the other person needs to hear and see in receiving your advocacy as self-positive and convincing.

In action, bullsh*t entails going along to get along, saying things not believed, smiling when critical, attending meetings with expectations that only meaningless agendas will be worked, pretending to agree while privately planning to block any action proposed, presenting self-interested views as objective, concealing emotions, telling half-truths and white lies, appearing to like people you don't, avoiding discussions on viewpoint differences that will never in a lifetime be reconciled, and the list of omissions, spin and inauthentic behaviors is endless.

Enhancing the need for bullsh*t is the fact that the world of work is a self-interested world where acknowledged self-interests can be used to discredit any viewpoint and to defeat personally important proposals. At work, all organizational advocacies

must be justified solely on the grounds of organizational contribution and effectiveness. But just as there is a saying that never, in the history of the world, has anyone ever washed a rental car, I believe, analogously, that no one has ever advocated a work proposal that he or she didn't, at the time, consciously think was good for them—with bullsh*t providing the cover.

But it's straight-talk people crave at work. There isn't much people want more of yet get less. We want others candidly to say what they think, be forthcoming about what they have done, and be up front about what they are planning. We want honest reactions to what we propose; we want to believe our views are receiving serious consideration; we want to know when others are no longer listening with open minds; we want to hear the real reason someone resists doing what we have asked. In short, we want to know where we stand.

Straight-talk You Can Trust

Bullsh*t is a tactical necessity. It's required for moving projects ahead, getting things done, and dealing with whatever comes up daily. But it won't provide you the advice, perspectives, and support needed for maintaining your bearings, for formulating new initiatives and charting life directions intelligently. For that straight-talk is required. It's the strategic resource you can trust that is essential to getting you where you need to go.

You need to see through the *youknowwhat* to understand what's required for straight-talk and to discern when straight-talk is possible. It demystifies truth-telling and candor which often is camouflaged bullsh*t tactically applied in pushing a clandestine, self-interested agenda. It provides recommendations for progressively infusing relationships with straight-talk. Most people take absolutist stands as if straight-talk is simply telling the truth as one knows it with no spin at all while bullsh*t is

total spin. Of course all communications involve spin either in the act of a sender or mind of a receiver.

You don't know what you said until you ask the other person what he or she heard. With bullsh*t the spin is self-interested in the service of moving another person in a convergent direction to the self-interested agendas of the speaker. With straight-talk the spin is directed towards creating the circumstance and context for the speaker to communicate more of the truth he or she knows. You can't ignore personal sensitivities and politics of the moment. The trick in straight-talk, and this term is carefully stipulated in the book, is to *spin* your words so that the recipient can get the intended meaning without jeopardizing the relationship which would compromise your ability to tell more truth on important topics at a later time. For example what do you say to a potentially straight-talking



partner when he asks how you like his new comb-over? What do you say to the spouse you love when you are late leaving the house to meet another couple and she inquires what you think of the top and skirt she "creatively" combined for your appreciation? What are you going to do when you are convinced

you are "right" and your boss, in an act of intimidation to shut you down, alleges, "You're being argumentative?"

My definition of *straight-talk* includes an ethical-moral dimension. Straight-talk must not result in mutual gain at the expense of the company (collusion or conspiracy). Straight-talking partners should do no violence to the system or to other members of the expanded team not present to represent their interests in the agendas worked and actions proposed. Straight-talk requires people to learn about one another's interests relevant to job success and worldly well-being and to take effective action to achieve work-related goals. Three-party optimization of interests is required: one's own, those of the straight-talking partner, and those of the team, organization, discipline, and system. Competition should be with competing enterprises and the marketplace—not with coworkers whose efficacy falls to the same bottom line. **SSE**

*Samuel A. Culbert is Professor of Management at UCLA Anderson School of Management and author of Beyond Bullsh*t (Stanford Univ. Press). Visit www.straighttalkatwork.com.*

ACTION: Engage in ethical straight talk.

Marketing Machine

How to market to get sales.



by Mona G. Hilton

WHY DO YOU BUY SOMETHING? You want it (preferred) or you need it.

You don't buy because of pushy salespeople or high-pressure tactics.

If you take a sales call, you are not listening to the pitch—you are preoccupied with ending the call. You sort mail over the trash and toss fancy marketing pieces before opening them!

Marketing is not a substitute for relationships. People buy from people with whom they have relationships. Marketing is a vehicle to *create* a relationship. Consistent, value-added marketing (communications) is the best way to get sales by being there when your prospects *want* or *need* something and the best way to develop relationships.

Prospects ripen, and you need to be there when they're ready, willing, and able to buy. You need to be the first name they think of when they have a problem and need a solution such as yours. You need to be recognized as the *Subject Matter Expert* (SME) when it comes to your products and services.

Marketing Communication Tips

Here are 12 tips for improving your marketing communication:

1. Use boomerang marketing. Give your prospects at least one way—and many good reasons—to communicate back to you. Create a never-ending loop of marketing messages, offer, response, and next-round messages.

2. Offer things of value. Once you know your role (to be the SME), give tips, tricks, valuable advice. Keep your prospects reading (and subscribing).

3. People buy benefits, not features. People do not buy shampoo; people buy great-looking or clean or manageable hair. People do not buy cars; people buy speed, status, style, economy, performance, and power. Mothers do not buy cereal; they buy nutrition. Find the major benefit of your offering and write it down. Your message should come directly from the benefit.

4. Follow the 80/20 rule. Give 80 percent information and make only 20 percent your sales offer in your marketing communications. Don't develop the reputation of a pushy sales pitch. Give your audience value.

5. Color co-ordinate your messages. Project color-coordinated messages in your TV spots, print ads, website, tele-marketing, direct mail. Everything you do must pull in the same direction.

6. Offer an incentive to respond to you. It can be a "weekend for 2", special offer, discount, report, information.

7. Remember the three-touch principle. Your prospects have to hear from you three times before they take note of your company name and seven or more times before they take action.

8. Develop relationships. Give your prospects and customers a way to respond, interact, and tell you what, when, and how they want to be sold.

9. Keep your eyes on the goal. Your marketing goal is to elicit a conversation and relationship with you!

10. Scratch the record. Be unconventional, different, memorable. Find a way to wake people up with creativity.

11. Think differently. Retool your marketing messages—from advertising to trade promotions, to consumer promotions. Think like your customers and prospects. What's important to them? What keeps them up at night? What are their pains? How can you solve them?

12. Become a marketing machine. Position your company as the SME by communicating valuable solutions to prospects' needs in a way that is clear, consistent, and helpful—and you will be there when they're ready to buy. **SSE**

Mona G. Hilton is president of Genesis Global Technologies and author of Sales Advantage. Call 239-337-2667 or email mona@Sales-Advantage.net.

ACTION: Improve your marketing communication.

SERVICE/LOYALTY

Customer Loyalty

You face tough challenges.



by Jill Griffin

TO BUILD CUSTOMER LOYALTY, focus on two key questions: Does our brand ace the *Worth-It Test* in the minds of buyers? In comparisons to key competitors, does your brand prevail?

I invite you to probe these questions—since your customers are asking them! Using Google and other search engines, your customers are comparing *What's available, from whom, with what features, and at what price?* and switching to your competitors when you fall short!

All companies face a new breed of buyer—the search-and-switch customer with a "compulsion-to-compare."

While you can never *eliminate* your customers' tendencies to search-and-shop your brand versus alternatives, you can *tame* these tendencies, make them work *for* you, deepen customer loyalty, and trump your competitors.

Your customers' affinity to compare is made more potent by four forces: *under-served customers* empowered with *unprecedented choice* garnered through *spot-on web search listings and links* and *bottom-up, social media activism*. Within these forces, specific factors feed your customer's desire to compare. Know these forces and factors, and craft better loyalty strategies.

For example, *under-served customers*

are comprised of two key factions: service seekers and newness seekers. Each demands very different value delivery payoffs from the products and services they buy. You must understand these differences and strategize accordingly.

Also, *bottom-up, social media* are causing "context on steroids." Product and service gaffes spread quickly. Today's social media can turn any buyer into a gaffe galvanizer.

In today's search-obsessed marketplace, what triggers a customer's need to compare? What escalates a search into a switch? How can you tame these tendencies and lessen these risks?

Examine your buyer's worth-it mentality and how to get credit for the value your brand delivers. Today, acing the customer's *Worth It Test* is harder. You need perception-making initiatives and watch-dog measures that oversee, on behalf of your brand, an array of new media—rating sites, online communities, customer-generated content, blogs, and message boards. Learn to "grid" your brand's unique perception-making and -taking idiosyncrasies into manageable spaces.

You must differentiate your brand. Prospects must perceive your brand as compellingly different when compared to the next best alternative. And you must ensure employees are creating ever-evolving differences for the brand.

Learn and leverage the new rules for earning customer loyalty. Your sales, profits, and future demand on it! **SSE**

Jill Griffin is a loyalty advisor and author of Taming the Search-and-Switch Customer (Jossey-Bass/Wiley). Call 512 469 1757, or email jill@loyaltysolutions.com.

ACTION: Step up your loyalty leadership.

Phoenix Principle

Create superior performance.



by Adam Hartung

ALMOST NOTHING IS CERTAIN in business. We face a tsunami of change as global competition alters how everything is done—from manufacturing to finance. Many organizations have been humbled or destroyed by changes that their leaders are hard-pressed to cope with. Underlying conditions—including reduced consumer spending, tight credit, and dramatic increases in offshore capacity and capability—imply a prolonged American recession, possibly spilling into global recession.

In these circumstances, the natural reaction is to batten down the hatches. Many leaders see a storm on the horizon, and seek to “focus on our core.” They are reinforced in this belief by authors like Jim Collins and Larry Bossidy who advise setting a plan, then executing—cutting out anything not linked to core. Working hard and getting lean sounds like a smart strategy for getting through tough times.

But, followers of “focus,” “core,” “lean” and “close to your customers” have not prospered. Companies that follow these practices are as likely to fail as other competitors. Many “great” companies—Motorola, General Motors, Circuit City, and Sears—focused on their core, even selling “non-core assets.” And yet they got in trouble. They were rarely the victim of weak leadership, weak execution, poorly motivated employees, or insufficient resources. Yet, when markets shifted they were unable to respond, and fell behind competitors—even failing. How could focusing on core customers, markets or technologies correlate to low long-term performance? What does it tell us to do now when many of our businesses seem most at risk?

An Alternative Explanation

I looked at hundreds of case studies over 12 years and concluded that what improves returns early in the life cycle becomes destructive as growth slows. “Focus” inevitably created lock-in to a Success Formula. Later, although execution was often excellent, growth and results faltered because competitors

caught up with early leader advantages and developed new solutions that were easily dismissed, but over time converted customers. Locked-in leaders suffered dramatic reversals.

In today’s global economy, competitors react quickly and drive down the returns of even successful businesses faster. Although focus initially appears logical as a reaction to worsening performance, it does not bring back lost customers or create sustainable performance improvement. Instead, market shifts shred initial leader returns as customers change to competitors.

Repeated application of best practices, specifically to what were considered core strengths, creates ever greater lock-in to core customers, markets, processes, technologies and cultures. “Focused” companies either extend their Success Formula too far into risky positions that are unsustainable in a changing market, such as Lehman Brothers, or resist changing to new competitive factors for too long, such as GM. Unrelenting focus dramatically impedes implementing new innovations while smothering adaptability.

Opportunity for Better Results

Yet, some organizations create and maintain competitive advantage even in a competitive global marketplace, reinforcing their market leadership. Strikingly, rather than follow the conventional wisdom of focusing on core and protecting existing customers, they are highly adaptable to innovation.

Companies such as Virgin, Honda, Cisco Systems, ITW and GE follow *The Phoenix Principle* to mobilize toward new market opportunities. When markets shift, they push themselves back into growth markets *even when those markets are potentially unrelated to historical customers, technologies, or other core strengths*. They keep growing and producing above-average returns regardless of market conditions.

They follow a four-step approach:

1. Focus planning on future scenarios. Most organizations plan by analyzing historical customers, market segments, technologies, and skill sets.

Phoenix companies emphasize future scenario development—unencumbered by current position. They don’t fixate on where they are, but on where they want to be. What’s important to planning isn’t what might be called “core”, but rather what new market opportunities can be identified and exploited.

2. Obsess about competitors.

Phoenix companies don’t expect current customers to tell them what will be needed in the future. Nor do they expect to have such prescient insight, because they are steeped in what they know—not what they don’t know. They develop a wide definition of competition and obsess over actions those organizations take. They interview lost and unhappy customers to identify competitor moves easily missed, and they never dismiss any competitor, no matter how apparently obscure or weak. They realize fringe competitors often bring to market

completely new solutions that create market shifts.

3. Be highly disruptive.

Disruptions are used to identify and challenge old behaviors. Rather than creating organizations that are restrictive—pushing people to “get on the bus or get out”—Phoenix organizations challenge conventional thinking, approaches, and processes. While employees are highly valued, paternalism is not acceptable.

4. Create and maintain white-space projects in which team leaders are permitted to violate traditional internal standards and ignore current expectations about margin, volume, quality, and technologies. White-space teams move beyond the *Success Formula* to find new ways to grow revenues and profits. They receive *dedicated* resources. They don’t compete for people or money.

Today, success does not come from optimizing a current Success Formula to shore up legacy assets. Success is built upon identifying competitive gaps and filling them. Success requires adapting to dynamic competitive conditions. Speed increasingly trumps scale.

All leaders must react to the new pace of global competition. We’ll never turn back the clock speed on competition.

Followers of *The Phoenix Principle* show they can innovate and capture superior returns as markets shift. **SSE**

Adam Hartung is author of Create Marketplace Disruption (Financial Times Press). He leads Spark Partners consultancy. Visit www.ThePhoenixPrinciple.com or email adam@sparkpartners.com.

ACTION: Create superior performance.



Bill Marriott Blog

He's still learning and growing.



by Bob Nelson

AT AGE 74, YOU WOULDN'T think J.W. (Bill) Marriott would start a blog. Yet that is exactly what he did in 2007 when he started "Marriott on the Move" to create a direct line of communication with both customers and employees.

"A blog is a way to put a personal face on the company," he explains. "People come to the blog to find out what you think. They want to know about you as a person. That's why I talk about my dog, my grandchildren, movies, and the fun things that we do as a family." Personal anecdotes have helped to make Bill's blog popular with Marriott employees and hotel guests.

It's just one example of a life-long dedication to personal learning and growth that Bill Marriott inspires in each of the 150,000 plus associates working at 3,100 Marriott properties in nearly 70 countries. He knows that companies thrive by giving associates a chance to grow. He fosters the spirit of learning and growth by recognizing the value people add and giving them opportunities to advance their careers.

"Many of our managers have come out of the ranks," he shares with some pride. "Our head of North American lodging operations—more than 2,000 hotels—started as a waiter. The head of all international hotels started as a security guard. I started by working in the kitchen for four years. Almost all our senior people started in the trenches. Opportunity and innovation are important to us. You can't just rest on laurels. You need to be looking for a better way.

"People feel the same around the world: They want to be recognized, be taken care of, get fair pay, and have an opportunity. We provide opportunities for people to grow. We have a few core values, the most important one being to do our best to take care of our people. If we take care of our customers, they come back. It's very simple, easily translated, and very global."

Weathering Tough Times

It's easier to take care of people in good times, but is it still possible (or practical) to take care of people in tough times? As Bill Marriott sees it: "Business has become softer, and trav-

el has come down. This is a very uncertain economy, an uncertain world."

Marriott has weathered tough times in the past. "Through the 1980s, we sold hotels. We sort of manufactured hotels to sell. In 1989, we had three or four big hotels that we had just finished, and we had contracts to sell them, but then the real estate market collapsed and the buyers went under. So we were stuck with hard assets—new hotels—and we had no leverage and too much debt. That was very hard. We had to lay off 1,000 people—thankfully we had counselors and placement officers to help them, and we found almost everyone a job.

"This business has grown consistently over the years. World travel and tourism are estimated to grow 6 percent. We see an emerging middle class in places like India and China."

SALES/MANAGEMENT

Sales Obsolescence

Don't just train, certify people.



by Duane Sparks

YOU NEED A SALES PROCESS that fosters continuous growth; otherwise, your salespeople tend to hit a plateau or slide into obsolescence.

Seven factors determine whether learning produces personal growth, skills are used on the job, and lasting changes occur in behavior:

1. Train managers, not just salespeople. Sales managers will either reinforce or hinder behavior changes.

2. Foster experimentation and creativity in training.

When salespeople have fun, they learn fast and well and are likely to translate the learning into lasting behavior changes.

3. Treat salespeople as peers. Respect their opinions. Learn as much from them as they learn from you.

4. Use self-directed learning, where salespeople take responsibility for their own learning and have all needed resources available to them.

5. Measure their pre-training skill level. Challenge salespeople to go just beyond their present ability and to share their knowledge.

6. Create involvement through interaction, exercises, role-plays, games.

7. Include feedback—assessments, observations, job-performance ratings, and certification—to know what's been learned and what is yet to be learned.



Opportunity for All

What's most memorable in a life of service? "It's opportunity," says Marriott. "I look back and think about what we have done: Built thousands of hotels, employed hundreds of thousands of people. Everywhere I go I meet people who have worked for us, somewhere, sometime, someplace. We give people the opportunity to learn. Giving people opportunities is wonderful—it makes me feel that we are contributing to people's lives, their livelihood, and helping them advance and grow."

J.W. Marriott, Jr., was the 2008 *Excellence in Communication Leadership (EXCEL)* Award winner, one of the top honors IABC bestows on a leader. **SSE**

Bob Nelson, Ph.D., is president of Nelson Motivation, speaker, and best-selling author. Visit www.nelson-motivation.com; email bobrewards@aol.com.

ACTION: Keep learning and growing.

Training Experienced Salespeople

In sales training, use four elements:

1. Motivation. If the salesperson doesn't recognize a need or benefit for change, training efforts will be in vain. Ask "What's in it for me if I learn to do things this way?" What gets measured gets learned. A certification process boosts motivation to learn new skills, practice them, and use them on the job.

2. Reinforcement. Create awareness of why certain behaviors must change. Reinforcement after training helps prevent relapses into old behavior, especially when that follow-up comes from

the manager. When the boss expects that the new behavior will be used on the job and holds the salesperson accountable, learning is more likely to transfer into practice.

3. Retention. Evaluate training's effectiveness on the basis of creating behavior change. Know what the salespeople learned and applied on the job.

4. Transference. Apply information to work activities. Involve salespeople in the learning process, provide follow-up activities and assessment, and require them to demonstrate their skills in the field. Management support and reinforcement on the job facilitate the transfer of new skills.

You need a complete, systematic process to help salespeople learn new skills, apply them, and measure the results. Start teaching the right skills and providing a framework. **SSE**

Duane Sparks is founder of The Sales Board and author of the Action Selling System. Call 1-800-232-3485 or visit www.thesalesboard.com.

ACTION: Avoid sales obsolescence.

Act Big, Feel Small

Deliver what customers value most.



by Phil Fragasso

WHAT DO CUSTOMERS want most? It's being able to deal with a big company that feels like a small company. That combination of attributes offers the best of both worlds—the peace-of-mind that comes with size and status, and the personal service of a mom-and-pop operation. Your job is to deliver what the client wants, and this request is eminently doable—and fun.

First, you need to rid yourself of the perception that *bigger is always better*. Bigness envy leads to snap decisions and short-sighted vision. Looking back on the dot-com bust, many firms that went belly-up actually had good ideas that could have succeeded; but the mantra of these young firms was to *Grow Big Fast*. Their goal was not to change the world or add real value to their customers' lives. Instead, they simply wanted to get big enough to support an IPO and cash in. That's not a business plan; it's a pipe dream.

There is no shame in remaining small, as smallness has several advantages. Small companies are less bureaucratic and more nimble, flexible, and responsive. They have interesting personalities and character. They engender increased loyalty because they are perceived as a team of people rather than a faceless corporate monolith. They can be more focused and specialized. They are more creative and innovative because they have less corporate baggage. And, they are closer to the end customer. Smallness is an advantage to be leveraged and enables you to employ a form of corporate Aikido whereby you use the bigger player's perceived strength to enhance your position. Here are some examples of perceived big company strengths that can be used to your advantage:

- **Lots of people.** The most obvious benefit of working with a larger company is its ability to throw more people at a particular project or service. The flipside is that clients will often never work with the same person twice. Partners and senior managers will typically show up for the initial meeting and never be seen or heard from again. With small firms, the part-

ners and senior managers will be there from start to finish. Similarly, inbound calls to a large company are typically handled by the next-available customer service representative.

Small firms have the advantage of employing dedicated service reps who handle all communications with their assigned clients and build personal rapport that enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty.

- **The best and brightest.** With their deep pockets and fancy offices, larger companies are often thought to attract and employ the most talented staff. In reality, large-company cultures often breed groupthink and a sense of entitlement among staff members. Small companies, on the other hand, are more likely to attract creative thinkers who disdain the very thought of big-company bureaucracy and who will work their butts off to prove their worth.

- **More knowledgeable.** Large firms are assumed to know what they're doing and talking about. But technical knowledge is becoming more and more of a commodity. Small firms can set themselves apart by highlighting their depth of knowledge regarding the client's business and industry. Specific knowledge beats generic knowledge bake-off after bake-off.

- **Instant credibility.** The reputations of large companies precede them, greasing the skids to closing a deal or getting an assignment. However, clients hire people, not companies—and there is a big difference between corporate and personal credibility.

The reps of many large companies often forget this, approaching client and prospect meetings with a blasé attitude, presuming that the business is already theirs. They mistakenly believe that corporate credibility can overcome a lack of personal credibility. Smaller firms can beat the behemoths at the credibility game by stressing their personal experience and relevant credentials. Instead of dropping the names of trophy clients and high-profile assignments, small firms can point to real-life examples of how they

helped specific companies—similar in size and nature to the prospect—solve problems similar to the case at hand.

- **Superior technology.** It seems logical that larger companies would have access to and utilize the latest cutting-edge systems. In truth, large-company systems requirements are so massive that they are often several years and several versions behind anything even approaching state-of-the-art technology. Small company systems are far less likely to be bound by the constraints of legacy systems and more likely to be able to deliver the benefits of new technology to their clients.

- **One-stop shopping.** Clients are often attracted to larger firms because of the appeal of having multiple specialties under one roof. The small firm can counter this all-in-one approach, and often better it, by building a network of subject matter experts that can be brought in for specific assignments. This network can be positioned as a handpicked all-star team, as opposed to the client having to settle for whomever the larger firm happens to have on staff.

- **Financially secure.** Clients take a leap of faith when choosing to align with a service provider, and there's a greater sense of comfort when working with a 100-person firm than a five-person firm. That's a difficult objection to overcome, but not impossible. For years Avis successfully bragged about "trying harder" than its larger competitor, implying that it would work hard to earn your business and to keep it. The same approach can work for smaller firms. And while you never want to appear that you *need* the work, there's nothing wrong with showing that you *want* the work—not by bearing gifts of tacky trinkets, but by doing your homework. An upfront investment of time and intellectual capital can demonstrate your professional worth and push aside concerns of financial worth.

Size is a non-factor in delivering a quality product or service. What matters is how effectively you utilize your resources. If clients perceive that you deliver big value, they'll view your smallness as a serendipitous perk. **SEE**

Phil Fragasso is president of I-Pension and author of Marketing for Rainmakers. Visit www.MarketingForRainmakers.com.

ACTION: Deliver what your customers value.

Brand Power

Harness what is unique.



by John Gumas

From the moment a potential customer meets you, views your business card, visits your website, or walks into your office, the building of your brand is at work. Without a solid brand, customers are confused, resources are wasted, and customers won't have the confidence they need to hire you. Getting branding right can make all the difference, and help you grow your company, your assets, and your image.

Branding is a process of positively differentiating yourself from your competition, and ensuring your target audience knows why you're different. Your brand is the intangible component of your company that gives customers confidence and a compelling reason to do business with you.

A strong brand identity ensures that your most important messages are on focus and on target, so that those who need to find you will.

To discover and make the most of your unique brand, take eight steps:

1. Know yourself and your customer.

Each company is unique and has a true, unique brand buried within it. Identifying this "brand essence" is more than choosing catch phrases and cool graphics. Your brand emerges from your specific attributes. What's it like to do business with you? Is technology at the forefront of your success, or is it your people, or a combination of both? How is customer service success measured? How is the phone answered and billing handled? Examine every detail.

2. *After uncovering the unique nature of your business, continue with research and competitive analysis.* Identify who your company is today, and who it must be tomorrow. Ask your team: to think of themselves as a brand—how would they market themselves, visually and in writing; to put themselves in the shoes of your customers; to identify your target audience to explore the benefit and experience that customers can get *only* from your brand; and to analyze the emotional relationship the consumer seeks from your brand.

3. *Look to the future.* Do you anticipate any upcoming cultural shifts or trends that will influence the lives of your customers and business practice?

Using your brand to help your company plan for the future and stay ahead of the game—cultural branding—can help your business succeed long term.

4. *Get your entire management team to agree on the unique qualities* that make your company a success—and figure out how these qualities will translate into everything your customers will have contact with.

5. *Bring your brand to life.* Create an image, both in words and visually, that ultimately forges more successful relationships with customers (and any other targeted group – including employees, stockholders, etc.).

6. *Develop a positioning statement*—a clear descriptor of your company and why it's unique. It must be relevant, differentiable, and defensible and

incorporated into marketing materials.

7. *Create a visual identity that reflects the branding strategy that emerges.* This visual statement must be focused, compelling, and immediate.

8. *See that every aspect of your customer communications,* including the identity program and platform, clearly articulates this unique positioning.

Developing a solid brand means establishing, maintaining, and enhancing the company's image, recognition, and trust among your customers and prospects at every point of contact. Done well, a branding program will pay for itself by enhancing your profile. **SSE**

John Gumas is president of Gumas, an award-winning advertising agency. Visit www.gumas.com, call 415-621-7575, or email jgumas@gumas.com.

ACTION: Create unique brand power.

MANAGEMENT/HIRING

Undervalued Assets

Identify and hire the right people.



by Keith D. Kulper

WHEN WE STARTED OUR search firm 11 years ago, we pledged to remain curious about what works well. Many of our best ideas spring from simple practicality, and a need to get something done in a cost-effective manner. This is why we have so many wonderful innovations that solve complex problems and save money while improving outcome.

I've listened to many vision statements over the years and talked with leaders about the need to attract and hire the right candidate for each position. Usually there are many candidates who can be right for a specific position. When clients ask: "So, how will you attract the right candidate for us?" I reply: "Finding the right candidate is the easy part—knowing that you have the right candidate when you meet him or her is the trick."

How can you best attract and hire the right candidates for key roles?

Leaders come in all types, shapes, and sizes. *Undervalued leaders* often possess the necessary experience, attributes, attitude, style and work ethic to succeed in a specific role, but they could be overlooked in the search or shunned by a hiring team that fails to accurately perceive value. Organizations that seek and attract the right hired candidate often hire an undervalued candidate

who could outperform a higher priced candidate in a key position. To make this happen, you need to consider the position specification/job description and believe in the power of the process that promotes the job opportunity in such a way that the right candidates enthusiastically say: "This job description was written just for me!"

The search firm acts as the steward of the search process in a highly ethical manner with no discrimination. Candidates who are right for the opportunity often may not fit a preconceived stereotype but will be a perfect fit when it comes to experience, desire, and capability. Again, the hard part is having

the ability to see *why* an enthusiastic and experienced candidate is right. This takes hard work on the part of the hiring team, hiring executive, and the search firm.

The *undervalued* asset is what great investors and managers seek to uncover.

When you begin to sign great talent overlooked by your prime competitors, you propel the organization forward. As you consider your approach to attracting top talent, think about the tangible outcomes you are striving to accomplish and then carefully identify what you want the hired candidate to accomplish—by when.

By meeting the hiring challenge, you improve your chances of identifying candidates with a verifiable track record of accomplishment that matches your needs among a broader swath of *right* candidates who may have not yet been noticed by your competitors. **SSE**

Keith D. Kulper is President of Kulper & Company. Call 973-285-3850 or email: kdk@kulpercompany.com.

ACTION: Attract and hire the right candidates.

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