

Grow your business

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Turn Your Staff Into A Team

How would you define a team? Most definitions include ideas like these: A group of *skilled individuals* who *work together* to achieve common goals *and produce quality results* for their organization. On this understanding it's not every business that can say it has a 'team'. Many businesses have 'employees' or 'staff' who go about their job sufficiently well to justify their paycheck; but these businesses are missing out on the rewards that come from real teamwork and team commitment.

You know you have a problem when you ask one of your people a question and their answer is along the lines of "You're the boss – you should know what to do".

The solution to this situation is to turn your 'staff' into a 'team'. Team building can transform your business into a smooth running, harmonious workplace with better interpersonal relationships and a greater level of satisfaction for all involved. But it has to start with you.



One of the keys to building a team is to systematize the business' processes and operations. This might sound like a mechanical rather than a personal approach to fixing the problem, but if you think about it, this makes good sense.

Systems make it possible for team members to work together better because they understand one another's job and can pitch in when help is needed. This means less opportunity for people to develop the 'this is my job – keep your hands off' attitude. Real team players don't try to keep their job functions a secret to protect themselves.

If your business has good systems in place, that are communicated to everybody on the team and well understood, then you've already gone a long way to creating a better place to work, as well as a much more efficient one.

Another key to team-building is for the business to have clearly defined goals. This enables a commitment to achieving these goals to be shared by all the members of the team.

Whenever possible, involve your team in the design of systems

and the defining of the businesses' goals. This will give them a feeling of participation in decision making instead of them just coming as a dictate from above.

Seek their input into updating the systems they work with and let them have their say about how the business can achieve its goals. This will take a big load off your own shoulders and give them a feeling of genuine ownership.

You'll need to accept that your team isn't necessarily going to do things in exactly the same way as you do. You might also have to accept that, for a while at least, they won't do some things as well as you do them. It's up to you to bring their performance up to the standard you want by providing the opportunities for them to improve.

The worst possible example you can set while trying to build a team is to become impatient and say things such as: "That's wrong. I might as well do it myself". Give others a chance to perform and with adequate support they'll measure up. Now look at your business and see how many of these team building characteristics you already have in place:

- A shared vision for the business
- Well-understood goals to which team members can commit themselves
- Enthusiasm for achieving these goals
- Strong leadership along with a sharing of responsibilities
- Effective decision making processes
- Team members who feel appropriately recognized for their contribution to the business
- A spirit of working together

How did your business rate? Chances are you found that there's still room for a bit more team building. Well, there's no time to start like now. Call a meeting of your team and be open with them. Tell them what you're trying to do and let them tell you what they think. That's how it begins – and exactly how the process should work from then on if you want a *team* rather than just a *staff*.

Make A Friend And Make The Sale

A lot of our business life is spent selling. We have to sell our products and services, of course, but that's only part of it. What we really have to sell is ourselves.

Human nature is pretty consistent. If we're going to purchase something we prefer to do it from a person we like. That means somebody we trust and with whom we feel an affinity of some sort.

Research into consumer buying patterns continually shows that this is at least as critical as any other aspect of making a sale. The products and services you're selling are important too, of course, but usually these, or very similar products and services, are available from other sources. Unless you've got the trust of your prospect and they like you, you probably won't get the sale.

How do you create this trust? How can you make somebody you've never previously met like you when you're trying to *sell* them something? Try incorporating these simple techniques into your selling to gain customer trust.

1. Be interested in the customer. Actively listen to what they have to say. Too often we're busy thinking about what our response will be to comments they have made rather than listening to what they are actually telling us. This means we miss out on all the opportunities they are providing us with to learn what it is they *really* want and to fashion our response to answer just how we'll do that.
2. Ask questions that actually draw information out of the prospect about their particular needs. Open-ended questions

work a lot better than just ones that can be answered 'yes' or 'no'. Make it a rule to listen more than you talk, even if the other person doesn't seem to be saying much; and don't try to dominate the conversation.

3. Sell the benefits, not the product. It's amazing how many competent sales professionals fall down on this point. The product may have some brilliant features, but what your prospect really wants to know is how they'll benefit from owning it. This means that you need to first find out what they need, then tell them how your product or service will deliver it.
4. Prepare for objections. Objections aren't necessarily a negative and can, in fact, be a very strong buying signal. The more expensive the item the more likely it is that the prospect has a need to justify the expenditure. When they query price you can help them with their decision by staying positive rather than going on the defensive.
5. Don't let nerves get the better of you. It's normal to be a bit nervous about 'selling' but this can be a real turn-off. Who wants to be around somebody whose palms are sweaty and hands are shaking? So relax and focus on trying to help your prospect through the decision. Think of your role as one of guiding rather than arm bending.
6. Live up to their expectations. What do you hope for when embarking on a purchasing expedition? Generally, it's that you will meet with friendly people who are helpful without being pushy; people who are neatly presented and full of product knowledge. Is this you? You don't have to be a clone of your prospect's vision of 'the perfect salesperson', but you should resemble it enough to win their trust.
7. Do your homework, its part of being helpful. Learn all you can about your competitors, their pricing, their product's features and benefits, and how they sell the same sort of product or service as you do. Your prospects want you to be an expert, or at least know a lot more than they do, about what you're selling and why you're the best business to deal with.

The *relationship* between the salesperson and the prospect is at least as important as *what it is that's being sold*. This isn't all there is to learn about salesmanship, but it is one of the essential basics that everybody in business needs to know and practice.

Marketing With Postcards

What's the first thing you do when you get a postcard in the mail? If you're like most people you'll turn it over. Regardless of what's on the

first side we see, we always look at the other side. That's instant involvement!

Compare this to the fate that befalls a letter that's been identified as advertising material. Studies show that most people don't open every piece of mail they get. They're selective about what they even bother to open, let alone actually read.

Think of the waste involved in printing and sending something that goes straight into the wastebasket without being opened or, even if opened, is then disposed of without being read.

Postcards are often overlooked when it comes to considering promotional tactics but in fact they have lots of advantages over other forms of mailout:

- They're inexpensive to produce; you can even make your own postcards
- They're inexpensive to distribute
- There's no work folding and inserting them into envelopes
- Well designed postcards have a lot of visual impact
- Nothing hides the message on a postcard

There are two ways of describing the ideal postcard. The first is that it would look good on a refrigerator door. The second is that it would make a good billboard.

This translates as a clear, uncluttered piece of communication without too many words and with attractive graphic elements that enable the message to be conveyed quickly. If you can come up with a postcard that possesses these attributes, you've got the right idea.

As long as you have a good quality printer you can even make your own postcards. This can add 'homemade appeal' to your message. Just be sure you comply with any applicable postal regulations.

Your business name and logo should stand out on a postcard. It's a good way to introduce yourself to someone who's never previously heard of your business.

Many businesses send out different mailing pieces to the same list each year but always use the same style envelope. What happens every time the person sees that envelope? They *know* what's in it and unless they have actually been thinking that they need something from this company, then into the wastebasket it goes.

With postcards, you're able to send out something different every time. Even if you send a card to your mailing list every month you can make it a different card so that you pique the recipient's curiosity twelve times a year.

Think of how versatile a postcard can be.

This is just a partial list of the many uses for this promotions tool:

- Say 'thank you' – for an order, for an enquiry, for anything you appreciate
- An after sale follow-up – thank customers for their purchase and remind them of your guarantee or service offering
- A gift certificate as a means of introducing yourself to prospects or rewarding current customers – 'Bring this card in and save \$5 off your next purchase'. Postcards are very easy to redeem in this way but you could equally ask them to quote a code number on the postcard if ordering by mail or over your website. And redeemed postcards allow you to easily establish the success of your campaign. Postcards used as offers are a good incentive for people to do business with you.
- An announcement of something new – your new website, an award you have won, a new product or an upcoming sale
- A reminder – 'It's been twelve months since your last visit' or, 'Your car is now due for service'
- To test an offer – send out just a small initial mailing and if the response is worthwhile go for a larger run

Postcards can be a simple prompt for customers to get in touch with you. They can direct people to your website to find out more about something that they're interested in.

Here are some straightforward cheap and quick techniques for making postcards work for you.

- Be single-minded. Don't try to communicate a lot of details; a postcard should carry only one key thought or message.
- Be brief. Use as few words as possible, and if a picture will substitute for a lot of words, use the picture.
- Use a postage stamp. It makes it look less 'businesslike'.
- Don't expect a postcard to close the sale. The primary purpose is to gain attention and interest the prospect in learning more.
- Make it look like a message from a friend or some other kind of personal correspondence.
- Go for a slightly bigger size than standard. This will make your postcard stand out from any others in the mailbox and won't cost much extra to print.

Do postcards replace other materials like letters, brochures or catalogs? No, but they can help you make sure these other items aren't just sent out to be thrown into the nearest waste receptacle.

How To Make The Most Of Your Newsletter

Be sure to read each article with the mindset "How could this apply to our business?" Thinking of it that way will guarantee that you get value. Better yet, take notes as you read and commit to having the ideas implemented by the time the next edition arrives. Also, make copies for each team member.

To really make sure something positive happens, work with your business development specialist to talk your team through the ideas and how to set a schedule for getting them implemented. We're here to help you get started.

Memorable Quotation

"A man will fight harder for his interests than for his rights."

– Napoleon Bonaparte

An Important Message

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