



Where world class communications meet superior customer service

# D&M Communicator

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## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

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## From The Desk Of The President

With Thanksgiving just around the corner, I thought it would be appropriate to dedicate this column to those things for which I am thankful.

At the top of the list has to be good health for myself, my family, my staff, and our clients. As I write this, I am extremely fortunate to report that no one I know is in the midst of a serious medical situation.

I am also thankful for the devotion of the D&M staff. With all

seriousness, I guarantee that you will not find another team of dedicated professionals who truly care about your success the way your D&M Project Manager cares about

you and your company.

And finally, I am thankful for the referrals we get from you, our

loyal customers. The reality is that D&M doesn't advertise, we don't do cold calling, and we do no marketing. 100% of our new business is the result of referrals from satisfied customers.

And with our company continuing to grow more than 20% a year for the 8th straight year, particularly in this economy, we truly have a lot to be thankful for!

Steve



Steven Gerhardt, President, D&M Enterprise Group

## 5 Ways To Cut Small Business Costs

Here are a few relatively painless ways to cut costs and make your business more robust.

**1) Use Free Services:** Why pay for something you don't have to? There is a lot of free stuff on the Internet. Web sites, e-mail addresses, fax numbers, and conference call services are all among the options business owners can use for little or no charge at all.

Just enter "free phone service" or "free fax service" in Google, and you will be amazed at what comes up.

Now that said, don't go overboard. It's OK to use "free" when it doesn't affect your professional business image. If it does [me@freemail.com, for example], DO NOT USE IT.

**2) Do It Yourself:** How much do you pay your accountant each month? \$200? With an investment of less than \$100 in easy-to-use payroll software, you can handle the

payroll job easily yourself. Most payroll software can be downloaded from the website and tried free for 30 days. Just pay for the software after you feel comfortable.

Do you hire a professional to create e-letters or flyers? With software like Microsoft Office Publisher, you can select from pre-built templates to quickly and easily create professional-looking e-letters and flyers using an in-house color printer.

**3) Outsourcing:** Outsourcing does not always mean sending your business overseas. The idea is to find talented people outside of your local area. On freelance websites you can find web masters, bookkeepers, and other people who work on a subcontract basis.

**4) Marketing Efficiently:** If you mail a printed newsletter or coupons to customers, would it be more cost-effective to send them as e-mails? You can save not only on printing and

paper costs, but also on postage. I'd suggest using an autoresponder system though to make it more professional and automated (saves time).

Instead of buying ads from traditional newspapers, you can also advertise on the web. For a modest fee you can use pay-per-click programs from Google, Yahoo, or other companies. But do not forget there are still a lot of free ways to market your company online such as blogs, social networking sites, directory marketing, press releases, and email-marketing.

**5) Cut Transportation Costs:** Do all your sales and service calls need to be in person? Consider internet-based technologies such as web conferencing.

Allow full-time employees to telecommute. It will cut your rent expense, travel, and fuel costs. And studies suggest employees who work from home have increased output and enthusiasm.

# Test Your Telephone Effectiveness

## Find out if your phone practices are winning or losing customers

If your customers aren't impressed by you or your co-workers on the telephone, they can switch businesses by merely hanging up and dialing the competition. So, your telephone skills can have a significant impact on your business and your career.

To find out how you and your co-workers are perceived, take this telephone test. While you're at it, have a friend make a "mystery call" to see how your employees measure up.

### 1. How long does it take you and/or your switchboard operator to answer the phone?

- a) 5 rings or less
- b) 3 rings or less
- c) under 3 rings

After two rings, callers are wondering what's going on. Your phone should be answered in-person by the second ring or by your voice-mail system after the third ring.

### 2. Do you answer your phone with any of the following?

- a) "Hello."
- b) "(company name only)"
- c) "(last name only)"
- d) "Good afternoon, this is (your full name), How can I help you?"

All of these greetings have flaws. A, B, and C are too abrupt and don't provide enough information. D is too wordy and dissuades callers from identifying themselves because it encourages them to get to the point rather than saying their name. Plus it forces you to check the clock to see if it's before or after noon. A better greeting is, "Thank you for calling ABC Company. This is John." If you are taking a call that's transferred to you, then always identify yourself as you wished to be addressed. Whether you choose to identify the department is optional.

### 3. Have you ever said, "Please hold" to a caller?

- a) yes
- b) no

Never put a caller on hold without asking for their permission, and then waiting for their response. Putting customers on hold without their consent is a sure-fire formula

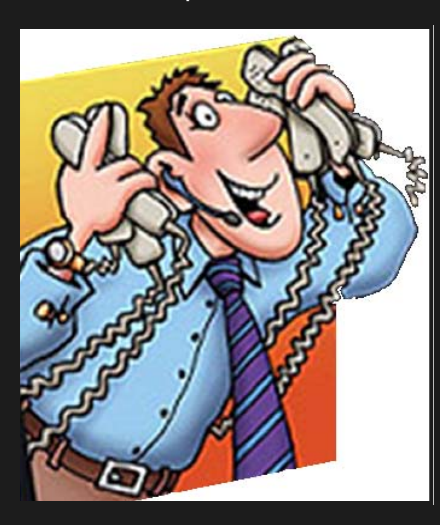
to lose customers.

### 4. How long does it take a person on hold to become annoyed?

- a) 2 minutes
- b) 30 seconds
- c) 1 minute
- d) 17 seconds

Studies show that after only 17 seconds, callers on hold become annoyed. The exception is when the greeter explains why the caller is being asked to hold and provides the estimated time required. Knowing beforehand how long they can expect to wait reduces the chance of annoyance, particularly among long-distance and cellular phone callers.

### Got Telephone Skills?



Another option to prevent frustration is to offer the caller the option of either holding or hanging up and having his call returned within a brief, specific time period.

### 5. If you're talking on the phone and a visitor walks in, who gets priority?

- a) the visitor
- b) the caller

The person who made the effort to show up in person gets priority. That means you need to interrupt the caller. The quickest way to get that caller's attention is to say their name. "George, I have someone who just walked in, can I ask you to hold for a moment?" Wait for their agreement. Then acknowledge the visitor, tell them you'll be a moment, and wrap up your telephone conversation.

If you're talking to a customer in person when the phone rings, then have someone else answer the phone, or use voice mail. Abandoning customers to answer the phone is downright rude and is a guaranteed way to lose customers. As obvious as this seems, it's one of the most common blunders in customer service.

### 6. When receiving a call for a co-worker, how are you most likely to respond?

- a) "Susan's not in right now, so I'll have to take a message."
- b) "Susan's still at lunch. Can I take a message?"
- c) "Susan should be back soon. Could you call back in about 15 minutes?"

All of these statements have flaws that make the greeter sound unhelpful and unprofessional. Consider each response. a) The statement, "I'll have to take a message," makes it sound like an inconvenient chore. Instead, change two words: "I'll be happy to take a message." The bonus is that you don't work any harder but you convey the impression of someone with a terrific customer service attitude. b) It's completely irrelevant that the co-worker is at lunch. The caller might be thinking, "That's a long time to be at lunch!" It's also irrelevant whether your co-worker is "in a meeting" or "with a customer" or "busy." The only relevant information is they're not coming to the phone. Therefore, "Susan is not available right now" is the most appropriate response, followed by, "I'd be happy to take a message." c) asking a caller to phone back later gives the impression that you're too lazy or disorganized to take a message. This gives a potential customer a terrific excuse to call your competitor.

### The training solution

If you're like most managers and business owners, you'll probably find that when you assess the phone practices within your organization, there is room for improvement. The good news is that with just a little training, it's easy to develop the skills that ensure that your customers keep coming back.

# Stressed Out? Solutions You Probably Haven't Tried

We all experience stress in our lives. Some of us thrive on it. Some of us muddle through. And for others, the stress causes serious health and work problems. As life has become faster and more complex, it gets more and more difficult to thrive. Apart from the usual stress management "suspects," like eating well and exercising, there are some techniques you can use to reduce the stress in your life (or at least make your reactions more constructive). We're going to cover some of these techniques, AND, help you find free online help (including audiobooks), to help you learn them. Most of them fall into the category of relaxation techniques.

## Overview:

Relaxation techniques have been around for a long time and have been well explored by psychologists. While the actual process of learning how to relax deeply varies and has different names (e.g., self-hypnosis, meditation, or just relaxation), they all have one thing in common. You use them to put yourself in a deep relaxation state where your heart rate, breathing rate, and "thinking rate" slow down.

Before we describe the different methods, here are a few things to keep in mind. What works for one person may not work for another. So, you may have to experiment. Second, since that's the case, it can get expensive to buy audio books, books, or tapes since you won't know in advance what will be most effective. One simple way to obtain the materials that will work for you is to see if the library has them. Not only will the materials be free, but you

can "test" variety of methods. Third, to benefit from learning relaxation techniques you must practice regularly.

**What works for one person may not work for another. So you may have to experiment.**

## The Different Relaxation Techniques

In no particular order:

**There is autogenic relaxation.** This is a form of passive relaxation (you don't move anything). You listen to a tape (or once you've learned to do it, you can do it without the tape), where you imagine different parts of your body becoming heavy, warm, and relaxed.

**Progressive relaxation** is a bit different in that it involves physical movement. It works like this: you tense particular body parts, one at a time (your hand, your forearm, etc), hold the tension and then let it go, either quickly or slowly. You focus on the feelings of tension and relaxation so you can become better at identifying your tension and learning how to release it.

**Guided imagery relaxation** is different yet again. It involves imagining yourself in

soothing, calm surroundings (on the beach, for example), and attending to the details of the experience (e.g., the sand on your feet, the warmth of the sun).

**Self-hypnosis** is quite similar to some of the approaches above. Often self-hypnosis involves the use of affirmations (positive or relaxing statements) once you have achieved a deep sense of relaxation.

**Subliminal techniques** are supposed to work this way. Buried in music or other sounds are various statements that you can't consciously hear, but, supposedly, your unconscious can hear. Unfortunately, there is little or no proof that these work the way they are supposed to, but if they do, go for it!

**Meditation techniques** used to be drawn from Eastern philosophy, but people have found that it's possible to use meditation techniques without subscribing to the religious tenets associated with them. Meditation for relaxation usually involves focusing your attention on a word, your breathing, or a simple object. Its purpose is to calm the mind.

**Music!** Finally, some people find it relaxing to listen to certain kinds of music (usually classical) or nature sounds.

Also, in the event that you are experiencing severe stress, don't go the self-help route without also contacting your doctor to see if he or she can help. This is particularly important since stress can affect your physical well-being.

## “Did You Hear About...”

One day a farmer's donkey fell into a well. The farmer frantically thought what to do as the stricken animal cried out to be rescued.

With no obvious solution, the farmer regretfully concluded that since the donkey was old and the well needed to be filled in anyway, he should give up the idea of rescuing the beast and simply fill in the well. Hopefully the poor animal would not suffer too much, he tried to persuade himself.

The farmer asked his neighbors for help, and before long they all began to shovel earth quickly into the well.



When the donkey realized what was happening, he wailed and struggled, but then, to everyone's relief, the noise stopped.

After a while the farmer looked down into the well and was astonished by what he saw.

The donkey was still alive, and progressing towards the top of the well. The donkey had discovered that by shaking off the dirt instead of letting it cover him, he could keep stepping on top of the earth as the level rose. Soon the donkey was able to step up over the edge of the well, and he happily trotted off.

Life tends to shovel dirt on top of each of us from time to time. The trick is to shake it off and take a step up.

# Check Out These Dead CEOs & How They Operated

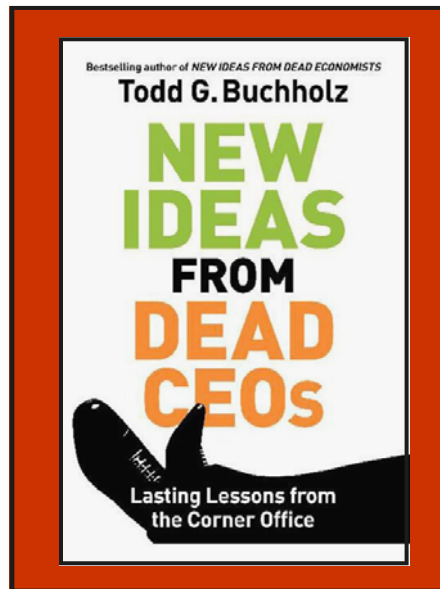
**Book Review:** War heroes, long after they pass on, live on in the movies. The lives and exploits of sports heroes are retold in books. Sixty years after his death, we still know Babe Ruth.

Stars of the business world may be less well remembered, but their daring feats qualify them as heroes just the same.

Dead CEOs still have a lot to teach. In *New Ideas From Dead CEOs*, author Todd G. Buchholtz dramatically brings their business stories back to us.

Take A.P. Giannini, founder of Bank of America. He cared so much for his customers that he reopened his bank four days after the San Francisco earthquake of 1906. It was a Sunday. Giannini went down to the wharf, put a plank across two wooden barrels and declared himself open for business.

Some of Buchholz's heroes started their empires from scratch. Walt Disney first supported himself by taking baby pictures. His career got a boost when he received \$500



for a film on dental hygiene.

Sam Walton wasn't shy about scoping out the competition. At one point, he sneaked around competitors' stores and looked under the display racks to check inventory. Walton was a proud skinflint. He was so tight with a dollar that he once shared a hotel room with eight staffers. Those were the early days. By the time he became a retailing legend, he only shared his room with one staff member.

The author recounts fascinating stories of early beginnings of mega businessmen, showing how his subjects transformed business.

In addition to the dramas of Wal-Mart and Disney, Buchholz tells the adventures of Tom Watson, Sr. and Tom Watson, Jr. of IBM, Mary Kay Ash, and Estee Lauder, David Sarnoff of RCA, Ray Kroc of McDonald's, and Akio Morita, founder of Sony.

*New Ideas From Dead CEOs* by Todd G. Buchholz, Collins, 300 pages, \$26.95.

## 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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