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D&M Communicator

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

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From The Desk Of The President

As another year rapidly comes to a close, allow me to reflect back on the year that was...

From a business perspective, without a doubt the three biggest events were the economy, the economy, and the economy. First things looked bad, then they got worse, and now we are told that the worst is behind us.

The government's stimulus plan was supposed to be a catalyst for the economy. However, like most Americans, I saw very little being stimulated.

With many of our clients strug-

gling, D&M instituted its own stimulus plan of sorts. Through our extremely knowledgeable staff, we were able to assist numerous clients reduce their telephone, data, and Internet expenses.



Steven Gerhardt, President, D&M Enterprise Group

Most savings were the result of either reducing services to coincide with staff reductions or sourcing alternate service providers better suited to meet the needs of our clients.

While our contribution may have

been minor in the overall scope of our clients' frugality efforts, nonetheless, just as we were there for them, we are always here to help you save time and money.

On behalf of the entire D&M staff, please accept my best wishes for a happy holiday season and a prosperous 2010.

If you have any questions or concerns about your voice, data, or Internet services, or if you would like to refer a friend to D&M, I can be reached at 1-732-335-5510.

steve

Great Advice: Focus On Customers

In recent years, businesses have spent huge sums of money to explore ways to retain customers. The success of these strategies ultimately depends on expanding the breadth and depth of customer relationships and translating this loyalty into higher sales of goods and services.

A lot of companies invest so much in developing customer loyalty and rewards programs but in the end, these strategies fail. A review of why they fail reveals that what is missing is, in fact, the most essential ingredient in any customer-client relationship: the spark between the customer and your frontline staff members.

From the moment your frontline staff member hands the customer his or her business card until your customer drives away from your company's parking area, everything is being assessed and evaluated in terms of how they, as customers, were treated by your company. The way your frontline staff members handled these wary

and dubious customers can transform them into strong and committed brand followers.

A delayed flight; a customer returning damaged merchandise; long queues at a service counter; badly printed business cards – these are "moments of truth." These are situations that can make or break your business. This is when the exceptional handling skills of your frontline staff members become crucial. Superb handling of these moments requires an instinctive frontline response that puts the customer's emotional needs ahead of the company's and the employee's agenda.

There are practical ways to handle these "moments of truth." In any industry that provides services or sells a product with an embedded service element, there are moments when the long-term relationship between a business and its customers can change significantly – for the better or for the worse. Here are some steps to ensure that your frontline staff members can deliver in

These "moments of truth":

Empower Your Staff: A strong sense of commitment emanates from an empowered workforce. Empowered employees can make decisions on the spot when necessary.

Create A Positive Atmosphere: A positive outlook and promoting constructive feedback mechanisms will ensure that staff members are not risk averse. Traditional companies however, would dwell on the negative and are just on the lookout for mistakes, often exacting sanctions for those who do not toe the line.

Empathetic Relationship: Your frontline staff members must deal with every client or customer on an individual level. They must have the skill to identify other people's feelings, creating empathy and facilitating better conversations with customers.

When you can improve on the quality of frontline employees you have, you will see more prospects turning into loyal customers which can then help your business thrive for a very long time.

10 Stupid Things Managers Do To Ruin Performance Appraisals

Performance appraisals aren't fun. But a lot of the time they are agonizing because managers do really dumb things and end up destroying a process that is important to everyone (or should be).

Stupid Thing #1: Spending more time on performance appraisal than performance PLANNING, or ongoing performance communication. Performance appraisal is the end of a process that goes on all the time - a process that is based on good communication between manager and employee. So, more time should be spent preventing performance problems than evaluating at the end of the year. When managers do good things during the year, the appraisal is easy to do and comfortable because there won't be any surprises.

Stupid Thing #2: Comparing employees with each other. Want to create bad feelings, damage morale, and get staff to compete so badly they will not work as a team? Then rank or compare staff. A guaranteed technique. And heck, not only can a manager create friction among staff, but the manager can become a great target for that hostility too. A bonus!

Stupid Thing #3: Forgetting appraisal is about improvement, not blame. We do appraisal to improve performance, not find a donkey to pin a tail on or blame. Managers who forget this end up developing staff who don't trust them, or even can't stand them. That's because the blaming process is pointless, and doesn't help anyone. Is there is to be a point to performance appraisals it should be getting manager and employee working together to improve overall productivity.

Stupid Thing #4: Thinking a rating form is an objective, impartial tool. Many companies use rating forms to evaluate employees (you know, the 1-5 ratings?). They do that because it's faster than doing it right. The problem comes when managers believe that those ratings are in some way "real," or anything but subjective, often vague judgments that are bound to be subjective and inaccurate. By the way, if you have two people rate the

employee, the chances of them agreeing are very small. THAT'S subjective. Say it to yourself over and over. Ratings are subjective. Rating forms are subjective. Rating forms are not behavioral.

Stupid Thing #5: Stopping performance appraisals when a person's salary is no longer tied to the appraisals. Lots of managers do this. They conduct appraisals so long as they have to do so to justify or withhold a pay increase. When staff hit their salary ceiling, or pay is not connected to appraisal and performance, managers don't bother. Dumb. Performance appraisal is FOR improving performance. It isn't just about pay (although some think it is ONLY about pay). If nothing else, everyone needs feedback on their jobs whether money is involved or not.

Stupid Thing #6: Believing they are in a position to accurately assess staff. Managers delude themselves into believing they can assess staff performance, even if they hardly ever see their staff actually doing their jobs, or the results of their jobs. Not possible. Most managers aren't in a position to monitor staff consistently enough to be able to assess well. And, besides, what manager wants to do that or has the time? And, what employee wants their manager perched, watching their every move? That's why appraisal is a partnership between employee and manager.

Stupid Thing #7: Cancelling or postponing appraisal meetings. Happens a whole lot. I guess because nobody likes to do them, so managers will postpone them at the drop of a hat. Why is this bad? It says to employees that the process is unimportant or phony. If managers aren't willing to commit to the process, then they shouldn't do it at all. Employees are too smart not to notice the low priority

placed on appraisals.

Stupid Thing #8: Measuring or appraising the trivial. Fact of life: The easiest things to measure or evaluate are the least important things with respect to doing a job. Managers are quick to define customer service as "answering the phone within three rings." or some such thing. That's easy to measure if you want to. What's NOT easy to measure is the overall quality of service that will get and keep customers. Measuring overall

customer service is hard, so many managers don't do it. But they will measure the trivial.

Stupid Thing #9: Surprising employees during appraisal. Want to really waste your time and create bad performance? This is a guaranteed technique. Don't talk to staff during the year. When

they mess up, don't deal with it at the time but SAVE it up. Then, at the appraisal meeting, truck out everything saved up in the bank and dump it in the employee's lap. That'll show 'em who is boss!

Stupid Thing #10: Thinking all employees and all jobs should be assessed in exactly the same way using the same procedures. Do all employees need the same things to improve their performance? Of course not. Some need specific feedback. Some don't. Some need more communication than others. And of course jobs are all different Do you think we can evaluate the CEO of Ford using the same approach as we use for the person who cleans the factory floor? Of course not. So, why do managers insist on evaluating the receptionist using the same tools and criteria as the civil engineers in the office?



Essential Tips To Prevent Business Identity Theft

1. Lock up your business files. Keep all physical business records such as customer records in file cabinets that lock. During lunch, and when you leave at night check to make sure that nothing is left unsecured. Put copies of important business data in the safe or the security deposit box at the bank.

2. Shredding can be your friend. All business records should be shredded. Criminals will often "dumpster dive" to get their hands on information that they can use. Only use the recycling bin for non-critical waste. If you are a small business, shredders can be bought at any office supply store. If you are much larger, there are services that will come to your place of business and shred for you.

3. Access to computers should be limited. All computers on your network should be password protected. You don't want anyone to be able to access confidential information whether they are a visitor or snooping employees. You have to determine which employees should have access and provide them with the passwords. If they have to get certain information, provide it to them on a need-to-know basis. You can always have the passwords changed in the near future.

4. Hey twin! Be aware of websites that look like yours or have a similar domain name. These sites can actually be set up to deceive potential creditors. These "spoof websites" are often created by black hat hacker hits. They can be bought for as little as \$100. The criminals can download codes and images from your site and duplicate them, so that they can send usernames, passwords, credit/debit card numbers to a bot-net. There are software programs that can search the net for you. Have your IT team look into it.

5. Be aware of "the business bust out." This is one of the schemes criminals use to apply for corporate credit cards using your firm's name. The application will pass a credit check because there is a company name and address match. He will sell the information, and then vanish before you know what happened. Know your neighbors.

6. Install anti-phishing software on your computers. Thieves will try to use spam email to entice you to submit your business identity to them. Please pay attention. They will also try and use money transfer tricks.

How To Motivate Your Staff

Sometimes it seems like a world of buzzwords when you read about employee empowerment" and "improving morale" and even "motivating staff." It's easy to throw buzzwords around, but issues that are so critical to a company should not be "buzzing." This is especially true when addressing the issue of motivation.

The interesting aspect of employee motivation is that there are many workers, both management and staff, who are motivated to succeed, but unfortunately that potential success is not seen as related to their current position or the tasks they are performing on a regular basis. In other words, they see their job as a stepping stone to another company or as a temporary diversion until the "real opportunity" comes along. Many employees also feel disenfranchised within their organization and believe their contributions to the company's success are overlooked and underappreciated.

In the "feel good" society in which we live, it's easy to get bogged down in buzzwords, sensitivity training, and motivational speeches intended to prove to employees that management "cares". All that really happens is that more buzzwords enter the picture.

Inspiring Action

This is a common mistake companies make because they believe any staff training, even if it is ineffective, is bound to have a positive impact. Unfortunately that is not necessarily true. Motivating staff involves a lot more than throwing out some buzzwords in a speech. Motivation is not about inspiration. It is about presenting information that inspires someone to ACT. Inspiring someone means influencing or guiding them, whereas motivating a person refers to moving them to ACTION.

The goal of motivating staff needs to be even more well-defined. Staff should be motivated to act in a way that promotes the success of the company where they work. This goal gets to the heart and soul of a motivational program designed to give staff the tools needed to succeed. These tools include an understanding of the mission of the company and the employee's particular role for insuring company success; job skills training that enables an employee to properly perform duties; and a business culture that encourages personal development.

Energizing Motivation

You will notice that motivation is not a static

or singular concept. It requires staff and management participation; company focus on personal enrichment; and skills training. Motivating staff requires effort all along the spectrum.

So exactly how do you motivate staff? The path to motivating staff is to focus on the mission of the company and then translate that mission into personal success. There is an enormous untapped potential in the labor force of most companies simply because people feel removed from the processes that equate to company success. That leads to a workforce searching for personal meaning (eventually with a position at a competitor!) or a workforce that is not mentally or emotionally connected to the company mission and thus underproductive.

Motivating employees takes a concerted effort on many levels. It begins with training that is focused.

- * Creating a corporate culture that promotes staff involvement and reduces resistance to change
- * Developing responsive management that values employee input
- * Encouraging team participation
- * Developing team leaders able to motivate others
- * Becoming an organization that is able to cross traditional functions and communication barriers
- * Creating positive energy that promotes individual success while also advancing company progress

Motivating employees requires leadership development, management building, team building, customer service training, and individual empowerment. Each staff member from the chief executive all the way through the organization needs the right tools and the right attitude in order for a company to experience success.

The bottom line is that motivating staff takes focused training. Those are not buzz words either!

Sales Tip Of The Month

If you want your clients to refer prospects to you, make it a point to refer prospects to your clients!

Inexpensive Ways To Market Your Business

When marketing your business, you do not have to break the bank to create a promotional campaign that can generate leads. These are precisely the times to be conscious of where your hard earned money is going. As such, you have to look into possible ways that you can save on costs on your marketing efforts.

Times are hard and you might find yourself struggling to attract new clients to your business. And although it is quite tempting, do not even think about cutting your marketing budget just so you can make ends meet. If you want to start losing your client base, then go right ahead and stop your marketing activities. But if you want to survive these difficult times and remain on top, you have to start thinking of clever ways to promote your business.

You do not have to regularly come up with more costly collaterals such as catalog printing or print brochures so that you can have as many leads as possible. There are other cost-effective ways to go about marketing other than your print catalogs. Here is how:

1. Market with thank you note cards.

You can always purchase a pile of them

at discount shops, and then send them to your loyal clients just to let them know that you appreciate the business they provide you. Handwrite the message to make it more personal. And end with a wish for their success and well-being.



Spending money is not a prerequisite to getting results. You don't need to wait for a tight economy to use creativity and chutzpa, two attributes that can often take you farther than a big budget.

2. Be an expert.

Write articles on your expertise. If you are in catalog printing, then write articles on how to print catalogs that work and then submit these articles to relevant websites. The more people who read your articles, the more chances your expertise will attract the leads you need for your client base.

3. Share data and information.

This time, if you find a great article, share it with customers who will appreciate such information. It will show that you are interested in them, so much so that you are keeping tabs on what can provide them solutions to some of their issues.

4. Contact people. Talk to them.

This is the most basic means to get in touch with your target clients. Just go ahead, pick up the phone and dial that number. Ask for feedback on current marketing campaigns or the ones you did for them last year. By getting in touch, you will be able to generate new business and revive old ones in the process.

5. Network, network, network!

Go to events and attend trade show exhibits. But bear in mind that networking is not about getting as many business cards as you can. Networking is about making connections and forming working relationships that can help you grow your business.

ships that can help you grow your business.

As the content above demonstrates, there are many ways to promote your business without spending money. One approach to get into the no-cost mindset is to simply ask yourself, if my marketing and/or public relations budget was eliminated, what could I do to promote my business?

“Did You Hear About...”

An old hill farmer trudges several miles through freezing snow to his local and very remote chapel for Sunday service. No one else is there, aside from the clergyman.

"I'm not sure it's worth proceeding with the service - might we do better to go back to our warm homes and a hot drink?" asks the clergyman, inviting a mutually helpful reaction from his audience of one.

"Well, I'm just a simple farmer," says the

old man, "But when I go to feed my herd, and if only one beast turns up, I sure don't leave it hungry."

So the clergyman, feeling somewhat ashamed, delivers his service - all the bells and whistles, hymns and readings, lasting a good couple of hours - finishing proudly with the fresh observation that no matter how small the need, our duty remains. And he thanks the old farmer for the lesson he has learned.

"Was that okay?" asks the clergyman, as

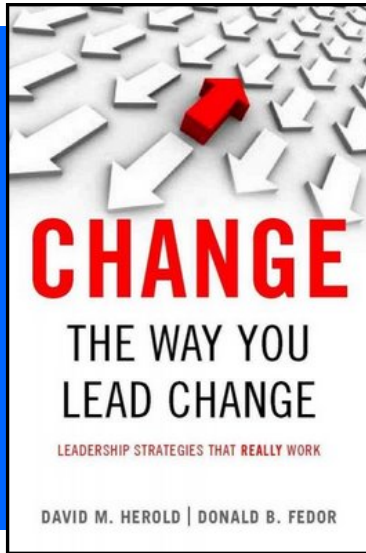
the two set off home.

"Well I'm just a simple farmer," says the old farmer, "but when I go to feed my herd, and if only one beast turns up, I sure don't force it to eat what I brought for the whole herd..."

From which we see the extra lesson, that while our duty remains regardless of the level of need, we have the additional responsibility to ensure that we adapt our delivery (of whatever is our stock in trade) to the requirements of our audience.

An Essential Guide For Implementing Change

Change is never a stepwise or easily prescribed process. Rather, it is messy and complicated, and its outcomes are easily swayed by a host of factors. In



this context, leaders need to develop and utilize realistic frameworks for organizational change. They need to implement a holistic change model that defines and justifies the proposed change, and takes account of both the abilities of those who will be asked to lead and carry out the change, and the *context* in which the change is to occur.

To develop such a model, David Herold and Donald Fedor, the authors of *Change the Way You Lead Change: Leadership Strategies that REALLY Work*, examined more than 300 changes and interviewed over 8,000 individuals who lived through them. They then reality-tested their model by bouncing their ideas off hundreds of managers who were living change on a day-to-day basis. Those ideas are collected in this practical book, which will

be of use to anyone who is likely to lead change initiatives in almost any organizational environment—from executives, to consultants, to management students.

According to Professor Amy Edmondson of the Harvard Business School, “This book presents a refreshingly realistic viewpoint of organizational change—what it’s like, what it takes, how many diverse players are involved—and argues that each change journey has the potential to be unique. What the book is really about is how most observers’ mental models (or published models) of organizational change are overly simplistic. I could not agree more with its basic points.”

Change the Way You Lead Change: Leadership Strategies that REALLY Work was published in 2008 by Stanford Business Books. This 176-page book has a retail price of \$25.00.

About D&M

Founded in 2001, D&M Enterprise Group has thousands of satisfied clients. D&M utilizes a consultative approach to thoroughly examine every aspect of each client’s telecommunications needs and then recommend specific cost-saving and performance-enhancing solutions. We specialize in medium to large-scale applications that include DS3, T1, as well as phone equipment installations.

As independent telecommunications experts, we have the luxury of offering our clients objective advice that truly serves their best interests. Once our clients’ telecommunications needs are identified, we match these needs with the services offered by more than 20 of the nation’s leading carriers and equipment manufacturers we represent. Because we have the ability to select from a wide variety of carriers and equipment, we can guarantee our clients that they are getting the **best solution** available at the **lowest possible cost**.

HOW WE DO IT: D&M does all the comparison shopping for you! Using proprietary software, D&M analyzes your existing communication, Internet, and data transfer usage. Once this analysis is complete, a comprehensive, customized proposal is prepared that shows the savings you can expect from competing carriers who can provide the same, or in some cases, superior service, at a lower price. Based on your needs, D&M will also recommend service and equipment changes that will save you money too.

In addition, D&M uses proprietary software, which we call our COMMauditor system, to analyze every invoice to ensure you are being charged at the contracted rate and that you are not charged for equipment or services that were canceled or never ordered. We also track all your telephony assets and vendor agreements.

The combination of increasing the efficiency of your business by ensuring you are using the proper services and equipment, along with monitoring your bills for accuracy, guarantees your company will be performing at maximum efficiency without overspending.

As your single point of contact, D&M makes it easy for you to spend your valuable time running your business while we make sure your telecommunications, Internet and data transfer needs are being supplied by the highest quality providers at the lowest possible cost.



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