



Tips FROM THE Top[®]

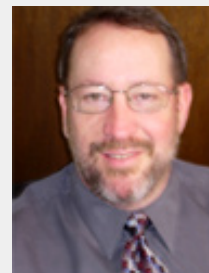
Business insights
from those at the top
for those at the top

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THE ALTERNATIVE BOARD[®]

Achieve Success with Peer Advice and Coaching



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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Pushing Family Limits



Customer service – at the Keil household it means that your father, on Christmas day, is willing to remove a critical part from your family’s furnace to get the customer’s furnace back in operation in time for Christmas dinner. Lessons like that run deep in Barbara Keil’s consciousness. As the third generation owner of Keil Heating and Air Conditioning, Barbara views going into the office each day as a huge responsibility to those who came before, the employees who serve today and the customers who rely on Keil’s expertise in HVAC.

She still remembers the day in 1986 when her father announced that Keil was pulling out of the home heating oil business, the mainstay of the company’s operations. It was a shock and both scary and exciting at the same time. Now Barbara shares “change or die” business decisions with her husband, Milton Baum, with whom she purchased Keil in 1994. She says, “I’ve always had faith that things will work out. I tend to be cautious about change and Milt is more aggressive about risk. We usually meet on the middle ground and it works.”

During Barbara’s tenure, Keil Heating and Air conditioning has succeeded in extending the longevity of the business by moving

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

completely out of the new construction market and into the retrofit and maintenance markets. About 95% of their accounts are residential. Homeowners hire them to replace aging or inadequate systems and to maintain existing systems.

Barbara and Milt have expanded their co-ownership roles by purchasing an associated company that produces and sells Kool Kaps, year-round covers designed to keep dirt and debris out of central air conditioners. The cover opens automatically when the unit comes on, eliminating the problem of homeowners forgetting to remove the cover at the beginning of the season. **Kool Kaps, LLC** sells these to distributors and contractors throughout the USA and Canada.

Barbara grew up in the family business and joined the company immediately after graduating from Franklin and Marshall with an accounting degree. Over the years, she has sought various means for acquiring information about how other businesses operate. She says, "Being part of TAB allows me to experience vicariously what it's like in other businesses. Belonging to TAB has helped my own business style. Before, I often wondered whether I was the only one with a particular problem. Hearing from others how they solve problems has really helped me."

For more information about Keil Heating and Air Conditioning, [click here](#) to go to www.keilheatac.com.

MANAGEMENT

Issue Confrontation

Business management is the **art of constructive confrontations**. It begins with confronting your own deviation from commitments and priorities, and it extends into interactions with employees, vendors and customers. The measure of success is to look back on the week and know that you have not let any "issues" slide. Whenever you recognize a behavior that is unacceptable or performance that is below expectation, take the time to **plan the confrontation** and assess the likely consequences. (This is the step that differentiates "constructive" from "destructive" confrontations!) Then waste no time in scheduling the appropriate action.

Some business owners may think that practicing this discipline is stressful, but most will find that once it becomes a characteristic of your management style, it actually **reduces stress** by eliminating a wall of unresolved issues.

Implementation of constructive confrontation builds respect and sets an example for your management team.

TAB Board Meetings

Monday, November 13, 2006

Bottom Line TAB Board Meeting

Wednesday, November 15, 2006

Arthur's TAB Board Meeting

Wednesday, November 22, 2006

Presidents TAB Board Meeting

Friday, December 8, 2006

CEO TAB Board Meeting

Tuesday, December 19, 2006

Strategic TAB Board Meeting

QUICK TIPS

E-mail Filter

My secretary reviews my incoming e-mail and passes on only the relevant messages to me. I find this to be a significant time-saver.

Wayne Hoover

Hoover & Harris & Co., PC

Greeley, CO

Jim McWilliams, Mountain View Tire & Service, Fort Collins, CO

OPERATIONS

Cell Phones as Trackers

The **profitability** of my business relies heavily on the **productivity** of my field technicians. I have six such positions each assigned a company van. They are dispatched daily to outlying areas. It has always been difficult to **get these field technicians to work a full day, every day**. We've taken many steps, but the most effective has been to add the **GPS feature to their cell phones**.

For an additional \$11 per month, per phone, we can get a report of their location at 15-minute intervals throughout the day. If they get home at 3:30 p.m., we know. When pay day comes, we **compare** their time sheets with the GPS report, and raise questions as appropriate. There is little argument when we dock them for less than a full day.

Jeff Eastburn, Hoopes Fire Prevention, Newark, DE

HUMAN RESOURCES

Breaking Down Silos Can Pay Off

A couple of years ago when the market got very tight, we eliminated a few positions, including an office accounting position. By **reassigning responsibilities**, we were able to make up the work. But as business picked up, we have had to fill the position again. In the meantime—again because of the press of work—our supervisors had to start earlier and earlier to get things organized for the day shift. We examined the organizational duties and realized they could be done by someone other than production personnel.

We scheduled the new accounting person to come in later in the morning and stay until early evening. Now, the individual in the new position can see what is needed to be set up for the next morning's crew and help prepare work orders and other paperwork, so it is ready when the supervisors arrive. By thinking **out-of-the-box**, we were able to solve two problems with one position, as well as help **breach the wall between "office and production floor."**

Michael McCarthy, Metko Inc., New Holstein, WI

MARKETING

When Customers Want it All

When my sales representatives or customers come to me and ask for a discount off the original price or they say they will buy our product if we lower our price, I ask which of the following three items do you want—low price, high quality or 100 percent customer service/satisfaction. I tell them you can choose two, but you can't have all three!

Steve Herstein

The Right Track

Crofton, MD

Continuous Improvement

When business is good, it's easy to turn your head away from problems and stop looking for improvements. When business is good, so is the opportunity to continue to look for improvements and avoid complacency.

Barry Bankler

Gibson Plumbing

San Antonio, TX

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

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Seminars as a Marketing Tool

As the owner of a local CPA firm, I have devoted part of our marketing effort to holding **educational seminars** for selected clients with common interests. Our seminar topics have included investment and retirement planning, successful real estate investing, small business tax planning and dealing with rising healthcare costs. The seminars include a meal and run for two hours in the evening.

Our last seminar featured a national bank speaking about commercial loans and real estate financing. Since the bank was being **highlighted**, we asked if they would like to **sponsor** the seminar—they agreed covering all costs. We have also asked the featured speakers at our next seminar to sponsor and they, too, have all agreed. We have found the **sponsors are excited** about sponsoring the evenings, because they see their companies **highlighted in a room full of potential customers**.

These seminars have been **very well-received by our clients** who are encouraged to bring a friend. Most do, and we have been able to **grow our practice through these referrals**. Bottom line: a cost-free program to both inform our clients and gain new ones.

Bob Simpson, Brinker, Simpson & Co., LLP, Springfield, PA

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 12 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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