

Sales and Service Excellence

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PEOPLE/PROBLEMS

Your Bad Apples

They spoil the whole bunch.



by Joanne G. Sujansky

YOUR COMPANY'S BAD apples tend to spoil your culture. What can you do with your problematic employees? Every organization has at least one. This person drags down morale. He or she is your "bad apple." And if you want to keep him (or her) from spoiling the whole barrel, you've got your work cut out for you.

Bad apples can wreak tremendous havoc. Their bad attitude, poor work ethic, or self-centered practices reduce the productivity of your other employees and damage morale, which can lead to a team breakdown. When bad apples are present, people stop functioning as a team.

Ridding your company of this bad apple can transform an office of formerly solitary cubicle hermits into a place where people productively work together to get extraordinary results. So, clearly, you *should* make dealing with bad apples a top priority. Doing so is not an easy (or welcome) task. After all, these bad apples tend to be just as draining for you as they are for everyone else. Moreover, you may not know how to deal with them.

Although bad apples usually comprise only a small percentage of a team, because they require more effort to handle, you end up spending a great deal of your time dealing with or listening to their concerns or complaints—or the complaints you receive from other employees about the bad apple. So, if you don't deal with your bad apples



either by cutting out their rotten behaviors or tossing them out of the barrel, their spoiling effects will only multiply.

Seven Common Problems

The first step is understanding what makes these people so difficult to handle. Managers are often flummoxed by bad apples. Here are seven common problems and how you can deal with them once and for all.

Problem 1: Some company cultures tolerate the passing of bad apples from one department to another. Rather than bringing their bad apple's behavior to an end, many managers choose to move the employee on to another department. By the time they get to you, they've been with the company so long that it's tough to fire them. You're tempted to shuffle your bad apples along to the next team, but all that does is move around the misery.

Solution: Create a culture that doesn't allow people to pawn problems off on others. We call such a company a *Vibrant Entrepreneurial Organization*. In a VEO culture, the elusive *sense of ownership* can flourish. When people feel that they own their work and their company, they won't allow a bad apple to spoil either one. If your culture allows bad apples to be passed around without any consequence for their behavior, they will spoil the whole company. However, if you have a VEO in which every employee innovates constantly, executes relentlessly, and works with a sense of passion, bad apples simply won't be able to survive.

Problem 2: Managers expect team members to deal with the bad apple, but they can't or won't. People have difficulty giving feedback to their

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peers. They'll almost always push the problem back to managers.

Solution: Confrontation by team members can be successful when team members feel like they have enough power in the situation. Developing a VEO instills a sense of ownership in employees and makes them want to find a solution themselves. Clear and open communication is key. You can foster healthy peer communication through teambuilding activities that help members improve their problem-solving skills.

Problem 3: Bad apples can be master manipulators. After all, they've stayed around for a reason. When you confront them, they tend to pull out all of the stops to redirect your attention from poor behavior to their more positive traits, or to some other person. Maybe they will mention an account they just brought in or point out that a fellow employee exhibits the same behavior.

Solution: Regardless of what your bad apple is saying, stay focused on addressing the issues at hand. Simply say, "That's not what we're here to discuss," and refocus on her destructive attitude. If you ignore the behavior, you'll have that same employee in your office every month as you try to solve the same problem.

Problem 4: Bad apples aren't always poor performers—some might even be great producers. If your bad apple's problem is simply a negative attitude or a tendency to bully others, his bad behavior may not prevent leaders from viewing him as an asset. Maybe he's a top producer, or talented in some hard-to-find skill. His redeeming qualities may make you reluctant to confront him, much less get rid of him.

Solution: Provide balanced feedback to all of your direct reports, including your bad apples. Acknowledge the positive contributions your bad apple is making, but confront the behaviors that negatively affect others. After the confrontation, the bad apple may realize that his annoying behaviors will limit his progress and promotability. Or, he may realize that his behavior will prevent him from getting support from others when his success is on the line. Ultimately, you must decide whether or not the bad apple's negative behaviors outweigh his one big sale or his singular skill.

Problem 5: Rather than model and recognize the behavior they want, expect, and demand, managers focus too much attention on poor behavior. The positive behavior can't cancel out the negative. There's something in human nature that allows the bad to outweigh the good. If you don't give people a lot of positive to focus on, their attention will gravitate to the negative.

Solution: While you shouldn't ignore the negative behavior in the office, you should place more emphasis on showcasing the positive. Reward employees who go out of their way to help their teammates. Create a peer review system. And be open and responsive to employee feedback. If your employees value teamwork and see how their behavior affects their coworkers, you may modify the bad apple's destructive tendencies.

Problem 6: Some managers are afraid to fire bad apples for fear of legal retribution. Bad apples, by definition, are troublemakers. And people who cause problems inside a company are likely to also cause problems on their way out the door. You may fear that if you fire your bad apple—or even confront or discipline her—she will file suit for discrimination or harassment or any other reason she thinks will work.

Solution: Legal retribution shouldn't worry you if you follow sound human resource practices. Coach, provide balanced feedback, help the person plan for correction, discuss what you document, and document what you discuss. After each meeting, cite the problem, the action taken to correct or eliminate it, the dates, the result, and any comments. Create fact-based, objective documentation that includes both positive and negative performance and behavior.

Problem 7: Firing employees, no matter how bad their behavior or poor their performance, is never easy. If bad apples refuse to change their behavior, you must let them go. Firing such people is so unpleasant that most managers will put it off. And many haven't been trained how to fire employees.

Solution: When certain employees aren't working out, you need to discuss the situation and intended actions with your human resource professional and/or legal counsel. They will help you conduct the exit meeting. Remind the bad apple of discussions and warnings, why the separation is occurring, and what activities are now necessary. This meeting should not be a surprise to the bad apple: His being fired is the result of not turning around his performance.

You can largely avoid the bad apple disease altogether by fail-safing your hiring practices. Hire for talent and values and character, not just for skill sets. You can teach people the skills they need, but you can't always teach work ethic or integrity or respect. Build the culture you want, one employee at a time.

SSE

Joanne G. Sujansky is the author of *The Power of Partnering and founder of KEYGroup*. Visit www.keygroupconsulting.com, www.joannesujansky.com or call 800-456-5790.

ACTION: Deal with your bad apples.

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Leading on Purpose

Use three tools to build teams.



by Lynette Lewis

REMEMBER MY FIRST FORMAL experience in leadership. After many years of working with only a loyal band of faithful volunteers, I was finally in a position to lead a staff of three people.

I did not know how to manage or lead, and my organization did not provide tools, processes, or standards to use when leading or measuring teams.

So I simply plugged along and experimented. While waiting for a mentor to emerge, I kept forming and fashioning my own tools, theories, and techniques. Some worked brilliantly, others flopped miserably, or just wouldn't work for certain personalities.

My staff grew, and each new person helped hone my skills. I could see people's lives grow richer through my leadership. I watched their faces light up as they watched their dreams move from a far-off idea in the back of their mind to a proactive, top-of-mind component of their daily work.

The weekly staff meetings shifted from "fairly-boring-drudgery" to "dynamic-motivating-highlights-of-the-week!" Individual meetings became personal coaching sessions of sort.

Three Tools

Reflecting on 22 years of managing teams, I recognize three tools that are so effective in motivating that I do not lead or manage a group without them.

Tool 1: The Team Building Day. A Team-Building Day is a powerful way to help people step away from their daily pressures to focus on their individual purpose and see how it fits into broader goals. One day, once or twice a year, effectively creates mutual understanding into one another's purpose and dreams, and how to work together toward common business goals.

There are many ways to organize such a day, but this agenda has been tested many times:

- A unique get-to-know-one-another exercise that works well for teams
- A strengths-and-weaknesses exercise and plans for leveraging both
- A process for connecting individual purpose to broader team goals, thus

increasing personal motivation

- Organizing such a day to include facilitation, structure, and output

Tool 2: Team Meetings and One-on-Ones. In an effort to build a purpose-driven culture, I find that full team meetings along with one-on-ones are essential. They ensure that the energy from the Team-Building Day is incorporated into the daily culture.

I meet regularly with the key leaders of my team, and they in turn meet with theirs. Meetings are best done in person but can happen by phone or video conference. Frequency depends on the level of interaction that takes place daily among team members. In some cases, we meet weekly and in other cases every two weeks.

Regardless of how often people collaborate, essential benefits are derived from meetings where everyone reports on their activities and where you as



the leader remind them of how their activities contribute to the purpose.

This same affirmation of purpose should take place in the one-on-one meetings. This is a private chance to listen to the activities and challenges of your direct reports while discussing how these activities contribute to their personal goals and aspirations.

Here are a few principles I keep in mind for team meetings:

- Begin promptly and on time
- Prepare an agenda
- Ask each team member to briefly summarize their current projects
- Invite the group to dialogue and trouble-shoot items as necessary, but avoid one person dominating the time
- Allow time, even if it's brief, for voicing general questions and concerns
- End when the meeting is over

For individual one-on-ones, I let the employee set the agenda, requesting they prepare a brief list of what they would like to cover. I use this list to take notes and then file. This file helps me when I need to recall details of their work and performance.

Tool 3: Employee evaluations.

Inspect what you expect. Building a purpose-driven culture might start with a big bang at a team-building day, but if mechanisms for measuring and evaluating are not employed, the sense of purpose soon fades.

Large organizations usually have rigorous processes and tools for goal-setting and evaluations. If yours does not, adapt sample employee evaluations and incorporate purpose.

Leading people is one of the most strenuous yet rewarding aspects of work. At the beginning of my career I found it daunting. Now I find it the single most rewarding element.

One of my employees at Deloitte a number of years ago was a young man obviously talented well beyond his job description, working hard to find his place at the firm. He dove right into the team-building days and staff meetings. Our one-on-one's were motivating to both of us. Self-discoveries he made during those few years helped launch him into his bigger dreams of starting a mental fitness training company for athletes, an endeavor that has brought him major success. He told me recently, "Lynette, I can trace the seeds of this dream I'm living back to that time when I was part of your team. That season cultivated my ideas, bringing me to a place of confidence where I could live my purpose proactively."

When I hear things like this I'm reminded that the energy and time it takes to lead effectively are worth it.

Armed with a few of these tools or some of your own, call yourself a leader no matter what stage you are in professionally. Become efficient and effective with even just a couple of tools, making them part of your brand of leadership. Be willing to learn from those you lead. Ask them, "How am I doing?" and "What can I do better?"

Measure your impact not by what your team has achieved, but how every member has grown. Give them yet one more lesson—a leader is someone who finds surprising joy in celebrating the achievements of those she leads. **SSE**

Lynette Lewis is the author of Climbing the Ladder in Stilettoes: 10 Strategies for Stepping Up to Success and Satisfaction at Work. Email info@lynnettelewis.com.

ACTION: Build stronger teams.

Dazzle Customers

Try six service strategies.



by Cynthia Clay

SINCE THE COST OF ATTRACTING a new customer is five times the cost of keeping a current one, a 5 percent increase in customer retention might result in a 25 percent increase in profitability.

How should you hold on to these valuable customers? Hire people who care about the quality of service they deliver. Then ensure that every service employee has the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to provide dazzling service.

Help people follow six strategies:

Strategy 1: Become aware of your personal customer service style. The acronym RATE describes four styles: Relate, Act, Think, and Encourage.

- The employee with a *Relate* style builds rapport and relationships with customers. He is seen as compassionate and people-oriented.
- An employee with an *Act* style tends to decide and act quickly to resolve problems or issues efficiently.
- The person with a *Think* style asks many questions and thinks things through before arriving at a solution.
- The individual with an *Encourage* style offers creative options. She teams with customers to explore possibilities. She is enthusiastic and optimistic.

As your team develops an awareness of their personal styles, they should also notice that customers have their own styles. Matching their style to the customer's style often results in a better service transaction. It can make all the difference to the customer.

Strategy 2: Begin to think like your customers. Customers often arrive with service expectations they get from your company's branding efforts, from marketing campaigns, and from their past experiences. Retain your customers' loyalty by consistently exceeding these expectations: on-time delivery, low error rate, trusting relationships, solving problems on the spot, product or service guarantees, and making it right (service recovery).

Strategy 3: Develop the interpersonal skills to win your customers' hearts and minds. Empathy for your customers' situations or problems can be developed through attention and practice. When service providers are focused

on customer needs, they can respond with empathy. They listen, ask questions, clarify, and recommend solutions. Help customer-facing employees develop interpersonal skills.

Strategy 4: Resolve customer problems to their satisfaction. Use language that indicates that the employee will own the problem and solution for the customer: "I'm not the right person to help you, but I'll find the right person." Second, support service providers in giving the customer options.

Strategy 5: Handle charged emotions effectively. Customers sometimes push hot buttons. When service providers react to the customer's tone of voice, demeanor, body language, or unreasonable demands, they are less able to

deliver quality service. Help people *detach* from the situation, *defuse* the emotions, and *deliver* dazzling service.

Strategy 6: Recommend system enhancements to improve the customer's experience. Document the pattern of complaints, and bring suggestions and solutions to the right people. Improve the system to better serve your customers. Recognize what aspects of your products and services are meeting their needs and what aspects are driving them bonkers. Pass along your knowledge to enable your team to dazzle customers with blazing service. **SSE**

Cynthia Clay is CEO of NetSpeed Leadership and author of *Blazing Service*. Email cclay@netspeedleadership.com or call 1-877-517-5271.

ACTION: Implement these strategies.

SERVICE/FOLLOW-UP

Show Me the Love, Show Me the Money

Win top-of-mind awareness.



by Chuck Bauer

TOP-OF-MIND AWARENESS (TOMA) is the guiding principle of follow-up.

Creating TOMA enhances your relationship with your clients and advocates. Pull ahead of your competitors and get your clients' attention with original, thoughtful reminders of who you are and what you do. The more fun you have giving it, the more fun they will have receiving it. Use cool follow-up ideas that will cause your clients to think of you when they enter or reenter the marketplace.



Your TOMA Campaign

Here are seven things you can do:

- 1. Resist stopping before you start.** Tuck away pre-conceived notions about follow-up. Ignore that little voice in your head saying "I would never do this" or "This won't work." If you don't become distinct, you'll become extinct!
- 2. Invest in greeting and thank-you cards.** Purchase some creative greeting cards and thank-you cards. The choices are plentiful and colorful with many different messages. The more creative they are, the better. Also, find some fun stickers to place on the envelope.
- 3. Personalize the envelope by hand writing the recipient's name and address.** Use a calligraphy pen for a

unique and professional touch. All priority clients should receive a card.

4. Create a fun, personal message to add to the envelope and card. Keep the message short, crisp, and fun. Brainstorm with your associates or check out the verses in the cards in the stores. Write a few ideas, play with the words, and then pick the best one for your sales process. Polish your prose to perfection.

5. Copy it for as many cards as you need to cover your client base. Select borders, shading, style, and color. Include your website and e-mail address.

Check your spelling. Add your logo or some other graphic. But keep it simple. Now print your pages, perhaps on colorful paper. Consider adding a gift card, business card, or anything slim and thin to get your client's attention.

6. Select and use a distinctive stamp. Never miss a chance to attract positive attention to yourself. Visit your post office or www.usps.com to purchase stamps. Find something different, unique, relevant to you.

7. Implement an 80/20 rule for these follow ups. If you have 100 clients in your database, take the top 20 percent, those you value the most (your VIPs), and send your TOMA cards to them. For the other 80 percent, send them an e-card or a nice message via e-mail. Reach the people who count versus counting the people you reach.

Return business and referral business is good business. TOMA touches are unique, and your clients will enjoy such a personal touch and follow-up. **SSE**

Chuck Bauer helps executives and salespeople make their sales organizations more efficient and profitable. Visit www.chuckbauer.com.

ACTION: Launch a TOMA campaign.

Customer Loyalty

Form strategic relationships.



by John Conover

EVERY COMPANY WANTS customer loyalty, but few do what it takes to keep their most profitable customers satisfied and increase business with them.

Today, it is difficult to earn and retain loyalty, as customers have more options. Staying ahead of competition requires a proactive approach.

We position ourselves to meet customer's demands today, and over time.

For decades, we grew largely based on our brand's association with reliability and trust. Since 1913, we've provided high-quality equipment. However, market forces have made us rethink the pros and cons of that reputation. The heating, ventilation and air conditioning market (HVAC) has undergone globalization, energy market changes, and a new focus on efficiency and performance. It's not enough anymore to just make durable equipment.

This has led to our transformation from being a HVAC equipment supplier to being a provider of systems, services, and solutions for building efficiency and performance for life.

From Transactions to Relationships

One shift was moving from a tradition of transactional sales to a strategic approach to building customer relationships. In our industry, sales are typically based on opportunity chasing. A contractor buys a new chiller or air handler, and the deal is closed.

We created a range of system, service, and solutions to help contractors and building owners achieve their goals as well as long-term building performance. This required us to recondition our sales and engineering workforce to think beyond the sales transaction to selling customer success.

Our customers' goals involve targets for greater energy efficiency, lower costs, better indoor comfort levels, worker productivity, and high-performance buildings. We creatively help them achieve these outcomes, working in partnership to understand the business, the facility, and its objectives—and cultivate a growing relationship. The shift toward relationship building

is mutually beneficial. More of our customers look to us for long-term service.

We do business in many markets, posing the challenge of providing satisfying experiences to all customers. We set up account management processes and systems that give us the advantage of dedicating cross-functional teams to key customers. These teams are focused on specific customers, yet flexible enough work across boundaries. This gives the customer seamless access to the best solutions.

Our approach to account management is based on accountability. The account team accompanies the customer every step—in the pre-sale, during sale, and after sale—to ensure that



we deliver on our promises. As the relationship grows, the account team deepens its knowledge of the customer's building needs, helping us to meet new demands.

Vertical Segmentation

Another development is market segmentation. As buildings evolve in functionality and efficiency, their needs become more specialized. To manage this, we have enacted a vertical market strategy that fortifies our ability to meet demands in key sectors.

Through training, study, and experience, our sales and technical people are constantly sharing their knowledge with the right people so that we can tackle the specific, often complex, needs of our markets.

With schools, we consider not only needs for heating and cooling, but the district's objectives for enhanced learning, cost savings, and community and environmental demands. In healthcare, we apply our expertise in how indoor environments impact prod-

uctivity and affect patient outcomes. In government, we are well-versed in regulations and standards. Not only does this focus on vertical market knowledge better meet customer needs, but it leads to advances in products and services. We create solutions that lead to more business.

We hope to earn customers' trust by solving their problems proactively. We aim to prevent problems and deliver tangible business results like economic and energy savings. We take a long-term approach to buildings, becoming trusted advisors. We are there at each stage with solutions that make their buildings work better for life. Through performance-based delivery, we ensure that a building's systems will continue to run at design performance.

By offering performance-based solutions, we help achieve operational and efficiency excellence for customers.

Our success depends on the customer's success. This approach allows building owners to fund improvement projects through resulting energy savings and operational improvements. We work intimately with the customer to ensure the savings are achieved as promised.

Proactive Leadership

We know we must proactively prepare for new customer demands to ensure that their systems and services help them reach their performance and financial targets. We help contractors, developers, owners and managers achieve high-performance buildings for life. We also tackle the complex needs of construction projects. Using design-build solutions, we deliver value through all phases of a project.

Our Strategic Partner Program enables building owners to meet construction deadlines, shorten commissioning times, devise the best design-build solutions, and reduce costs and risks. With the average length of partnership spanning 10 years, we stay enmeshed in our customers' businesses in order to partner with them to meet their latest challenges head-on.

By building on our past heritage, we assure that our business will grow and meet market changes. Trane remains synonymous with "technology" and "reliability," but the brand is taking on new connotations. Customers see us as reliable partners in helping them devise and implement solutions. **SSE**

John W. Conover IV is president of Trane's commercial systems business. Visit www.trane.com.

ACTION: Win customer loyalty.

Are You Coachable?

Break down the walls.



by Eddie Erlandson

WHILE COACHING THE Boston Red Sox executive team in Florida, I was struck by the parallel between me and the baseball coaches. Just as I help executives increase leadership strength, baseball coaches help talented players improve their game.

One challenge executives and athletes share is being coachable. Anytime a baseball coach talks to the pitcher, the pitcher knows he is about to receive feedback, whether he wants it or not. Similarly, when your boss calls you in to talk about a challenge you face, you know you are about to receive some needed coaching.

A useful way to tackle these growth challenges is to become curious with an attitude of learning from every curve ball that life throws you. Listen to learn and grow, not to explain why you're doing something the way you are.

There are many "aha" moments in the life of an executive. I had one of those moments last month with Dennis, a successful sales and marketing executive, as we reviewed his 360 feedback. One comment triggered defensiveness. Dennis' face reddened, he stiffened in his chair and launched into a passionate explanation and justification that ended with him defiantly saying, "This is wrong." At that moment he was searching for the comment culprit.

I asked him, "Does this comment seem familiar to you? And, is your response to this feedback typical?" The silence hung heavy. He admitted: "There's more truth here than I want to acknowledge. I've tried to deny it."

In this moment, Dennis became coachable and feedback-agile. He decided to break down the defensive and prideful wall halting his growth. He became open to feedback and showed signs of change to his team.

He adopted a self-disclosing and somewhat self-deprecating style when talking with his team about the challenges he faced. That communication created relief and results with his team, and also calmed a colleague who dreaded giving him feedback.

Tips for Being Coachable

Over time, many performers become superstars, and when their inflated confidence gets the better of them, they do not remain coachable and open to feedback. To become more coachable, you need to commit to becoming receptive to feedback and constructive criticism, irrespective of the style of the person providing the feedback. Turn defensiveness into curiosity. Admit that you don't know everything. And trust the intention of your coach to support you in furthering your own vision and goals.

Sound feedback increases your chances of winning. But often when you get comfortable in your style and confident in your abilities, you create a wall that communicates you don't want to hear other people's ideas about how you can improve. Your ego

inflates, and a know-it-all attitude replaces curiosity and shuts off the flow of feedback from your team and peers. When arrogance enters the field, defensiveness follows close behind.

The wall in front of you can take the form of an inflated sense of confidence or a stubborn, defensive nature. To break down walls, avoid explaining your actions or justifying your behavior. Instead, listen to the person's perspective with the intention of uncovering the change you need to make.

Remember: your coach or manager can see the entire field, while you are only playing one position. Remaining coachable enables you to improve your game inside and outside of the office. **SSE**

Eddie Erlandson is senior vice president of Worth Ethic and coauthor of the HBR article "Coaching the Alpha Male." Visit www.worthethic.com.

ACTION: *Be more coachable.*

SALES/APPRECIATION

Like Attracts Like

Using 'The Secret' at work.



by Noelle Nelson

A LOT HAS BEEN WRITTEN about "The Secret"—how the law of attraction brings positive things into your life.

I provide tips on how to use the "like attracts like" principle at work to create a more positive, productive work experience. By applying the "The Secret" or the law of attraction, you can bring about positive change. Companies that value their employees effectively receive more value from their employees in return, leading to increased performance, productivity, and profits. Examples include Southwest Airlines, See's Candies, Ryder, FedEx, and Costco. Bosses and workers can use appreciation to communicate more effectively, motivate others, defuse negative situations, persuade co-workers, lift sales numbers, and increase morale.

Appreciation Guidelines

Put the law of attraction into practice using these guidelines:

1. **Catch your people in the act of doing something right.** Appreciating and rewarding employees for good work on a spontaneous basis encourages more good work and effort. Specific comments are more effective than the catchall "great job."



2. **Keep employees in the loop.** Hold regular meetings to discuss the direction of the company, highlighting its successes and areas of needed improvement. People need to feel that what they do matters to the company. Give them a stake in the company, and their efforts and loyalty to the company will increase.

3. **Discourage negative talk about anyone or anything.** Don't indulge in conversations like "customers are a nuisance." Don't diminish the power of appreciation by bashing others.

4. **Think of one thing you like about your job on your way to work each day.** If you can't think of one thing, tell yourself, "Today I'll find one thing I like about my job." Then find something. You'll be happier going to work.

5. **Learn to say, "How can I help?"** instead of "What do you want?" People are more inclined to be appreciative of you if you answer their concerns with compassion, not defensiveness.

6. **Say "Thank you" more often.** You can never say "thank you" too much. In every situation, saying "thank you" makes things run smoother. Be sure your "thank you" is genuine. A sarcastic "thank you" will never work.

Before the concepts in "The Secret" can really take hold, you need to learn how to apply them to the nitty-gritty aspects of life, including work; otherwise, it's just a wonderful theory. **SSE**

Noelle Nelson is a clinical psychologist, consultant, and author of The Power of Appreciation in Business (MindLab Publishing). Visit www.noellenelson.com.

ACTION: *Use the law of attraction.*

Do What You Say

Integrity is the secret to sales.



by Bob Davies

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF business? Most people say that the purpose of business is to make money. I suggest that the purpose of business is to grow people! If you adopt this purpose in your business, you will make more money as well! I assure you: If you would live your life with integrity, your business would be better.

Citicorp, Ford, Marriott, Nordstrom, Wal-Mart, and Disney all share a common code of integrity. One shared belief is that the purpose of being in business is to grow people.

Three Core Principles

Here are three guiding principles:

Core principle 1: I do what I say I will do. If you don't hold this core principle, your entire system of values falls apart. I support this principle by debunking the myth: I'm better off by committing high and falling short. You are not better off by unrealistically committing to big audacious and hairy goals. If you commit to an artificially high goal, the moment you question your ability to reach that goal, your motivation dramatically decreases. The "pull" of hope no longer is present.

Replace that myth with minimum-level objectives (MLOs). This concept embraces the first principle of living with integrity: I do what I say I will do. You give your word you will do it, and you don't fall short.

I've often heard people say that they are committed to reach some goal, but then they do not take the intended actions. They have viable reasons, stories, priorities, unscheduled interruptions, and excuses for not doing what they said they would do!

With unrealistic goals, the force preventing your progress is fear. Once you see "evidence" that you can't do something, you buy into it and live your life in resignation. It's the starting that stops most people!

If you had set a smaller, more realistic goal, then you would maintain hope and honor the principle: I do what I say I will do. I'm not against setting stretch goals. I simply request

that when you give your word, you will achieve the goal no matter what.

Core principle 2: I can't do it by myself. I'm far better off as a part of a team than I can ever be alone. Elite performers never argue with this.

They surround themselves with others and create an atmosphere where learning, discovery, clarity, and accountability occur. Try this experiment. Take 30 seconds and write down as many green vegetables as you can think of. Next, get a partner, and together, come up with a list of green vegetables in 30 seconds. Your list will be greater with a partner.

Core principle 3: Accountability—I am the source of all that I experience. This principle is a source of strength. It doesn't allow you to blame or



become a victim. People are powerful at creating results in their own lives. These may be dysfunctional results, however! Someone who is 30 pounds overweight has created a miracle of a result. How would they know how to regulate their intake to gain 30 pounds? They are exactly where they are in their weight because that is exactly what their point of view supports. We are powerful at manifesting our dominating thoughts.

Likewise, someone who has financial difficulties has exactly what they should have given their financial point of view. If they want to have different results, they must first change their dysfunctional point of view. After all, they are the source of all that they experience.

How do you change your point of view? You decide what you want, what you need to do to have what you want, and what you will do over the next seven days. This declaration needs to

be specific, observable, and measurable. And then you need another person to hold you accountable and to check with you at the end of the week to see if you actually did what you said you would do.

This is the elite performance system. For people who want to be more fulfilled in their health, business and personal lives, this is the formula.

Try it. Make a specific declaration to another person and then set out to execute for the next seven days. Design some reward or punishment with that person, and watch how your perception shifts. Now, because you have this accountability in your life, instead of just seeing how busy you are and all of the reasons why you can't do what you said you would do, you will see the opportunities to handle whatever comes your way and still honor what you said you would do.

Put one week after another, and you'll have a miracle and magical year.

Dramatically Increase Sales

You are driven by the avoidance of anything that you perceive as uncomfortable or painful, and driven to anything that you perceive as pleasure or comfort. You are designed to have selective perception.

For years I had a problem with my weight. I kept using willpower to eat less, but it never would last long. The forces of avoiding pain and seeking comfort are far more powerful than great intentions and willpower. But you can get human nature to work for you by associating pain with the indulgence, and comfort with the discipline.

Here's how I did it. I told five of my coaching clients that if I go into the mini-bar on my trip, I would pay each of them \$250. That's \$1,250! Now, I linked pain to the behavior I wanted to avoid, and pleasure to the action I wanted to have (accountability).

Try this formula yourself. Over the next seven days, link the not doing of the desired action to pain, and the taking of the action to comfort.

Apply this to your prospecting. Commit to making so many calls this week. Make sure that this number is realistic. Make this commitment to another person, put a fine on it, and enjoy your week. At the end of the week, you will discover that it was easy! Do this for just one activity every week. **SSE**

Bob Davies is president of High Performance Training, and author of *The Sky Is Not The Limit—You Are!* Call 949-830-9192 Email: Info@bobdavies.com Visit www.Bobdavies.com.

ACTION: Dramatically boost your sales.

Relationship Building

Move slow and steady.



by Lillian D. Bjorseth

CHRISTOPHER CHAPMAN requested the following epitaph in 1680: *What I gave, I have. What I spent, I had. What I left, I lost by not giving it.*

More than 320 years later, it is still a good prescription for relationship building. The art of networking is based on the premise that to give is to receive. Some people just don't get it. They want to "get" immediately—or at least within a week or month of having made a new contact, certainly before they expend much time, effort, or money on the other person. They are easy to spot. They talk incessantly about themselves and seem to consider it an interruption if you ask a question—even about them!

They call or e-mail you and within 10 seconds are telling you what they are looking for: a different job, a lead into a certain company, and so on. Seldom do they ask how you are doing.

Another example is the new members in a chamber of commerce who send letters of introduction to other members, saying "I'm a new member of the chamber, and here's what I do. I'd like to stop by your office and tell you more." Rarely, do they indicate any interest in what I do. How refreshing it would be to receive this: "I'm a new member of the chamber, and I want to get to know you and your services better. May I stop by your office or take you to lunch soon?"

I'd be so impressed I'd pick up the phone and offer to take them to lunch! They are the ones who ask, "Who are your best customers/clients?" or "What need/pain shall I listen for so I know when to refer you?" And, you know they mean it because they are quiet and give you time to answer thoughtfully! Then you can reciprocate.

Relationship-building takes time, care, and commitment, which can be too much work for those who expect instant gratification and results.

If you join a "leads groups" as a networking tool, observe six things:

- Some are more business-to-consumer oriented than business-to-business, so you might meet as many

people in your second target market.

- The groups are a band-aid solution rather than a bandage at first, since it takes time to build relationships. Trust and comfort need to be established.

- It's a big-time commitment—several hours every week by the time you consider travel and meeting time.

- You need to be prepared to give solid leads regularly.

- The groups can help you improve your relationship-building skills.

- The groups are structured and "force" you to work on marketing.

Here are six reasons why you should stick with this networking process to reap future benefits:

- Warm calls (those backed by a referral from someone else or someone you have met) produce at least 80 percent more results than cold calls.

- At least 85 percent of all jobs are

found through referrals.

- Each of us knows about 300 people to whom we could refer others and to whom others can refer us.

- We are only six people away from anyone we want to do business with when we proactively let people know.

- Networking greases the skids so we can slide easily into the door.

- In the beginning, it's *whom* you know not *what* you know. Once inside, you need to be the "what" expert.

The networking process works when you promote yourself the professional way. There's a fine line between confidence and egotism. The former is a great asset; the latter is a detriment. **SSE**

Lillian D. Bjorseth is the author of Breakthrough Networking: Building Relationships That Last. Email lillian@duoforce.com or visit www.duoforce.com.

ACTION: Build client relationships.

SALES/TELEPHONE

Telephone Dos and Don'ts

Improve your skills.



by Nancy Friedman

WE WORK WITH ALL KINDS of people, including senior sales and marketing

executives. Some of these folks feel they're exempt from telephone skills

training. Yet we could all use some tips and training. Here are some Dos and Don'ts.

Do acknowledge all your phone calls. If you're unable to return a phone call yourself, have it returned on your behalf. Not returning a phone call is like not using your car's turn signal—it's rude and dangerous.

Do place your own phone calls. Or, if you absolutely need to have someone else place a call for you, be ready when the person you called is on the line. It's bad taste to get a call from someone's assistant and then be put on hold to wait.

Do give bad news yourself. If you're not able to deliver on time or canceling a contract, it's best to give the news yourself when possible. Having someone else give your bad news is what I call "distance-induced bravery."

Do identify yourself on accepting all incoming calls. (Even when you know who it is.) *Hello* isn't a business greeting on the phone. Everyone likes to

know who they are talking with.

Do expect your called party *not to be available*. Expect voice mail. Be prepared to leave a detailed message with full disclosure of who you are and how to reach you. Leave your phone number twice, and say it slowly.

Don't make employees lie to your callers by having them say you're not there when you are or in a meeting when you're not. Face the music, or better yet, train your staff to handle the call: "He is in, but unavailable." Then they should offer assistance. It's much healthier than an out-and-out lie.

Don't be too busy to be nice. We're all busy. Being busy does not give you permission to be rude.

Don't hide behind voice mail. It was not intended as a screening device or to warehouse calls.

Don't use a speakerphone on initial greetings. Echo voices should not be the first thing a caller

hears. Ask if they mind being on the speakerphone.

Don't use a car phone for full-blown sales calls and presentations. Too much chance for distraction; and of course, an accident.

Don't leave bad news on voice mail. You can leave a message saying you need to discuss a situation. But leaving bad news on voice mail is, again, distance-induced bravery. **SSE**

Nancy Friedman, president of Telephone Doctor Customer Service Training, is the author of five best-selling books. Visit www.telephonedoctor.com or call 314-291-1012.

ACTION: Observe these tips.



Brand Repair

Don't cripple your future prospects.



by Dick Martin

COMPANIES FROM ENERGY services behemoth Halliburton to pharmaceutical giant Merck have seen their high-flying reputations plummet in the span of a single news cycle. So have those business people who have tarnished their good names, thereby demeaning past accomplishments and crippling future prospects.

In marketing terms, they corrupted their brands. A brand is more than a logo, celebrity, or reputation. Anyone with crayons can draw a logo. The tabloids create 15-minute celebrities everyday. And a reputation is simply what someone or something is known for. Brands operate at deeper levels in the realm of emotionally charged perception. They are the stuff of images and feelings, rather than ideas and reason. There's an idea at the core of every brand, but a brand's power derives from the emotion in which it's wrapped. "Refreshment" is an idea, but when it comes in a contoured bottle of Coke, it's imagery and feelings, strong enough to measure in a magnetic resonance scanner. By marrying emotion to knowledge, brands turn what would be a Trivial Pursuit answer into motivation. As Donald Calne notes, "Reason leads to conclusions; emotion leads to action." Brands are words packed with motivating emotion.

From the perspective of its owner, a brand is a promise. From the perspective of the brand recipient, it's trust that the promise will be kept. Understanding this duality is key to managing brands and, when they are broken, to repairing them. But the two sides of a brand are not equal. Even the most salient and compelling promise has to be accepted before it can acquire power. And at that point, power shifts to the recipient. Coke, for example, was disabused of the notion that it "owned" its brand in anything but a legal sense when it tried to change the soft drink's formulation. Consumers rebelled. They might have preferred the new formula in blind taste tests, but their emotional attachment to the "classic" formula overwhelmed their taste buds. Within

three months, the company was forced to back down. Giving trust represents a bigger emotional investment than making promises.

Trust has two emotionally charged components: competence and sincerity. Incompetence evokes feelings of anger, derision, insincerity, suspicion, and hatred. Incompetence leads to calls for correction, restitution, or punishment. Insincerity invites retribution and revenge. Of the two, insincerity is the more dangerous because it violates people's basic instincts of fair play and empathy.

Consider the case of Bob Nardelli, who went from Home Depot's ostensible savior, worth whatever it took to steal him from General Electric, to Exhibit A of unbridled corporate



greed. While Nardelli failed to move Home Depot's stock price in his six years as CEO, and some questioned his long-term strategy, few considered him incompetent. He more than doubled the company's sales and earnings. But when his extravagant compensation attracted criticism, he not only refused to apologize for it, he stifled discussion at the company's annual meeting, convincing the directors to stay away, limiting shareholder questions to one minute, and gaveling the proceedings to a close after 30 minutes. Nardelli's disingenuousness was a more serious blunder than incompetence would have been.

Nardelli thought he could manage perceptions. Perceptions can wreck reputations and move markets, but trying to manage them directly is like pretending to direct the wind. CEOs and boards stray when they spend more time tending to perception than to the underlying reality. It's smarter

to make a clean break and build new perceptions through concrete actions.

Sometimes, repairing a brand means eating crow. In 2004, Japanese regulators kicked Citigroup's private banking operations out of the country for lapses that allowed some customers to launder money and manipulate stock prices. It was a severe blow to the company's new CEO, Chuck Prince, who was already dealing with regulatory problems in the U.S. But instead of fighting the decision, Prince presided at a Tokyo news conference where he personally apologized for the company's lapses. By taking quick, personal action, Citigroup minimized questions about its sincerity and won the benefit of the doubt that it could restore its competency.

Making amends can also mean giving something back. When AT&T's nationwide telephone network suddenly stopped working for nine hours in January of 1990, the company knew it not only meant people couldn't make phone calls, but that they had lost something. They felt betrayed, victims of technology they didn't understand and couldn't control. So the company authorized its operators to help customers make calls on competitors' networks until AT&T's was restored. When the network was fixed, the company announced a special Valentine's Day discount for all customers. Few customers defected; most credited the company with doing the right thing.

One of the biggest mistakes CEOs make is to ignore the emotional content that can arise from either component of trust. The impact is even more devastating on the company if juries find it guilty of insincerity and incompetence. Halliburton's brand suffered from the double-barreled charges of influence peddling and false billing (insincerity) as well as accusations that its work was shoddy (incompetence).

Repairing a brand must start with an assessment of damage to both components of trust. Then move on to acknowledgment, apology, amends, and action. But perceptions always lag reality, and backsliding is common. Once people feel wronged, it's very difficult to win them back. But making a clean break with the past, focusing on what matters to *them*, and demonstrating through action that you get it can help restore their trust. **SSE**

Dick Martin is the author of Tough Calls and Rebuilding Brand America (Amacom). He was executive VP of PR and brand management for AT&T.

ACTION: Repair damage to your brand.

The Dark Side of Office Politics

Practice what you preach.



by Edmond Mellina

BEHAVING WITH INTEGRITY and maximizing performance have emerged as core elements of credos, and yet office politics remains as prevalent as ever.

In using the term *politics*, I'm referring to people playing "dark" politics, driven by the search for personal gains. This is different from people leveraging influence networks to reach the objectives. This is "light" politics. The intent of light politics is first the good of the organization, not personal benefits.

Engaging in light politics is critical to success. Marshalling support for the necessary changes requires light politics. However, playing dark politics belongs in the realm of unethical behaviour. To succeed in the game of office politics, you must plant sharp knives in the back of your opponents.

Sadly, promotions and plum assignments often go to those who are the most gifted at dark politics. As in the *Survivor*, those who don't master the art of deceit, or whose personal values prohibit them from engaging in manipulative behaviour, often get voted off the island. However, some outcasts make it to the jury. This discourages players from acting too cunningly.

However, in business, the outcasts often disappear in oblivion, and the Machiavellian players go unchecked. Many organizations have improved their governance structures and financial reporting. But they haven't done anything meaningful about reining in dark politics or making the reality of the workplace match the creed of integrity.

What about performance? Dark politics consumes brain power and emotional energy, diverting attention from advancing the business and conflicting with the creed of performance.

Consider the case of Lyle, a manager who joined a highly political company. Initially, Lyle focused squarely on tackling the challenge for which he had been hired. But, to his dismay, he soon realized he had entered a nasty game of politics.

His boss and peers were masters at the art of deceit. Lyle's attention quickly switched from doing his job to play-

ing survival politics. His performance declined, and his adversaries pointed this out to the boss. Within six months, Lyle was let go. Lyle's misfortune became part of the company lore, reinforcing a highly political culture.

Allowing dark politics to exist has performance and talent management implications. The competent employees who are driven by doing what is right become disengaged, they leave, or they are pushed out.

A political culture also generates leaders who are, well, political. They have seen their boss climb the ladder through cunning. The message is clear: success here requires mastering dark politics. The more political the culture becomes, the more it reinforces that message and the more political people get. Of course, a political cul-

ture also tends to attract "corporate politicians." It's clearly a vicious circle.

Dark politics spells trouble for the talent pipeline. As a leader, you must lead by example. Don't play dark politics or allow corporate politicians to win the day in your area. Raise awareness about the light and dark sides of politics. Talk about the implications, both immediate and future. Know what's going on. Talk to people, probe, and observe. When a political employee is considered for a promotion or plum assignment, raise your concerns. Promote integrity and top performance. **SSE**

Edmond Mellina is president of TRANSITUS Inc., a leading provider of learning and consulting solutions to master change. emellina@transitusinc.com or www.transitusinc.com.

ACTION: Abstain from dark politics.

MANAGEMENT/EMOTION

Look Within

Improve your effectiveness.



by John Drury

HAVING CREATED MY OWN Had agency and built it into a \$100 million business, I know all about the glory and pitfalls of being a leader. I then helped build AutoNation, America's largest retail automotive company, into a \$22 billion Fortune 100 company. Then, I made a change, looking to find a part of me I didn't like—a man caught up in the trapings of success and decimating my personal life.

I wrote a book *Awaken Your Soul*, to help others look within, rather than solely managing outward, to improve their effectiveness and efficiency. Too many people equate leadership to directing others, directing energy toward the performance and actions of others. But how often do you introspect—look inside—and come to terms with your own emotions and motives?

I offer five tips to help you change the way you look at yourself, your company, and your employees, and lead to an improved bottom line.

1. Tap into emotions. Sounds like 'feel-good' advice, but it is not. Every decision a leader makes, every action, is driven in part by inner emotions. If we examine and assess so many things

outside of ourselves, doesn't it make sense to tap into our own emotions? Understanding emotion leads to better management and decision-making.

2. Use the power of truth. Truth gets all the information out on the table so you can make the right decisions quickly. Dealing with truth speeds everything up, builds strong teams, improves the flow of information, and helps you navigate change.

3. Embrace all feedback. Arrogance breeds a closed mind. Drop your defenses and take in all feedback, regardless of how you get it or who you get it from. Accepting feedback

strengthens your ability to learn and encourages creativity and the free exchange of ideas.

4. Be impeccable with agreements. Keeping your word—from showing up to meetings on time to serious business decisions—is the basis for trust.

A foundation of trust improves company morale and effectiveness; loss of trust spreads like a disease and chips away at positive functionality.

5. Accept accountability. Blaming others is easy; accepting responsibility is the much tougher road. When you accept responsibility for your mistakes, you make those around you trust you more, and follow your lead willingly.

If you are afraid to examine how your emotions affect you, you will never become the best you can be. **SSE**

John Drury is the author of Awaken Your Soul and founder of Fully Alive 360, a coaching, facilitation and retreat organization. Visit www.fullyalive360.com.

ACTION: Examine your performance.



Sweet Spot for Selling Services

I n t e g r a t e d a c t i o n s e a l s t h e d e a l .



by **Suzi Pomerantz**

WANT TO FAST-TRACK A business venture? Want to step up your rainmaking timeline? Want to leverage your sales skills, marketing know-how, and networking panache?

The secret to sealing multiple deals lies in your ability to take integrated action in four key domains. Imagine a diagram with four equal circles—representing Networking, Marketing, PR, and Sales—that all cross at one central point (the sweet spot).

Many of us have trouble integrating action in these four key areas because we have clouded the distinctions. As you explore the following distinctions, ask yourself: What am I already doing in this area? What else could I be doing? What percentage of my time is spent in each? Where and how might I integrate my activities across all four domains? What would the impact and value be if I were to generate a quantum leap in my rainmaking results?

1. Networking is the relational piece. It is connecting with others to share resources, information, leads, referrals, and ideas. Cultivating a working network of relationships is crucial to your business development system, but in and of itself will not be the way you build or expand your client base. True networking involves connection-seeking with genuine interest in others. You are building your pipeline, meeting people who may or may not be directly linked to your business development strategy. You're getting out there, creating relationships, and expanding your circle by asking others to introduce you to people whom they know. You're sharing your network with others and introducing people to each other who might be of service or interest. You're engaging in the Nine Mindsets of Networking (it's a game, connection-seeking, partnering, up-front agendas, authentic curiosity, six degrees of separation, climate of comfort, giver's gain, and ongoing action). Networking is casting a wide net, involving everyone, and going beyond collecting business cards to creating authentic relationships.

2. Marketing is the preparation element. Marketing is how you prepare yourself to take your unique identity package, your irresistible offer, and your message to market. This involves strategy, design work, writing, and outreach, but those things alone will not get you the clients you want. Marketing includes branding and creating a sustainable, consistent, recognizable uniqueness. Those activities generate informative materials to hand out or direct people to so that they can learn about you, your company, or your offering. Documents, speeches,



advertising, promotional materials, image and collateral elements (logo, letterhead, business cards, websites, brochures), writing letters, researching clients and prospects, or anything you do to position yourself as an expert falls under this domain. Marketing is when you plan activities, strategies, and conceptual approaches to either acquire, retain, or re-acquire buyers.

3. Public Relations is linked to marketing because your image and messaging impacts your brand. PR involves anything you do with the media and press and key publics. It can be either proactive or reactive. Managing your presence in the public eye even without a crisis can be daunting. It's those things you do to get yourself or company into news articles, radio, or television appearances, or other high-profile interviews. If you lack the skills to write compelling press releases, if you lack media training, and if you lack the relationships with journalists and producers, you may not want to try this on your own.

4. Sales is about implementation.

Once you understand your mindsets and the societal and cultural mindsets pertaining to sales, you can reframe these important activities in a way that supports and sustains you rather than depletes or stresses you. You can transcend dysfunctional sales and service practices and simply help people in ways that they will appreciate. Sales feels uncomfortable when it is not aligned with core values. When it is integrity-based, it gives you energy because it is linked to your core values. Sales activities are about implementing your business development strategies. Sales involves making appointments, seeking to be of service, making fabulous and bold offers, and asking for the business. The critical elements of sales involve a baseline understanding of the sales process and your own sales cycle, knowing your hit rates and numbers, moving people through your pipeline, and any activities that directly yield clients, contracts, and revenues.

Now you need to figure out how to fit these four activities in your schedule. When your action plan includes strategic actions in each of the four key areas at once, you will see a quantum leap in your impact and results. Master the integration of these areas where preparation and relation meet implementation: Relation + Preparation + Implementation = Clients. Or, Networking + Marketing + Sales = \$\$\$\$.

This is not a one-to-one ratio. Spend the bulk of your time in networking or relational activities. You have to put a lot into the system up front to yield the desired output. Networking, marketing, and many PR activities are the precursors to sales activities, all of which are necessary input.

Wouldn't you rather be in the driver's seat than waiting for your networking and marketing efforts to pay off? Take the lead and control your time, efforts, and results. Taking action in your sales process from the start will dramatically reduce the time-to-close—even as you are building your network, creating your marketing materials and strategies, and managing your public and media relations.

When you start taking integrated action in each of the domains of networking, marketing, public relations and sales, you will hit your stride in that sweet spot where they all intersect. There you can seal the deal. **SSE**

Suzi Pomerantz is the CEO of Innovative Leadership International, an executive coach, and author of Seal the Deal. Email suzi@innovativeleader.com or visit www.sealthedealbook.com.

ACTION: Operate in the sweet spot.

Passionate Performance

Engage minds and hearts.



by Lee J. Colan

ABOUT 70 PERCENT OF customers' buying decisions are based on positive interactions with sales staff. People buy from people, not companies. So, your people—and their performance—define your competitive advantage.

Yet only 26 percent of employees are fully engaged at any time, and 19 percent are actively disengaged, (they negatively impact the organization). The annual cost to employ this actively disengaged group exceeds \$300 billion.

When people are engaged in their work and feel deeply connected to it, they deliver *passionate performance*. Think of times you've gone shopping or to a restaurant and dealt with people who are excited to be in their jobs and to be serving you. Their words jump out of their hearts rather than from a script. They surprise you with the extra effort and thoughtfulness, and they answer your questions.

Do you buy more from these companies? Are you likely to return? Do you recommend them? Yes. The value chain starts with engaged employees.

Passionate performers are more likely to stay with the organization, perform at higher levels, influence others to perform well, promote the organization externally, and deliver unparalleled customer service.

Passionate performance is achieved when people are fully engaged—when they show a strong, sustained attachment to their work. The key is found within the mind and heart: When my needs are fulfilled, I am engaged and perform at my peak ability. When my needs are not met, I'm frustrated, out of control, unfocused, and disengaged.

To meet basic needs, you must view your employees as people and identify six basic needs—three intellectual needs (achievement, autonomy, and mastery) and three emotional needs (purpose, intimacy, and appreciation).

When it comes to *passionate performance*, the mind and the heart go together. Engaged minds build your employees' performance and engaged hearts build their passion. Performance

without passion falters during tough times or in the face of challenges that require sacrifice, extra effort, or creative solutions.

Engaged Minds and Hearts

You ignite *passionate performance* when all three intellectual and all three emotional needs are fulfilled and you connect minds and hearts.

Engaging the mind. Engaging minds is a science that comes naturally for many leaders. The mind represents the intellectual elements based on reason, logic, and cause and effect.

When we fulfill these needs, we create a self-reinforcing cycle of improvement, growth, and high performance. Engaging the mind strengthens our ability to perform.

Engaging the heart. Engaging the heart requires the art of leadership that focuses on relationships and creates passion. Customers and employees are primarily driven by emotional and personal considerations.

When people go to work, they don't leave their hearts at home. So, leadership is a high-touch job. To engage your employees' hearts, you must first meet their basic emotional needs. People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

When you fulfill these needs, you create self-reinforcing connections and strong relationships that yield amazing tangible results. **SSE**

Lee J. Colan is author of *Passionate Performance*. Visit www.theLgroup.com.

ACTION: Engage hearts and minds.

SERVICE/CHECKLIST

Perceived Indifference

It's a deal breaker.



by Suzanne Schell

SEVEN OUT OF 10 CUSTOMERS will stop doing business with you when they believe you don't care. If your customers perceive indifference, they will move on and you may never know why.

Customer expectations have changed from expecting good service to expecting a great experience. You can't retain customers by offering excellent products without exceptional service and memorable experiences.

Perceived indifference creates negative experiences for customers. You get caught up in "doing" what you do and looking to ease what you do, forgetting the impact on your customers.

For example, voicemail may reduce your costs, but it may also reduce your customers' loyalty if they can't speak to the people in your business to get help.

Everything in your business needs to be done to benefit the customer.

Here's a 20-point checklist. If you answer no to any point, change your operations to eliminate perceived indifference and improve your service.

1. Do you answer your phone on the second ring every time?
2. Does every caller get asked for permission to be put on hold?
3. Do you make sure no one is put



on hold for more than 30 seconds?

4. Do you thank your customers for calling? Visiting?
5. Do you ensure your customers are referred to by their name?
6. Do you thank your clients for using your business?
7. Do the team members arrive on time for customer/client meetings?
8. Do you avoid making your customers wait?
9. Do you deliver product and services when promised?
10. Do you always let your customers know if there will be a problem?
11. Do you have a process ensuring all mistakes or problems are solved?
12. Do you return phone calls/ emails the same day? (within 24 hours)
13. Do team members take responsibility for helping customers?
14. Do you ask for more information when customers ask for a price?
15. Do you always follow up after delivery of a service or a product?
16. Do you stay in touch with customers regularly?
17. Do you ever surprise your customers with a gift?
18. Do you keep your customers informed about what is new?
19. Do team members know why the customer is "king"?
20. Do you thank your internal customers for what they do for you?

Each point requires a process or system to ensure it is followed consistently for every customer every time. **SSE**

Suzanne Schell is the founder of Business Excellence. Call 613-567-9402.

ACTION: Create an action plan.

Stealth Marketing

It's your secret sales machine.



by Tom
FitzGerald
and Linda
Brakeall

IT ALL BEGAN SIMPLY ENOUGH WHEN A branch of Heartmann Woods (72 employees, two in sales) performed an audit of telephone calls.

This was part of a biennial cost-containment drive. The audit revealed that while the two sales people made about 40 calls a day, the other 70 non-sales people were making 200 calls a day, 1,000 calls a week, 50,000 a year.

Nearly all those outgoing calls were to clients. The 70 non-sales people received just as many incoming calls. That totaled 400 calls a day, 2,000 calls a week, 100,000 a year. Previously all these calls were viewed as interfering with the production of information.

Could those calls be an opportunity? The 70 non-sales people understood that when they connected with clients, they reached people who wanted to talk and were willing eager to make relationships. These clients were serious buyers, but the 70 did not think so. They were inside the corporate defenses, inside the barriers to sales.

Every call, every conversation, contains the seed of a sale—a seed that extends the business relationship; a seed that identifies the influentials and the real buyers; and a seed that uncovers new needs. Recognizing this opportunity, the 100,000 seeds now fell on fertile ground. A new secret sales machine had been born—with 70 “stealth marketers” at the wheel. Within two years, that 70 became 300.

Stealth marketing is simple—just six ideas: Every “non-sales” call has already bypassed the corporate sales defenses. The best source of business is current clients. Every person in a client organization is a buyer, whether they know it or not. Every person in your organization is a salesman, whether they know it or not. Every call is a sales call. *Sell* is not a four-letter word.

The Hurdles

Stealth marketing requires: An environment of continuing sales to existing customers. A volume of customer con-

tacts that exceeds official sales calls by a factor of five or better. A commitment by the CEO to have everyone participate in and feel responsible for company sales. A little ingenuity.

But when it came time to implement stealth marketing at Heartmann Woods, one difficulty could have stopped it cold: People were afraid to sell.

Though the company had been talking “sales” and “sales culture” for 15 years, most people still didn’t like the idea. Their resistance showed mostly in body language and performance, but it was often articulated in words like, “What? I’m not in sales!”

Fortunately, the CEO had embraced



the idea and encouraged managers to become entrepreneurs. But to get stealth marketing through all the inertia and prejudice against selling, something extraordinary had to happen.

Start the Secret Sales Machine

The process can begin simply enough. Here’s how it worked at Heartmann Woods: Non-sales staff, section by section, reviewed and tallied up how many human-to-human connections they made. Non-sales staff listed their contacts and described how those contacts might buy for and influence their companies. The boss introduced the raw numbers that underlie the company’s sales function—the first time most people had ever seen them. The salespeople told real stories. They described how difficult it is for a salesperson to get through on the phone. How nearly impossible it can be to get a prospect to disclose anything that they can use to begin a sale.

As the two salespeople opened up, the non-sales staff grew in awareness and sympathy. After that, the concept

of the easiest sale being with current clients began to be understood. The “non-sales” people could feel what such sales could do to the bottom line. And their paychecks. Gradually, the “non-sales” 70 began to talk of the two sales people as “outside sales” and themselves as “inside sales.”

Overcome the Fear of Sales

For over 50 years, most people who are not in sales (and many who are!) have felt that selling is somehow distasteful. It is a feeling that many do not express, even to themselves. Unless that attitude is changed, major sales increases won’t happen.

If you doubt it, just ask your people what comes to mind when you say “salesman.” The answer can be scary.

Here’s how Heartmann Woods overcame the bias: Everyone took an anonymous “Sales Readiness” survey. Each department got together with a salesperson. The responses to the survey were the launching point for discussion. The deepest feelings, the hidden prejudices were brought into the open. The discussion helped transform distorted beliefs. Each section “adopted” a salesperson to become his or her support system. She became their mentor. Every section, every worker, discovered a way to contribute to the effort. Supervisors helped refine the process.

One by one, the departments accepted the challenge. They faced the truth about themselves and selling. They transformed their attitudes. They brainstormed and wrote scripts. They practiced. They called. And clients loved it.

Rewards helped. And recognition, especially recognition, fueled the fire.

Almost from the first day, sales began to grow. Just a little at a time. But a month later, their average order had increased with almost every major client. Success bred optimism. Optimism bred success. Profits grew. Paychecks grew. It was a fun place to work. Almost every company owns a gold mine of opportunity—a secret sales machine. It exists buried in the hundreds, sometimes thousands, of daily calls to and from existing clients, to and from people who think of themselves as “non-sales.”

Stealth marketing generates good will and sales. It gives staff a sense of deep participation in the life and future of their company. And it is fun. **SSE**

Tom FitzGerald and Linda Brakeall are consultants. Visit www.managementconsultants.com or www.lindabrakeall.com

ACTION: Start your stealth marketing.

Death of a Salesman

Enter a new era of sales.



by Richard Hodge and Lou Schachter

FOR DECADES, THE SALESPERSON WAS portrayed as something of a con artist who convinced people to buy something they didn't really need. That notion is obsolete. But another misconception still exists—the idea that the most effective salespeople are those who sell solutions. Now everybody is selling solutions.

The idea behind solution selling is that a buying company needs more than a solitary product or service. It may need to finance the purchase; it may need customized specs or features; it may need help with implementation or integration; it may need training, support, and service. Providing these enhancements still makes sense, but they are insufficient to support an enhanced value proposition.

Solution selling once enabled salespeople to avoid getting stuck in price-driven transactions focused on point products. Now solutions have become commoditized. The notion of selling integrated solutions—rather than point products—no longer differentiates.

Top sales forces are moving beyond solution-selling. Instead of using solutions to solve implementation problems, such companies as UPS, Nokia, and Lexus are reorganizing their sales process to *accelerate their customers' desired business results*.

Until the 1970s, salespeople specialized in particular products. Customers evaluated salespeople on the depth of their product knowledge. Later, the Internet made product specs widely available and easily accessible, thus generating the ability to sell solutions.

With solution selling, salespeople not only look for the customer's product needs, they need to understand potential problems a customer faces as they use a product. That's why integration, service, support, financing, delivery, and training are critical. Customers are willing to pay more for a single-source solution.

Now everyone sells solutions, and so solutions no longer create differenti-

ation. What makes a difference today is accelerating the customer's desired business results. It means selling the product, the solution, and implementing the transaction in the way that maximizes the customer's business goals. Here are two examples:

- One customer may be in a hiring campaign. For this company, the key to the sale could be an easy way to train new people. The selling company needs a simple, efficient, training offering that can be used by anyone at any time to learn the product's features.
- Another customer may be involved in a cost-reduction campaign. The key to this sale may be integration, smooth implementation, and interoperability.

The next generation of salespeople will know what drives their customers' businesses, understand the

challenges faced by their customers, and keep up on trends that influence their success. These salespeople know what is important to their customer, and to their customer's customers. They provide different kinds of value. They learn their customer's value chain—suppliers, value-generating activities, inventory and distribution processes, and sales strategies. They find sales opportunities in multiple buying centers across the customer's company.

Most sales forces are evolving to this way of selling. What we see is not so much a death of a salesperson as a birth of a new era of sales. SSE

Richard Hodge is president and Lou Schachter is senior VP of the sales training firm The Real Learning Company and coauthors of The Mind of the Customer (McGraw-Hill). Visit www.mindofthecustomer.com.

ACTION: Adopt this new way of selling.

SALES/VALUE

Selling Value *Develop value for customers.*



by Brian Polowniak

IN TODAY'S ECONOMY, SALESpeople should think differently about their work, and see themselves as informed consultants with one primary goal: to be a strategic source of value to their business. Instead of pushing products and features, salespeople should focus on the key value they provide. They must see beyond scoring large deals to becoming strategic, long-term business partners.

Too many sales teams employ feature-oriented approaches to sales. They present their application as an advantage to their customers or tout their service or support as a form of differentiation. This strategy never creates long-term value.

You must build your business by delivering value to your prospective customers, thereby contributing directly to the performance. Not only must you help partners improve margins, win more business, and shorten selling cycles, you must gain their trust.

Today, you must see how all your activities—from product development to sales—support one another. Sales must be coordinated with the core competencies. The idea of responding to the “voice of the customer,” is about responding to the

key needs of customers in supporting their value stream to their customers.

You must ensure that customers understand how you are contributing value. This means asking questions about the strategic approach of the customer, understanding their market, and finding the best fit to support them.

This analysis requires you to focus on what is most important to the customer and identify and integrate important aspects of value as perceived by key decisionmakers. This process zeroes in on how different decision-makers perceive the relative value of your product and the impact it has on their business, and quantifies decision-makers' perception of value—from commodity to strategic partner.

This enables you to answer two questions: “How does my offering help my customer to succeed in *their* marketplace?” and “Does my customer trust us to deliver?” Identify where your strengths best complement your customer's strategic goals, to be perceived by your customers as a strategic partner.

Customers seek suppliers who understand their businesses and the trends that drive performance and margin results. When customers see that you are learning their business and helping them grow, they view you as a high-value partner in a way that clearly differentiates you. SSE

Brian Polowniak is President and CEO of Solution Strategies, Inc., solstrats@aol.com. www.solution-strategies.com.

ACTION: Be seen as a high value partner.



Are You Having Fun?

Try eight irresistible principles.



by Michael Bungay Stanier

FOR MANY OF US, WORK IS not a fun experience. It's tolerable. It might be exciting at times. And it pays the bills (or some of them at least). But it's not fun. I could show you stats and studies that demonstrate how having fun helps the bottom line. I could tell you stories about companies that build fun into their culture. But you already know that it's important to have fun at work—not necessarily to improve the bottom line, but simply because you spend so much of your life there.

By *fun*, I'm not talking about bringing in balloons to work or hanging up signs that say "you don't have to be crazy to work here ... but it helps." I'm talking about connecting to work that's important and fantastic—and then letting nothing get in your way to do it.

Three Categories

One way to consider this is to divide everything you do at work into three categories: Bad Work, Good Work, and Great Work.

Bad work is the stuff that, if you stopped to think about it, you'd wonder why you were wasting your life: interminable meetings that have no discernable point, and paperwork that exists only for its own sake.

Good work is a comfortable place to be. You're doing work that uses your skills, gets stuff done, gets you recognition, pays you a wage. You know what you're doing, and it is probably something of a routine. So it's not that you're having a bad time. It's just that when you're asked by people what you do, it feels like you're trying to convince yourself that this is great. In a year's time, you won't remember the Good Work that you're doing today.

Great work, however, isn't comfortable. It is a place of inspiration, where suddenly all your past makes sense (A-ha! That's why I did that, learned that, experienced that). It brings both exhilaration and terror because you often have no idea how to do what needs to be done and are only a little fazed by that, because you are certain

that this is truly what needs to be done. Great Work is where there's flow. It's a place that honours your skills, passion, and experience.

Eight Irresistible Principles of Fun

The Eight Irresistible Principles of Fun can guide you to doing more Great Work and having more fun in your life. Make these principles part of what you do and how you do it, and you'll feel better. You'll stop wasting time and energy, and start doing the things that really matter to you.



1. Stop hiding who you really are.

Take time to figure out what makes up your DNA. What are the unique building blocks of who you really are? When it comes down to it, what do you stand for? And then, when you know who you are, turn up the volume! "Always be a first-rate version of yourself, instead of a second-rate version of someone else," said actress Judy Garland.

2. Start being intensely selfish. Get hungry for the things that are truly important to you. Think of the people you respect and love, the moments you relish, the impact you want to have, the legacy you want to leave. Don't waste your time on anything else. "When you come right down to it, all you have is yourself," said Pablo Picasso, artist. "All the rest is nothing."

3. Stop following the rules. With the exception of gravity, almost all of the rules are negotiable—someone just makes them up. It's no longer about what you can't do. It's about what you can do. "If you obey all the rules, you miss all the fun," said actress

Katharine Hepburn.

4. Start scaring yourself. Explore the edges. Dip your toe in the bold, the outrageous, and the unthinkable. Seek out and have adventures. "Men wanted for hazardous journey. Small wages. Bitter cold. Long months of complete darkness. Constant danger. Safe return doubtful." So advertised Ernest Shackleton for fellow explorers.

5. Stop taking it all so damn seriously. In this moment, is it a life-or-death decision? In 10 years, will you remember what you're fretting about? In 100 years, will anyone care? So lighten up: this too will pass. "Do not take life too seriously. You will not get out of it alive," noted publisher Elbert Hubbard.

6. Start getting rid of the crap. Think of all that stuff that weighs you down and gets in the way. Not just the things, but also the habits, the memories, the attitudes, the people. Get rid of that clutter. "Knowledge is a process of piling up facts; wisdom lies in their simplification," said Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, civil rights leader.

7. Stop being busy. Being busy is seductive. But just because you're going flat out doesn't mean you're on the right track. If it's the wrong hole, you need to stop digging. "We're lost, but we are making good time," said Yogi Berra, baseball philosopher.

8. Start something. It's time to do what you really want to do. Don't wait any longer for permission. There are always enough reasons to procrastinate just a little longer. Enough! Just start! "When all is said and done, a lot more is said than done," quipped Lou Holtz, football coach.

Do What Matters Most

Get going on the stuff that matters. Find the principles that most resonate with you right now and apply them to start having more fun in your work and in your life. Don't let this moment slip by. If one of the principles has hit home, made you think "I could do with some of that," turn intent into action. Write down an action that you could take, that would help you do more Great Work and have more fun. Now tell someone your going to do it—and by when. And now tell them you'll report back to them that you've done, and by when. Now you'll likely do it. **SSÉ**

Michael Bungay Stanier is the Principal of Box of Crayons, enabling organizations to do more Great Work, and the author of *Get Unstuck & Get Going* (www.getunstuckandgetgoing.com). Visit www.EightPrinciples.com.

ACTION: Start having more fun at work.

Best Practices for Salespeople

Don't do it on your own.



by Dave Kahle

ONE DEBILITATING MYTH about the sales profession is that salespeople can learn on their own and eventually become good at their jobs. This myth implies they'll eventually develop their own style, and that will bring them maximum results.

Most field salespeople perform at a fraction of their potential because they have never been systematically exposed to the best practices of their profession. Instead, they have been expected to "learn on their own."

I like to paint walls in our home to change the feeling of the room. I've always enjoyed painting, and for two months, I made a living doing it.

I thought I was a good painter—until I watched a home improvement show where a professional painter taught the best way to apply masking tape, hold a brush, and apply the paint. Yikes! I was doing it all wrong.

I thought I was good, in my self-taught, learn-on-my-own sort of way. I didn't have any standard. When I discovered the best practices, I saw that my own ideas were not up to the standard. I had to change my routines and incorporate the best practices.

So it is with sales. Most salespeople have learned on the job, on their own, and have never been exposed to the best practices. They delude themselves, thinking that they are good. That delusion keeps them lingering in performance considerably beneath what their potential would allow them.

Sales managers often share that delusion, and occupy themselves with other matters, unable or unsure how to improve the performance of their team. Typically, the sales manager was once a high-performing salesperson. He learned on his own, studied the best practices, and incorporated them into routines. As a result, that sales manager expects every salesperson to be just like him; to have the same motivation, drive, ability and propensity to learn. He makes little effort to expose the sales team to best practices, because he did it on his own.

Every profession develops knowl-

edge about the best way to do a job. And all professionals are expected, if they are serious, to regularly study those best practices, and to incorporate them into their routines with a disciplined, methodical effort.

The job of the salesperson is no different. There is probably no other profession that is more written about, and to, than field sales. Over the last 50 years, there must have been thousands of books written, tens of thousands of articles published, thousands of audio programs prepared, and hundreds of newsletters and magazines published—all for the field salesperson, and all describing the best practices of the profession in various terms and methods.

Just as there is a set of best ways to paint a room, there are sets of best ways to ask a question, seek an

appointment, build rapport, make a presentation, close the deal, and follow up the purchase. Astute salespeople understand this and seek to learn the best practices and incorporate them into their routines, repeating them until they become habits.

Astute sales managers do likewise. They teach their salespeople the best practices of the profession, and encourage every salesperson to improve by methodically incorporating them into their routines. Those companies that systematically expose their salespeople to the best practices consistently outperform those who don't. **SSE**

Dave Kahle is a consultant and trainer who helps his clients increase their sales. He is the author of six books. Ten Secrets of Time Management for Salespeople (Career Press). www.davekahle.com.

ACTION: Learn the best practices.

MANAGEMENT/CULTURE

High Integrity Commitments

Create an integrity culture.



by Edward M. Marshall

WHEN YOUR SALES MANAGER is finalizing his budget and goals, he may ask you to make firm commitments to achieve them. When asked "Are you willing to commit to that number?" would you say "No, I can't commit to it; I don't think it's realistic?" Knowing that saying this would likely result in a serious career incident, you are more likely to say "yes", hope for the best, and work like crazy. It's a risk, but few people are fired for not meeting such commitments.

Is this a breach of your personal integrity when you commit to a goal—even if you know it's unrealistic—or are you merely negotiating? Or, is your boss out of integrity for insisting you say "yes" by holding your job over your head?

The Integrity Gap is the distance between what you commit to and what you deliver. There's a big difference between deliberate deception and hopeful thinking. Those who deliberately lie, conceal, or mislead, need to be let go. But many people commit to targets they don't think are achievable.

One reason is fear. People who are afraid for their jobs, may be afraid to not commit. For most people, a cul-

ture of fear is real, even tangible. They fear meetings where budgets are cut and programs are realigned.

The cost of this approach to commitment is great. You don't meet your targets, you feel badly, your confidence is lost in your ability to make the numbers, and integrity is undermined.

An Integrity Culture

To achieve commitments, create a culture where everyone can "own" the budget and its targets, test their reality, and then commit with integrity. An Integrity Culture has five attributes:

1. The strategy and vision are known and owned by management, and the organization is aligned and motivated to make it happen.
2. The plan, goals, and targets are set by managers with high reality testing, ownership, and alignment.
3. Commitments are made based on fact, reality, and truth about the numbers.
4. Financial incentives are tied to the achievement of the targets, and everyone in the company benefits fairly.
5. There is self-accountability along the way, with opportunities to problem-solve, learn, and change the way work gets done to improve performance.

Since people take care of what they own, engage your people in owning the most important aspects of the business—the achievement of its monthly, quarterly, and annual sales goals. **SSE**

Edward M. Marshall is president of The Marshall Group, collaborative consultant, and leadership coach. Email tmg-marshall@aol.com, or call 919-593-4358.

ACTION: Create an integrity culture.

