

Special points of interest:

Here are just some of the business issues we can help you with:

- Building and sharing your business Vision and Mission.
- Analyzing your industry—understanding the environment in which you operate, and how well positioned your business is.
- Understanding where your business is in it's Lifecycle and what needs to be done to get you to the next stage.
- How to articulate what makes you truly different from your competition. Crafting your Business Value Proposition .

Inside this issue:

Some Principles for Success	2
Surviving a Cash Crunch?	2
5 Common Employee Relations Problems	2
Strategies for Employee Relations	3
Is It Really About the Pickles?	3
Talking about Changes	3
Willing to Risk Being Successful?	4

Achieving Stability in a Volatile Marketplace

Today's marketplace operates at breakneck speeds. In almost every segment, a customer can have a change of heart and a new priority overnight. Keeping pace with technology, innovation, competition, and fulfilling customers desires can leave a business owner breathless.

However, one thing that will never change is a customer's desire for an excellent product and excellent service.

Achieving and managing excellence throughout your entire organization will give you a leg up in the race for customers.

This can be challenging when your relationships with vendors, distributors, employees, and suppliers can change so quickly. Small businesses typically have limited resources and can often get swept

out of the marketplace because of rapid changes in technology and customer tastes.

A commitment to excellence is the great equalizer between small and big companies.

In fact, smaller companies are often better at achieving excellence because there is less bureaucracy, better teamwork, and more personal contact with customers throughout the organization's hierarchy. Consider your business for a moment.

- Do you have an explicit commitment to quality and customer satisfaction?
- Is it written down and expressed to your entire organization?
- Do you have clear processes

and systems for handling customer complaints?

- Similarly, is there a way for customers to give you feedback?
- Do you encourage customer suggestion?
- Does your entire team share an enthusiastic and genuine commitment to delivering an excellent product and superior customer service?
- Does your team consider it the number one priority?

It's very likely your team probably has scores of ideas on how to improve customer service in these areas. Encouraging their ideas is a great way to motivate them and often produces low-cost enhancements to your business.

Pursuing Excellence In Your Small Business

Achieving and managing excellence throughout your business can take years. You and your team have to embrace the idea and make it a part of your business and your personal value system. Here are some tips to get you started in your pursuit of excellence:

Let your team know that a **commitment to excellent** work and customer service is a requirement for working here.

Post signs around the workplace that reinforce this message. Ask your team for their input on how to serve customers better.

Make excellent customer service a part of everybody's performance standards and employment reviews.

Likewise, **improving customer service and quality** must be a commitment shared by all.

Talk about your **commitment to excellence** at every opportunity. Continually reinforce this commitment as the number one priority of every person in the business.

Prepare to change. Significant changes may have to be made to reach your goals.

Most people are uneasy about

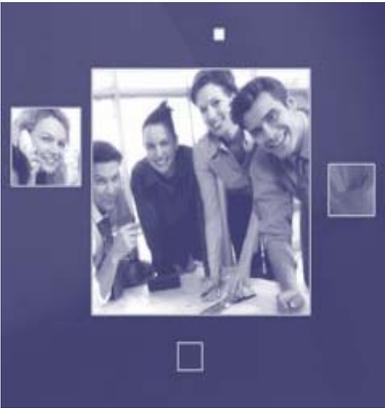
change and as the leader of the business, you must set the example and embrace the changes that are going to make your business better.

Think small. Often it is the little things a business does that sets it apart from all the rest.

Think about **all areas** of your business: distributors, suppliers, billing methods and customer interfaces.

Pursue a business that is centered on excellence and **reap the rewards.** Ask us how we can help you institutionalize an excellence focused approach to doing business.

Some Principles for Success



Unlike in the movies, successful business does not require ruthless behavior or contrived schemes. More often than not, it requires doing things “right.” Here are some brief principles for garnering success:

Be kind. Genuinely caring about the needs of others - customers, managers, co-workers and suppliers alike - is a powerful key to success.

Check your ego at the front

door. Put aside your agenda to benefit mutual goals.

Remain positive. Resist the impulse to get entwined in the office grapevine. Instead of complaining, try to look at negative situations another way and make a point to say positive things about people, instead of joining in on office feuds.

Work hard. Your first priority should be to do the best you

can to meet your goals. Office politics, co-worker’s mood swings and petty arguments will usually take care of themselves, if you overlook them.

Keep your word. Consider verbal promises as contracts and write them down to ensure they’re fulfilled. This is a key to integrity.

The foundations of success are built on honesty and integrity, not office politics or bullying.

"To survive and flourish, businesses need to embrace a new systematic approach to setting direction that integrates classic analysis with values, purpose and vision."

Robert Allio

Surviving a Cash Crunch

Some small business executives say that when you’re strapped for cash, it’s best to explain the situation to your suppliers and ask for extensions on your credit. Others, however, recommend that you keep the problem to yourself.

That’s just what Jim Ansara did when his company, Shawmut Design and Construction, in Boston, was in the hole

\$550,000. While he worked to solve the core problem of poor financial controls, Ansara kept his vendors and subcontractors in the dark by paying bills in 30-35 days, much faster than the industry average.

The trick, of course, was coming up with the cash. To do that, he took only high-margin jobs from customers he knew would pay promptly. When possible, he

completed work ahead of schedule and billed some jobs twice a month. He also convinced a few customers to pay for work upfront, in exchange for a discount.

The plan worked so well that suppliers never suspected the company was in trouble, and Ansara had the time he needed to get the company back in the black.

5 Common Employee Relations Problems

Identifying the problem is half the road to solving it right? If you’re experiencing problems in your organization, consider whether any of these factors could be at the root of it.

According to the Manchester Executive Coaching Survey, there are five employee rela-

tions problems that leaders need to correct the most in order to work effectively with others:

Poor interpersonal skills, selected by 48% of survey respondents as the No. 1 top-level employee relations problem in their organizations

Disorganization - 31%

Demeaning attitude - 22%

Unpredictability, Arrogance (tie) - 21%

Addressing employee relations problems and taking your team’s complaints seriously are critical to business per-



Strategies for Employee Relations

1) **Orient new team members** - it's vital for management to explain the goals and mission of the organization to new members. Employees should know the organizational structure, where they fit in and what management's expectations are. Management should also highlight the learning and development aspects of working within the organization.

2) **Develop collaborative performance evaluations**- These

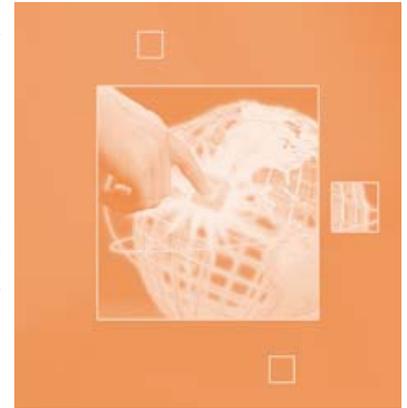
encourage team work, initiative and problem solving. Managers get to know their employees, and, in turn, employees feel valued and committed.

3) **Coach team members**- Adopt a coaching style that allows workers to generate their own solutions while receiving regular and constructive feedback. This can be time-consuming, but ultimately team members become more self-directed and autonomous,

thus freeing managers to get on with managing.

4) **Encourage peer coaching**- This allows team members who are willing and enthusiastic to assist each other. Of course, this can only succeed in an environment where coaching and cooperation prevail.

We understand that this is no easy task. For specific implementation ideas, contact us.



Is It Really About the Pickles?

Knowing what your customers are really buying can help set you apart from your competition. Take a minute to read this account and see how it might apply to your business.

"When I get a customer on the telephone screaming because—I tell you no lie—he doesn't like the kosher pickle we serve on the side of our sandwiches, I'm thinking, "Get

a life", while I'm saying "What kind of pickles would you like?".

Because the issue isn't the pickle with the strong hint of garlic. The issue is making the guy feel good.

"The customer is not always right. The customer knows it. You know it. The employees know it.

In fact, customers are frequently misinformed, unclear and selfish. Who cares? It's not the issue. Make them feel good, and you'll be giving them what they really want ... SATISFACTION!"

Jeffrey Mount, President of Wright's Gourmet House, a restaurant and catering company, Tampa.

"In business there are only two things that count ... marketing and innovation."

Peter Drucker

Talking about Changes with Your Team

When you adopt a coaching role, you learn to be more in tune with each individual's needs and preferred style of communication. This can be critical to successfully communicating changes in the workplace to your team members.

While it may not seem cost-

effective or efficient to tailor communication to every individual, the coach's role is to work through change with each team member. Most critical to effectively presenting change and garnering team acceptance of change are: open channels of communication, a sense of trust, and a belief that the

changes are beneficial to the organization and the individual.

Recall a time when you were presented with change. What helped you accept the change? What made you want to reject the change? Use this when talking to your team about changes.



Are You Willing to Risk Being Successful?

Fear is a powerful emotion, one that can prevent us from realizing our full potential. While taking risks is difficult, it is a requirement of success.

Success alone may instill fear in some of us. But here are some tips for battling fears that may be holding your business back:

Remember the positives and benefits. Taking a risk always has two sides.

Use your fear. It can increase your alertness. Fear should act as a helpful warning, not a barrier.

Analyze the situation. Not all risks are worth taking. Ask yourself the following:

“What am I likely to gain? What are the realistic chances of success? What could I lose, either by going ahead or standing still?”

Get the facts. The more you know about a situation, the better you can evaluate the risks involved. Successful risk taking is informed by thorough market analysis, planning and research.

Study the worst-case scenario. Often you'll find that it's not as bad as first thought. Talk your ideas over with a trusted colleague, friend or business partner. They may be

able to give you a more realistic perspective.

Trust yourself. In most of the business risks you take, your own hard work, initiative and sheer determination will play a crucial role in the outcome.

Assessing the situation, weighing the possible benefits and losses and determining whether your caution is wise or woeful will help you make the right choice.

We can help you analyze the potential financial risks, investment required and market conditions for your business so you can bet on your success!

About Our Consulting Services

We are not your 'average' consulting firm. Far from it. We are members of the Principa Alliance, an international network of consulting professionals.

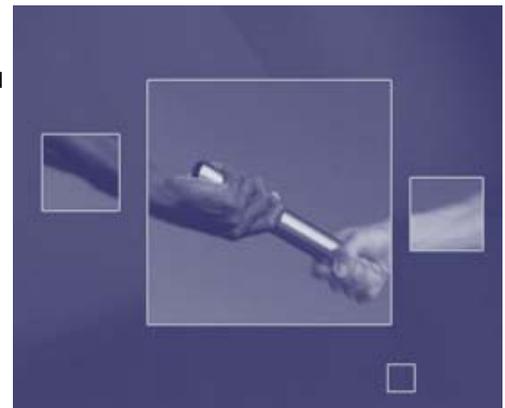
So when you work with us to improve your business you're gaining access to a global knowledgebase and a wealth of consulting experience that is much more powerful than any one firm could offer.

Combining our knowledge of your business, the personal relationship we share with our clients and the consulting tools,

support and networking power of the Principa Alliance, we can help you achieve more with your business than you imagined possible.

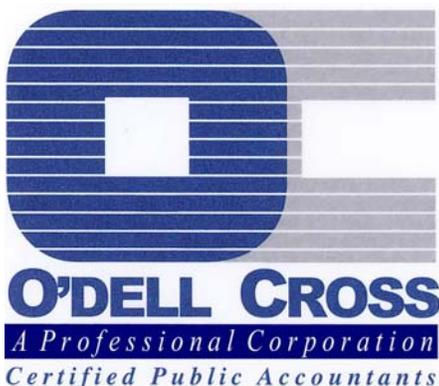
Our goal is to help you build a stronger, more profitable business and enjoy a higher quality of life and greater financial and personal freedom as a result.

We can and will do so much more for you than just 'keep the score'. Contact us today to discuss how we can help you build a business that delivers on its promise.



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