SALES AND SERVICE

Excellence

FEBRUARY 2009

THE MAGAZINE OF TEAM LEADERSHIP

Earn Loyalty

Tension
Learn to Manage It

Waymishes
Destroy Your Business

Social Currency

Andrea Sittig-Rolf
Sales Consultant

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MANAGEMENT/LOYALTY

Earn the Loyalty of People

The success of your team and enterprise depends on it.

by Ritch K. Eich

ONE OF AESOP'S MANY fables tells of two travelers on the road together when a bear suddenly appears on the scene. Quickly, one traveler made for a tree at the side of the road, climbed up into the branches, and hid there. The other, who was not as nimble, threw himself on the ground and pretended to be dead. The bear came up and sniffed all around him, but he kept perfectly still holding his breath because a bear will not touch a dead body. The bear took him for a corpse and went away. When the coast was clear, the traveler in the tree came down and asked the other what it was the bear had whispered to him when he put his mouth to his ear. The other replied, "He told me never again to travel with a friend who deserts you at the first sign of danger."

It doesn't take the prospect of being a bear's lunch to see ***evidence of declining loyalty*** around us. In sports, we find athletes no longer loyal to their teams and owners who are no longer loyal to their fans or cities. In marriage, we see rising divorce rates and an alarming number of deadbeat parents who fail to care for their children. In business, we see employees job hopping, companies downsizing, benefits dwindling, and widening income disparities.

Discussions on loyalty are as old as the scriptures. After all, *Old Testament* writers were occupied with the fickleness of human commitments, whether to God or to each other. They called it "unfaithfulness," but it meant the same thing. Since then, creative writers, marketing gurus, psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists, political theorists, anthropologists, scholars and others have tried to make sense of this virtue and of all of its complexities.

One thing is clear*: *Loyalty directly affects behavior, and good leaders know this. In business, there is evidence of this every day. Those most loyal are the persons most likely to execute the company strategy in their daily work, most likely to go the extra mile to please a customer, and most likely to trust their employer in times of crisis. Historically, in fact, a loyal person stays with or remains committed to the object of that loyalty (such as an employer) even when it may be disadvantageous to do so.

"All teams and organizations hang together or fall apart because of loyalty" says Tom Krause. "Loyalty, trust and commitments are truly the glue that holds relationships together."

Loyalty is something that most people inherently want to give if provided the right environment, motivation, and inspiration to do so. Despite this innate desire, the *Walker Loyalty Report* categorized as "loyal" only 34 percent of people polled nationwide. More startling, Walker reports a rise in the growing number of "high-risk" employees, those who are not committed to an organization and are most likely to leave within two years. Why is this? Where is the disconnect? Where are today's leaders failing?

To some, the definition of what makes a person loyal is changing. The barometer that judged loyalty on how

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long a person stays with a company no longer applies. Viewing loyalty through a new prism, it is the quality of service and an employee's psychological commitment that matters, not the length of employment. Employees who stay at a job even a short time are now considering themselves loyal if they do good work, treat their company with respect, and leave the company in good stead. Isn't this a greater display of loyalty, so they argue, than someone who works for 20 years putting in only half the effort and stealing whatever they can? Under this new rubric, loyalty and longevity are no longer necessary bedmates, meaning that leaders must now find a new way of quantifying just what makes an employee loyal.

Today's leaders who understand the power of loyalty not only must adapt to this new way of thinking but also understand that in the 21st century work-world, loyalty can no longer be assumed. They must throw away tidy assumptions and dead certainties regarding loyalty and realize that loyalty, as the cliché goes, starts at the top. They must also realize that loyalty, like trust, must be earned. Fortunately, there are many ways to do this.

Earning Loyalty

Here are a eight ways to earn loyalty:

• Know that loyalty doesn't come without trust; successful leaders practice trust's three key elements: integrity, honesty, and promise-keeping.

• Exhibit leadership by solving problems, being a calming influence in troubling times, and having the courage to make and stand by tough decisions. Leadership also means being fair, consistent, and transparent. The days of secret handshakes are over.

• Show genuine care and concern for workers, treat every employee as an individual, and look for tangible ways to demonstrate this at every possible opportunity. Forget the old rules and look for new ones. Consider flextime, childcare, telecommuting, in-home gyms, and concierge service. In short, go the extra mile; and find ways to tune into and satisfy each employee's unique needs.

• Show appreciation for employees' ideas and input, promote debate and listen.

• Invest in your employees' future by providing development and training and then delivering on opportunities for advancement—ideally within the company, but if no opening exist, being willing to say "goodbye" to a future star.

• Have the right values and hammer them home every day through words and deeds.

• Know that loyalty is a sentiment, but acknowledge that it is often rationally motivated. Appeal to employees on both levels.

• Be fair. Unfairness, either real or perceived, diminishes loyalty.

Unfortunately, like most values in a paradoxical world, loyalty can be misplaced. When it is, great harm can be done. That is why many people consider loyalty a "problematic virtue" which sometimes pits loyalty to an association vs. loyalty to good judgment.

Misplaced Loyalty

In his book *Police Unbound*, former Minneapolis Police Chief Anthony Bouza describes the damage and injustice caused by the unspoken agreement among many officers to not report wrongdoing committed by one of their own. Those prescribing to this "Blue Code of Silence" believe that they are being loyal to the force or to a friend. But as Bouza points out, such loyalty is misplaced, and those involved should be bound to a higher loyalty—to the public and their sworn duty.

Perhaps nowhere is loyalty more fundamental than in the military where absolute loyalty to a cause and to the combat unit is essential. Such loyalty involves the faithful performance of duties, keeping one's word and being willing to sacrifice—even to the point of giving one's life. Yet the same qualities of loyalty were ingrained in the minds of Nazi Germany, and the results were some of the greatest atrocities ever inflicted by man on man. For this reason, U.S. Naval Academy training includes a trip to the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., so that midshipmen can see what can happen when misplaced loyalty, blind obedience, and a lack of concern for human dignity are taken to the extreme.

The lessons here are clear: Loyalty is an attribute laced with nuance; and there are no easy answers as to where it lies, how it is earned, and how it is kept.

Earlier this year, the *Harvard Business Review* put forth a study on commitment, designed to gauge (among other things) an employee's loyalty to his or her company. The study asked for levels of agreement or disagreement on five simple statements:

• I feel a strong sense of belonging here.

• I feel as if my firm's problems are my own.

• I would not leave my firm now because I have a sense of obligation to the people in it.

• The firm deserves my loyalty.

• I do not feel any obligation to remain with my current employer.

How would your employees answer these five questions? Find out! SSE

Ritch K. Eich, Ph.D., is VP of marketing communications at California Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks and has studied leadership for three decades. Visit www.callutheran.edu.

ACTION: Earn the loyalty of your people.

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1806 N. 1120 W.
Provo, UT 84604
1-877-250-1983
1-801-375-4060

Sales & Service Excellence:
Ken Shelton, CEO, Editor-in-Chief
Scott Spjut, Asst. Editor
Craig Cheek, Circulation Manager
Nancy Low, Marketing Manager
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Geoff Pace, Sales

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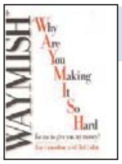
Executive Excellence Publishing

Combat Waymishes

They can destroy your business.



by Ted Cohn

A MAN WALKED INTO Brooks Brothers' New York City store prepared to buy a replacement belt for his Brooks Brothers raincoat. In sequence, he was told they didn't sell belts, go to the fourth floor, the second floor, try customer service—and finally he paid the $20 he had been ready to spend and walked out an unhappy customer, muttering: "Why did they make it so hard for me to give them my money?"

• A man who owned an inventory-taking service went to a supply store to buy 100 two-step ladders. He told the clerk he would pick up the ladders when they arrived, so the store wouldn't have to handle them, and asked for a discount. "We don't give discounts for anything," he was told. The result was more muttering.

• A lady checked out of a stationery store with a picture frame. She told the clerk the price label was wrong —she had an ad from the day before that showed $5.99 while the frame showed $8.99. The clerk argued with her, claiming no one had told him about the lower price and he'd have to check with a supervisor. Delay and frustration ensued, only to find out that the customer right, and no one even bothered to apologize—more unhappiness.

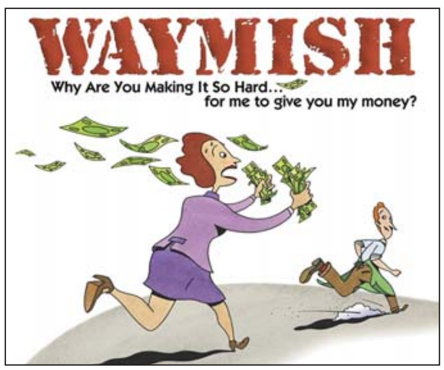
In these three cases, the customer was ready to pay, but the seller didn't want to take the money. We call this a *WAYMISH—Why Are You Making It So Hard* for me to give you my money?

Good customers can be driven away by a lack of helpfulness or an indifference to their needs. Here are four ideas that can help eliminate Waymishes:

1. Treat every complaint as a chance to learn what's not working and to reclaim a customer. The person who cares enough to complain is a treasure. Your job is to listen, don't defend, and then ask: what can we do to make it right? A company in the soybean business shipped a trainload of beans to a customer. He complained that the water in the beans was excessive. The weight of the bags had compressed the water in the bags at the bottom. The soybean seller said: "It's our fault. Keep track of the bags you can't use, the time of your people doing the clean-up, and send me a bill for the bad bags and the labor. You'll have a check by return mail."

Was he crazy? No. He understood Peter Drucker's 50-year-old rule: *the purpose of any business is to create a customer*, not to make a sale. The cost of the bad beans was nothing compared to the *lifetime value of the customer*.

2. Let your people know what that value is and give them the training and freedom to adjust inevitable problems on the spot. A calculation of customer value: in a supermarket if a customer spends $100 a week ($5,000 a year) and the average customer stays with you for 10 years, the customer is worth $50,000.



People who buy our book tell us they use it for training in handling Waymishes. Employees from different departments, including those not directly in touch with customers, are assigned to read a few pages in advance of a weekly one-hour meeting. The leader asks the participants to describe what went wrong in a specific case, how should it have been handled, and what could be done to eliminate the problem.

After making the group feel smart about solving the Waymishes of other companies, the leader asks: Who has had a problem with a customer recently, how did you handle it, could it have been handled better, what was the customer's reaction, and is a system or policy problem causing the Waymish?

Small groups are assigned to look into the internal Waymish and report back on how to improve service. The system works and has saved thousands of saved dollars and customers.

Training in specific skills like listening, asking questions, showing empathy and suggesting solutions can empower employees to eliminate Waymishes and make the work day more rewarding. With training, you can turn an unhappy customer into a customer evangelist.

Send a few customer-contact people to your competitors regularly and ask them to report back on service, returns, information, and what they do better.

3. Hire the right people. Hire people who like to be with and help people. Selection is 10 times as important as training and incentives. Nothing will turn someone who likes to work alone or takes criticism of company products as a personal insult into a happy salesperson. Good interviewing and reference-checking will reduce hiring errors.

4. Keep the rules few and enforceable. I walked through a factory with the CEO and counted posters telling the employees 28 things that they couldn't do. I mentioned to the CEO that Moses had received only 10 commandments and perhaps 28 rules gave the impression that his employees were either children or fools. In a few minutes, we came up with a revised set of four rules: no stealing, no lying, no drugs or alcohol, only first-rate quality.

"Treat the customer as a friend or as you would like to be treated" is simple and clear, especially if you put limits on what employees can do to satisfy the customer. Some companies have no limits, concluding that "too much" is more than balanced by the results.

How your people treat your customers is less a matter of training than it is a reflection on how you, the manager, treat your direct reports. When those relationships change, there may be no need to train sales associates.

Waymishes crop up everywhere and can be eliminated if you encourage employees to tell you—without recrimination—when something goes wrong. Challenge your systems every year.

Waiting is a top hate in every customer's list. How to reduce it? Disney makes the long lines fun by snaking you through different lines. Banks, the post office and railroads find that a single line feeding to the different service windows is better than individual lines that can cause a customer to be stuck.

Ask whether a system or policy is for the customer's benefit or does it insensitively serve some internal need?

Watch for the Waymishes, head them off, and encourage your people to report and reduce them. Everyone wins. SSE

Ted Cohn is a consultant specializing in family businesses. He's written over 20 books. Email aliceted@hotmail.com or visit www.crmlearning.com/keepcustomers.

ACTION: Eliminate WAYMISHs in your firm.

PUBLIC RELATIONS/BUZZ

Secrets of Buzz

Create some public relations stir.

by David Seaman

In my work, I've developed some ideas to help create PR buzz. Use these tips to create a killer hook to your message.

1. Make your message stand out. Media are inundated with faxes, emails, and phone calls announcing new products. To make your release stand out, try staging an event with a specific time and place. This gives local newspapers and area TV stations something to actually cover. For example, if you're opening a wine store, a release simply announcing that you now exist is not likely to get coverage. Instead, organize a South American vineyard-tasting event at your store to kick things off. Let any blogs focused on your state know about the event in advance. Call and email local papers with details—and hit more than one contact within a news organization.

For instance, if you send it to both a feature writer and local events reporter, you have a better chance of making it into the paper. Most community newspapers will include you in their events section. Many will send out a features reporter and photographer, in which case have a few quotes on tap!

In terms of taking the wine store coverage national, you need to ask yourself two questions: First, do I *need* national coverage? If you're simply a neighborhood wine shop, you'd be better served by focusing on local publicity. Your motivation should be making the store profitable, not becoming a celebrity. Only go national if that's what your company needs in order to succeed. Second, if you *want* national coverage (maybe your wine shop accepts orders via a website or toll-free number), find a way that you can be of use to reporters at the national level.

2. Build on national stories. Every couple years, a story comes out about some new health benefit of drinking red wine. The next time one of these stories hits the wire, build on it. Be aggressive and let the national networks know about your store. Play up your experience with red wine and say that you'd be willing to let camera crews come to your store. TV shows are always looking for the visual element: This helps them create a nice clip to go along with an otherwise bland story about wine antioxidants!

3. Think like a successful television producer, not like a common self-promoter. The show's producers don't really care about sending business your way; they just want a captivating package to air. If you can help them add value to their piece, you stand a good chance—and you'll reap the rewards of exposure.

4. Appeal to a specific demographic. Harley-Davidson, the legendary motorcycle company, has begun staging "garage parties" exclusively for women. Female bike enthusiasts can get together and talk shop—asking and answering technical motorcycle questions without being ridiculed by "know-it-all" tough guys. This "women-only garage party organized by the maker of heavyweight bikes" seems unusual at first, but it's brilliant. It draws in a huge segment of new motorcycle owners, it costs almost nothing to set up, and it results in serious press.

5. Find or create an enemy or rival. We love to hear about feuds and rivalries and to watch to find out what happens in these situations. Finding an "other" to fight against will help keep you motivated. It will take your pitch from yet-another-publicity-grab to the realm of high drama. So find a way to be outraged! The news covers conflict. If you have no enemies, create one. Usually with a little digging, you'll find a genuine enemy. We live in a competitive society; there is *someone* out there who wants your business, your fame, or your expertise. Rivalries are pure publicity gold. **SSE**

David Seaman is the author of Dirty Little Secrets of Buzz. *Email dseaman@gmail.com.*

ACTION: Create some buzz around your product.

MARKETING/DIRECT

Lean, Mean, Green

Marketing in a downturn economy.

by Crystal Uppercue

As the economy tightens, direct marketers need to be obsessed with ROI—and cost-cutting is part of it.

We've seen several new direct marketing production technologies reach critical mass—variable data personalization, web-to-print, cross-media marketing, personalized urls (PURLs), micro-websites, and automated/trigger response, to cite the most popular. These tools are about controlling waste and working lean, mean, and green. Consider these options.

Here's what else to do:

Take advantage of every sophisticated mailing option. *First*, for campaigns demanding automation discounts, the new *Intelligent Bar Code* is the new best practice. Even though IMB won't be required until May 2011, smart mailers have been using it for months, and clients are enthusiastic. With IMB, direct marketers *know* when mail has arrived. Meanwhile, undeliverables hover at zero, and hand-keying database updates is a thing of the past.

Second—the U.S. Postal Service's rigorous new "move update" requirements, in effect since late November 2008, will change the way mailers do business. That is to say: very carefully, with far less error, and more profitably. Work with a mailer who understands *all* the ways to parse your mailing list before it goes postal.

Third—investigate co-horts: copalletization and commingling. These twins ensure that you get the best postal rates possible. Select a mailer approved for one of these services.

Ensure your direct mail is properly designed. Postal regulations are complicated. Before you design *any* direct mail package, check with a mailer who can vet your concept. Is your design a postcard? Not until the U.S. Postal Service says it is. Are you intrigued by a square mailer? Maybe, but their automated mail evaluation machine balks at square, so that design could cost you. Is your package outside USPS size parameters? You'll not only lose discounts, you'll incur a surcharge.

Test the magic of automated response. The best campaigns will anticipate, embrace, and *predict* possibilities, then seamlessly direct the results into appropriate channels. Did a product order come in? You send a "thank-you," of course, but be prepared with a cross-sell or up-sell. Ask: how much contact management is too much? How do you best integrate fax and email?

As with all challenges, tremendous opportunity dances with change. Smart marketers will find a way to make the new lean, green, and mean tools produce better than ever—*and measure the results*—as we've always done. **SSE**

Crystal Uppercue is marketing manager at EU Services, a direct marketing production facility. Call 1-800-230-3362 or cuppercue@euservices.com.

ACTION: Go lean, mean, and green.

Who's in Your Cabinet?

Selecting those to help you succeed.

by Adam Hayes

WITH THE U.S. PRESIDENTIAL election squarely in the rearview mirror, you have heard the discussions around the President Obama picking his key advisors and cabinet members.

Whether you agree with the choices and politics or not, you must understand that, even the "leader of the free world" needs trusted advisors whom he can go to in times of need. We should also surround ourselves with those we trust and believe in.

The problem is that picking trusted advisors can be so tricky that politicians make any potential advisors go through a vetting process before allowing them into their inner circle.

I define a *professional advisor* as someone you can go to with any work-related issue or topic. They need to be able to identify with the situations that you discuss with them and counter your opinions and ideas with new, and possibly opposing, suggestions. You should have more than one advisor. Each should be someone you respect and admire for his or her unique skills and abilities. Being in an IT leadership role, I have trusted advisors I can go to for general business, technical skill, and leadership.

Selecting an Advisor

Since I don't have a committee of people I can use to screen my would-be advisors, I created a few guidelines:

1. Consider the candidate's record for being trustworthy. The level of trust needs to exist on multiple levels. You need to be able to talk to this individual about business topics without worrying about them using this information against you. You also need to trust your chosen advisor to separate friendship from advisorship. Many times, this can be a difficult task because the topics may become emotionally or personally charged. Both parties must understand that this may be the case and come up with a way of addressing it. One of my closest advisors came up with the idea of starting the conversation with a clarifying statement. Often, I have come up and said, "OK, I've got to vent about this. It's ticking me off, and I need you to just listen before I say something stupid that I'll regret." My advisor listens patiently while I rant and rave about a topic; then she offers a calm description of how she sees the topic and offers advice on how she would handle this if she was in that specific situation. Through experience, we both know that leadership can present frustrating scenarios, and sometimes you just need to blow off steam.

2. Consider how others perceive the potential advisor. Your employees judge you not only on your actions, but also on the individuals you pick as trusted advisors. Some of you may think that your team members will never know whom you have as trusted advisors. While they may never know all of them, they will figure out the identity of a few. When that happens, their reputation will reflect on you. If the perception is that these advisors are poor business people or even worse managers, then you instantly lose credibility with your employees.

Unfortunately, you have no control over people's perceptions. You may think that the person you've selected as a trusted advisor in a certain area is a perfect choice. If those around you hold an opposite opinion, you are in trouble. To avoid this problem, make him or her a trusted advisor that others may not know exists. While others may not know the details of the position or the individual who holds the role, you have determined that the person qualifies as a trusted advisor on a key topic.

3. Consider the experience of your would-be trusted advisors. While they may not have many years of experience, they need to have enough to provide insightful and professional feedback. This experience should not be a direct mirror of your personal experience. Every individual background can create a unique mindset and perspective that can vary greatly from yours. Embrace this difference and use it to your advantage.

What to Avoid

Beyond identifying positive qualities you want in a trusted advisor, you also need to avoid three red flags:

1. Avoid having a trusted advisor who can use any information you share as a competitive advantage against you or your company. At the beginning of the affiliation, both parties should agree that topics discussed remain confidential, unless explicit permission is given to share the subject matter. There may come a time when you have to replace one of your trusted advisors if either of you changes a job that places the relationship into this conflicting situation. This is never fun, because you learn to rely heavily upon your selected advisors. One way to avoid this affecting your capability to talk to your advisors is by compartmentalizing. My technical advisor knows nothing about how I communicate management techniques to my team. My business advisor does not know whom I go to for technical problems. By compartmentalizing, I avoid some possible conflicts of interest and keep a trusted group of advisors.

2. Avoid "yes men". You need your trusted advisors to stand up to your opinions and provide contrasting points of view. If your advisors always agree with your stance and approach to a situation, they are likely treating the relationship as a friendship, not as a professional bond that both parties can utilize for improvement. Such advisors can create more harm than assistance.

3. Avoid selecting an internal advisor or fellow employee. If you do, be wary. They may leverage your trust in them to advance their own agendas. While you may think you are bridging the gap, you are also taking a big risk. Try to build relations with them in a way that avoids conflicts of interest.

Trusted advisors can assist you in making difficult decisions and even be there as an ear to vent with. The key is to be selective in picking your cabinet members and avoid common pitfalls. Once you have your team in place, you'll feel more confident in your decisions, and your team members will respect those decisions, knowing that you worked through issues with competent individuals that you trust. SSE

Adam Hayes is Managing Principal for New Age Technologies (www.newat.com) and author of the Leading IT *blog. Email adam.hayes@newat.com.*

ACTION: Select your key advisors.

MANAGEMENT/PROCESSES

Uncover Opportunity

Find money in tough times.

by Tiffany DeBolt

IN TOUGH ECONOMIC TIMES, managers cut operating expenses at a record pace. Unfortunately, many ignore the golden opportunity to simplify costly processes that create financial waste.

You need to understand your current processes to reveal areas of fallout, breakdown, and missed revenue opportunities. You can find many small opportunities—multiplied and amplified by transactional volume—in order to gain a competitive advantage for when the economy starts to recover.

From the point when a sale is made to post-sale follow-up, you need to know how the business works, understand your operations, see how customers flow through the process, and make sure everyone working with you has that same understanding!

Meet with your employees or staff to document how your product or service works through your business. Brainstorm in groups, solicit feedback from employees, and use post it notes on a wall or a whiteboard. The tool is not as important as the method. Once you have your process steps, add who does them, how long does that step take, how does the handoff happen (Paper? E-mail? Phone call? System?).

Next, do some analysis. Are there handoffs between people or departments with no clear ownership or communication? If so, the result is customer dissatisfaction and increased effort in reactive support costs. These areas of fallout can even cause a lost customer. Make sure of clean handoffs, accountable owners, and that all the necessary information gets passed from one owner to the next. Identify areas where your customer or product spends a large amount of time. If the delay isn't adding value, shorten or get rid of it.

Review your process and note any step not adding value from the customer or product-quality perspective. If it is not adding value, why pay for it? Is the process step necessary? Layers of approvals and reviews don't add value to the customer, so why are they there? If it is to ensure someone else is not making mistakes, maybe you need to re-align your performance objectives and cut out the extra layers. Reviewing your process steps with a customer-focused eye will show you the waste. Ask at each step, Do I need to do this? If not, cut the step and re-align your process to add value for the customer.

Look at your processes with revenue and customer service in mind. Where could you be contacting, updating and up-selling customers? Find opportunities for revenue that are being missed, such as a post-sale or post-launch follow-up contact. Do you ask for and offer incentives for referrals? Do you solicit feedback to help understand the perception of your product or service in the markets? Review your process for possible customer touch points where you can enhance your relationship and understand the improvements you or your business may need to make.

As you learn through trial and error, you'll soon find the tools and techniques to most effectively make a difference! You'll come away with a clear picture of your operations and a list of areas for change and improvement, enabling you to multiply your volume without as many defects, errors, or unhappy customers. It also makes training new employees much easier, since you now have a clear visual of what your business does, and the documented processes can now be an integral part of the training program.

This will reduce waste and errors, save money, increase customer satisfaction, and boost revenue. It's is not always easy, but in these hard economic times, you can't afford to throw money and customers away. SSE

Tiffany DeBolt is President of DeBolt Business Solutions. Email tldebo@msn.com or call 619-339-1511.

ACTION: Review your sales and service process.

MARKETING/INCENTIVES

Outwit Competition

Use nontraditional marketing.

by Denny Durbin

THE COMPETITION GROWS greater daily as new businesses pop up, and online shopping becomes more of a mainstream point of purchase. Owners and managers strive to come up with new ideas to outwit their competition. Slashing prices is only part of the equation.

Although price matters, savvy buyers also take into consideration these facts:

- How they arrived in your store in the first place. You're doing something right in your marketing for them to consider buying your products. This is a start for tracking successful marketing; learn how they heard about you.
- Brand or branding of the product is important, but the branding of your store will help in the customer's decision making of sale or no sale.
- Staff is the most valuable marketing asset and advantage you have. Go the extra mile for them, and they'll put in the extra effort to keep customers happy. Treat each employee well and praise them daily, and you'll pave the road to success. To keep your team on top of their game, treat them in ways you want them to treat your customers; ensure they are passionate; train them to smile to customers; teach them that last impressions are as valuable as first impressions.

Once you learn where most of your customers are coming from, target more customers with similar demographics. Since your customers rarely come from one form of advertising, you need a well-conceived and widespread marketing campaign.

Incentives and motivation are the main ingredients of bringing in new customers. Put yourself in a customer's place and ask: Who cares? What's in it for me? What problem does it solve? What are the benefits? If you can answer these questions, you will win and keep more new customers.

Incentives are popular, yet they all depend on the price of your product. If your sale price is under $50, come up with a nice gift or gift card that costs you around $5. If your products sell for hundreds of dollars, consider giving a gas card. Think about what your customers might enjoy.

Motivation. Put together a "street team" of motivated, energetic, good-looking people to represent your business. Take some fun-loving people, have them put on bright T-shirts with your logo, and send them out to hand out offers, coupons, or incentives. One popular gift is a bottle of water with your logo and discount coupon.

The key to successful marketing campaigns is testing and tracking until you know which method brings in customers and generates sales. SSE

Denny Durbin is author of Lazy Enchiladas, Redefining Success. *Visit www.lazyenchiladas.com.*

ACTION: Use incentives and motivation.

Hunt for Quality Prospects

They may be elusive, but they breed success.

by Tom Black

A FACTOR THAT DETERMINES results in selling is the quality of the prospect. Even the hardest working salespeople can still improve by improving the quality of prospects that they see.

This first became evident to me when I started selling books door-to-door. At first, I went to every house. Soon I learned the best prospects have jobs and children. I talked to lots of people my first summer who didn't have kids. Since most of the books I sold were for families, that didn't make sense. Some young couples without kids bought, and a few older couples bought for their grandkids, but most of my sales were from families with jobs. So when I went to only those families and passed on others, my sales doubled.

Basketball coaches know this principle; they don't let their players shoot half-court shots. A lay-up is easy, but you have to fight to get to the basket.

Football coaches know this, so they don't call Hail Mary plays. Long shots are just that—long shots. As they say, "The exception proves the rule."

Go Where There Is Power

The first product we sold to banks had a marketing element to it. So, the President or CEO would say, "You need to see the marketing director."

When we actually did that, we rarely made the sale. Marketing directors didn't have the authority to say "yes." The only answers we got from marketing directors were "maybe" or "no." We later made a rule: *If we can't see the CEO, we just won't go*. Once we made this rule, everyone got better at selling the decision-makers. If you cannot see someone who can say "yes", your time is better spent going somewhere else. This rule is easy to understand but hard to implement.

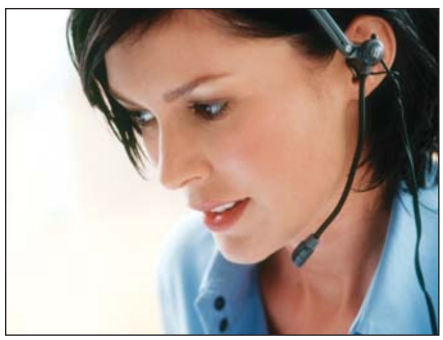
I have a friend who is a drug rep. Her attitude is that *anyone is better than no one*. But the doctor is the only one prescribing drugs. Giving the sales presentation to anyone else is simply not effective. She won't fight to get to the basket. You can make yourself do this.

Once, a night watchman who got off at midnight every night walked home through a cemetery. Week after week, he would walk home this way. One night the cemetery crew left an open grave, and the night watchman fell in. He tried to get out but couldn't, so he settled into a dark corner to wait for the grave-digging crew to return.

Another man was walking down the path a few minutes later, and he also fell into the open grave.

The night watchman, hidden in his dark corner, was amused to see the new man try the same methods he had tried to escape the pit. After a few minutes of watching him struggle, he said from the darkness, "You can't get out of here." But the second man did.

If you are not seeing decision-makers, you can get out of that rut. In sales, a rut is just a grave with the ends



knock-ed out. Of course, no matter what you sell, you won't see decision-makers every time because of all the gatekeepers. But if decision-makers are that hard to see, that likely is their point of resistance. Once you get past this, the road is easier. Steep resistance to sales calls is like a sign that says, "Hunt here! Plenty of quail!" No other salespeople can see them either!

Quality Knows Quality

The key to gaining more quality prospects is getting referrals from other qualified prospects. I like this method (in person, by phone or email): As I am speaking to a satisfied customer or a new buyer (someone who can also serve as a referral), I say: "Mr. Jackson, as you know, I'm looking for other people who *might want to use* our product. Do any other bankers come to mind that I should call on?"

I expect a "no, not really" response. When a banker gives me referrals, that is a bonus. Now my work really starts.

Let's assume you get the expected "no, not really" response. Your question to that response should be: "How about somebody in your peer group?" This may remind the customer of a few people, and he may provide a name.

If I still don't get a few names from this customer, I use *ticklers*—-spheres of influence that my customer might have. If all else fails, I pull out my prospect list and ask if he knows some of the bankers I'll be calling on. If he does, I try to get a referral that way. In any case, I help referral sources think of people they know. It takes practice.

The strongest referral is when the referral source makes an initial contact for you. You might say: "It would help, Mr. Jackson, if you could drop Mr. Stevens an email and let him know I'll be calling him." If you can get your satisfied customer to do this, it's better than saying: "Mr. Jackson suggested I call you." This too takes practice, and you will face some rejection when you ask, but you should still ask *every referral source* to do this to help you.

Fight for the Best

So you have a great prospect based on what you know, a referral or on your own information. Now you need a creative approach. You can secure an appointment in person, over the phone, by third party, via email, and through snail mail. If one doesn't work, try another.

When I have a prospect I want to see, and my first approach (typically by phone) is rejected, then I have other methods. Few salespeople try other methods after the first one fails. Strive to be one of these great salespeople. Write an email, send a proposal letter, or go call on the prospect in person.

Many salespeople don't fight to see the qualified prospect because it's easier to see someone else and make a presentation or demo. So they see those prospects who can't say "yes."

I've argued with salespeople who say, "I had a prospect once who bought and who wasn't the decision maker."

My response: "How much time did you waste with other non-decision-makers to get that one exception?"

Don't resist the rules of the game, play by them and you'll win.

I've also heard: "My presentations are low because I only want to talk to qualified prospects."

The best of all worlds is qualified prospects seen lots of times with polished presentation skills. SSE

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

ACTION: Spend time with qualified prospects.

MARKETING/WOMEN

Gamma Women

Rewriting marketing rules.

by Jack Griffin and Nancy Weber

YOU PROBABLY KNOW HER, TALK TO HER and depend on her input, but chances are you aren't marketing to her—at least not correctly. Who is she? She's a Gamma. And it's time you learned her language.

There is an untapped segment of influential women whose significance has not yet been recognized—the Gamma. Gammas represent more than half of all women ages 18 to 64.

Sheer numbers explain why they are turning marketing into a dynamic conversation across all media, as opposed to the one-sided monologue of years past. Gammas are digitally empowered with an internal sense of self and are single-handedly rewriting the rules of marketing.

But who exactly are Gammas and what makes them unique? Gammas have always existed. They operate within an egalitarian web of communication and thrive on sharing information with others. This willingness to share information and product recommendations with their extensive network of friends and family is what makes Gammas such an essential target: they can, and will, act as brand advocates for your product. These women are truly engaged and are motivated to have an impact on their families, friends, and environment.

Because of this eagerness to inform and share ideas, Gammas have quickly latched onto new technologies, like social networking. No longer are they relegated to their neighborhoods, school districts, parishes, etc. Now, they have the entire Web to help them share information. As technology evolves, Gammas will play an increasingly significant role as brand advocates for the products and services they believe in. To succeed in today's market, you have to actively join the Gamma conversation.

For marketers, this means reaching a Gamma and the wide and diverse network of people with whom she is in constant contact. Hook one Gamma and you hook her entire web.

But it's not as simple as it sounds. Gammas don't respond to traditional marketing tactics—they see through them. As the market majority, they are increasingly disenchanted with purely aspirational messaging and images of perfection. They not only embrace their own unique qualities but also celebrate them. Gammas respond to natural, realistic beauty in advertising and entertainment and have a deep desire to celebrate individuality with all its quirks. In fact, many of these core Gamma values are representative of recognized, large-scale trends.

And whether representing beauty products or financial services, some marketers have already begun to harness the Gamma Effect. But how do they do it? To capture the attention and loyalty of Gamma women, you must think like Gammas. For example:

- Create a dialogue; talk *with* her, not *at* her.
- Encourage interaction with your brand rather than pushing product.
- Forget targeting only Alphas, hoping that your brand messaging trickles down.
- Target Gammas where *they're looking*.
- Ask for opinions, needs, and wants; make Gammas part of the brand conversation.
- Feed Gammas with what they need, social currency—information that they use to communicate with those in their web of connections.

Getting Gammas on your side can make all the difference. SSE

Jack Griffin is President and Nancy Weber is Chief Marketing Officer of Meredith Publishing Group. Visit www.GammaWomen.com.

ACTION: Learn the language of Gamma women.

MANAGEMENT/COSTS

Cost Cutting

10 ways to do it smart.

by Paul Facella

YOU CAN'T OPEN A MAGAZINE without reading about major cost cutting. Some measures bring to mind the image of pruning a fruit tree. If you cut too deeply or in the wrong places, you can kill the tree. There are smart ways to cut costs. I've been there, as regional VP of McDonald's largest profit center in the U.S., and I've seen what works. Make sure it's a team effort—and everyone is aware of what's going on. Present a positive front. And don't make any cuts that jeopardize your integrity, product quality, or mission.

Here are 10 more cost-cutting tips:

1. Cut leader perks. Clearly, perks for managers should be the first to go—including salary reduction and bonus cancellation. It sets the tone, leads by example, and sends the message that "we're all in this together."

2. Double up on cost items. Examples are rental cars, hotel rooms, and equipment purchases.

3. Stay put. Cut unnecessary travel when possible. Use phone, meeting consolidation, conference calls, and video conferencing as alternatives.

4. Freeze hiring. Delay hires, especially in administrative services.

5. Combine jobs. Where plausible, and even if only for a short time, give employees incentives to double up with jobs "if they can handle it." Many times you'll find you don't need that extra person, and you'll save on benefits, downtime training, and staff costs.

6. Seek solutions from staff. Ask people to come up with their own cost-cutting ideas, and reward them when they do—by giving a percentage to the contributor or a flat reward. I've done this, and it works big time.

7. Review staff salaries and benefits. Do this carefully, and ensure everyone is sharing the cost of health care.

8. Consolidate. Multiple offices, profit centers, locations, and retail outlets need to be reviewed for their profit contributions. Often, terminating leases and closing multiple locations stops the bleeding of expenses. In a retail concept, delaying growth of additional units opening can save huge amounts.

9. Switch from ads to PR. Instead of advertising, try public relations. In many businesses, it can have a better result at a fraction of the cost.

10. Don't mess with morale. Never cancel an office party, holiday celebration, or rewards ceremony. It costs nothing to reward people, lift their morale, and pay attention to them. Spend time with employees. Eat lunch with them. Buy them a cup of coffee. Send them a note of praise. These gestures of thanks and appreciation keep people loyal during trying times. SSE

Paul Facella is CEO of Inside Management and author of Everything I Know about Business I Learned at McDonald's *(McGraw-Hill). Visit www.insidemanagement.com.*

ACTION: Do some smart cost cutting.

Selling in the 21st Century

To be successful, you should practice five U's!

by Ken Rogner

DRAMATIC ADVANCES IN technology during the past decade have created more change faster than any previous period in history—and success in selling has changed as well!

What has stayed the same is the importance of establishing trust and building a strong relationships with customers, along with the importance of finding the unique, specific, and individual needs that our customers have and linking them to the unique values our firm offers.

What has changed is *how* we do that and *what it takes* to do it successfully!

Whether your customers are retail consumers or professional purchasing agents, the internet has changed everything. That is not necessarily a bad thing, but it changes what you have to do to be recognized as being original or offering some unique value. Like Seth Godin says, we're seeing "the end of interruptive marketing and the advent of permission marketing." What does that mean to you as a salesperson?

Five U's You Need to Practice

There are five U's you need to memorize, internalize, and practice to have a positive and long-term future in sales:

Unexpected is about being creative in your strategic analysis of sales opportunities and channels, and looking for new customers, sales venues, and avenues your competitors have not even dreamt about!

If you are selling industrial tools to manufacturing firms, what retailers are you passing while on your routes that could use or re-sell these products? If you're selling components and equipment to swimming pool contractors to help them be more effective, what landscapers and deck builders are you passing by who might also profit from your products? If you are selling unique products to drug-stores, are gas stations a possibility? If you sell high-end jewelry in a retail store, what about doing in-home jewelry parties? Look for unexpected channels and potential new customers. To gain the most additional sales volume, creativity in planning is critical. You can't keep doing what you've been doing and expect anything to change for the better!

Unique is about developing the products or services that separate you from the competition, and making sure your customers and potential customers are aware of those differences. Unique is about finding niche products and services that cannot be easily turned into commodities. Sometimes uniqueness doesn't have anything to do with the products you sell; maybe it's about customizing schedules or changing delivery hours to be of help and support to your customers, offering a 24/7 ordering capability your competitors can't, having unique financing or different terms than your competitors, or customizing or private-labeling a product in ways your competitor can't.

What can you do to customize your services to meet the unique needs of customers or potential customers? If you want to make up a word to cover this uniqueness, it would be *customerization*—the ability to make your services fit your customer's most challenging requirements. Offering something unique and making sure your customers and potential customers are well aware of the uniqueness is good for sales and good for increasing margins as well!

Unconventional is about being remarkable in your advertising and promotional messages. If the normal tools for promoting your product or service are being ignored because they are interruptive or obtrusive, try something out of the ordinary. Stir curiosity and send a message of gain as opposed to invading your potential customer's time and space. Perhaps you could offer a portion of your product or service for free; tie your services to an incentive trip or gift; offer goods or services in multiple language; focus your message on your client's kids; access some form of social network—physical or digital—to open new interests; challenge the customer with a puzzle to solve. Whatever the unconventional approach is, the goal should be to build a list of e-mail addresses—organized by interest in specific areas of product and service—and to then build rapport and only promote specific and targeted items in your communications.

Unobtrusive is being cognizant, respectful, and appreciative of your customer's time. This is more than just making appointments in advance, planning the call, and working out the presentation in advance. Being unobtrusive requires knowing your customer's business so well that you only communicate when you know the new product or service could be of additional value. It means knowing schedules so well that you only try to make appointments that fit that schedule.

Unobtrusive is also about tapping into the folks that give you permission to market to them as a result of some of the unconventional things you do. With your list of e-mail addresses, begin a sophisticated set of messages. Send e-mails that apply to your customer's specific needs. It will bring credibility from your ability to be an unobtrusive but effective supplier!

Unstoppable is about persistence, closing skills, feedback, and follow-up. Moving a sale forward or closing a sale is the step that happens when you get a signal that says, "It's time to stop talking and start writing." The "writing" could be as simple as scheduling the next call in the process or scheduling a call with a "specialist" or "expert." The "writing" could be filling out the order. What makes you unstoppable is what you do from that point on. Being unstoppable is about following up on details, promises, and commitments.

Get proficient with the electronic customer relationship management tools your firm provides. Being unstoppable is about using every tool to ensure that relationship with your customer keeps getting stronger. Remember important dates and events, follow up with every task you are committed to, and make sure you use current successes with existing customers. Tools and good follow-up habits will make you more successful.

The new, exciting and challenging world of selling in the 21st century is something to be embraced, not avoided. Pay attention to the Five U's to become unbelievably successful. SSE

Ken Rogner is a senior sales consultant and educator. Call 708-205-6721 or email 3rresources@comcast.net.

ACTION: Practice the five U's.

SALES/COMMUNICATION

Telling Tension

You can learn to manage it.

by Conrad Elnes

TELLING TENSION IS THE compelling desire to talk. It occurs whenever someone feels strong emotions; and the stronger the emotion, the more desire there is to express it. The *in*ability to manage Telling Tension will keep you *out*, so learning to manage it will have a more positive impact on your career than any other single skill.

Managing Telling Tension begins as you bridle your own Telling Tension and listen as buyers talk about something important to them. As they express themselves, their Telling Tension diminishes rapidly; leaving them with open minds and open ears. Then it's your turn to talk.

Causes of Telling Tension

There are three causes of Telling Tension: 1) strong emotions like anger, disagreement, defensiveness or enthusiasm, 2) questions, and 3) silence.

When a buyer says something causing disagreement, you may feel compelled to cut the speaker off; you may try to overcome an objection by talking faster and louder. This reduces receptivity to zero. As both parties feel a need to talk, they focus on their own points of view, ignore new information from the other, and the issue remains unresolved. I've observed some highly experienced professionals during their interviews, driven by one major goal—to get in and make a strong presentation. Their enthusiasm causes them to launch their pitch with little regard for the buyer's needs. They fail to learn the buyer's problems and have no idea which features and benefits to stress.

Questions can be doubly dangerous. When a buyer asks a question, it is nearly impossible not to answer quickly. The question drives up your Telling Tension, and you may begin talking without considering the implication behind the question. Remember that 70 percent of buyer questions have a hidden meaning—they are loaded questions and correct information may not be the "right" answer.

Any extended period of silence is certain to drive up your desire to talk. When you ask a question and the buyer remains silent while considering an answer, you may feel compelled to say something. But if you break the silence, you are likely to lose the sale.

Symptoms of Telling Tension

The most obvious symptom is talking. Salespeople are viewed by others as being primarily talkers. Interestingly, more than 50 percent of the skills associated with high-performance salespeople are actually related to their ability and desire to listen and ask questions. Spoken objections, interruptions, complaints, and expressions of strong bias—such as "I'd never buy a foreign made car"—are also signals that a potential buyer may feel high Telling Tension.

But some symptoms are more subtle. Prospects may clear their throat as they prepare to talk, or may move from leaning back in their chair to leaning forward. And if a buyer's eyes seem to glaze over and he becomes unresponsive, you may have said something to which he wishes to reply.

Manage Telling Tension

You add value and create allies when you're willing to listen to buyers as they express themselves. Manage Telling Tension with these four steps:

1. Be aware of the causes and symptoms, so you can recognize it.
2. Stop talking as soon as you receive the buyer's signals.
3. Listen responsively to the buyer.
4. Avoid presenting information for longer than two minutes without asking a question. If buyers are enthusiastic, they will want to talk about it. SSE

Conrad Elnes is an author and trainer. Email celnes@salesinstitute.com or visit www.salesinstitute.com.

ACTION: Create and manage telling tension.

SALES/INCOME

Increase Income

Do it by leveraging your value.

by Jim Donovan

IF I WERE TO ASK YOU IF YOU want more money, you would likely say "yes!" Money not only provides you with the basic necessities, it also enables you to do things for your family, friends and community—and to live life on your own terms.

One of the best ways to increase your income is to find ways to increase and leverage your value. People are paid based on the value they provide. So if you can find ways to leverage or increase your value to society, your customer, or your company, you will automatically increase your income.

For example, when Tony Robins first started, much of his work was based on Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP). While there are thousands of practitioners using NLP working with clients, Tony taught these techniques to thousands of people. Years ago, I attended one of his seminars with 3,000 people who each paid $200 for the day. That's $600,000 gross plus product sales. Clearly Tony understood the value of leverage.

If a chef were to sit and explain a recipe to one person, he or she may be able to collect $100 for an hour of consulting. However, if the same chef put the information into a book, CD, or DVD or some other "package" they would be leveraging their time and value, producing exponential returns.

Some years ago, I charged my clients $150 an hour for consulting. Then I started packaging much of the information into an audio seminar with an Ebook for only $27. The client saved $123, and I was able to help many more people; moreover, the potential return to me is practically unlimited.

How can you leverage your value? Could you add group coaching to your solo coaching practice? Or offer additional products to your existing customers? McDonald's mastered this principal with their now-famous, "Would you like fries with that order?" question.

What could you do to add more value to your company? Companies pay employees based on the value they add. This is one reason salespeople and rainmakers (people who can leverage high-level connections) are paid well. Also, many intrapreneurs—people who work inside a company but create added value—earn well in excess of their salary by either saving the company money or creating additional income for it.

Where could you save money for your company or add to the bottom line? How might you present this in a way that will enable you to share in the income generated from your idea? SSE

Jim Donovan is a motivational speaker and the author of Stop Living Paycheck to Paycheck *and* This is Your Life, Not a Dress Rehearsal. *Visit www.JimDonovan.com.*

ACTION: Boost your income this year.

Your Sales Pipeline

Build an effective process.

by Steve Gielda

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO do to get sales forecasting more accurate? This is one of the most common and urgent questions asked by senior sales leaders. In theory the answer is a rather simple, but in practice getting better forecasts has proven extremely challenging.

So what's the underlying problem? Answer: the dots aren't connected. The most common reason why sales managers can't get sales reps to forecast more accurately is because the company's sales pipeline process is not integrated with the company's sales process. Too often companies implement a sales pipeline (sales funnel) process into their organization without any regard to the fundamental and strategic activities which take place throughout the sales process.

Aligning Sales Stages

What does it mean to align the sales process to the pipeline process? Most pipeline processes use terms such as Stage 1, Stage 2, and Stage 3 or Early Cycle, Mid-Cycle, or Late Cycle. But there is not a common definition to what these terms mean. For one sales rep, Stage 1 means identifying the "suspects" in their territory, while for others it means developing prospects' needs. This lack of common understanding often leads to poor sales forecasting and under-leveraged sales management support.

On the other hand, some people are getting it right. Today, top companies establish a common definition of what each stage in the pipeline process means and then establish a set of fundamental criteria which define that stage. One leading Fortune 1000 medical equipment company established a five-stage sales process and then built the sales pipeline process around it.

Their five stages are:

Stage 1 – Opportunity Qualification
Stage 2 – Need Development
Stage 3 – Solution Identification
Stage 4 – Implementation Resolution
Stage 5 – Contract Confirmation

Almost every sales organization has some form of these stages in their sales process. Some companies have more steps, others have fewer, but the overall process is strikingly similar.

Once the stages are established and labeled, the first step of integration is completed. However, it is critical to define each stage with clarity; and a simple narrative sentence won't due. It is necessary to establish the fundamental sales process criteria that operationally define each stage of the pipeline. For example, within Stage 1 there are crucial steps in the sales process which much be accomplished before moving onto Stage 2. Such steps may include criteria such as: key players in the account are identified, customers buying process is clearly understood, or revenue potential meets profiled standards.

Establishing the crucial criteria for each stage makes it easier for salespeople and managers to communicate with clarity where they are in the pipeline. The challenge comes from identifying the proper criteria (steps) for the each stage of the pipeline. What comes before what? What does a best practice sales process look like?

Understanding who the key players are and their role in the decision process early in the sales process is essential, so an effective strategy can be developed to leverage those key players later is the sales process. After understanding the key players, a best practice next step is to understand the customer's decision criteria and how the customer perceives your solution as compared to those decision criteria.

Advantages of Integrating

Integrating the sales process into the pipeline process has several distinct advantages. Here are just a few:

It creates absolute clarity as to where the opportunity is in the pipeline. If a sales rep tells the manager the customer is in Stage 3 and yet the rep hasn't met the criteria established in Stage 2, that's a red flag.

It provides a strategic coaching tool for sales managers. Sales manager can quickly identify where sales reps might need help. Too often sales managers spend hours conducting "account reviews" without any clear direction or outcomes from the dialogue. Creating clear criteria for each stage of the pipeline process allows the sales manager to quickly identify which accounts seem to be "stuck" in the pipeline and can discuss the specific steps that the sales rep needs to take to move the account forward in the pipeline process. Otherwise, managers merely conduct dialogues of good intent but can't establish clear direction regarding what the rep is to do next.

It allows for clear call objectives. A top sales rep will always be clear about their call objectives before the sales call begins. Too often sales reps walk in and out of their customer's office without doing anything strategic to drive the customer closer to a decision. With clear criteria in each stage of the pipeline process, a rep can check to see what criteria have not been met for that stage and develop a call plan to achieve that objective.

It shortens the sales cycle. Top sales reps drive the customer buying process instead of playing a reactive role. Creating best-practice criteria at each stage of the pipeline can build the desire to get customers to take action, and help them through their decision in a more timely fashion.

It creates forecast metrics that you can bank on every month. When each phase of the pipeline is managed with rigor, you can measure the success rates of the business in each stage.

The same medical equipment company created a rigorous process to forecast opportunities against the criteria in each stage of the pipeline. As a result, they realized that when opportunity entered Stage 3, there was a 78 percent chance in winning that business. When the account moved into Stage 4, the percentage jumped to 86 percent. Based upon these statistics, the company was able to be more effective in their sales forecasting and was able to manage product manufacturing more accurately—reducing inventory and shipping costs.

Things change quickly in the hypercompetitive market of sales. Providing your sales team with an effective pipeline process to manage the multitude of ever-changing criteria customers have is imperative to success. **SSE**

Steve Gielda, is a principal in Sales Momentum, a sales effectiveness training company. Call 703-266-7667 or email sgielda@salesmomentum.com.

ACTION: Provide an effective pipeline process.

MANAGING/ENVIRONMENT

Speed of Caring

It ensures an engaged workforce.

by Sue Lindgren

CAN YOU REMEMBER A TIME when a leader, mentor, or boss was 100 percent focused on you. What was that experience like? How did it make you feel? You probably felt rejuvenated, challenged, and inspired by that person's confidence in who you are as well as your abilities. You both slowed down to the speed of caring. That is the magic of Mindful Leadership.

Mindful Leadership is about making an impact with your employees each time you have an exchange. When you practice Mindful Leadership, the rewards are expanding, and you inspire a deeper level of engagement from your people. Imagine a workforce of highly engaged, committed people. What would stop them? Not much!

Mindful Leadership offers you the flexibility and freedom to be fully engaged from the deepest part of who you are, wherever you are. It is simple, but not easy. It is an experience of completion without sacrifice.

Developing Mindful Leadership

Hold meetings only if they are highly productive. Thirty-one percent of employees believe meetings are held out of habit, and have no real purpose. In the U.S., almost 60 percent of employee time is spent in meetings; and, counter to their intent, most of those cause distrust and misalignment. When your employees believe their time is being wasted and communication is poor, their trust in the organization and in your leadership dwindles. That, in turn, leads to low productivity, absenteeism, and attrition over time.

Focus on clear, consistent communication. Show concern for your employees' time. Reward their loyalty and give them clear information to do their jobs well. Help them envision themselves as important players who directly contribute to your company's future. Take the time in the beginning to ensure they *understand*—not just that they *heard* the words. It needs to make sense to them, given how they see their world.

Answer and share the following: What are your expectations of them individually and as a group? What is the competitive environment? What are the financial challenges and results? What are their career and development opportunities? What are your business challenges and strategies?

Be aware of your communication and its impact on others. Seventy percent of the reasons companies lose clients, employees, and customers is due to poor communication. And of all the reasons people are terminated, 75 percent is because of low emotional intelligence competencies.

Learn how to sense, understand, and react appropriately to others' emotions. Careers are derailed for three reasons: 1) inability to handle interpersonal problems, 2) poor team leadership in the face of challenge or conflict, and 3) inability to adapt, change or elicit trust.

Practice communicating regarding employees career needs and what matters most to them. Fifty percent of employees surveyed said companies fall short in providing employee development initiatives and offer poor or inadequate communications regarding their career and what matters most to them.

When you slow to the speed of caring, your focus is on listening and being present for people. Use clear, thoughtful communication to improve your power to inspire and engage those around you. As a result, everyone will gain greater satisfaction in their accomplishments while your bottom line improves. SSE

Sue Lindgren is CEO of YESS!—Your Extraordinary Success Strategies and author of Create the Business Breakthrough. *www.sayyess.com or call 952-746-3190.*

ACTION: Manage at the speed of caring.

MARKETING/NETWORKING

Social Currency

Get more power referrals.

by Andrea Sittig-Rolf

SOCIAL CURRENCY IS THE value you bring to the social networks in which you are involved—based on the people you know and the relationships you have. Social currency is what you have to "spend" by way of introductions you make to help the people in your networks get what they want.

So how do you determine your social currency? Think of all of your spheres of influence: the people you know and the networks you're involved in. This will help you map and understand your individual strengths and how they can benefit those in your spheres of influence—your potential ambassadors and your actual ambassadors.

About 17 years ago, one of my best ambassadors—who represented a long-distance services company—and I did a mutual endorsement mailer. A mutual endorsement mailer is a marketing tool used not only to promote each other's businesses, but to actually make personal introductions for each other.

Here's how it works. Review your contact database with your ambassador and determine which of your contacts best fits your ambassador's ideal client profile (ICP). Next, on *your* letterhead, have your ambassador write a letter to the contacts in your database who have been identified as fitting your ambassador's ICP to personally introduce your ambassador to your contacts. Your ambassador is writing a letter on your letterhead, as if it is coming from you, as a way of being personally introduced to specific contacts in your database.

By having your ambassador write the letter, he will be able to stress the key points he wants to convey to those receiving the letter. When you mail the letter, be sure to include any marketing material relevant to your ambassador's business, as well as your business card and your referrals partner's business card in the package you send out. Remember, you should sign the letter, as it is coming from you.

Then, have your ambassador do the same for you, on his letterhead, with his signature, introducing you to the contacts in his database that fit your ICP. About a week after the mailers have been sent, call the contacts—given to you by your ambassador—who have received the mutual endorsement mailer. When you call, say, "I'm calling to follow up on the letter you received from Bob Jones." (Bob Jones being your ambassador.) From there, the conversation should flow fairly smoothly and you now have a great introduction into a new prospective opportunity.

You may find, as my ambassador and I did, that you will get phone calls from prospects who receive the mutual endorsement mailer before you have a chance to follow up with them! SSE

Andrea Sittig-Rolf is a sales trainer, speaker, author of Power Referrals *(McGraw-Hill), and president of Sittig Inc. Email info@sittiginc.com or call 206-769-4886 or visit www.sittiginc.com/powerreferrals.*

ACTION: Draft a Mutual Endorsement Mailer.

Higher Performance

The key is to get on the same page!

by Joe Calhoon

IN ORDER TO MAKE THE MOST of the current realities, leaders must adapt to the changing marketplace and engage the capacity of their people to achieve business results. It all starts with a dynamic business growth plan.

Developing a clear and simple plan will strengthen employee morale, increase productivity, and improve profitability—and won't take long. It will fit on a single page. It will be easy to communicate. It will keep your team on track, and it will be easy to adjust as the economy improves. An effective planning system is the most reliable predictor of business growth—it keeps everyone on the same page and ultimately leads to higher performance.

Developing Your Plan

To get your team on the same page, start by answering these six questions:

• ***What are you trying to build? (Vision). Vision*** is your desired future state. Look beyond current realities to a more promising future. A vision ignites people's passion and harnesses their unique strengths to grow the business.

The four basic elements of a useful vision statement are: what business you're in, what products and services you offer, who you're trying to serve, and the scope of operations (local to global). If you don't agree on these four elements, it will be difficult for your team to make meaningful progress.

The vision of Apple Computer is: "Apple is committed to bring the best personal computing products and support to students, educators, designers, scientists, engineers, business persons and consumers in over 140 countries around the world."

• ***What's your purpose? Why do you exist? (Mission). Mission*** is purpose. Mission motivates. It's why you do what you do. Many mission statements are too long. They should be 10 words or less and fit on a t-shirt. For example, FedEx's mission is: "The world on time."

An effective way to define your mission is to ask "Why not just shut this organization down, close the doors, and sell off the assets?" This gets to the core of why you're in business.

• ***How will you treat each other moving forward? (Values). Values*** define a code of conduct—acceptable and unacceptable ways to treat one another. Values build strong relationships and create trust. With strong values, employees will receive greater acceptance, appreciation, and respect at work than in other areas of their life.

Lou Holtz, the great college football coach, has never taken over a winning team; but within two years, each of his teams played in a bowl game. Many attribute his success and the character of his players to these three values—do what's right, do your best, and treat others as you want to be treated.

Vision, mission, and values are long term; they don't change much in time.

• ***How will you measure progress? (Objectives). Objectives*** are the numbers that measure progress. Think of the dashboard in your car. Your business needs a dashboard—a set of indicators that tell you how you're doing.

Jack Welch is widely recognized as the most effective executive of the 20th century. He said, "Too often we measure everything and understand nothing. The three most important things you need to measure in a business are customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction, and cash flow." In fact, businesses that obsessively focus on meeting the needs of those three stakeholders—customers, employees, and owners (CEO)—while developing their leaders are 756 times more profitable than comparison companies!

• ***What are the categories of work to be done? (Strategies). Strategies*** are the high-level choices you make that determine the course you're going to follow. Here's a simple and effective method to define your strategies:

Define your categories. They might be called marketing, human resources, innovation, productivity, etc. Start with a verb and clearly define the end in mind. Use the words "by" or "through." Then identify your strategic choices. This marketing strategy helped Wilson Auctioneering double their revenues in one year: "Reposition through television advertising and focus on bigger deals."

Larry Grill recently explained his leadership philosophy. "The further you go up the corporate chart, the greater your responsibility to serve others. Unfortunately, many leaders lose the ego battle and undermine their own effectiveness. Leadership is best described as servant leadership."

• ***Who will do what by when? (Priorities). Priorities*** translate strategies into results. Priorities define who needs to do what by when. Many business plans are lengthy documents that collect dust. Almost every plan is missing a vital element: priorities.

Priorities start with a verb, end with a date, and have something measurable in between. Priorities include problems to solve, goals to achieve, or capacities to develop: "Finish vehicle maintenance by Dec. 19" or "Sell $200,000 in new business by Nov. 28" or "Complete marketing plan by Dec. 5."

Engage Employees

Three principles help leaders engage employees, accelerate growth, and increase profits.

• ***No involvement, no commitment***—Involve your team to a greater extent as you move through the six elements. You want your team less involved in creating vision, more involved in creating strategies and priorities.

• ***Progress, not perfection***—Your plan does not have to be perfect for your team to make significant progress. You will reach a point when it is best to quit planning and start achieving.

• ***80/20 principle***—Focus your team on the 20 percent of activities that produce 80 percent of your results. Ask, "What is most important?" and do it.

By answering these six questions and getting your team on the same page, you develop a significant competitive advantage. The key to higher performance, higher effectiveness, and strong capacity is developing your dynamic business growth plan and consistently achieving your most important priorities. SSE

Joe Calhoon is the President of PriorityAdvantage—the smartest way to run a business. Visit www.joecalhoon.com or call 816-285-8144.

ACTION: Develop your plan and engage people.

MANAGING/COST

Surviving Recession

Cut (waste) and build (value).

by Jay Forte

LOYALTY—OF BOTH EMPLOYEES and customers—is the key to success in any economy. Employee loyalty must first exist to activate customer loyalty. As recession-inspired actions cross your desk, be sure to evaluate them not only for their bottom-line effect today, but also for their impact on employee engagement and loyalty for tomorrow.

To recession-proof your company, consider this "***Cut*** (the waste) and ***Build*** (the value)" strategy:

- For most businesses, employee-related expenses are the greatest expense captions on the Income Statement and therefore the first to be targeted for cuts. Review all employee-related expenses and assess those that do not make a significant difference to the employee. Survey employees to determine the benefits with greatest value. ***Cut*** those that do not add value; ***build*** value by adding small, high-impact benefits while the rest of the business world is cutting. The positive emotional response to an "addition" at the time of cuts cannot be underestimated.
- Senior management should feel the effects of the first cuts. Employee loyalty is critical, so if employees see all cuts are at their level and not first with those who are more significantly paid, they will not buy into the changes and quality will drop. So the goal is to make changes *and* win employees into continued performance. ***Cut*** senior manager perks and compensation; ***build*** rapport by sharing information about this first round of changes with all employees. Employee support will significantly improve as they see all levels of the organization change in response to the challenges in the economy.
- ***Cut*** wasteful perks such as meetings with no real agenda, or social outings with limited purpose. Instead, ***build*** by hosting a meeting with a clearly defined profit purpose. Use a powerful speaker and create specific individual performance requirements from the meeting. Follow up with employees to implement changes. ***Cut*** the bar bill and the fancy meals; ***build*** performance by spending on speakers, coaches, and tools to build performance, and then hold employees accountable for using what they learn to drive results.
- Be honest with employees; share the numbers so employees understand the critical financial picture. Many times employees are willing to make cuts and changes when they see the reasons and are given the facts. ***Cut*** limited and hearsay communications; ***build*** rapport by being honest with employees and sharing the facts. Also, send a letter to employees' homes to be sure accurate information is shared with families as well. Employee loyalty is affected by how spouses and partners feel about the organization.
- Change your understanding of the roles of employees. ***Cut*** the old definition of *employees* where they just show up and do what they are told; ***build*** a powerful recession-proof workplace by allowing employees to own a larger portion of the results, ideas, policies, and services. Offer education, skill development, and learning to expand perspectives and thinking. Encourage employees to take performance risks to win customers, invent efficiencies, and see possibilities instead of limitations. Ignite employee performance by spending in areas that drive engagement.

The recession is here, so protect your business by remembering that value lies in your employees' hearts and minds. Cutting expenses that impact this may save a dollar today but will cost you $10 next week. Spending wisely, holding employees accountable for performance, and building a more positive workplace are the keys to surviving and thriving in a slowdown economy. SSE

Jay Forte is a performance speaker, consultant and president of Humanetrics, and author of Fire Up Your Employees and Smoke Your Competition. *Visit: www.humanetricsllc.com or call: 401-338-3505.*

ACTION: Use the cut-and-build strategy.

SALES/PERFORMANCE

Perform or Die

Performance is your product!

by Dan Beaulieu

IN TODAY'S MARKET, IF YOUR delivery and quality numbers are not at least 96 percent all the time, then you have no one to blame but yourself. Don't even think of blaming the Chinese, companies that price "unfairly," the U.S. government, or your industry's trade association for your lack of profitability.

If you run a company with an attitude that "good enough is good enough," you are going to fail. Companies must deliver great products on time and make money. Companies have to focus on what their customers want, and give it to them. Companies that do so continue to grow and make a profit. It can be done!

What really scares me are those low-performing companies with a chip on their shoulder that go around with a "What, me worry?" attitude about their performance. Then they chastise their salespeople and tell them they're inadequate because they can't sell their product. Remember, your performance is a reflection of what you are, and what you produce. If you are 85 percent at on-time delivery, that means that 15 percent of the time you fail.

Apply that to other things in your life. How would it work for you if: Every time you got in your car there was a 15 percent chance it would not work? Your doctor was wrong 15 percent of the time? The children came home after curfew 15 percent of the time? Commercial airlines you fly on did not work 15 percent of the time? Fifteen percent of the stuff you bought at the grocery store each week was not fresh? If 15 out of 100 beers you opened was flat? Your plumber only did a good job 85 percent of the time?

You would be outraged right? You would tell everyone about the crummy grocery store, plumber, and beer company. If it was your doctor, you wouldn't hesitate to sue him, right? Why should you think that your own customers are any different?

To learn how well your business performs, ask these questions: Is the on-time delivery number less than 95 percent? Is the quality yield number less than 95 percent? Is the customer return number more than 1 percent? Have we lost 3 or more customers due to dissatisfaction? Have we received one or more irate customer calls in the past 30 days?

If the answer to any of these questions is ***yes***, then your company is in trouble. You need to get back in there, roll up your sleeves, think about your customers, and get to work. If you are committed to doing this, you will get better and you will succeed. SSE

Dan Beaulieu is a sales and marketing expert who helps companies increase sales with targeted strategies. A founded D. B. Management Group. Visit www.dbmpcb.com or email danbbeaulieu@aol.com.

ACTION: Assess your performance.

Make Your Company a Magic Kingdom

We can all learn business lessons from Walt Disney.

by Kendra Trahan

EVEN THOUGH THE NAME "Walt Disney" is synonymous with creativity and the Walt Disney Company is one of the largest and most successful media and entertainment corporations in the world, many business professionals scoff at the idea of embracing "the mouse" at work. In fact, depending on where you work, wearing a Mickey Mouse tie or watch to the office will not only be frowned upon, but it may also cause co-workers and managers to question your professionalism or challenge your credibility.

Despite corporate America's negative view of all things Disney on the job, millions of people go to one of the many Disney parks for vacations each year, bringing home souvenirs and photos that they proudly display on their desk. And while some people may think that such Disney keepsakes are too whimsical or child-like for an office setting, the fact is that Mickey Mouse and all the other Disney items represent the kind of success that many companies are striving for.

No matter what company or industry you're in, seeing something Disney in your office should be a sign of excellence—a reminder to do your best, to think creatively, and to reach for the stars. While Disney items are often frivolous and fun, they can also be reminders of great business principles that all companies should implement.

Consider Three Beliefs

Consider three beliefs that enabled Walt Disney to create and build a multi-billion dollar corporation.

1. Hire the best in the field and let them do their best. When it comes to hiring great talent, one of two things often happens. Either the manager hires a great person for the job but stands in the new employee's way, resulting in poor performance; or the manager feels threatened by a potential employee's skills and hires someone else who is less qualified for the job. In either scenario, the company suffers.

Walt Disney was not a very good artist, so he hired Ub Iwerks to do the animations for him. Rather than feel threatened by another artist, Walt recognized his own weaknesses and sought out the best talent to help him succeed. At the same time, Walt knew he was good at sales, so he handled the sales end of his company. Walt believed that the only way to become successful was to have a great team on your side.

Rather than feel threatened by someone who may have a better education or more skills than you, welcome that person onto your team. Put your ego aside and pinpoint your weaknesses. Then, find people who are strong in those areas to help your company or department move forward. Always remember that the success a lone person can achieve is great, but the success a group of people working together can achieve is often amazing.

2. Internally mine the talent in your organization. While many companies do like to promote from within, they often have strict guidelines for promoting or reassigning employees. For example, salespeople can only be promoted if they exceed their sales quotas. But if salespeople are weak in sales yet strong in another area, such as training or accounting, they cannot get promoted or reassigned because they did not meet their quota. The results are frustrated employees who could shine in another area and greatly contribute to the company's bottom line—if only given the chance.

Walt Disney routinely "walked the studio," talking to his employees and learning what they were passionate about. He often took the time to notice what personal items they had on their desk, as he believed those items could tell him a lot about their strengths and what they could contribute to the company. For example, Walt noticed that one of his artists, Blaine Gibson, had beautiful sculptures on his desk—sculptures that he made himself. Blaine was a good artist and doing fine in his position, but Walt saw the passion for sculpting that Blaine had. Walt quickly reassigned Blaine to W.E.D. (known today as Imagineering). Today Blaine is best known as the person who sculpted the faces in the Pirates of the Caribbean ride and all the American presidents for The Hall of Presidents attraction.

Look for the passions hidden within your people. Do you have a salesperson who would make a great trainer? An accountant who would excel at PR? A maintenance worker who can create great sales copy? See what people can do besides their immediate job. Often their hidden talents and skills are just what your company needs to succeed.

3. Empower your people to exceed customer expectations. Although many companies like to talk about "empowering their employees," the fact is that many workers feel very un-empowered these days. They want to help a client or customer resolve an issue, but they have to go through so many layers of red tape that doing so seems impossible. With the focus on bottom-line results and cutting costs, employees feel restricted on what they can do.

One of Walt's main goals that lives on at The Walt Disney Company was to always "exceed expectations." Walt inspired and empowered people to give more than what was asked of them. Even today, Disney employees can do what's necessary to meet a guest's expectations. If a child orders popcorn and then drops it a few second later, the employee is empowered to replace the popcorn for free.

Empowering employees doesn't mean they have free reign; it means they can do certain things within established limits and guidelines to make the customer happy. Take some time to outline what your staff can do in specific situations to exceed a customer's expectations. Then let your employees do it. When you allow your employees to take care of the customers in a respectful way, the business will take care of itself.

Create the Company of Your Dreams

While the genius and namesake behind the Walt Disney Company has been gone for 40 years, the principles and methods he used to build a very successful corporation are still relevant. So as you sit in meetings discussing strategies for taking you to the next level, remember Walt's ideas. They could propel you into a profitable future. SSE

Kendra Trahan is a board member with Carolwood Pacific Historical Society, dedicated to preserving the legacy of Walt Disney. Visit: www.themeparkdetective.com.

ACTION: Make your company a magic kingdom.

MANAGEMENT/SERVICE

Recession-Proof Your Business

Protect the bottom line.

by Robin Robins

I'VE ALWAYS BELIEVED OUR successes and failures are 100 percent by choice. The results we have today in our businesses, incomes, health, and lives are born out of the daily decisions we make on where we spend our time, our focus, and our energy. Success and failure are not overnight things. You have to work at it, whichever you choose.

Many people would have you believe that we are in a recession. And while it's clear that certain industries are suffering, I can't help but think they've rolled over, pulled up the dirt blanket, and accepted the inevitable end of their business.

Take the real estate market. I have not seen *any* additional effort from any builder, realtor, or home seller to generate more business. Not a direct mail campaign, prospecting call, or ad. Many retail stores have complained that the dip in the economy is hurting sales, yet I've yet to see anyone make even a weak attempt to convince me to patronize their business. I can't tell you how many companies I've contacted, credit card in hand, only to get voice mail and never hear back from anyone who is willing to take my order.

Just recently I shopped nine companies looking for a Web-to-print technology; a $60,000 to $100,000 solution that I'm looking to implement immediately. Over half never responded, and of those who have, only *one* of them actually followed up more than once to try and get me on the phone. Even that one was supposed to send me a proposal, and here I sit, weeks later, not hearing from them.

Even the companies I usually patronize on a regular basis have not stepped up. I recently stopped doing business with a home-delivery dry cleaner and never received so much as a lousy letter asking me why I stopped my weekly delivery. Truth is I was unhappy with their service; but if they had called to find out why I stopped patronizing their business, they could have made it right and kept me as a frequent buyer.

In my business, we recently stopped all orders to a major vendor we spent over $200,000 with last year, and they never even called to find out why.

So while everyone is whining about how companies are "cutting back" and "spending less," I'm not buying. Sure, the low-hanging fruit has probably gone away, which means their sloppy, inconsistent sales processes and utter lack of customer service will stop working. Want to know how to recession-proof your business? Pull your darn socks up and pay attention to the acres of diamonds at your back door!

Have five ways to consistently bring in new clients and keep the funnel full; and don't take a weak, half-hearted approach to this, or you'll end up no further ahead and out a few thousand dollars in failed marketing attempts.

Make a concentrated effort to communicate with your clients ***more***—offering them more options, more services, more products, and reminding them of all you can do for them. Contact old customers who've not bought in awhile and find out why, and follow up with all your old unconverted leads. And last but not least, make absolutely certain you have a good referral system in place that not only *asks* your clients frequently for referrals, but also rewards them for the ones they graciously give you.

Remember, your #1 job as a business owner or manager is to bring in more revenue and secure profits. So ask yourself, what have you done ***today*** to recession-proof your business? SSE

Robin Robins is an independent marketing consultant, sales trainer, and author of the Technology Marketing Toolkit. *Email ask@technologymarketingtoolkit.com.*

ACTION: Protect your bottom line this year.

MARKETING/OPTIONS

Stimulate Business

In challenging economic times.

by Julia Hutton

MOST BUSINESS EXPERTS agree that hard, economic times create a huge window of opportunity for those who know how to take advantage of the "poor economy" while promoting their businesses. For most first-stage and even second-stage business owners, their first reaction is, "I don't have the money to market now."

You need to find money. Otherwise, how will consumers know what you have available? What good is spending all your money on manufacturing if the products just sit on a shelf gathering dust? You need a good marketing campaign!

Marketing Options

Marketing is a series or combination of activities that take a product or service to its logical market or markets. Marketing activities get the word out to consumers about a fantastic—possibly new—solution or service.

Marketing is the umbrella term for advertising, direct mail, digital (web site, blogs, etc.) and public relations.

1. Advertising—Purchased time or space on radio or television, billboards, newspapers, or magazines—where the business tells the public what they want it to know about a product or service.

2. Direct mail—Campaigns where lists are purchased and postcards, brochures, or letters are sent via mail.

3. Digital—Websites, email campaigns, blogs, social networking, etc.

4. Public relations—media contacts (editors, producers or reporters) in print, broadcast, and digital write about a product or service.

Marketing Tips

You need to do all four options simultaneously if possible, but if you must choose, I believe particularly strongly in the power of public relations—*especially during recession*.

Here are five reasons for marketing during economic downturns:

1. You get better bang (exposure) for the (marketing) buck during challenging times. As more businesses pull back, more "deals" can be made in media buys, direct mail campaigns, digital and public relations costs.

2. Media is looking for stories because more businesses have recoiled in fear, and marketing is usually the first to go.

3. Media is cutting back on producer, writer, and reporter positions. They are now depending on publicists to do a lot of what these people did.

4. Consumers may be more careful with spending, so third-party media endorsements are critical. When an editor says, "This is the grooviest (*so and so*) I've seen in a long time," readers and viewers believe them.

5. PR, more than any other form of marketing, can deliver fast and furiously to a company's bottom line. SSE

Julia Hutton is CEO of Orca Communications Unlimited, LLC. Visit www.orcacommunications.com.

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