

Special points of interest:

- It's a team thing—building the spirit, fuelling success.
- Credit where credit's due—keep track of your account customers.
- Creating loyalty—it's a privilege doing business with you!

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Inspired performance

We all like to work toward some sort of goal, and our teams are no different.

Incentive schemes have been used by many companies to get their teams to produce better results. Some approaches you may want to use in encouraging your team's performance are:

- Set a target for the whole team. If the group reaches this target, then the individuals get rewarded. (Make sure that in setting the target you establish clear parameters for how the goal is to be accomplished—it's no good achieving high results in one area if other crucial business elements are sacrificed.)
- Each team member's slice-of-the-pie (so to speak) will be

determined by their individual performance. Determine a 'minimum performance level' for each team member in order to be eligible for a share in the team's incentives. This prevents those who aren't as willing to put in the work from riding on the backs of others.

- When deciding on incentives, remember it's not always money that motivates people. You may decide to incorporate other incentives such as free movie tickets, a night out for the whole team, or an afternoon off.
- Team members will be more motivated to perform better if they have a positive, happy, work environment where they feel valued. Small rewards for a job well done go down extremely well.

And try these other ways to make your team feel valued every day:

- Have a team suggestion-box in the lunch room/kitchen.
- Meet regularly to determine how you can help the team perform better.
- Conduct regular training sessions.
- Have team photos up in the office to show your pride in them.
- Ask them to write articles for your customer newsletter.
- Send letters to your customers signed by your team members.

A team that works well together is a fantastic asset for any business. And your customers will really notice the difference.

Cut the red tape!

Sometimes the simplest task can take forever, as it goes from one person to the next for approvals, processing, lodgments and so on.

Some businesses have processes that allow team members to cut through the red tape, simply and effectively. It helps break down the "Us vs. Them" mentality too.

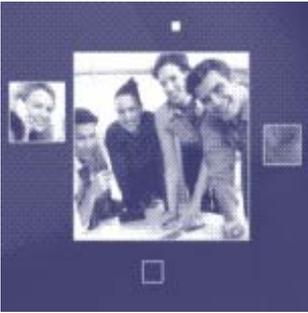
Here's a sample:

- Conduct reverse reviews: whoever is evaluated gets to evaluate those above them as well.
- Call everyone by their first name.
- Call people associates, partners, managers or team

members as opposed to 'workers' or 'staff'.

- Take a deep breath... and throw out the old organization chart!

Cut the red tape once and for all and you can make it easier for everyone to get done what they need to do.



*Whatever you can
do or dream you
can, begin it.
Boldness has
genius, power and
magic in it.
Goethe*

Know thy customer

Put yourselves in the shoes of your customers for just a moment...

Would you be delighted with the service that you were receiving? I hear a resounding YES! and that's wonderful. But is there room for improvement? We'd all have to answer YES! to that one as well.

Thinking that there is no way you can improve your services to your customers can be very limiting—it doesn't allow you the scope grow and improve if you want to.

Once you've defined who your customers are, the whole

business needs to become involved in the never-ending job of understanding them. And smart businesses understand their customers as well as, indeed even better than, they do themselves.

Challenge yourself constantly with these 4 questions:

1. What are our customers' needs and expectations, and which of these needs and expectations matter the most to them?
2. How well are we meeting these needs and expectations?
3. How well are our competitors meeting them?
4. How can we go beyond the minimum of 'customer satisfaction' to truly delight them?

The most basic step is simple: ask them how well you're currently serving them. Give them a chance to tell you what they want, where you're lacking and where you're succeeding.

Conduct a customer survey and ask a third party to find out exactly what your clients want and what their perceptions are of you.

Businesses that do this consistently and act upon their findings reap massive benefits.

Building a great team

It takes more to create a team than designating members and giving them an assignment.

Successful teams are infused with an energy that draws them together into a cohesive unit and has everyone striving to reach a common goal. There are many ways to help instill this sense of energy in a team. For instance:

- Lead by example.
- Take team members from different levels and areas to lunch and ask what they would change in the business and how they'd change it.
- Communicate all information to all team members all of the time.
- Encourage team members to improve one process, procedure or aspect of their job every day (i.e. CANI—

Constant and Never-ending Improvement).

- Conduct your personal and professional life in a manner that will bring credit to you, your family, and your business at all times.
- Send a problem or challenge out to all team members and ask for their suggestions on how to solve it.
- Give your team permission to say "yes" to clients and the resources to do it.
- Break down barriers between departments.
- Encourage every team member to take risks, exercise initiative, deliver quality results, and never be afraid to make mistakes.
- Create a supportive environment that nurtures professional and personal growth.

- Do what you say you're going to do—and more!
- And finally, while you're building a great company—have fun!

The ultimate result from creating an energetic team environment is a business where the whole truly is more than the sum of its parts.

How a company deals with mistakes suggests how well it will bring out the best ideas and talents of its people, and how effectively it will respond to change. When your employees know that mistakes won't lead to retribution, it creates an atmosphere in which people are willing to come up with ideas and to suggest changes. This is very important to a company's long-term success.

**Bill Gates
Chairman and CEO
Microsoft Corporation**

Lowering the barriers to doing business

Have you ever dealt with a company that makes you feel like *they* are doing *you* a favour by taking your business? You may recognize having come up against some of these barriers yourself:

- Limited payment options available—not everyone carries ample cash.
- Distance to the premises for out-lying customers.

- Restrictive opening hours.
- Difficulty in contacting the business (cell phone/fax/ email/voice mail etc.).

Easy ways you can avoid these in your business—and create a delightful experience for your customers—are:

- Have easy payment systems, e.g. EFTPOS, credit cards, lay-by, payment plans.

- Opening hours that cater best for your customers, e.g. weekends, evenings.
- Toll free numbers for interstate and international callers.
- Mail order options available.

It's impossible to make it too easy for your customers to do business with you.



Adding real value

What does it mean for a business to have value that exceeds the talents of individual team members?

By improving the efficiency of your processes and the effectiveness of your team, you can add real long-term value to the way you do business.

Try these approaches in your business:

- Provide your team with the benefit of shared skills and

experiences—allow people to ask questions and share their experiences with one another. The next time someone is faced with an issue or challenge, they have that much more knowledge to draw on.

- Invest in shared tools, processes, templates, research and so on. This prevents every team member from having to 'reinvent the wheel'.
- Establish processes to produce well trained juniors.

- Achieve a high level of referrals and cross selling. Always be aware of what kind of value you can add to the services your customers are currently receiving from you.

- Establish a powerful brand name, so that marketing is easier. Think about how you want to position yourself within the marketplace and go about aligning yourself with that image.

*Set a challenge for your firm—
Put together a "nurturing" strategy for your "A Class" clients (and reap the rewards!)*

A cautionary tale...

From *It's your money... So get paid'*, Alan Williams et al, McGraw Hill, Sydney 2002.

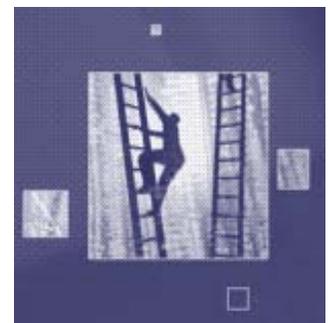
When an associate of ours went into business about 10 years ago, he wanted to establish some commercial credit trading accounts with materials suppliers. One supplier provided their application form but when asked if personal credit references were acceptable

(because the applicant had no trade history at that stage), he was told that this was not acceptable and he would have to continue on a cash basis.

He ordered \$2,000 worth of materials but was told that only \$500 of the material was in stock and the rest had been put on back order. He sent off a check for \$500 and the materials arrived by

return. The following week, the other \$1,500 of materials arrived within an invoice to be paid in 30 days. He was now in their system as an account customer and the application form was still in his top drawer!

Beware that your internal communication and authorization systems don't let you down.





Make your customers, and your team, want you!

That's right! It's your job to make them want you as much as it is to give them what they want. And it will be a whole lot easier if you know exactly who it is that you want.

If you haven't done so already, be sure to clearly define the type of customers you want to serve. Be as precise as you can in identifying them—

Good example: *We serve family and individual outdoor recreational enthusiasts of the greater Boston area. Our customers are likely to be in the middle to top income*

bracket, will likely shop the Internet and are drawn to the latest and greatest gadgets, equipment and outdoor sports.

Not so good example: *Our customers are campers.*

In a similar manner, identify the type of employees you want—

Good example: *We want to hire sports enthusiasts who have a passion and drive to climb mountains, kick their heels into the ice of the Aleutians and share their stories with other enthusiasts. Our employees are leaders in delivering*

customer service and are committed to having a laugh at work with a customer at least once a day.

Now that is a recruitment ad just waiting to hit the presses!

Not so good example: *Wanted: Sales help at Outdoors-R-Us.*

Like everything else, success requires communication. Be sure that everyone on your team knows who they are serving and why they were chosen to work for you.

Membership as a customer or an employee is a privilege they

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