



Tips FROM THE Top[®]

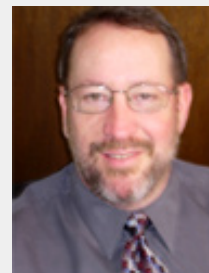
Business insights
from those at the top
for those at the top

Published by The Alternative Board[®]



THE ALTERNATIVE BOARD[®]

Achieve Success with Peer Advice and Coaching



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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Keep It Simple, But Do It

This is the time of year that TAB members and other business owners set goals for the coming year. Some forecast and budget within the larger context of strategic planning. Others might focus on a handful of initiatives.

While it is important to quantify objectives as much as possible, you can still be successful addressing more “amorphous” goals. For example, you might set sales objectives in terms of revenue, market share, margin or new business. These are, of course, vital.

I’m finding, however, that even more important for business owners this time of year is to commit to improving systems. The objective might then be something like, “Implement a comprehensive sales management system that holds sales staff accountable to activity and revenue results.” From this objective we can build action plans to make it happen.

Regardless of the scope and breadth of the undertaking, I have found that there are some critical components to successful annual planning; in other words, we get the results we want:

1. **Write it all down.** Remember, “If a plan is not in writing, it doesn’t exist.”
2. **Tell everyone that needs to know;** management, staff, etc.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

3. **Have EVERYONE set goals for the year and submit them.** This exercise should be part of an employee review and development process which I'm sure you all do on a quarterly basis. For the tiny fraction of you that don't do performance appraisals (90%), this method will go a long way to driving performance.

4. **Have a built-in schedule to review on a regular basis.** Some of the best plans in the world don't work only because there is no systematic process for review.

5. **Keep it simple, but do it.**

Have a healthy, fulfilling and prosperous year everyone.

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Bob Zelnick, TAB Facilitator

MANAGEMENT

Interviewing for Your Job

We recently determined that we needed new blood in our sales department. We decided to take a unique approach rather than making an arbitrary decision of whom to keep and whom to let go.

We met with the sales staff and told them we needed to revitalize the sales department and were going to be reducing the size of the staff. We made it clear there were going to be terminations. We told each of them to prepare to interview for the remaining positions. In essence, they were going to re-interview for their current job. Our initial goal was to terminate two of the seven positions. After the interviews, we decided to terminate three people.

Three people literally "failed" their interview. The amazing lesson was the difference in an interview when you don't know a person versus when you do know them. They cannot hide behind false statements when you know their work ethics, attitudes, etc. Also, you learn who really wants their position by how they prepare and their attitude toward the interview.

I would recommend this approach any time you are trying to make a decision about whom to keep and whom to terminate.

Lynn Gastineau, Gastineau Log Homes, Jefferson City, MO

FINANCE

Center for Closely Held Business Breakfast Roundtable

Tuesday, February 13, 2007

[More Information](#)

TAB BOARD MEETINGS

Thursday, January 18, 2007

[CEO Board TAB Meeting](#)

Wednesday, January 24, 2007

[Arthur's Board TAB Meeting](#)

Wednesday, January 24, 2007

[President's Board TAB Retreat](#)

Thursday, January 25, 2007

[Strategic Board TAB Meeting](#)

Friday, January 26, 2007

[Bottom Line Board TAB Retreat](#)

QUICK TIPS

Attitude Adjustment

We classify team members in 1, 2 and 3 categories. Category 3 team members are not performing as expected and are usually prone to complaining about their job. Recently, I decided to speak individually with all those in category 3 and give them a strong warning. Less than half-way through the list of interviews, everybody knew what was going on.

Employee Financial Analysis

For business owners and managers, costs always seem much more difficult to track and control than revenues. This is true of employees, too, and in the absence of concrete information, they will generally have a fair handle on revenues and underestimate your cost structure. As a result, they will always tend to think that you are making more money than you actually are, and this dynamic needs to be taken into consideration when thinking about sharing financial information.

Hugh Koh, STA International, Uniondale, NY

HUMAN RESOURCES

Hire for Attitude

An employee needs all three legs of the success triangle (attitude, skills and systems) to make the maximum contribution. However, business typically spends a fortune both recruiting and late-training employees based on skills and systems.

If you list the ten most important characteristics you want in an employee—eight of the ten relate to attitude. The person with the right attitude will learn skills and systems. Someone with a poor attitude is far less likely to succeed regardless of their skills or the system.

Next time you plan to send someone to a \$1,000 seminar, buy them a \$15 book first. If they don't read the book, they won't get much from the seminar either.

Phil Linden, Lindens Propane, LaGrange, OH

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Think Like Your Customers!

Have you ever received an "Explanation of Benefits" statement from your insurer that left you with more questions than it answered? Who hasn't? Next time it happens, let it be a reminder to look over your own company's communication documents that are designed for customer consumption. Have you taken the customer's point of view and knowledge level into consideration when preparing your estimate, invoice, product description or complaint policy? Make it easy for your customers to understand these documents, and you'll make it easier for them to do business with you!

Doug Roof, TAB-Certified Facilitator, Hockessin, DE

OPERATIONS

As a result, most category 3 team members have shown improvements in productivity and attitude.

Mike Barker

Leon Springs Gas Co.

San Antonio, TX

How Many Banks?

You can never have enough banks—one is not enough. Expand your banking relationships. At the very least, you should have a business banker and a personal banker. If one cannot meet your needs, the other may be willing. Locally owned community banks are often more responsive than larger, multi-state financial institutions.

Wayne Hoover

Hoover & Harris & Co.

PC, Greeley, CO

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Recording Telephone Conversations for Quality

Whether you actually record telephone conversations or not, putting a message on your automated attendant that says, “This conversation may be recorded for training and quality purposes” achieves several things.

- **It sends a message to your customers that you care about quality and training, and potentially elevates your image in their eyes.**
- **It reduces phone abuse by your employees because they are concerned that personal phone calls will be identified if they are caught up in the monitoring net.**

Steve Quail, Q Source, Bohemia, NY

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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