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SERVICE/EXCELLENCE

Lose Customers

Here are 10 proven ways.



by Michael Bergdahl

IF YOU TREAT YOUR CUSTOMERS well when they have problems, they'll reward you by returning to make future purchases. If you mistrust your customers, and make them feel like naughty children, they'll leave you, and spend their money elsewhere! Here are 10 ways to lose customers:

1. Broken promises. Customers get upset when you make promises that aren't fulfilled (over-promising and under-delivering). Always live up to the commitments you make to your customers. Teach your customer service team, "A promise we make is a promise we will keep—every time." When someone on your service team makes a commitment to one of your customers, your company must stand behind that commitment, even when it costs you money. Admit your mistake, apologize to the customer, and do what you can to make them happy.

Remember: unhappy customers will tell everyone they know exactly how poorly you treated them. Failing to keep your commitments to one customer may end up costing you business from several other customers!

When you treat customers poorly, you drive business to competitors! So, under-promise and over-deliver!

2. Shuffling the problem. We've all contacted a company by phone regarding a complaint and been transferred from one unhelpful person to another. "Customer shuffling" is a nasty service practice that some companies use to avoid taking responsibility for dealing



with a customer's problem. When this happens to you, you feel, "This company doesn't really care about me, my problem, or my business." To solve the "service shuffle," create clear procedures that each service rep can follow to address common complaints. When you train your people, and empower them by giving them the decision-making authority they need to solve cus-

tomers-related problems, you avoid their need to shuffle dissatisfied customers around. Empower employees who receive customer complaints to follow up on them, from beginning to end. Customers are happiest when the service rep who makes the initial contact also has the decision-making authority to resolve the complaint quickly and easily. Ask yourself: How important are satisfied customers to my business? You should realize that satisfied customers are the key to your past, present and future success! A satisfied customer is likely to return to do business with you again and again!

3. Poor service attitude. We've all dealt with service people who project the attitude, "It's not my problem." This makes customers angry! When this happens to me, I assume the service rep lacks empathy for my problem, so I ask to speak to a supervisor. This is what most people do. So, you should have a written procedure in place describing what your service team should do when a customer is irate. Monitor interactions between your employees and your customers. Have your service supervisors monitor customer phone calls. Set standards for customer service and deal with employees who are rude or project an uncaring attitude. Your

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company only gets one chance to create a make a first impression on customers—so make sure that first impression is a good one!

4. Making customers angry. Some companies have a way of calming down and satisfying their unhappy customers. Do your service employees know how to do this? What do your employees do with irate customers? Do you have a procedure in place? Companies whose service people know how to satisfy unhappy customers train their people well. To turn dissatisfied customers into satisfied customers, make sure newly hired customer service employees are trained on when to refer customers to a supervisor. During their orientation, use role-play to give each member of your team a hands-on experience dealing with service-related problems that cause your customers to become irate. With a service procedure in place, a strong orientation of new employees, and staff training using role playing, your team will be ready to address customer concerns.

5. Lack of follow-up. You can't solve every problem in moments. Sometimes you need to research the problem and get back to the customer later. Explain to the customer that you need time to investigate their problem, and commit to a specific timeframe for getting back to them. Failing to get back to customers is like telling them that their business is not important to you. It also sends the message that you lack integrity. If you are going to be delayed, let the customer know. Provide updates as soon as you have them. Teach your team to live up to their commitments to your customers and to one another. Customers don't want to hear excuses! Treat your customers the way that you would want to be treated! Teach your team: "Say what you'll do and do what you say!"

6. Alienating customers. Customers are not always right, but you need to act as if they were! Project a positive attitude, along with respect for your customer's point of view. It serves no purpose to argue with your customers—the outcome is never positive. You may win the argument, but you'll often lose the customer. What is a customer worth? Treat them right, you may win their future business, and word-of-mouth advertising. Argue with them, and prove them wrong, and you'll likely to lose them for life.

7. Reaching an impasse. You can't satisfy every customer. Initially, the service rep should try to resolve the problem directly, but if an impasse is reached, ask the customer if they would like to speak with a supervisor. Tell the customer they will be placed on hold for a moment. The service rep then quickly summarizes the customer's



concern for the supervisor. The supervisor then gets on the phone, listens to the customer's concern, understands the issue, and either tries to either resolve the issue to the customer's satisfaction, or apologize for being unable to satisfy the customer. If you can't resolve the customer's problem to their satisfaction, explain why clearly. When customers understand your explanation, they are more likely to accept the decision. Apologize for any inconvenience, thank the customer for their business, and end the call, "agreeing to disagree." Teach this procedure to everyone and follow it to satisfy unhappy customers and continue to do business with them.

8. Apathy toward customers. Your customers pay your bills by spending money on your products and services. But customers can change their buying habits—they can walk away from your business and spend their money on your competitor's products and services. Think about that every day!

What are you doing to make your customers want to continue doing business with you? Are any of the people servicing your customers taking your customers for granted? Is there a compelling reason why your customers should continue doing business with you? Talk with your service team, and do something about it, now!

9. Non-competitive practices. Customers have many options for purchasing products and services. They can use the internet to compare products and services. So, study the competition and their pricing structure for products and services against your own and make adjustments. Don't underestimate the intelligence of the shoppers for products like yours. People are smart, and the market will dictate what you can charge for your products and services. Customers expect you to make a fair profit, but no more!

10. Mishandled product issues. When customers make a purchase, it is easy to smile and thank them. How do you react when customers return a purchase for a refund or replacement? Are your service people well trained provide service after the sale? Your customers will learn more about your company from the way you deal with a return. Are you just as glad to see the customer making a return as someone who is making a purchase? Restrictive return/service policies create bad feelings with customers.

Show your loyalty to your customers by taking care of them when they have a problem; they'll reciprocate by being loyal. **SSE**

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ACTION: Cultivate customer loyalty.

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Seven Failures

These stop your growth.



by Daniel Burrus

IF YOU WANT TO STAND OUT IN today's marketplace and lead your company to new heights, you have to work smarter. Sadly, many leaders and managers get snarled in the glaring failures that derail business growth and stagnate profits.

To avoid the traps that stifle growth, be aware of the seven top failures and know the strategies to combat them:

1. Failure to anticipate. Most managers react to changes that are taking place. They react to customers, react to the economy, and react to government legislation. Instead of reacting, you need to anticipate future changes and plan for them. You can anticipate a great deal in your industry. For example, are cell phones of the future going to have a high-definition screen with high-definition video? Most people think so. In the future, will we have better bandwidth for both wireless and wired Internet connections? Yes. In the future, will we have more storage in our computers? Of course! Apparently you're certain about some future events. So, instead of being a crisis manager and reacting to change, anticipate changes so you can drive growth from the inside out. Spend one hour a week thinking about the predictable opportunities that are waiting for you. List of all the things you're certain about. Then look at your strategies and base them around that list. Only then can you better manage opportunity.

2. Failure to communicate. There is a big difference between informing and communicating. Informing is one-way, static, and seldom leads to action. Communicating is two-way, dynamic, and usually leads to action. Ironically, we have all fantastic communication tools, but we're using them poorly. Are you better at informing than communicating? If you can't communicate internally with your staff, how can you communicate externally to customers and shareholders? This is not to say that you should stop informing people. However, you do need to tap into the true power of communication. When you focus on maximizing two-way communications, you can create a com-

munication-age organization and cause positive change much faster.

3. Failure to collaborate. Most people tend to *cooperate*, which is different from *collaborating*. Even though we often use the word *collaborate*, we're just cooperating, meaning "I won't get in your way, and you won't get in mine—and we'll work together when we have to." Such an approach provides results, but not outstanding results. *Collaboration* is when we put our heads together and ask, "How can we create a bigger pie for both of us?" Collaboration is based



on abundance. Cooperation is based on scarcity (the pie is only so big and I want my piece bigger than yours). Collaboration is about working together to create a bigger pie for everyone. That's how you can get competitors to work with you. Today's technologies enable us to collaborate in new and amazing ways. Use them properly.

4. Failure to innovate. Most companies innovate once, come up with a great product or service, form a company, and then they let it ride. They don't continue to innovate and create new products and services. Instead they start asking themselves how they can be more efficient, do more with less, reduce staff and overhead, and use technology better. Those are all good questions. However, you also want to ask how you can use technology and your people to create new products and services that will increase the sales of your old products and services. The more time you devote to innovation, the more profitable and efficient you'll be.

5. Failure to pre-solve problems. Some people say that a problem is an opportunity in disguise. Nonsense! A problem is a problem. A problem is only an opportunity before you have

it. Most of the problems your customers and company experience are predictable. If you ask customers what they want and then give it to them, you're missing the real opportunity. Why? Because your competitors are asking the same question, getting the same answer, and providing the same solution. You need to think a level higher and ask yourself and your customers, "What problems are you about to have?" Then you can develop new solutions based on the answers you receive. At that point, you can base your product development on your customer's future problems and deliver the product or service right when the problem is starting to hit.

6. Failure to de-commoditize. Any product or service can be de-commoditized. Unfortunately, many companies tend to come up with something new, and then that's their main product. Other people copy the product. Margins get thin. Sales slow down. And they end up competing on price. The key is to take your product and put a service wrapper around it. Take your product and wrap service around it so you can charge more. Look at your product or service and think of ways that you can wrap a service around it to add value. And keep adding value to it every year so you never become a commodity again.

7. Failure to differentiate. Many companies become just like everyone else. They don't continue to stand out. Even though they do strategic planning, it's usually just financial planning in disguise. True strategic planning needs to be more than numbers-based; it needs to focus on how you can differentiate from your competition instead of being and doing more of the same. So how do you differentiate? Simple—you stop doing all the failures of business growth. You start anticipating, communicating, collaborating, innovating, pre-solving problems, and de-commoditizing. Realize that you can infinitely differentiate your company if you're only bold enough to try. Have the courage to do the things your competition isn't doing.

When you know the failures to avoid and the strategies to combat them, you can create an organization that continues to grow despite outside conditions. So learn from these failures and rethink the way you do business. **SSE**

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ACTION: Avoid these seven failures.

Recognize Others

Then the team will improve.



by Marshall Goldsmith

FAILING TO GIVE PROPER RECOGNITION to others will limit your success. In withholding your recognition of people's contribution to team's success, you're sowing injustice, treating people unfairly, and depriving people of the emotional payoff that comes with success. They can't revel in the success or accept congratulations when you choke off that option. Instead, they feel forgotten, ignored, pushed to the side. And they resent you.

In depriving people of recognition, you deprive them of closure. Recognition is the ribbon wrapped around the precious gift of success you and your team create. When you fail to provide recognition, you cheapen the gift. You have the success, but none of the afterglow.

Do you need to do a better job of recognizing others for their great work? You're not alone: about 80 percent of managers struggle with recognition. Why? Their answers say more about them than the people not recognized. "I just got too busy," "I just expected everyone to do great work," "I never realized how important it was to them," "I was never recognized for my work—why should they be?"

Great achievers focus on themselves: *my* career, *my* performance, *my* progress, *my* needs. Great leaders shift the focus from themselves to others.

One of my clients taught me a wonderful way to provide recognition. He first listed all the important groups of people in his life (friends, family, direct reports, customers). He then named every person in each group. Twice a week, on Wednesday morning and Friday afternoon, he reviewed the list of names and asked, "Did any of these people do something that I should recognize?" If so, he gave them some quick recognition, by phone, email, voice mail, or a note. Within a year, this executive's reputation for providing positive recognition improved from *poor* to *excellent*.

Not providing recognition is one of those slights that endures most deeply.

Team Check-Up

If you get regular physical check-ups and maintain your car, you are more likely to have a healthy body and a car

that runs well. Likewise, if you have periodic performance reviews with your team to reveal opportunities for further leverage and professional development, you will have a better team. So, how often does your team reflect on its performance on financial and operational results? How well do members engage with one another on the issues that matters most?

Teams need to regularly assess how they are doing. And leaders need to consider the knowledge, style, and history of the individuals they select. They often neglect to consider how newcomers will integrate into or change the operating style of their team, and even fewer openly address this dynamic with others on the team.

To help your team perform better, emphasize expected results. Focus on the purpose, mission. Assessing team

strengths and weaknesses provides clarity and traction around performance.

To keep focused on key goals, conduct regular maintenance. Engagement and focus occur optimally when people have stretch goals, vividly stated.

Gather your team and address these questions: What is our team's mission? How has our mission changed? What kind of team do we need to be? Where must we be collaborative? What characteristics do we possess that enable us to fulfill our mission? What gets in our way? What one action will each of us take to be a better team member and improve team performance and results?

Commit to doing regular maintenance, check-ups, and recognition. **SSE**

Marshall Goldsmith is author of What Got You Here Won't Get You There. Visit www.MarshallGoldsmithLibrary.com.

ACTION: Recognize people regularly.

MARKETING/BRANDING

Brand Yourself!

Take three microbranding steps.



by T. Scott Gross

THE JEANS YOU WEAR ARE branded. The company you run or work for is branded. And *you* are branded. In fact, you are multiple-branded. But your multiple brands may not be working together. They may even be working against you!

Brands serve as mental shortcuts that help consumers make their buying decisions. Brands tell you who you are dealing with, what they may be selling, and predispose your thoughts about the quality and price you should expect.

Try these definitions on for size:

Any message communicated by any means that creates an expectation is an act of branding. Everything you do impacts the value of your brand. If you manage a company or department, think about how the MicroBrands of the players impact the overall brand.

Any brand intended to dominate a micro-market is a MicroBrand. Think about your local auto dealer. Outside you'll see the global brand of Ford or Toyota. Underneath the logo you are likely to see the name of the dealer principal. But what brand carries the most weight when you are deciding where to go for service? Probably the MicroBrand of the service writer who is

your initial point of contact.

A micro-market can be as small as a one-on-one personal relationship.

Think about your brand as a professional at work or as a partner at home. Your appearance and language, everything about you serves as your logo and influences your MicroBrand in the mind of those you want to influence. Do you own the mental real estate you want to own in the mind of your boss, your spouse, your children?

Powerful MicroBrands are not built by slick marketing with high-dollar graphics. MicroBrands are more likely built with strategic networking, clever public relations, and some event marketing.

Take Three Ladders

To put the power of MicroBranding to work for you, take these three steps: **First, take an inventory of all brands associated with you.**

In addition to your brand as a professional, don't forget the brand you own as husband or wife, a mom or a dad.

Second, decide if your brands are in harmony with one another. Harmonize your brands with who you want to be.

Third, stop letting your brands manage themselves. Start being proactive about the mental real estate you want to own in the minds of people.

In an over-messaged world, it's difficult to stand out. But all you need is a clearly defined micro-market and a powerful, personal MicroBrand! **SSE**

T. Scott Gross is the author of Positively Outrageous Service. Visit www.tscottgross.com.

ACTION: Develop and promote your brand.

The Age of Anxiety

Calm people can save your company.



by Jeffrey A. Miller

STRESS IS AT AN ALL-TIME high. The uncertain economy keeps everyone slightly off-balance. Doing more with less has become a way of life: fewer dollars, fewer employees, and what feels like fewer hours in the day. It all adds up to anxiety overload—and that can be deadly. Elevated anxiety can have severe repercussions, and most organizations are at risk. It takes only one person to break the cycle and turn the company around.

Managing excessive, chronic anxiety is your job. Ensure that employees operate on principles rather than emotions. When people stay in low-grade panic mode, they can no longer think clearly, creatively, and flexibly. They make irrational decisions.

Of course, *some* anxiety is normal and even desirable. All organizations face threats, and anxiety is an instinctive response to *any* threat. But when the chronic anxiety becomes excessive, employees become like a herd of stampeding wildebeests. They start operating on “fight or flight” instinct.

Furthermore, anxiety is contagious—it can infect your entire company. You unwittingly pass your anxiety on to a coworker. She passes it on to someone else, who passes it on to yet another. Soon, the organization is trapped in a cycle of anxiety. Perhaps the anxious employees succumb to group-think. Or one person is unfairly singled out as a scapegoat. Or employees can’t take the stress any longer and start leaving. Or, people are fired to solve the problem, which reappears later with new people because the *system* hasn’t changed.

Six Suggestions

Rather than accepting the cost of excessive anxiety, *you* can break the destructive cycle by taking six suggestions:

1. Strive to be a predictable leader. Your rational system—the official goals, values, policies, procedures, job roles—should be a fairly accurate description of what actually transpires and should be reasonably well aligned with the emotional system. Great leaders are predictable in the sense that their behavior

is consistent with what the rational system would lead you to expect. So, if you want to guess what the leader will do in a given situation, check out the mission statement, current objectives, policy manuals, and reporting structure. People tend to disregard the rational system when the emotional system contradicts it. They will, for instance, ignore their job descriptions if the emotional system rewards them for doing something else, and disregard policies and procedures that conflict with the interpersonal ecology. The emotional system is simply more *compelling* than the rational system.

2. Map anxiety in your situation. Because anxiety feels uncomfortable, you tend to dilute the pain by passing it on to someone else. Figure out where your anxiety originates. Draw a circle that represents you and other circles labeled with the names of those around you. Use arrows to indicate where anxiety is coming from and going. You may find that some of your anxiety is coming from a family or team member.

3. Learn to take an “I-position.” When you have to solve a problem, it’s tempting to worry about how your decision will affect the feelings of other people. But you’ll never please everyone. Trying to control the reactions of other people is anxiety-driven behavior, and it results in more anxiety. To take an I-position, you need to make a principle-based decision rather than one based on feelings and personalities. Taking an I-position may *temporarily* cause anxiety to rise, but over time, the entire system will be able to calm down.

4. Calm yourself with a six-second vacation. When you are in a situation that makes you feel anxious, you must distance yourself from it before you can think clearly. If you’re in the middle of a meeting, conversation, or other incident that is triggering your anxiety, try taking a six-second vacation: Inhale for two seconds, sending the air where you need a little help. It can be sent to any part of your body, mind, or spirit, or you can direct it to

a troubling idea, a present worry, a concern, even a recurring theme. Exhale for two seconds, releasing all muscle tension in your body, starting at the head and moving to the toes. Then do nothing for two seconds.

5. Detriangle yourself. Any relationship seeks to stabilize itself by pulling in one or more third parties. This is called *triangling*. Suppose you have a conflict with a coworker, Mike. Since the two of you can’t reach an agreement, anxiety builds up. You decide to draw in Mary, to get her “on your side” and relieve your anxiety. You have created a triangle—you and Mary against Mike. Triangles sometimes create even *more* anxiety. You can “detriangle” yourself by: looking for the cause of the anxiety; taking sides with issues, not with people; taking an “I-position” and stating it clearly; and maintaining an independent one-on-one relationship with each member of the triangle.



6. Correct an overfunctioning/underfunctioning relationship. *Overfunctioners* take over responsibilities that belong to another person. *Underfunctioners* allow this to happen. It is a reciprocal relationship—neither can exist without the other—and both parties are reacting to anxiety. Too much of this behavior is unhealthy.

Fortunately, either party can break the cycle by taking the I-position. If you are an overfunctioner, realize that you are not responsible for someone else’s success or failure. You can’t do his job *for* him. If you are the underfunctioner, realize that your long-term passive approach serves to maintain the other person’s overfunctioning behaviors (micromanaging or controlling). Get clear on *your* responsibilities.

When you rise above your own anxiety, you start a “ripple effect.” You can’t change your behavior without changing the system. Sometimes these changes are dramatic. For example, I had one client who learned to manage his own anxiety and, as a result, averted a strike, saved his company \$6 million, and earned a major promotion.

Taking responsibility for yourself—giving up the need to blame or control others—requires courage. When you manage your anxiety and find this courage, the organization prospers. **SSE**

Jeffrey A. Miller is president of Jeffrey Miller + Associates and author of The Anxious Organization (Facts on Demand Press). Visit anxious.org.com.

ACTION: Rid your team of excessive anxiety.

Common Purpose

Motivation through mission.



by **Bill Catlette and Richard Hadden**

ON SEPTEMBER 12, 1962, PRESIDENT John F. Kennedy committed the nation to a path of manned space exploration that would take us to the moon. It launched a hope, a dream, and a bold, bright view of the future.

Fully engaged by the challenge, NASA's 36,000 employees, together with 376,700 federal contractors, did the best work of their lives over the next seven years. And on July 24, 1969, astronauts Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin, Michael Collins, and the Apollo 11 spacecraft returned safely to Earth.

We still venture into space, but the results since have been less compelling. Ask 10 people what NASA's mission is, and you'll be met by blank expressions and random guesses. People don't perform in an inspired manner without a big-time commitment to a compelling cause. Every major achievement is accompanied by real commitment to a common purpose. Otherwise, Christopher Columbus and crew would likely have held out for better maps before they sailed off the edge of the known universe. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his supporters probably wouldn't have marched into Selma, and Astronaut Alan Shepard might have suggested sending more monkeys up before strapping his rear end to a relatively untested rocket.

What would happen if you asked your people to describe your organization's mission or purpose? Those same blank stares and wild guesses? If members of your management team were asked individually to write the three top priorities, would their answers reveal incredible disparity?

Here are five ideas to help you create motivation via a common mission:

1. Make the mission clear. Soon after signing on as head coach of the Green Bay Packers, Vince Lombardi whistled practice to a halt one day, assembled his players—who had grown way too accustomed to losing—and got real clear about the core purpose. Picking up one of the practice balls, he said, "Gentlemen, this is a football."

Investment guru Peter Lynch advis-

es investors not to put their money into anything they can't explain with a crayon. If you can't explain with a crayon what your organization is all about and where it's going, people can't explain it, and won't buy it.

2. Beware mission flatulence. You can't go anywhere without hearing or seeing some corporate (or individual) noise, usually expressed on a poster, plaque or t-shirt, about the entity's mission statement. Put your marketing and PR folks to work on other tasks—slick images, hype and buzzwords are not helpful here. Given the cynicism, if you expect people to believe in it, let alone support the cause, it must be simple, straightforward, and not wobbling or morphing into something else as time passes.

3. Make the mission compelling. Modest objectives beget modest effort.

MANAGEMENT/FIRING

You're Fired!

What can you learn?



by **Annie Stevens and Greg Gostanian**

MORE PEOPLE HAVE EXPERIENCED AN involuntary job separation as part of a cost reduction or reorganization, unsatisfactory performance, poor fit for the job, or interpersonal reasons. With layoffs and cutbacks, you need to learn some critical lessons from a separation so you can readily pick yourself up, and gain new employment.

For whatever reason people are released, most never see it coming. An involuntary separation is difficult to get over when it is related to performance, capabilities, or personality. If you experience an involuntary job separation, we suggest that you learn these four lessons:

1. Realize that a job is not a career. A job is comprised of the duties you perform and responsibilities you have for a particular employer. Your career, however, is the sum of all the jobs you have held, your accomplishments with these employers, your educational achievements, and your acquired learning. Jobs come and go, and you can expect to be involuntarily displaced several times during your career.

2. Performance matters. Indications of unsatisfactory job performance,



4. Know that consistency matters. As former NFL head coach, Jimmy Johnson once said, "Confused players are not very aggressive." If the folks on your team see the game or the goalpost changing regularly, or words and deeds not matching up, expect to see some confused, disillusioned players.

5. Have an adversary. The effort meter often gets a boost from an adversary. As FedEx founder and Chairman, Fred Smith said, "If UPS weren't around, we'd have to invent them."

Your people will move faster, get more done, have more fun, and make more money if they share a sense of purpose and direction. Make sure that they get it—*really* get it. **SSE**

Bill Catlette and Richard Hadden are authors of Contented Cows MOOve Faster. Visit www.ContentedCows.com.

ACTION: Share a common mission or purpose.

such as mediocre or worse performance evaluations, should be warning signs that everything is not well, and your job security may be in jeopardy.

3. Keep your professional knowledge and skills and career network up to date. Keep up with new technology or changes in your profession. You must always be prepared if something unexpected should happen in your career. Keep your resume updated, stay in touch with people you may need to network with, and continually make new potential networking contacts at trade associations, community meetings, and other events.

4. Look for warning signs that your job is in trouble: Your supervisor and colleagues stop making direct eye contact with you. You fail to achieve the most important tasks you were hired or promoted to do. People in other departments know more

about what is going on in your area than you do. You stop being invited to important meetings, or being consulted about future plans. You are discouraged from traveling or joining associations. You ignore your shortcomings. You fail to toot your horn with your boss. You don't recognize the achievements of your direct reports. You don't ask for ideas from colleagues.

You may need to update your skills, change your attitude, or transfer your experience to another career. **SSE**

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ACTION: See and heed the warning signs.

Full Cooperation

How to shape perceptions.



by Alan R. Zimmerman

WHEN YOU FIRST BECAME a manager, you tried to project an image of confidence—an image that said you expected performance from others. In a sense, you intuitively knew that “perception was everything” and you needed to “manage your brand.” You did things that encouraged others to see you, your product, your service, or role in a particular light. And that, you hoped, would encourage their motivation.

Effective leaders don’t leave things to chance. They use three tools to shape the perceptions of others to get their full and willing cooperation.

1. Understand how others perceive you. If you don’t like the perceptions you’re getting, you must do something to change perceptions. After all, perception is reality. If you’re not getting all the cooperation you need from your coworkers or customers, then it’s time to ask what image you are projecting. Do your customers see you as apathetically taking their business for granted? Or do they see you as a person who’s eager to give the very best service? Sometimes you have to stop pointing your finger at what the other person is not doing and look at the perception you are creating. And if you don’t like the results you’re getting, then it’s time to re-examine your image and change it.

2. Create a perception of possible pain for noncompliance. The bottom-line question in cooperation is, “What’s in it for me?” People are wondering about the rewards they’ll get if they go along with you. Let them know, but also let people know about the pain they’ll experience if they don’t go along with you. I’ve seen this technique used with great effectiveness. In Indiana, for example, I saw a sign on a fence that read, “If you cross this field, you had better do it in 9.8 seconds. The bull can do it in 10 seconds. No Trespassing.”

And, I saw a creative sign on I-95 approaching Deland, Florida: “Narcotics Inspection Ahead.” There was no inspection, but those drivers who saw the sign, panicked, and made an illegal u-turn were stopped and searched.

Yes, you need to let people know “what’s in it for them” if they comply

with your wishes, but also let them know about the painful consequences of not going along with you.

3. Create a perception of scarcity. G. K. Chesterton said, “The way to love anything is to realize that it might be lost.” People, things, and opportunities seem more valuable to us when we’re about to lose them. We see this “deadline” tactic being used in advertising all the time. And you hear about the “limited time offer” because these techniques work. People hate to lose their choices and chances. You can use the scarcity principle to get more cooperation from others. You can point out what they are about to lose. A company, for example, may tell its employees that this is their last chance to take advantage of the early retirement program.



To get people to do what you want, look at your image and messages. With the right combination of these elements, you’ll get more cooperation.

Increase the Want-to Factor

If you’re trying to get your coworkers to change, you need to be aware of a basic motivational truth: **People only change when they want to.** To pump up your team’s want-to cooperation factor, do three things:

1. Ask brave questions. If you’re not interested in your employees, you can’t expect them to be interested in you and your goals. But if you show real interest, they’ll move in your direction. As Dale Carnegie said, “You can make more friends in two weeks by showing interest in others than you can in two years trying to get others interested in you.”

One of the best ways to show interest is to ask more brave questions:

- What’s most important to you when it comes to your job, your family, your goals, or your future?
- If you were leading this team, what

changes would you make?

- What motivates you most or best?

Remember, superficiality does not communicate genuine interest or pump up another person’s want-to factor. You’ve got to really care about the other person, and that comes through when you ask brave questions.

2. Be likeable. Simply put, people tend to follow people they like. And the more your employees like you, the more you pump up their want-to factor.

Direct sales organizations tap into this principle with great success. Just think about the selling power of the Mary Kay or Tastefully Simple organizations. The home-party attendees aren’t being sold a product by some anonymous salesperson. They’re buying from a friend they know and trust.

So ask yourself: How likeable are you? Would you like to do business with a person who acts just like you? Do you use a warm, inviting tone and smile with ease? Or do you exhibit a hurried sense of impatience? Do you listen with undivided attention, or do you glance at your desk and computer while a coworker is talking?

3. Exhibit authority. Before people can have a healthy want-to-cooperate factor, they’ve got to trust you and your integrity. In fact, one of the most sought-after job perks today is integrity.

Here’s how you can exhibit your integrity and your authority:

- Let people know about your educational background, certifications, and legitimate titles, but let them know in subtle ways. No boasting, bragging, or arrogance. When your employees know such things about you, they have more respect for what you say.

- Refer to what other colleagues and customers have to say about your work. Again, be subtle. Others can brag about your performance whereas you can’t and still be liked.

- Dress one or two levels above those you are trying to influence. If you dress higher than that, your employees may not think you can identify with them. And if you dress below your employees, they may not take you seriously.

- Dress in clothing styles and colors typically associated with authority like black, navy, or white.

Do you want someone to change? To follow you? To be more cooperative? Then it all starts *when* they want to. And they will want to, **if** you follow these three simple practices. **SSE**

Dr. Alan Zimmerman is a best-selling author and professional speaker. Visit www.DrZimmerman.com.

ACTION: Increase the want-to factor.

Sales Success

Learn five critical skills.



by Jeff Thull

WHAT ARE THE MOST important skills a sales professional must have today? First, recognize that a sales professional is a professional, like physicians, attorneys and pilots.

Three critical components—systems, skills, and disciplines—form a solid foundation for exceptional performance. The *System* is a process or procedure that leads to a predictable result. *Skills* consist of the knowledge and ability to execute the system, and *Discipline* is about your mind-set—how you think and execute. It includes the emotional or mental stamina needed to achieve high standards of performance. These three areas represent knowing what to do, how to do it, and having the emotional strength to carry it out.

To achieve exceptional results today, you need five skills:

1. Research and prepare. Before you engage with a new customer, you must be prepared so that you are relaxed, open-minded, and ready for any path the conversation may take you and the customer. Sales professionals don't just "wing it." They seek to understand the customers' industry, business and the job responsibilities before they walk into their office. They guide their customer through a quality business decision. They do their homework to learn the real, complex problems that customers face. They're prepared to assist them in sorting through available alternatives and creating the best solution.

2. Diagnose. The amateur salesperson "prepares to present," but the professional prepares to "diagnose" and to guide the customer through a conversation in a way that brings awareness, clarity, and ownership to the problem they are experiencing or opportunity they are missing. Acquire the information you need to make an accurate diagnosis and design an efficient solution. Understand how the absence of your solution might affect your customer in both business and job performance. Become a true business advisor.

3. Dollarize. Help the customer quantify the financial impact of the situation. They need to know how much it is costing them not to have what you propose. There are three possible out-

comes: 1) they find that the financial impact justifies the investment and move forward; 2) they postpone the purchase until it becomes a priority; 3) they find the financial impact doesn't justify the solution and walk away.

4. Collaborate. You collaborate with the customer to "co-design" the solution in a manner that leaves the customer with pride of authorship and the confidence to invest. This process, which begins with diagnosis, expands with input from your extensive knowledge about the industry. Collaborating in a problem-solving relationship with open and honest communication creates trust. For your solution to be accepted, your customer must understand the problem to be solved, take ownership, and champion the change.

5. Get your mind right. You can raise your results by simply changing your

SERVICE/COMPLAINTS

Leave the Hammer Home

Learn how to complain.



by John Tschohl

MONA SHAW MADE NEWS last fall with the tactics she used to register a complaint with Comcast. The 75-year-old woman was justifiably upset with the company when a technician showed up two days late to install service. She was even more upset when, two days later, Comcast cut off service.

Shaw and her husband drove to the Comcast office and asked to speak to the manager. Told that someone would be with her soon, she waited patiently for two hours before being told that the manager had left for the day. Shaw went home, but two days later she grabbed a hammer and returned to the Comcast office, where she smashed a keyboard, monitor, and telephone. Police were called, and Shaw was arrested.

Shaw's actions earned her applause from frustrated consumers—and she now even has an online fan club. But they also earned her a suspended sentence for disorderly conduct, a \$345 fine, and a restraining order.

All of us have experienced bad customer service; there is, however, a more effective—and lawful—way to register a complaint and to get the service you deserve. Follow seven steps:

mind. How you think impacts how you behave; your mind-set is the foundation for success. The right mind-set is first an intense focus on bringing value to your clients. You believe and behave as if your success is an automatic by-product of your clients' success.

Sales professionals believe that their success will come from taking care of their customers and helping them become successful. They approach their customers thinking, "How can I help them succeed?" rather than "What can I sell them?" They think like a business person, not a salesperson. They see sales as a process done *with* the customer rather than *to* the customer. **SSE**

Jeff Thull is a strategist, valued advisor, CEO of Prime Resource Group, and author of *Mastering the Complex Sale*. Visit www.primeresource.com.

ACTION: Develop these five skills.

1. Be prepared. Keep all sales receipts, warranties, canceled checks, product tags, repair orders, and other information for what you purchase.

2. Be diplomatic. If you approach a service rep and start yelling and name-calling, you put that person on the defensive and decrease your chances of having that employee's cooperation.

3. Be persistent. If that employee is unable—or unwilling—to help you, move your complaint up and ask to talk with the manager. If you still are not satisfied, contact the owner or president.

4. Be clear. State how you were wronged—the product didn't work properly, for example, or the service wasn't delivered when promised. Then state what you want the company to do to correct the situation. Be specific.

5. Set a time limit. Give the company a deadline for righting the wrong. Ten working days is the norm.

6. Document everything. Keep copies of all correspondence. If you write to the president, keep a copy. If you talk to an employee, write down the employee's name, and the date, time, and a summary of what was said.

7. Take it to the streets. Contact a consumer group or media with consumer advocates who investigate—and air—your complaint and help resolve it. Bad publicity is a strong motivator for a company to solve a problem. **SSE**

John Tschohl is an international service strategist and speaker and author of *The Customer is Boss, Loyal For Life*. Call 952-884-3311, email: quality@servicequality.com or visit www.customer-service.com.

ACTION: Make your complaint heard.

The Best Service

It may be no service at all.



by **Bill Price
and David
Jaffe**

CUSTOMER SERVICE IS BROKEN: LOYALTY is hard to achieve when customers encounter broken processes (incorrect invoices) or missed promises (late shipments) or confusing offers, which force customers to call, email, chat, write letters, or stomp into the branch office to complain.

For years we've coped with these complaints instead of figuring out why customers have to spend their precious time (and our precious resources) to seek a solution. What if we could "challenge" the demand for service and fix the problems for once and for all and find new ways to deliver great customer experiences?

This is the core premise of "the best service is no service." Customers shouldn't have to contact organizations for pre- and post-sales service or tech support—everything should work perfectly, be clear, and not force customer service. Do we wake up thinking "I think that I'll call my utility (or bank or online retailer) to get my account fixed!"? No! We want this to work right!

After suffering for years as customers, striving to put in place "Best Service," we decided that "enough is more than enough" and laid out the *Seven Principles of Best Service*.

Four elements link these seven principles: 1) you need to put in place closed loops with your customers and between customer service and the rest of the company; 2) customer service is the "canary in the coal mine", not the culprit; 3) we've been measuring the wrong things; and 4) executives need to understand why customers bother to contact the company.

Here are the *Seven Principles of Best Service*:

1. Eliminate dumb contacts. Why do we invest in new CRM technologies and systems to cope with contacts that are not adding value to the customer or to the company, for example: "I just got this order cancellation notice—what gives?", when the company is churning out erroneous notices. Let's fix the cancellation system and do away with all

of these contacts. Our experience shows that 35 percent of the customer contact volume (contacts X handle/process time X handle costs) should be handled using self-service or proactive measures, and another 25 percent should never get handled at all.

2. Create engaging self-service. Most web- and IVR-based self-service doesn't work well, frustrating customers and forcing them to call or send an email to find out what they tried to discover or share by themselves, yet we continue to invite (or require) our customers to try FAQs that are not "frequently asked" or we bury useful links below the fold. Best practice is to engineer self-service offerings to ensure

an 80 percent success rate, just as Alaska Airlines does for its online support and Citibank Card does for its IVR balance inquiry; success rate = number of customers who find exactly what they need divided by those who attempt self-service. Do you know what your self-service success rate is? If not, it's time to figure it out! Even 80 percent means that 20 percent of your customers are failing, and if you're lucky they will call or email or chat with you; if not, they may simply go away or tell 1,000 others in a blog entry.

3. Be proactive. Utility companies usually don't want their customers to call them to say they don't have power—they know and have sent outbound automated messages to customers to reassure them when power will be restored. Amazon and other companies that send order confirmation or shipment confirmation messages are also providing useful proactive alerts, as are airlines warning passengers with automated messages that their flight is canceled before they arrive at the airport. If you know that something's broken, it's better to tell your customers than let them discover it.

4. Make it easy to contact your company. Kingfisher Airlines in India, whose CEO invites email messages to him on the website so that he can ensure that his "guests" (his passengers) enjoy "the good life". Few other CEOs do this, and many companies

wind up practicing "contact prevention" (such as hidden 800 numbers or long email response time). Like the proverbial iceberg, 75 percent or more of your customer disquiet never gets expressed, and so it's much better to invite contact and fix the problems.

5. Own the actions across the company. Customer Service causes few contacts; instead, it's more like the "canary in the coal mine" that handles or copes with mistakes or confusion produced by IT, billing, marketing, or other departments. What happens if Customer Service reports the contacts its handles for the other departments and calculates the cost? Communal work on solving the customer problems! Here executives can "own" actions that the departments cause, working with Customer Service to diagnose and implement self-service programs or to eliminate the root cause entirely, and presenting to the CEO, Board, and shareholders how they have reduced the contact rates.

6. Listen and act. Customer Service is one of the best places to listen to what customers are saying, and act on what they are saying. Many of Amazon's banner features such as "drop down 1-click" came from listening and acting to what the customer is saying in the midst of the call or

email, and companies such as Mars now has personalized messages on its M&M candies, after listening to requests from customers.

7. Deliver great customer experiences. We're awash in metrics that have nothing to do with customer service excellence, such as AHT (average handle time). The core metric in Best Service is to cut the rate of incoming contacts per driver X, where X = orders or customers or statements. Customer service doesn't cause many of the contacts that it handles, but there is one exception—mistakes that lead to more contacts. We call these repeat contacts snowballs—a better metric than "first contact resolution" that is prone to bias.

When you embrace "the best service is no service" ethic, you benefit from lower support costs and higher customer loyalty. Make service "fast and simple" for your customers so that they don't need to contact you for support or care—ensure that everything works right the first time. **SSE**

Bill Price and David Jaffe are coauthors of The Best Service Is No Service. Visit www.drivasolutions.com.

ACTION: Apply these seven principles.

What' in a Name?

Birthing a new global brand.



by Michelle Rodwell

WHAT'S IN A NAME? EVERYTHING! Brand building is like building a house. You need the right blueprint, tools, materials, and resources. But to make a house a home, you need people and love. A well-developed brand demands that the design is functional; details are cared for and inspire feelings of happiness.

As International Brand and Marketing Director for a global services company operating under two different names in North America and Europe, we faced a vexing challenge: Could we introduce a unified global brand name that celebrates our history and roots while presenting a focused and consistent organization with a clear vision to customers?

Our journey of building a brand started in 2006 with customer research that led to a decision to change our name, allowing the company to move away from the association with pests (Rentokil Pest Control), unify the organization, and position us for growth. On 27 March 2008, Initial Tropical Plants, the leading provider of plants and services for the workplace, will become *Ambius*. Our North American name change follows the global brand name change from Initial Tropical Plants and Rentokil Tropical Plants to *Ambius*.

The name *Ambius* was created from the word *ambiance*. Our new name came from thinking about people and plants, and our role in creating the best environment that people can work and relax in. The five-leaf shapes of the *Ambius* leaf icon represent the five senses: sight, sound, smell, touch and taste. We believe an *Ambius* environment can stimulate people's senses to inspire ideas, improve health, and lift moods.

Here are six ideas that worked for us:

1. Find the big defining idea. *Ambius* represents customer intimacy and a holistic strategy that stimulates the five senses. The big idea led to the development of four pillars—Inspire, Connect, Engage and Grow—which provided the framework for our mission.

2. Put the customer first. The new brand must be personally relevant and motivating to customers and prospects and tap into rational and emotional components of the decision-making process. We conducted qualitative cus-

tomers research in the US, UK, and Sweden that answered key questions to help us define the brand.

3. Own the brand. We conducted research to access cultural meanings, pronunciation, translation and identified similar names and products. The research verified that our name *Ambius* withstood cultural language and could be trademarked and registered.

4. Realize that it takes a village. Critical to the success was setting clear goals, inspiring people with vision, connecting the best ideas, and championing great marketing. We formed teams to innovate strategically.

5. Champion complexity. Rebranding 14 countries in 16 months requires constant communication, solid commitments, informed decisions, and detailed follow through. Our orchestration challenge mandated a phased

approach. We developed all launch materials, prepared guidelines, and shared a step-by-step re-branding guide. Each country adapted the materials for their local culture and markets.

6. See branding as an investment. Strong brands increase shareholder value. We developed our brand budget with care by allocating funding based on number of colleagues and customers.

Our *Ambius* brand introduction has featured events around the world where we create, energize, and motivate our brand evangelists. Our new global name is our most visible way to present and reinforce our brand. It symbolizes all we are in a synergistic way. **SSE**

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ACTION: Consider renaming or rebranding.

MANAGEMENT/DO NOTS

Know What Not to Do

Obey 10 commandments.



by Eric Thompson

THERE ARE MOUNTAINS OF advice for managers to follow—what to do, how to behave, moral compasses, and lessons to be learned from Attila the Hun and Shakespeare.

Since our personal values are based upon the negative admonitions of the 10 Commandments (“Thou shalt NOT”), it is time to render the new 10 commandments for sales and service leaders:

1. Thou shalt not play the victim card. You may generate sympathy, but who follows a victim to the future? Nobody.

2. Thou shalt not begrudge other's success. Even saying that someone only succeeded because they were lucky to be in the right place at the right time sends a “sour grapes” message.

3. Thou shalt not blame the absent. Talk with respect about the past, with realism about the present, and with optimism about the future. Blame leveled at those who can't answer leaves you wondering “what will be said about me when I am not present?”

4. Thou shalt not strut the hubris. The message communicated is one of behavioral gloating. Self-congratulation often appears as a reciprocal proclama-



tion of the failure of others.

5. Thou shalt not make money your mantra. Those who communicate “we are in business for profit only,” create the wrong impression. Profit is not as simple as revenue less expenses—any accountant can manipulate numbers!

6. Thou shalt not grind your guilt. Stop feeling sorry for yourself and letting everybody know how repentant you are for the negative consequences of one of your decisions. Admit your error and move forward quickly.

7. Thou shalt not know it all. Ask for help, and show some humility. Knowing it all leaves no room for followers to develop, no room for making decisions, and guarantees most decisions land on your desk.

8. Thou shalt not gotcha. When you do not say *yes* or *no*, you imply either a *maybe* or *Do it wrong and I gotcha!*

The threat of a *gotcha* is a demotivator and inhibitor and *maybe* can stop forward progress.

9. Thou shalt not mock and deride. You may intend to display a sense of humor, but you leave the impression, “When will it be my turn to be the butt of such mocking and derision?”

10. Thou shalt not mistrust others. Trust must be given before it is reciprocated. You must earn the trust of your people first. Mistrusting others earns the same mistrust in return.

Violating any of these commandments will make you less effective. **SSE**

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ACTION: Know what not to do.

Start Selling

Stop procrastinating.



by Michael Masterson

MOST PEOPLE AVOID SELLING their product or service, but nothing is more important. So, stop procrastinating and start selling. Place your primary focus on sales. Nothing matters more. If no one is buying what you want to sell, you're just wasting time and money on a business that has no future.

To build a successful business, get the product ready to sell, but don't worry about perfecting it. Then sell it. If it sells, make it better.

People work so hard to avoid selling because selling is not easy. Selling can be terrifying. It can be tough, gritty, unglamorous work. But when you make that first big sale, you realize it's also exhilarating. You probably won't succeed in business until you can sell your product or service in your sleep.

Your top priority should be building a customer base—selling. Invest most of your time, attention, and energy (80 percent) in selling—and 20 percent toward everything else.

Nine Tips

No matter how great you think your product is, it won't sell itself. You must become your business's foremost expert at selling. Here are nine tips:

1. Before you do anything else, make your first sale. Nothing is more critical than making your first sale for two big reasons: first, it creates cash flow; and second, making the first sale proves that your big idea is as great for others as you thought it would be. There is only one way to test your product, and that is by selling it. The faster you can find out whether your idea will sell, the better for you and your business.

2. Know that the customer really is always right. If you've had some success in the past, you may have strong feelings about what sort of product or sales campaign will work for your new business. Use your instincts to shape your plans, but never commit the bulk of your capital to a project until you have tested your idea. Your customers, not you, are the ultimate arbiters of what is good and valuable and exciting. The sooner you can find out what they

think—whether it supports or contradicts your judgment—the better.

3. Discover your magic three. Perfect your combination of media, pricing, and positioning to bring in your most qualified customers. This is the *optimum selling strategy* (OSS). Figuring out your OSS will require you to answer four questions: *Where are you going to find your customers? What product will you sell them first? How much will you charge for it? How will you convince them to buy it?* Once you know your OSS, run with it. Discovering the OSS for your product will put your business on the right path to growth and profitability. It will make everything that happens afterward easier. Problems will be easier to solve. Obstacles will be easier to overcome. And objectives will be easier to reach. Your business will grow quickly, because you've taken care of its biggest problem: acquiring new customers without depleting your bank account.

4. Find the best locations. Find the best places to sell your products. Think about where the customers who will be most interested in what you are selling will be. Assemble a master list of media placements—a map of where all the marketing activity is taking place. Find out not just where your competitors are advertising, but also how often they are advertising and, if possible, how much they are spending. You want to know where the most popular locations are and what locations your competitors go back to.

5. Don't pin all your hopes on one idea. Figure out your plan B. Starting with a single product in mind is usually a big mistake. For every single-minded success, there are dozens of single-minded failures. To avoid that trap, stay flexible about the details of your product idea. First, find out what products are hot in the market. Then, determine if your product idea fits that trend. If it does, move forward; if it doesn't, move on to plan B. Plan B involves devising me-too versions of several hot products and then working to improve them in some

way by adding features or benefits the originals lack. If one version doesn't work, you have several other ideas in mind that might work better.

6. Find the right price for your product. The price you charge for your product has a major impact on sales. Start by learning what the competition is doing. You will need to find the optimal selling price—a price at which the selling campaign will yield the greatest profits. This optimal price can change during the lifecycle of the product—being higher when the product is hot, for example—but it is always important to know. If you deviate from it significantly, you will reduce profits.

7. Figure out your product's unique selling position or USP. You can sell your product by talking about its many benefits, but you will find that the most successful ads highlight a single benefit. To sell a new product into an established market, either make it—in some

way—*better* than the competition, or make it—in some way—*seem* better. When this benefit is presented as uniquely characteristic of your product, you have an advertising proposition that can last and last.

8. Create great, benefit-driven ad copy. The difference between a great copy concept and a not-so-good concept can be a difference of 100 percent in response rates, sales, and profitability. The only way you can discover the best copy platform is by testing it. Test many different media as you can at two or three different prices and using at least two different platforms.

9. Use direct marketing to test new ideas. Direct marketing is the best way to test new ideas—it's fast and cheap, and it enables you to do more than ask people what they might do (like surveys and focus groups). You give them a chance to actually do it—by selling them your product. Use direct marketing early in your selling efforts to learn the best ways to sell your product.

You won't understand your product until you can sell it. And until you can, don't expect other people to sell. As the business grows, you can let other people do most of the selling. But by establishing marketing credentials early, when the selling secrets of your product are unknown, you'll gain a deep understanding of your business. **SSE**

Michael Masterson is the author of *Ready, Fire, Aim* (Wiley). Visit www.michaelmasterson.net.

ACTION: Start selling early.



Proactive Services

It's your source of advantage.



by Conrad Elnes

WHEN COMPETING FOR sales, do your salespeople sell your company's competitive advantages or do they drop the price? Although salespeople have learned the features and benefits of their products, they rarely understand and employ their company's competitive advantages. Therefore, price (profit) discounting becomes their alternative to an empty order book, particularly in recessive times.

Many sales involve defeating the incumbent supplier and other competitors. The lack of an effective plan to displace the incumbent and eliminate all others from consideration early in the sales process is a major cause of lost sales. Also, if your competitor is the incumbent, he/she will use the advantages of incumbency to keep your company out.

You must also compete with those who are planning to entice your current high-value customers to leave you, thus raising retention and profit issues for you to deal with.

Developing ways to insulate your current customers against competitors is essential. As the incumbent supplier, your staff must develop new services, positive attitudes concerning customer service, and new skills to help them provide the spectacular service that delights customers, strengthens relationships, and keeps competitors out.

Winning Solution

Quality, price and service are the main competitive arenas. Since many of your competitors can meet or beat your quality and price, your sustainable competitive advantage must be in the areas of service and relationships. Reactive services—those everyone provides—are customer expectations, not competitive advantages. They are the price of admission. Competitors will match any you have in order to neutralize the advantage you hope to enjoy. To secure new customers and keep them, you must “break” your existing service paradigm.

Breakthrough Proactive Services (BPS)—your paradigm breakers—are the service design and delivery breakthroughs you develop now (but your

competitors won't offer for two or three years). Your customers and prospects will want these unique services immediately after you develop them, and you will be their only source.

Your competition won't be aware of your BPS, or can't match them quickly. Leapfrogging competitors with the BPS of the future helps make you more successful in gaining new customers, developing impenetrable relationships, and preventing the damage caused by price discounting to close sales.

Answering five questions will help you determine the value of developing BPS: 1) Is your revenue/profit growth hampered by the price discounting necessary to acquire and keep customers? 2) Are your products or services perceived as commodities? 3) Is the loss of

the lifetime value of the customers filched by competitors of concern? 4) Is your closing ratio on new business and current customers optimal? 5) How will you be better off once you have developed solutions to these issues?

All customer-facing people in your organization must be committed to creating, implementing, selling and fulfilling the promised services.

Your competitors are either a little bit ahead of you, or a bit behind and striving to surpass you. When prospects perceive uniqueness in your product or service, price ceases to be the major factor in their purchase decision. **SSE**

Conrad Elnes is CEO of STI International and author of Inside Secrets Of Outstanding Salespeople (Prentice-Hall). Visit www.salesinstitute.com.

ACTION: Engage in proactive services.

MANAGEMENT/PRODUCTIVITY

Time Wasters

Avoid recession rumination.



by Mark Murphy

ACCORDING TO A NEW study by Leadership IQ, workers waste 25 percent of their workday, and that number is up 44 percent over last year. The biggest reason for this increase in wasted time is *Recession Rumination*.

Leadership IQ conducts an annual survey of workplace slacking. In February 2007, workers reported wasting 1.6 hours per an average 9.1 hour workday. In February 2008, these same workers reported wasting 2.3 hours per an average 9.2 hour workday, an increase of 44 percent!

The Top 5 timewasters were the typical culprits: 1) surfing the Internet for shopping (17%); 2) surfing the Internet for entertainment (15%); 3) surfing the Internet for personal e-mail (10%); 4) chatting with co-workers (9%); 5) daydreaming about positive topics (9%).

But in February 2008, the Top 5 timewasters were different and clearly influenced by fears about a recession: 1) surfing the Internet for career improvement (21%); 2) surfing the Internet for personal finance (17%); 3) daydreaming about negative topics (12%); 4) chatting with co-workers (9%); and 5) surfing the Internet for entertainment (7%).

In times of great anxiety, like an impending recession, people can get

stuck in a self-reinforcing cycle where they ruminate about their anxiety which, ironically, only increases their anxiety. And of course, this vicious cycle destroys their productivity.

Fortunately, there is a cure for *Recession Rumination*. Workers that rated their managers as highly effective reported significantly lower amounts of wasted time than others. The survey questions that most predicted managerial effectiveness include: “If I shared my work problems with my direct boss, I know that he/she would respond constructively.” “I know exactly what actions I should undertake to fulfill the strategy and vision.” “My direct boss



recognizes my accomplishments.” And “My direct boss pushes me to expand my skills and knowledge.” Effective managers cure *Recession Rumination*.

Managers who set clear expectations, respond constructively to problems, recognize accomplishments and stimulate people to grow, stave off wasted time. These effective managers keep people at the optimal levels of engagement and challenge. They push hard enough to keep people's minds occupied, but not so hard that people become demoralized and burned out.

Recession Rumination is not affecting all groups equally. Workers between ages 41 and 50 experienced the biggest increase in time wasted (62%) over the past year, even though their wasted time was lower than other groups. **SSE**

Mark Murphy is CEO of Leadership IQ, training companies how to motivate their workforce. Visit www.LeadershipIQ.com.

ACTION: Keep people productive.

The Service Edge

Train people to use their humanity.



by Jay Forte

EMployees who are think, invent, create, contribute, feel and respond with passion activate their professional EDGE. Employees who are human in their jobs out-perform, out-last and out-invent others. Our humanity is our EDGE; it builds customer relationships, invents solutions, creates new products, finds the extra effort to complete tasks and wants to make a difference.

Each day we have to think through our responses to each customer; all customers are different, and one size service does not create loyal customers. In today's economy, employees interact all day with people; personal rapport and relationship-building are center stage. Employees must care about customers to provide service worthy of loyalty. Employees must care about their peers as people in order to work effectively with them. Employees must be fully present—heart and mind, emotions and intellect—to respond in the way that wins customers and drives the business.

The front-line employee is now more influential in performance and profitability. Each employee, by the way he thinks and responds, creates the potential for extraordinary service events and loyal customers—or not. Each employee is now a player in the success of the business because each is the face of the business to the customer. This employee has to be excited, passionate, and happy in his role to perform well. Humanity is now the critical component of an extraordinary service brand identity. Humanity is now a competitive advantage. And, your role as manager is to encourage, accept, inspire and develop the human service EDGE.

Four Power Areas

This EDGE can be broken down into four power areas: emotions, thinking, inventing, and the will to succeed.

1. Emotions. Employees are thinking and feeling creatures; emotions come bundled with them. Many managers believe that emotions do not belong in the workplace; they are inappropriate or too difficult to deal with. But, the best performance happens when employees are passionate about what they do.

Employees who are encouraged to be human at work, cheer and applaud success and are disappointed with failures. They fully participate because they are welcomed for who they are. Emotions drive performance.

No longer is it effective to hire people who look similar or who share similar experience or backgrounds; today, each role requires a particular way of thinking, and the best employee for the role is one who has the talent in the areas that the job requires. What matters is how each employee thinks and how he activates his personality and passion in the role. The better matched an employee is to his



role, the greater interest and passion an employee will bring to his performance. The greater passion, the greater the connection to inventing, problem-solving and dealing with customers.

Are your employees passionate about life or work? Do you do to encourage them to get excited about what they do and how they relate to customers? Are emotions allowed? Is it okay to be human? Is fun and great energy encouraged at work?

2. Thinking. A service economy is a thinking economy; each time a customer comes in or calls, the employee must be engaged and thinking to know how to provide the right response for the customer, and then to change for the next customer. To access the Human EDGE, you must encourage employee learning, education, and creative thinking. Enable employees to try new things, build skills, exercise minds, and share what they know. This focus on “thinking your way through the day” engages employees and empowers them to participate in running the business.

The more employees are allowed to think, the more vested they become in

their performance and in the results. The more you think for employees, the less they think on their own. Your competitive EDGE is in your thinking.

Do you require your employees to think their way through their day—even if some of their thinking leads to errors or failures? Do you applaud their ability to invent their responses and use what they know to think through powerful responses? Do you create a workforce that encourages each other to think and to share what they know? Do you hold employees accountable for the success or failure of their thinking and their responses?

3. Inventing. Even though most of us were better at inventing and creating as kids, we still have the ability. You must make it easy for employees to reconnect to their ability to invent, create and propose new ideas to advance service levels, product quality and performance. As author Seth Godin says, “the bland and boring spot has been taken;” that means that our success is in the creative and innovative. So, allow the unconventional to be considered as a method to invent the best responses and solutions.

Do you practice being creative with your employees? Do you invite suggestions for improvement? Do you make work fun and engaging? Do you support cross-training and job-sharing?

4. The will to succeed. The will to succeed drives employees to higher performance. The more successful a person feels, the better he performs. The best way for employees to feel successful is when they know what is expected of them and what adds value. They must be given the tools and opportunity to achieve. You can help employees succeed by creating performance expectations (identify what success looks like) and allow them to have a voice in decisions and own their success.

Do you create specific performance expectations or goals for each employee? Do they have a voice in creating these expectations or goals? How do you celebrate when goals or performance expectations are achieved? Do your employees own their success?

The Human EDGE is key to extraordinary performance and a competitive service advantage. Great performance happens when the “whole” employee—thoughts and emotions, mind and heart—is present at work. This is your greatest competitive advantage. **SSE**

Jay Forte is a speaker, performance consultant, talent strategist and author. Visit www.humanmetricsllc.com.

ACTION: Gain the human EDGE.

Genghis Style

Dominate your territory.



by Ken Rogner

YOU MAY THINK OF GENGHIS Khan as a ruthless military leader who conquered much of the known world in the early 13th century, but recently we see a new side of this military strategist who did more to amalgamate the world of his day, eliminate feudalism through meritocracy, improve transportation, and change warfare, than any other military leader in history. He mandated freedom of religion, forbid torture of captives, and offered truce and alliances before attacking or sacking a tribe or city. He was also very loyal to his troops, and his troops to him.

What makes Genghis an outstanding study for field salespeople is his grasp of creative strategies and unique thinking. Just as your mission and strategic objectives should guide your strategies, decisions and efforts, Khan adopted a written language from a captured tribe (the Mongols previously had no written language) and used it in creating the *Yassa* (a guide book) for decision-making by his field generals and warriors.

Ask yourself, do all my offers and presentations further my short- and long-term mission and strategic goals? Do they help my customers achieve their goals? Do my presentation skills need an update? Am I using the same language that my customers use? Do I communicate in terms they understand?

Just as your company uses CRM technology to put tools in your hands and give you a competitive advantage, so Khan used the saddle stirrup and the laminated re-curved bow (developed by the Mongols) to change warfare and to obsolete old-fashioned defenses and attack methods.

Ask yourself, do I fully utilize the computer and sales tools that my company provides me? If not, where can I go to get the instructions I need? Do I use the tools and information I have to help my customers achieve their goals?

Consider that 500 years before we developed a pony express, Khan developed one in Mongolia. He called it the *Yam*, and 26 riders and relay stations could transfer information across his country in a few days.

Ask yourself, do I use our company's IT tools to track information that

would help my customer to grow her business? Do I have lists of e-mail addresses and websites for all of my customers so that I can communicate quickly any information that would help them? Have my customers given me permission to send them e-mails?

Khan had a network of spies, usually merchants who traveled that part of the world. These spies fed him information that helped him to develop his strategies and contributed dramatically to his success.

Ask yourself, do I take the time to analyze my sales territory at least once each year (SWOT or other method) so that I know where the best place is to spend my time and effort? Do I ask the people I come in contact with (manufacturer and independent reps) for information that would help me in my strategies for

dominating my sales territories? If I get that info, do I use it? Do I read the relevant publications so that I am tuned in to changes in my customer, competitor, and supplier base? Am I in contact with other people in my position who work in other parts of the country? Are there sales tools or techniques that they use that I might adopt?

Khan was successful because he knew the best and most efficient way to achieve his objectives, utilize every technology and tool at his disposal, and find and use information to create a position of supremacy. He was clear on his objectives, creative in approach, and committed to winning. To succeed in sales, you must be too. **SSE**

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ACTION: Learn from Genghis Khan.

MANAGEMENT/RESULTS

Get Results!

Drop all the excuses.



by Ed Rigsbee

WHY DO SOME PEOPLE seem to have the ability to get things done—to get results—while others seem to continually spin their wheels?

I believe that the results-getters have three common qualities:

1. Great self-talk. This is driven by personal experiences, both positive and negative, environment, personal goals, the price that you are willing to pay for your success, personal desire to improve, minimal concern for what others say about you, and many other elements. Together, these factors create something we would call *passion*.

Can passion be taught or acquired; or does it have to be innate? I don't believe that you have to be born with passion. There are too many negative examples of fanatics who became passionate about their cause after their conversion, or indoctrination. This is proof to me that passion can be taught or learned.

2. Great alliances. These appear in many forms: camaraderie, friendship, partnership, networks, collaborative activities, master minds groups, and mentorships, depending on the situation. The relationships you, and your employees, enjoy will affect your self-

talk and your abilities. Great alliance relationships are the glue between the first and third steps to results.

Building great relationships comes natural to some people; however, it is a skill that can be taught and learned. Organizations that adopt partnering as a key strategy for growth must learn the skills to develop and implement profitable alliances. The same goes for results-driven individuals.

3. Great ability. This is more than the sum of your God-given talents. Ability is the collective body your knowledge, skills, experiences and talent synthesized through your self-talk. The relationships you build greatly affect your ability. Your abilities come from your knowledge and experiences. Few people knew how to drive a car upon leaving the womb. Similarly, few people know how to effectively run multi-billion dollar companies

when they are in third grade. Such skills are taught to them. Ability comes from the gained knowledge and skills garnished from relationships with others—paid or reciprocal, or through trial and error. Trial and error is costly and time consuming.

What does this mean to you? You want results? What do you care about? You can have results; if you are willing to change your self-talk, build better relationships and learn from the people that currently embody the skills you need. It's as simple as 1, 2, 3. **SSE**

Ed Rigsbee is president of Rigsbee Research Consulting Group and author of three books. Visit www.Rigsbee.com.

ACTION: Get results with ability and alliances.

Custom Communications

Close the gap between you and your customers.



by Chris Stone

ATTRACTING AND RETAINING customers is key to your financial health. You may have spent a fortune on customer relationship management (CRM) to provide a better customer experience, but these systems can't automate the many customer touch points to leverage and protect your brand and providing a unique customer experience.

While you may now understand the benefits of a technology platform that addresses these issues, you soon realize that the endeavor often involves several challenges, including managing the many sources and formats of input and the many formats and channels of output. You need a platform that allows your users to publish relevant and personalized content, leverage existing technology and employee skills, and managing all customer communications regardless of channel.

To increase operational efficiencies, you must minimize the time it takes your managers—those who are developing the revenue-generating programs in marketing, customer service, and fulfillment—to act on these ideas and get them in play with customers in a way that is meaningful and relevant. You seek a solution that can address the needs of communication-intensive business units while enabling the delivery of customized messages across many channels in high-volume and ad-hoc scenarios.

Customers now expect organizations to speak to them at “the audience of one” level and convey quality communications at each touch-point. Companies like Amazon have excelled in personalizing the customer experience to the point that customers are asking, “If they can do it, why can't you?”

Turn White Space into Green-Backs

Solutions such as dynamic enterprise publishing or transpromotional marketing are earning a seat at the table, as it enables you to reduce costs and increase revenue-enhancing activities. These offerings center on interactive content and transactional output capabilities with proactive marketing, allows you to maximize document

white space, manage and fully leverage multi-channel distribution, combine content from multiple sources while creating interactive two-way communications. Many companies are now looking to deliver personalized and customized customer communications (transpromotional solutions—a growing segment that combines transactional and promotional content to leverage predictable and long-term customer communications).

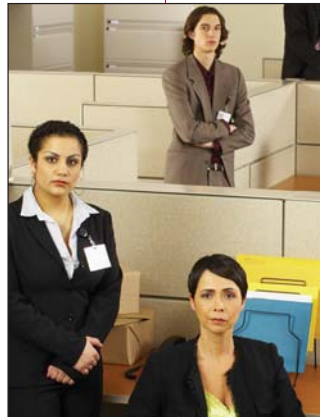
Transpromo documents place personalized marketing messages on transactional statements, making it more likely a customer will see the promotions, since 95 percent of people open and look at their bills and statements. Considering most direct marketers strive for a 5 percent conversion rate from unsolicited mailings, communicating to customers on statements increases that number to an almost perfect 100 percent open rate—very effective marketing!

Customers are adopting transpromo solutions as a way to make static documents relevant, dynamic and to turn costly materials (bills, statements) into a revenue-generating mechanism as organizations “sell” whitespace to complimentary vendors or business. Driven by the opportunity to provide better up-sell and cross-sell initiatives, streamline operations, reduce errors and assure compliance, organizations are adopting transpromo solutions.

Closing the Gaps

As you look for ways to bolster your CRM and loyalty initiatives to generate as much revenue as possible from existing clients, you need to bridge the gap between your employees and customers. Every 1 percent drop in operational costs will contribute an extra 1 percent to profitability. Focus on engaging your customers to increase customer loyalty and commitment to the brand. Leverage a dynamic enterprise publishing platform to create an electronic conversation with your customers—to enable mass-personalized customer interactions.

Despite recognizing the benefits of more effective one-to-one communications, most managers are separated from customers because process filters limit their ability to respond in a timely manner. Apart from constraining the enterprise's ability to engage in a timely way, existing processes are responsible for non-revenue generating efforts—resulting in lowered productivity and increased costs. Instead of requiring managers to hand off routine implementations to other team members, organizations are adopting enterprise-wide correspondence management environments that enable all lines of business users to directly create and



launch personalized content while maintaining all necessary rules that govern its use such as approvals, roles and stylistic requirements.

Leveraging correspondence management, company's can cut the time-to-market for new and revised customer communications, simplify the workflow process, and reduce the involvement of the IT staff. With

more personalized, dynamic communications, enterprises can ensure that their document contributions—from customer letters and statements to notices and claims forms—are accurate and current. Because content revisions take effect immediately, organizations can enhance customer communications while improving processes, thus speeding time-to-market and reducing the risk of outdated or incorrect content.

The true power and ultimate value of transpromo is its ability to integrate and manage communications across all channels to generate a unified and meaningful customer experience. By creating a consolidated enterprise strategy that supports reusable content, you can achieve a meaningful customer relationships that translate into long-term loyalty and improved profitability.

While streamlined processes and simplified support and infrastructure reduce costs, faster time to market, quicker response to changing conditions, and finer control of customer communications all increase revenue opportunities. Not a bad conversion rate considering the economy. **SSE**

Chris Stone is CEO of StreamServe, a leader in dynamic document composition, management and delivery solutions. Email chris.stone@streamserve.com or visit www.streamserve.com.

ACTION: Increase your revenue opportunities.

Successful Salespeople

They share four characteristics.



by Dave Kahle

IBELIEVE THAT SALES IS A *PRO-active profession*—you must first act, and your actions get reactions. When you act in the right way, your behavior drives your success.

Anyone can be taught the principles, processes, and practices of effective sales, but it sure helps if you have the four characteristics of great salespeople:

1: They truly want to be successful.

Many people don't want to be successful—at least not if it is going to cost them anything. Most people would like to have the benefits of success—the sense of confidence and competence, the material advantages, the respect and admiration of others—but they aren't willing to accept the cost that is the inevitable prelude to success.

Success is usually the result of a consistent, long-range investment of time and energy. You must give something up in order to get something larger.

Successful salespeople accept the costs and invest the time and effort that it takes to be successful. The success-focused salesperson works more hours than colleagues. They try to make their first appointment for 7:45 a.m. and their last for 4:30 p.m. And when someone cancels, or the salesperson finds himself with unplanned downtime, he finds something productive to do.

Whereas most salespeople won't invest \$20 in their own money for development, success-seeking salespeople buy the books, listen to the CDs, and attend the seminars. They are eager to learn from others, and solicit input into their performance. They trade a short-term pleasure and invest in themselves for the long-term benefit.

2: They have the ability and propensity to learn. They expose themselves to new ideas, and then change their behavior in positive ways as a result. They're always looking for the next good idea, and continually experimenting with practices and behaviors that are designed to give them the best results. Whereas the desire for success supplies the energy and motivation, the ability and propensity to learn is one key way that motivation expresses itself. Success-seekers learn the best

practices of their profession and seek to make them part of their routines.

3: They deal successfully with adversity. They don't let failure knock them off the path. They see failures and adversity as temporary stumbling blocks, and bounce back from every defeat. This characteristic causes them to make the second sales call after having been rejected in the first and to approach one more prospect, or visit this account one more time. This characteristic prods them to bounce back from a failed marriage, a financial reversal, a bad experience with an employer or manager. Motivated by their desire to succeed, and equipped with the ability to learn, they see adversity as just another learning experience, and become more focused, wiser and more committed as a result.

4: They focus. There are so many things to do, so many opportunities and demands on your time, you can easily squander your day reacting to the superfluous. In the movie "City Slickers," when asked his secret for living a successful life, Curly held up one finger. "One thing" he said. Focus on one thing and do it well. Few people can do more than one thing very well. Success in sales takes years of disciplined work. So, stay focused on the basics of your job, and the practices and principles that you know will pay off.

Adopt these four characteristics and you will become successful. **SSE**

Dave Kahle, The Growth Coach, is a consultant and trainer who helps his clients increase their sales productivity. Visit www.davekahle.com.

ACTION: Boost your sales productivity.

SALES/ACCELERATION

Accelerate Sales

Take five steps starting today.



by Joanne S. Black

THE U.S. ECONOMY IS IN A funk. Have your phones stopped ringing? The "R" word—recession—is back. Housing starts are falling, the consumer price index keeps jumping, the stock market is like a roller coaster, massive layoffs occur daily, and renowned companies are declaring bankruptcy.

How do you tackle economic uncertainty? Cut advertising, travel, training, marketing, and discretionary expense line items? Cut purchasing? Ouch! The pipeline starts to dry up and the anxiety goes through the roof. Many people think that since there's nothing they can do, they should just do nothing. But "nothing" is futile thinking.

What if you could reach your market without hard costs—no marketing budget, no direct mail budget, no ad budget, no trade show budget? The only budget you worry about is your "time and referrals" budget—simply the time you invest to ask for referrals!

You know about referrals. When a qualified prospect is referred to us, we get a new client a minimum of 50 percent of the time and typically between 70 and 90 percent of the time. Additionally, we are pre-sold, our selling time decreases, we have credibility, and we ace out the competition. There is no other business-development

process that can claim these results. Results are the only thing that matters.

Here are five steps to accelerate your sales in a lagging economy, retain your loyal customers, and attract new business without increasing cost of sales.

1. Broaden your perspective. What business are you in? Redefine and reinvent yourself. Is Starbucks in the coffee business or the people business? Build new alliances and consider alternate distribution channels. Don't go solo. Assemble a group of advisors and get their input and creative ideas.

2. Be nimble and innovative. You'll never have all the facts. Make quick decisions. Be fearless and make tough choices. Create new uses for products, or a new business model!

3. Dazzle your current customers. Your customers need care and feeding. Don't ignore them at the expense of new business—they are your best source for new business.

4. Prioritize wisely. The most important activity for

you to do is what's closest to cash the first thing every day—whether it's following up with a prospect, writing a proposal, or closing a deal.

5. Become an expert. Companies hire experts because they can't afford to make mistakes. Position your company as the expert with a specific product or in a specific market niche.

Sell more with higher margins, accelerate your "win" ratio, and take business away from the competition. **SSE**

Joanne Black presents on The Power of Referrals, The Truth About Your Sales Funnel, and What's New in Sales? Visit www.nomorecoldcalling.com.

ACTION: Accelerate your sales.