



Tips FROM THE Top[®]

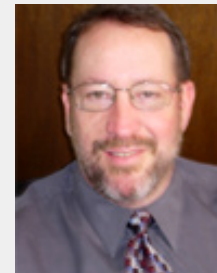
Business insights from those at the top for those at the top

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THE ALTERNATIVE BOARD[®]

Achieve Success with Peer Advice and Coaching



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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Clear Vision is the Solid Foundation for Her Business



When Leslie List opened the doors of her first company, she had a distinct picture of what she wanted to establish: a full service advertising and design firm that provided a nicer, more productive atmosphere to work in. More than 10 years later, that vision hasn't really changed, even if the name of her firm has. Her current agency, Kulture Marketing, has a firmly established reputation for award-winning yet effective branding and marketing communications programs that provide tangible results for clients. Leslie's foresight is a key factor in her success.

After graduating from the Art Institute of Philadelphia Leslie's career made a natural progression through the creative ranks of well-regarded regional and national advertising firms, moving from staff artist to production manager to operations manager to Art Director to Creative Director quickly. In 1995, she came to the realization that, while she loved the business, she was essentially running a company without gaining any of the benefits of being a principal. It was then that she

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

opened her first agency, Paisley Enterprises. The advertising business can often involve long, hard hours; knowing that she would someday want to start a family, she created a business that would support both her professional and personal aspirations simultaneously without having to compromise either.

While List's vision for her company has remained fairly constant, she has noticed changes within the industry, in terms of competitive pressures as well as the challenges her clients face. Leslie has carved out a very specific niche by placing an emphasis on sound strategic planning in her service offering. "As advertisers run leaner, client marketing departments have less time and resources. This has translated to a situation where they bid out work to as many as 7 firms and then go with the lowest bid. Many agencies have cut their fees just to win the business. It's critical that I position my company to compete in such a cutthroat environment yet still provide additional value," explains List. By placing a focus on building strong relationships and developing sound underlying strategy as well as innovative creative execution, Kulture Marketing sets itself apart from those with more conventional offerings. "Our clients attach great importance to our personalized service – we place a high degree of emphasis upon listening to their needs. Smaller accounts rarely receive this level of service. Larger accounts are no different – they appreciate that we value their business and view their account as more than just another line on a balance sheet. By maintaining our focus and building relationships, we don't have to be the lowest bidder because ultimately, clients WANT the best, not the least expensive."

This strategy is clearly working: 95% of her business now comes from referrals, and many of the clients she served in those early days are still with her, even though many have moved on to other organizations. This kind of loyalty speaks volumes in such a competitive industry.

A relative new comer to TAB, Leslie joined in fall of 2006 initially attracted to the idea that she could surround herself with a circle of successful business owners who could provide her with fresh perspectives and input as to how to continually improve her own company. She has not been disappointed. The feedback she has received from her fellow board members has helped her keep her focus and proved invaluable in helping her concentrate her efforts where they will make the greatest impact on her company.

For more information about Kulture Marketing [CLICK HERE](#)

TAB BOARD MEETINGS & EVENTS

Wednesday, April 11, 2007

[Bottom Line Board Meeting](#)

Thursday, April 12, 2007

[Arthur's Board Meeting](#)

Wednesday, April 18, 2007

[President's Board Meeting](#)

Thursday, April 19, 2007

[CEO Board Meeting](#)

Thursday, April 26, 2007

[Strategic Board Meeting](#)

QUICK TIPS

Marketing Trifecta

Send out a thank-you letter to new or first-time clients/customers. Offer them a discount on future goods or services if they fill out a customer feedback form. The results will:

- 1) build positive client relationships.
- 2) increase revenues by making the client/customer a repeat client/customer.
- 3) provide the business owner with valuable feedback that can be used to improve relationships in the future.

Nancy Waterman, Network IT

Middletown, CT

Driving Referrals

I recently completed the TAB Business Vantage® about my business and was dissatisfied with my score under “Sales.” I went through the underlying questions and identified three key items that needed to be addressed and then met with my facilitator to go through it. Instead of stopping at the three I had decided to take on, he pushed me a little further and pointed out that my business benefits greatly from referrals, and yet I had said that we had no referral program. We have ongoing sales (maintenance, software upgrades, etc) and as we discussed it, I realized how easy it would be to put a referral program in place and give discounts off future sales to people who refer business. My salespeople can let customers know about this as part of their regular communications, and I am excited at how easy this will be to accomplish and how effective it can be in helping me grow my business.

Dennis Labriola, Admit Computer Service, Farmingdale, NY

DEVELOPMENT

Take the Offensive

We are faced with the loss of a large customer – one who accounts for about 30 percent of our revenues. I quickly made the decision that we would grow our way out of this, rather than attempting to cost-reduce our way out. We have accelerated the development of several new services to fill the gap and to keep the organization moving forward. I'm more comfortable with this approach than I am with the defensive strategy of hunkering down.

Ernie Zerenner, Power Financial Group, Wilmington, DE

MANAGEMENT

Making Time

At some point in our management history, the “Open Door Policy” was created. This allowed all my employees to drop in or to interrupt my thoughts by knocking at my door and asking questions. What I found was that although they were getting their work done, I was not. This realization changed my “Open Door Policy” to a sometimes open door. My employees had to be trained that when I closed my door, it meant I did not want to be disturbed. Once instituted, I was able to have some quiet time to concentrate on completing my more difficult issues.

Larry Shulman, Communications Specialties, Inc., Hauppauge, NY

LEGAL

What's In Your Wallet?

My attorney, after drafting my will and setting up several powers of attorney, has given me a laminated card that fits in my wallet. It contains information on my healthcare power of attorney and who to contact to release healthcare information in the event I am incapacitated. In today's world of confidentiality and HIPPA regulations, such a card could be a lifesaver.

Keith Jones

ENDEX of Oklahoma Inc.

Oklahoma City, OK

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Masters by Allen E. Fishman, Founder and CEO of The Alternative Board®.

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The Importance of a Policy and Procedures Book Acknowledgment

Be sure that all employees have received and understand their policy and procedures book. Have them hand in a sheet with their signature so stating. My secretary charged with this responsibility for all new employees did not understand the importance of the recordkeeping and apparently let it slide.

This came back to haunt us in an unemployed compensation hearing for an employee who had been fired for repeatedly smoking in a non-smoking area. Although we had warned him twice before, the **unemployed compensation judge used the fact that our secretary couldn't swear that she had given him the procedures book, and we had no written record on file.**

In the end, the ruling was in our favor, but the lesson to have all employees sign and return the acknowledgement has hit home.

Pat Masse, Masse's, Green Bay, WI

LEADERSHIP

Leadership Networking

Business owners need to realize that their involvement in community activities and professional associations is vital to the successful growth of themselves and their company. Increasing your visibility in the community or industry association is a way of showing your appreciation of others and making a lasting contribution. The time investment has a high ROI.

Merv Selvidge, Synergene Seed Co., Salinas, CA

LEGAL

Employee Theft

One of my members had his internal accountant steal approximately \$28,000 by writing checks to herself and using bogus invoices. He had assigned his office manager the oversight function to check on the work of the accountant, making this her number one priority. Fortunately for the company, there was \$35,000 in employee dishonesty insurance which covered the claim.

Pat Idoux, Patrick Insurance, Waterloo, IL

The Alternative Board® brings business owners, CEOs and presidents of non-competing businesses together in boards, where members can present challenges and opportunities to the board for seasoned, practical advice from other owners who understand one another's perspective and contribute meaningful solutions. The boards consist of up to 10 members, meeting monthly under the guidance of a TAB-Certified Facilitator. Over 300 TAB Boards are operating each month across the United States, Canada and South America. Since its inception, thousands of businesses have benefited from membership in The Alternative Board®. For more information on The Alternative Board®, visit www.TABBoards.com



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