

YARD & GARDEN

Dealer Success Guide

Dealer Success Guide
Best Practices
Roundtable at GIE+EXPO

Dealer Resource Pavilion
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 28,
from
8:00 to 9:30 a.m.

Can
STIHL
remain
dealer-only
for another
10 years?

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Volume 23
A Supplement to *Yard & Garden*

Continuity of Excellence

Dear Servicing Dealer,

It's been said, "In business, you're never quite done, you just keep polishing." As the number one selling brand of gasoline-powered handheld outdoor power equipment in America*, it is important to remember what helped us achieve our industry leading position and what we must continue doing in the future to stay there.



The announced succession from Hans Peter Stihl to his son Dr. Nikolas Stihl as the new chairman of the STIHL advisory board in July 2012 is a strong indication that the values, philosophy and vision of our company remain constant. In fact, as 2011 STIHL sales continue to outpace the industry at large, much of our concentration here in Virginia Beach is already focused on 2012. In short, you can expect us to continue the development, manufacture and distribution of new products through independent STIHL servicing dealers,

In addition, you can read about the consistent STIHL distribution strategy in this issue of *Dealer Success Guide*. As you develop your business to serve future customers, using all available resources to deliver the servicing dealer promise will be vital to your success.

At STIHL, our approach is simple and viable; ensure that our customers get a superior value for their investment through our servicing dealers. I'd like to thank STIHL dealers for your dedication, cooperation and teamwork that has helped us earn the number one selling brand position in America.* Enjoy the enclosed issue, and I wish you all good selling in the days ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fred Whyte". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fred J. Whyte
President
STIHL Inc.

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Dealer Success Guide Best Practices Roundtable at GIE+EXPO

A Dealer Success Guide Best Practices Roundtable will be held in the Dealer Resource Pavilion **FRIDAY, OCTOBER 28, from 8:00 to 9:30 a.m.** It will be facilitated by *Yard & Garden* magazine and sponsored by Gravely and STIHL Inc.

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10-year Run to No.

The very dealers STIHL Inc. has supported for nearly 40 years have helped make STIHL the top handheld outdoor power equipment (OPE) brand in America.* Now the question is: Can dealers keep them there?

Since reaffirming its “servicing dealer only” distribution model roughly a decade ago, STIHL Inc. has doubled in size, amassed a network of 8,000-plus U.S. independent servicing dealers, and is now recognized as the largest-selling handheld OPE brand in America.*

Two of the key architects behind the servicing dealer-only business model in the U.S.—president Fred Whyte and vice president of sales and marketing Peter Burton—share some thoughts on how they’ve done it, and how they’ll continue doing it despite the fact that the economic outlook is filled with uncertainty, population growth is slowing, consumer buying habits are changing, and the total number of available dealers continues to shrink.

Peter Burton and Fred Whyte of STIHL Inc., and Gregg Wartgow of Yard & Garden and greenindustrypros.com.





Q: In the 2000-2002 time-frame, when many of the other big names in the outdoor power equipment industry had concluded that venues such as Home Depot and Lowe's would be essential to capturing consumer sales, what gave STIHL the courage to do the opposite?

FW: Both Peter and I had been in the industry a long time. We saw what happened to some other companies, namely Homelite and McCulloch in the handheld segments. Combined, they probably had 80% of the chain saw market at one time. But when they went into the mass channel, they cheapened their product to accommodate a mass market. As a consequence, their entire brands were eroded. People thought they were buying the same high-quality product that existed years ago, but they weren't.

We recognized that fact and decided that STIHL couldn't try to be all things to all people. We've been very successful in the dealer channel. Things maybe go a bit slower and a

little more deliberately, but we've been successful. I can honestly say that we have never seriously considered going the way of the mass channel.

PB: You have to remember that this is not a new philosophy. All we've done for the past 10 years is to stay the course we set nearly 40 years ago. We were profitable and growing our position in the marketplace. We knew that if we could remain in the position we were in, maintaining credibility with dealers and helping them grow both professionally and personally, we had all the faith in the world that we could continue growing.

Q: In the mid-2000s, just a few years after STIHL's bold "Why?" campaign announced where you can't buy STIHL products and promoted independent servicing dealers, we began to see the emergence of the "prosumer" market. As a result, have consumer lawn and garden sales shifted back to the dealer channel at all?

FW: That's hard to measure. I can say that a very large percentage of

carburetor. Furthermore, it doesn't matter whose product you bought, eventually it's going to require service. This is where dealers continue to have the advantage.

PB: Yes, there is a large market of very price-sensitive shoppers. But there's also a large market of consumers who want something better than they've owned before. The bitterness of poor quality remains long after the sweetness of low price.

Q: Would you point to the "Why" campaign as the "aha moment" where consumers started to draw a distinction between dealer-sold product and big box-sold product?

PB: That was just the tip of the iceberg. Our investment, for example, in dealership merchandising systems was tremendous. We needed consistency across dealerships, and it needed to be retail-friendly.

But the "Why" campaign was definitely important. We had research that said 60% of consumers thought we were in Home Depot and Lowe's. That was something we had to correct. The "Why" campaign also told our dealers that we weren't going

"We instill the principle here at STIHL that our dealers are still independent businesspeople who vote with their wallets. So we are careful to guard against this arrogance that can tend to seep in." Fred Whyte

our consumer end-users are second-time buyers. They bought on price the first time. But they weren't shown how to load the trimmer line, sharpen the chain or adjust the

into the mass channel. There are always rumors, but this helped put some of these concerns to rest.

The iCademy online dealer training program has been another important

investment. We would need an army to educate all of our dealers, whether that education was of a technical nature or simply on the features and benefits of our products. We have one person, John Keeler (national training manager for STIHL Inc.), who has done an outstanding job with this program.

Also with respect to advertising, our marketing advantage co-op program, which allowed area dealers to take out full-color, full-page ads in local newspapers, was very effective in building awareness among consumers. This is a big reason why we have dealers selling a lot of equipment to consumers, dealers who would have never thought about the consumer market 10 years ago.

FW: Another thing the marketing advantage program did was make consumers aware that STIHL products were available at a wide range of price points. I had friends and

also did a lot to change the way dealers viewed each other. It took some time, but they eventually realized that the other dealer across town was a competitor, yes, but a competitor on a like basis; he offered service and had technicians, stocked parts and so on. The real competitor is the big box. Dealers are realizing that to gaining market share from the box stores is the best way forward.

Q: Mass retailers such as Sears and Home Depot are now marketing commercial-grade zero-turn riding mowers. Are dealers going to have another fight on their hands when it comes to public perception, i.e. “you don’t have to go to a dealer if you want a more durable, higher-end piece of equipment”?

“The bitterness of poor quality remains long after the sweetness of low price.” Peter Burton

neighbors who would apologetically tell me they bought a new chain saw, but they didn’t buy one of ours. “I just didn’t need one that good,” was often the explanation. So I’d ask: “How much did you pay for it?” Their response: “\$149.” My response: “Well, we have saws that start at \$179. Wouldn’t you have rather paid another \$30 to get a STIHL?” The marketing advantage program did a lot to correct this false perception that our products are too high-priced for the average consumer.

The marketing advantage program

PB: I can only speak from STIHL’s perspective in the handheld arena. The dealer has become more relevant in the buying consideration of the consumer over the past 10 years. The dealer is the expert. In the past, the decision was often price-driven. That’s still the case in a lot of circumstances, but not as much. And the desire to get the best value for the money has heightened with the tough economic times we’ve seen the past few years.

Q: There are not as many dealers today as there were 20 or even 10 years ago. If the number of dealers continues to shrink, is this going to present a problem for STIHL?

FW: What’s interesting is that we’ve gone against that grain so far. Our dealer count has actually been increasing every year. We have more dealers than we did 10 years ago.

Q: What role have hardware stores played in your ability to increase your dealer base?

PB: More and more hardware stores are seeing the value in putting in a service counter. We will not do business with them unless they do. Hardware store owners are very smart businesspeople; they have to be to survive in that business. They, too, want premium lines which the box stores don’t have. And they are independently owned and operated.

We’ve also found that the typical hardware customer is different from the typical OPE dealer customer. And hardware stores also provide access to our products and accessories when the majority of OPE dealers are not open on the weekends.

FW: Keep in mind that our product does not appear in hardware store franchise catalogs, like ACE Hardware or Do It Best Hardware. Each store is set up with its own account, just like a dealer is. It’s then up to the individual store to sell and service STIHL product or not. Individual hardware stores are treated just like OPE dealers and conduct business like those dealers.



Q: What role has your marketing relationship with John Deere played in your ability to add dealers and grow sales?

FW: Clearly, our affiliation with John Deere has had something to do with it. And frankly, this relationship in general has exceeded our expectations. But sales is only one element. The culture of the two companies has also been a nice blend. The cooperation level of their senior management team has been stellar. The entire organization is a class act.

Deere has also told us that they've been surprised by the success they've enjoyed. Many Deere dealers tell us they've sold more STIHL product in a month than they ever sold of John Deere handheld in years.

PB: Remember, we've always had some John Deere dealers selling STIHL product. The effort that was launched in 2008, following Deere's decision to exit the handheld market, just helped accelerate things.

Q: Did you experience a lot of blowback from existing STIHL dealers when the alliance with John Deere was rolled out?

FW: We had some instances where dealers were naturally upset. To the best of my recollection, we lost two dealers nationally. What's interesting is that for many of the dealers who were initially upset, we said, "Let's just wait a year and see what happens." What happened in most instances was that everybody grew; both the existing STIHL dealer and the John Deere dealer now selling STIHL.

PB: John Deere customers tend to be very loyal to the John Deere brand, so STIHL is able to capitalize on that loyalty and gain new customers by being in these dealerships.

FW: Once you take the emotion out of it, step back and look at things from a business perspective, one's perspective will often change. I believe that time has vindicated the decision we made.

Q: When we launched the *Dealer Success Guide* more than 10 years ago, the average dealer needed help in the discipline of business management. STIHL took steps to help dealers improve by launching initiatives such as the Retail Readiness Program. Going forward, how is STIHL going to continue helping its dealers to compete, profit and prosper?

PB: We will continue to offer assistance to our dealers to help them market and manage their businesses. There are still those who need help in these areas, including new dealers who've never been in this business.

That said, today's typical STIHL dealer is a much stronger business manager than he was 10 years ago. Plus, you now have second- and third-generation owners who are raising the bar even higher.

FW: Some big companies, once they become No. 1, have a bad habit of becoming arrogant. We instill the principle here at STIHL that our dealers are still independent businesspeople who vote with their wallets. So we are careful to guard against this arrogance that can tend to seep in. We want to remain dealer-centric and customer-friendly, and not break our arms patting ourselves on the back.

**EDITOR'S NOTE: STIHL's status of "Number one selling brand" is based on syndicated Irwin Broh Research (commercial landscapers) as well as independent consumer research of 2010 U.S. sales and market share data for the gasoline-powered handheld outdoor power equipment category combined sales to consumers and commercial landscapers. ■*

EXPANDING

with Products and People



Seeing promise in the industry and setting yourself up for a successful dealer expansion

While the industry awaits the lift of the recession, some dealers are passively standing by as their businesses are forced to close their doors. Other dealers are seeing the promise and opportunity this affords them as nearby territories become available.

Dealers expanding in the current market are embracing the opportu-

nity and setting themselves up for success by carefully choosing product lines and building a team geared toward accomplishments.

Seeing promise

There is a difference between seeing things through rose-colored glasses and searching for the positive when all others see negatives.

While many dealers have their guards up and are taking few risks, some see the promise the industry still holds for a driven individual looking to expand and excel.

Making and keeping goals to grow your business can set you on the path to expansion—provided you don't let the fears of the market stop you. Dan Weingartz, a Michigan-

G



Dale Magie and the team at Moe's celebrate the grand opening.



based dealer, opened his fifth store this year. He saw an opportunity and didn't let the economy scare him from taking a chance.

"We felt like we were operationally ready to take on another location and that the market that we were going to has a lot of potential for growth," says Weingartz. "The other reason is that we have everything in-

vested in this business, and regardless of the economic conditions we need to be growing."

As some dealers close their doors, it creates even more opportunity for other dealers to pick up not only the territories left behind, but the customers seeking service.

Dale Magie of Westchester Lawn & Garden in Liberty Township, OH, took over a newly built ACE Hardware that failed to thrive. Under the name MOE's, the ACE Hardware will sell and service equipment for the consumer market while Magie's other location will focus on servicing contractors.

"We are always striving to provide the best service," says Magie. "We know there are fewer independent outdoor power equipment dealers and we think there is definitely an opportunity. We want to try to grow our business to be of value. We hope that by having a bigger footprint we will be able to offer more things to more people and be more prominent in the marketplace."

Customers are drawn to the service provided by dealers as they require

more for their money. A quality product and the service to help it last is what consumers are looking for—and are finding at their independent dealers.

"As dealers, we've always felt that if people only knew of the service and value that they can get at an independent dealer, they would never go to a box store," says Weingartz. "It seems that as pocketbooks tightened up, consumers spend a little extra time researching options. We've seen some sentiment coming back of people wanting to spend locally rather than having their dollars going out of state. Combine those factors with the further maturing of the landscape and lawn maintenance industry, and I think that the outlook for dealers is relatively bright."

Magie shares those sentiments and thinks being proactive and positive means being competitive, saying: "I've always been an optimistic person and I always try to remain proactive in order to stay ahead of the curve."

Choosing products

With a bright outlook on the market and the desire to grow business through expansion, a plan for implementing growth is essential. Carefully considering which of your product lines to carry over is a good start.

"Our goal was to take a similar selection of product," says Magie. "We took our strongest and biggest brands to the second location. We thought it would make it easier to educate that team of people to understand and best sell our most profitable lines. By not taking the less in-demand brands, we are able to keep a smaller inventory."

In choosing your product lines, you may have to follow manufacturer limitations regarding territory reach, like Weingartz did. However, limited

MOE's will sell and service equipment for the consumer market while Magie's other location will focus on servicing contractors.



The sales counter at the Weingartz Ann Arbor, Mi, location.

lines doesn't have to mean limited growth.

"We offer the same product categories and services, but, unfortunately, the brands vary from store to store," explains Weingartz. "Our model is to have a wide selection of products and brands for the customer to choose from. Some manufacturers don't share that model, so as we've opened new locations our brand mix has changed."

As the business continues to grow and open new locations, Weingartz is trying to form a select group of brands with which they can build on relationships. His focus is on working with brands that want to help his dealership grow—whatever brand that may be.

"That doesn't mean that we never plan on changing the mix in our existing locations, just that we want to have brands that are committed to growing *with us*," says Weingartz.

Carrying and maintaining a parts inventory between locations is an easy task with the help of a business management system. Being able to check the inventory at other locations with a simple mouse click is invaluable. The computer systems are tied together so we can see each other's inventory at both locations," says Magie. "We think that will help

in parts sales volume long term."

The right people

In pushing products and managing the inventory, it's all about choosing the right people for the job. While some staff from the original location can often be transferred over to see things through—Magie moved an employee of three years over to be an assistant manager at the new location—new hires with the right background can add to the overall commitment to succeed.

In taking over the ACE Hardware, Magie had access to a few of the former employees. "The people from ACE gave us candidates to consider, and then we solicited people we knew were looking for a career change or new opportunity," says Magie. "We hired a girl as a second assistant manager so we would have someone who knew the ACE side of the business. She also had some people she knew that would fit well in the environment."

Magie hired the store manager, a gentleman from the grocery business who is familiar with fast inventory turns, and trusted him to hire additional staff with the help of two assistant managers. By trusting them to that task, he feels they have built a staff of employees strongly vested

in the business' success.

"Allowing them to have a say in who is hired makes all of us better about who we are and what we do," explains Magie. "They take more ownership in their work."

Continuously assessing the staff and management structure can improve customer service and the business' success. It is important to find the people and organizational structure that works best for your business.

"This is an area that is constantly being evaluated," says Weingartz. "We've gone from each location operating like its own business with all of the management being at the store to centralizing a whole lot of the management to where we are now."

All day-to-day decisions and managerial execution for Weingartz is done at the store level with an overall centralized strategy. "I think that as we continue to grow, this will be an area that continues to evolve to give us greater focus on certain aspects of the business," says Weingartz, who is always focused on growth and opportunity. "We feel like the one way to guarantee our failure is to stop being aggressive and let opportunities for growth pass us by." ■

7 Questions When Planning Growth

There is a lot of attention directed at small businesses this year. President Obama talked about the need to help and support small businesses in his State of the Union address. And one outcome was the launch of Startup America. Also, states are talking about easing regulations and the tax burden on small businesses in their quest to reduce unemployment.

This is all good news. However, it is not a good strategy to hope that the federal and/or state governments will pass the right legislation and write regulations to help you succeed.

Furthermore, be wary of generalizations about how the economy is doing, and who is and isn't doing well. It's distracting and oftentimes filled with conflicting information.

Yes, we'll admit that the economy is showing signs of recovery, but the real question is whether it's showing signs of recovery for you and your business. To answer this question you need to stop thinking like a small-business owner and start thinking that you are running a multi million-dollar enterprise.

Here are seven questions to think about and respond to when planning for business growth.

- 1.** Do you have a strategic vision that outlines your business direction for the next year or two? And if you have employees, do they know it?
- 2.** What is your stated mission (or purpose) statement? How is it communicated to your employees, and how does it help drive business decisions?
- 3.** Do you have stated, written and practiced company values to align how you and your employees work together and serve your customers?
- 4.** Do you have a branding strategy that promotes how you want to be seen by prospects and clients, and articulates your competitive advantage or differentiation from your competitors?
- 5.** Do you have standard monthly financial reports to track the financial health of your business and to help drive your decisions?
- 6.** Do you have outstanding customer service? If you can't answer based on your customer's feedback, loyalty, references and testimonials, your answer is "not yet".
- 7.** Do you have an exit strategy for your business? Every business needs to have a sense of what the end game will look like. It drives growth and helps focus business decisions.

Visit visabusinessnetwork.com for other great small business marketing and management tips such as these.

What to Look For in an Assistant Manager

Finding an assistant manager with the right skills, qualities and experience can help your business to flourish.

Great companies are populated by great employees. While a top general manager is necessary, it's often not sufficient for the genuine long-term success of any company. Businesses that genuinely succeed and flourish over the long run have owners or general managers who possess the vision, wisdom and courage to identify, attract, hire and mentor great assistant managers.

By securing and mentoring the right assistant managers, you will have significantly more time to do what someone in your position should be doing. With more time for strategic thinking and developing multi-year business plans, your business will run more efficiently and profitably.

Following are the attributes that savvy general managers look for when they hire their key assistants.

Complementary skills – Good assistants are typically not clones of their general manager, but rather bring new and different talents to the managerial mix. For example, a “low-tech” general manager would be particularly well-served to hire someone who really understands the many “high-tech” tools that are available and applicable to the specific business needs of the company.

Practical experience – While in no way diminishing the fundamental importance of a formal, industry-specific

education, good assistants also need relevant hands-on experience before they are truly ready to function effectively. Ideally, this practical experience can and should be garnered in a variety of positions within the company or another company in the same industry.

Loyalty – Good assistants in any profession must be totally loyal to their boss. Anything less is simply unacceptable. “Office politics” might make for a good television sitcom, but they make for a bad assistant manager. There is more than a modicum of truth in the old saying, “When the boss looks good, everyone looks good.” Effective assistant managers fully trust in the experience and knowledge of their bosses, and, in doing so, earn over time the complementary respect and admiration of their bosses.

Good work ethic – The successful assistant manager is someone who is willing and able to put in the necessary time it takes to help make the business a success. Nine-to-fivers need not apply. The importance of hard-working assistants cannot be overemphasized.

Desire to be a general manager someday – Today's assistant manager is potentially tomorrow's general manager. Someone who is content just to be an assistant manager without fervently aspiring to become a general manager someday is,

generally speaking, not someone who most general managers would want on their management team. (There are always exceptions, of course.)

Passion and enthusiasm for the industry – Successful assistant managers are those people who genuinely love their work and the particular industry they are in.

A willingness to be creative – The truly successful assistant manager is someone who is willing to think outside the proverbial box. Better yet, he or she doesn't think about boxes at all. A common shortcoming of newer assistant managers is that they are, on occasion, too rules-oriented and/or too rigid. Industry-specific sense comes to most assistant managers over time, especially when they are working for a mature, supportive and nurturing general manager.

An interesting person – Finally, truly successful assistant managers are not one-dimensional. They have creative, fulfilling personal lives and a myriad of interests and activities independent of their work. ■

About the Author

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Making TIME for TIME Management

Effective time management at home and in the dealership can improve both work and home environments while increasing productivity.

As a result of the recent economic collapse, there are fewer people doing more work. Many dealership owners are overwhelmed by the sheer volume of things they and their staff need to do. Learning how to manage your time carefully, and teaching your employees to do the same, can create a better environment for everyone at home and in the dealership.

While there are a lot of good habits that you can develop to better manage your time, it's best to pick a few to get started. Master those and then move on to another group. Start with these simple ideas to make your life a little easier. Remember, they are simple ideas, not necessarily easy. They will require self-discipline just as developing any good habit does.

1. Develop a set of goals and write them down. Consider short-term goals and long-term goals. Consider establishing goals that will help you balance these eight important areas of your life: professional, social, spiritual, financial, recreational, family, intellectual and physical. You should always be thinking in terms of life balance. Encourage your employees to do the same and ask them to share their professional goals with you and work on a plan for achieving them together.

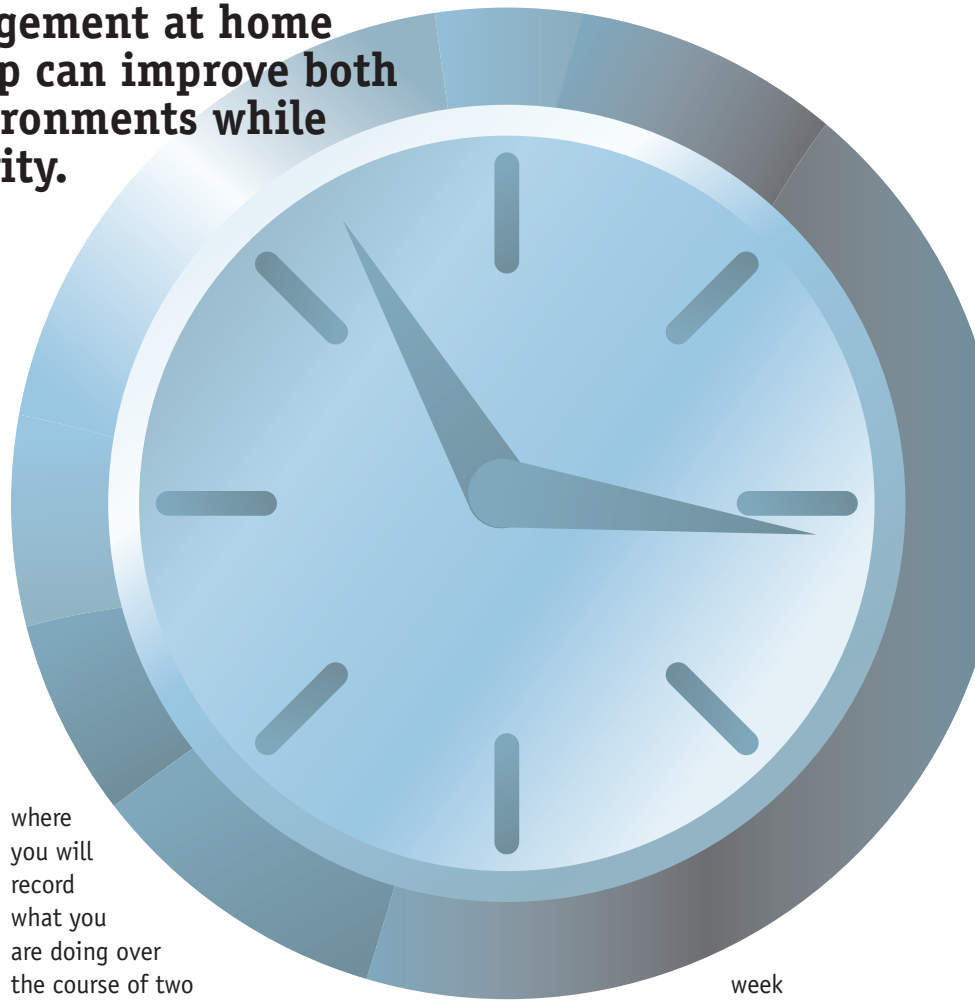
2. Analyze where you spend your time now. Develop a simple time log

where you will record what you are doing over the course of two weeks. You can use the same categories from step one if you like or you can create some others. The important thing is to get an accurate picture of how you spend your time now. Where you spend your time is a direct reflection of your priorities. Are you spending your time on the things that will help you achieve your goals?

3. Plan and schedule your day in writing. What is the difference? Planning is deciding, in advance, what you will do in a given day,

week or month.

Scheduling is determining when you will do it. Too many people begin their day or their week with no real idea of exactly *what* they want to accomplish and *when*. Writing it down has two great benefits. First, it creates a sense of urgency in your subconscious. Because you've written it down, you believe that you need to get it done. Second, it gives you a chance to pat yourself on the back when you cross it off the list. Are the things you are putting in your plan



and schedule contributing to reaching your goals? If so, great. If not, you may want to consider eliminating them from your list.

4. Make the most of slow time in your day and at the dealership.

There are at least two categories of slow time. The first is when you are not at your peak performance level. Maybe this occurs right after lunch or maybe you're just not a morning person. Schedule easier tasks for these times. These are good times to respond to emails, sort through your mail, and return phone calls. The really tough projects need to be scheduled when you are at your peak.

The second category of slow time includes waiting time. Waiting for a doctor's appointment or commuting

on the train are examples. Always have something to do; have trade journals to read, expense reports to complete or reports to review. Think of all the little, but important, things you can get done during this slow time. An interesting side benefit is that all of a sudden, it seems as if you never have to wait for a doctor or dentist. When you have something to do, they always seem to be running on time.

5. Create and maintain a controlled sense of urgency. Orchestra leaders, football quarterbacks and airline pilots all have it. They aren't in a hurry but they are committed to everyone starting and stopping at the right time. There is a sense of urgency that everyone must buy into.

Your employees will sense it and take their lead from you. You are someone who is in control of your time and in control of your life.

Doing more with less is not only possible, it's required in today's economy. As we learn to make better choices with our time, we achieve more control over our lives. We can better balance our work and play, relieving pressure and stress. ■

About the Author

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Small Steps, Huge Results

By Marti MacGibbon

By focusing on making progress rather than meeting perfection, you and your staff can find more satisfaction in the accomplishment of everyday tasks on the way to meeting larger goals.

Seeking perfection in your work and business is admirable. But while being a perfectionist is a good quality, it sometimes can get in the way of completing a task. Fearing mistakes can make problem solving challenging while preventing creativity.

Being confident in your work keeps you and your staff positive while working on projects—allowing you to remain focused, empowered and energized. By focusing on making progress rather than meeting perfection, you can find more satisfaction in the accomplishment of everyday tasks and goals.

Focusing on progress will highlight the fact that everyday tasks and goals are actually baby steps on the way to achievement of the highest standards and accomplishments. While focus-

ing on progress we learn to enjoy the journey as well as the destination.

Here are six progress-oriented strategies you can use that will free you and your staff from excessive self-criticism while increasing your creativity, satisfaction and confidence.

There is really no such thing as perfection in life. Know that perfection is not an oasis, but rather a mirage. You'll never arrive, because it simply isn't there. Once you realize that everything in this universe is flawed, you can relax and focus on improvement, or progress. You will find that as your confidence builds your freedom of thought increases. You now have lots of room to take on new and exciting challenges.

Practice intelligent goal setting. Determine your ultimate goal. Then set do-able, measurable goals at definite intervals along the journey that you know you can reach. At each of these intervals you can measure progress, adjust your sights, and make changes if necessary. It's easy to slip into a self-defeating pattern by setting too-difficult goals and standards. If you tell yourself you can only accept the utmost perfection in everything you do, you rob yourself of the joy that comes from celebrating each and every small accomplishment regardless of the result.

At the end of each day, take an inventory of anything and everything you have accomplished and celebrate it. Progress is not exclusively linear. Be sure to include an upbeat attitude, positive thought process, kind words and generous actions on your list of accomplishments. You most likely have gained character strengths, leadership skills, personal insights and communication skills during any given day, week or month at work. It's a good idea to begin recognizing all of your accomplishments and gaining greater resolve from them. You should en-

courage employees to do the same. As they see their character growing on the job, they will also take more ownership of their work.

There is real reward in enjoying the journey and accepting your work without judging it. Perfectionism often creates a cycle of procrastination. The standard is set so high that you find yourself overwhelmed and paralyzed from the beginning. Exercise your non-judgmental attitude toward others as well, regarding everything around you as a work in progress. Do not be too critical of yourself or the staff.

Give yourself permission to grow, and to embrace missteps. Some of the greatest discoveries were a result of blunders, or were learned by trial and error. If you stop making mistakes, you stop progressing and learning. Learn to value the process and you will find that your creativity, productivity and happiness will increase exponentially.

Never underplay your accomplishments. Banish negative talk downplaying your achievements or ruling them unimportant. Discounting the positive can lead to not enjoying the satisfaction in a job well-done. Instead, encourage yourself and others around you by recognizing the significance of smaller tasks as part of the ultimate goal. Gain enthusiasm and confidence in your work by visualizing yourself closer to the final result.

Try consistently to put these strategies into play, and you will be surprised as you exceed your own expectations. Constantly focus on progress and learn to have fun along the way, celebrating each baby step. ■

About the Author

Marti MacGibbon, CADC II, ACRPS, is a certified mental health professional, inspirational motivational speaker, veteran standup comic, author and member of the National Speakers Association. To find out more, visit nevergiveintofear.com or call (310) 210-4674.



Are You Ready for STIHL at GIE+EXPO?

GIE+EXPO



October 27-29, 2011
Kentucky Exposition Center
Louisville, KY

Sponsored in part by STIHL, the new **Dealer Resource Pavilion** will benefit dealers of all sizes with educational sessions providing step-by-step recommendations to help improve dealership operations and increase profitability!



Educational Sessions

Sessions will be led by Bob Clements, who has earned a reputation as the go-to consultant for building profitability in outdoor power equipment dealerships. The North American Equipment Dealers Association (NAEDA) will also lead sessions on marketing through social media and legal issues of running a dealership.

Service Tips

Clements and his team will provide tours of the service department demonstrating techniques on improving the performance of the technicians. From compensation programs, software, workbenches and lifts, attendees will learn tips on how to move a service department to the next level of performance.

Dealer Resource Roundtable Breakfast

Friday, October 28: 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. | \$25 per person

Sponsored by STIHL and Gravelly, hosted by the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute

Dealers have said time and again that one of GIE+EXPO's greatest benefits is the opportunity to learn about the best practices of their peers. Participate in small group discussions facilitated by industry professionals on a range of topics including: pumping up profitability in the service department, smart marketing with today's technology (social media and public relations), strategic business planning for success, and other important issues.



Yard & Garden Magazine Dealers in Excellence Awards

Sponsored by Gravelly, STIHL and GIE+EXPO, *Yard & Garden* magazine Dealers in Excellence Awards recognize dealers who are successfully growing their businesses with professionalism and innovation. The winner will be announced at GIE+EXPO and featured in the November/December issue of *Yard & Garden*. www.greenindustrypros.com.

Independent We Stand

STIHL is proud to be a major sponsor of Independent We Stand, an organization that promotes independently owned business and touts the benefits of "buying local." Since 1974, STIHL has "walked the walk" by selling its products exclusively through a network of independent servicing dealers. Visit IndependentWeStand.org or visit the STIHL booth (#5080) to join the movement!



› Visit Greenindustrypros.com/yg/einquiry and enter **200**

Check out all the latest STIHL products at Indoor Booth #5080 / Outdoor Booth 6236D



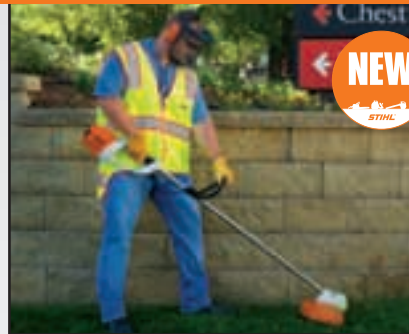
STIHL BGA 85 Handheld Blower

Commercial grade, 36-volt STIHL Lithium-Ion technology delivers excellent blowing performance with 102 mph at the nozzle. Great for emissions- and noise-restricted areas.



STIHL MSA 160 C-BQ Chain Saw

Combines 36-volt STIHL Lithium-Ion technology with the power and efficiency you'd expect from STIHL. Portable and lightweight with reduced vibrations and instant start-ups.



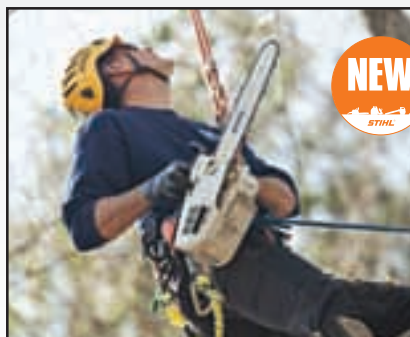
STIHL FSA 85 Grass Trimmer

Professional 36-volt STIHL Lithium-Ion model. No Gasoline. No Emissions. No Power Cord. And five times quieter than the STIHL gasoline-powered equivalent.



STIHL HS 56 C-E Hedge Trimmer

A great value for pros. Improved fuel efficiency for a longer run time; lighter weight to reduce operator fatigue; and 68% less exhaust emissions to lessen impact on the environment.*



STIHL MS 201 T Chain Saw

Arborist tree saw reduces exhaust emissions by 70%, improves fuel economy by 20% for longer run times between refueling, and allows 30% longer operation between filter maintenance.*



STIHL MS 201 C-E Chain Saw

With reduced emissions, increased fuel efficiency and improved ergonomics,* this rear-handled version of the MS 201 T also offers the Easy2Start™ starting system.

*As compared to previous models



STIHL Lumberjack Challenge Returns to GIE+EXPO

Thursday - Friday: 10:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m., Outdoor Demo Area

The STIHL Lumberjack Challenge, presented by DL Weatherhead's Timberworks, returns to GIE+EXPO! This entertaining and educational lumberjack show is a unique blend of sport, history and comedy that guarantees fun for all. Lumberjack athletes demonstrate a variety of skills as they compete in such disciplines as log rolling, speed climbing, the obstacle pole, hot saw, springboard and many others.

Join the STIHL Community!

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STIHL®

Making the Case for a 'Coordinator'

When putting someone in a leadership role at your dealership, the right language and the right person can get the job done and ultimately save on costs. Forward-thinking dealer Lynn Pesson suggests hiring a "coordinator" from within.

While many dealers rely on assistant management to support their business's day-to-day operations, Lynn Pesson Jr. of Southland Engine based in Lafayette, LA, has found success in assigning coordinators. Hiring the right people from within and communicating that their role as coordinator is to assist can help the business to run smoothly without the added overhead of more management.

Manager vs. coordinator

Within his dealership of four locations throughout Louisiana, Pesson has implemented three "coordinators" to help employees in all departments to do their jobs properly. Pesson believes that the title of "coordinator" will influence a more active role than that of a traditional "manager".

"We find that managers have a problem with a title that implies sitting behind a desk and pointing a finger," says Pesson. "In outdoor power we need more assisting with customers and employees. We feel that coordinators will work with employees by helping make decisions with sales, checking on parts and working with shop jobs. Acting as a team player earns them the respect that coordinators need in the employees' eyes."

For the coordinators, it's not simply opening up shop and policing staff, but rather working alongside employees to aid and assist. Together they troubleshoot and get the job done. "We felt we did not need someone to open up, turn the light on, turn the computers on and then open the doors for the customers to come in," explains Pesson.



"Hiring the right person for the job can make or break you. That's why we hire within."

Lynn Pesson

Pesson was looking for a more active role from his coordinators. There is also a sales coordinator on staff that travels between the stores checking on equipment and meeting with customers.

Hiring right and saving cost

When hiring someone to play the role of coordinator, it's vital to hire the right person. Trusting the wrong person to do the job can leave it done improperly and below the standards set forth.

"Hiring the right person for the job can make or break you. That's why we hire within," says Pesson. "We already know this person, and if they can or can't work as a team and communicate well with customers."

Pesson suggests looking for a team player that leads and is good at communicating with staff and customers. Finding the right well-

rounded individual to play the role of coordinator can in turn save the company additional overhead costs.

"We as dealers need to find ways to lower payroll, and we need more indians and fewer chiefs. We found in the past that the managers came to the owners for the hard call anyway, so if the owner is involved then why do you need a manager?," Pesson questions. "If employees are trained right, they can make the day-to-day calls without the manager, and a coordinator is always there for the assist." ■

Learn how you can transform your company into a lean, productive and passionate organization that can continue to be competitive for years to come by visiting GreenIndustryPros.com/working-smarter, or call 920-563-1614.

HOW TO Exceed Customer Expectations

Establishing a customer-accountable culture starts with strong leadership, and is followed by process discipline.

In today's highly competitive business climate, most successful companies are finding new and creative ways to win business. By building customer-centric business plans and increasing their commitment to company-wide execution, they've managed to succeed in a turbulent economy.

From equipment sales to service, successful dealers understand that the key to creating loyal customers is building a culture of accountability.

Organizations that foster accountability run like well-oiled machines, as people and processes work together to achieve more predictable and profitable results. Organizational accountability is not about catching employees doing something wrong, but rather high levels of employee satisfaction and enabling staff with the right resources and support from management.

The three keys to creating a culture of customer accountability are exceptional leaders, process discipline and workforce engagement.

Setting a direction through leadership

Establishing a customer-accountable culture starts with developing exceptional leaders. These leaders have a foundation of management expertise that can maximize the talents of their teams.

There are six job functions that are critical for exceptional leaders: communicating, planning, organizing, controlling, staffing and leading. Leaders who are effective at these functions consistently elevate the performance of their people.

Employee accountability

Process discipline drives accountability and ensures success, even in a turbulent economy.

Leaders who hold their teams accountable for exceeding customer expectations establish a systematic approach to monitoring progress and taking corrective action. This typically involves a regular, top-down examination of goals and tasks, enabled by a plan for overcoming obstacles to success.

But a consistent methodology is not enough if there is not a clear understanding of the importance of customers to accomplishing key business drivers. Identifying and planning to execute on these "vital few" is the key to energizing employee commitment to individual, departmental and corporate goals.

Employees make it happen

Leaders who support employee development and clearly communicate goals enable workforce engagement.

When an individual feels leadership is aligned with their efforts to serve customers, he or she tends to maintain his or her customer needs focus. An engaged employee views each customer experience as a "moment of truth"—an opportunity to deliver value and create another loyal customer.

Ultimately, workforce engagement enables commitment to excellence. When individuals understand how their dedication plays into the organization's broader goals, they see themselves as part of a team. They work to better themselves in order to ensure the whole team wins.

Customer-accountable cultures with exceptional leaders, process discipline and an engaged workforce have the unique ability to establish a competitive advantage. Companies with an uncompromising commitment to leadership, process and people are committed to their customers. Accountability makes customer loyalty possible. ■

About the Author

Walt Zeglinski is CEO and chief client advocate for Management Action Programs (MAP), a performance-improvement firm that helps organizations achieve profitable growth. MAP's performance and process solutions establish the disciplines that create a culture of accountability. For more information, visit mapconsulting.com or call (888) 834-3040.

5 Strategies for Implementing Social Media

As many companies have already found out, having a business presence in the social media communities can have a positive impact on the company's bottom line. Being able to connect with customers and prospects to build loyalty and community goes a long way in today's world, and social media marketing is changing the way customer relations take place.

One of the main questions businesses ask when implementing their social media strategy is, "Do we open this up to the company?" Some argue that allowing employees to access social media sites during the day will result in a productivity drain, and they encourage businesses to put website filters in place and to ban social media sites from the workplace.

However, Australian scientists at the University of Melbourne recently published an interesting study that found when employees take time to visit websites of personal interest, such as social media sites, it provides them a mental break and actually increases their ability to concentrate. The scientists documented a 9% increase in productivity among their subjects. As they explained, "The activity helps keep the mind fresh and helps put you in a better place when you come back to working on topic."

Additionally, realize that people don't work 100% of the time on what they're assigned to. They do other things, such as get a snack, go to restroom, talk to co-workers, surf the

web, etc. So they're giving themselves some distractions already. The question is, "Do you want to offer a suitable distraction, or let your employees choose their own distractions?" Clearly, giving your employees an acceptable distraction is the way to go, especially if doing so helps the company's bottom line.

With that said, you can't simply allow everyone to post to the company's social media sites arbitrarily. Rather, you need to establish rules of engagement. The following suggestions will help you do precisely that.

Put everything in writing

Detail what is and what is not allowed to happen on your social media sites. For example, you may want to specify such things as not sharing proprietary information, keeping all posts positive, not sharing client information, not divulging salary or benefit information, and not revealing any corporate intelligence.

What you allow or disallow is up to you and your specific company culture. For example, some companies decide that they will talk about their clients and customers (with the customer's permission), while others feel talking about customers invites competitors to try to steal them. The

main point for everyone to remember is that if you wouldn't post the information on your website, then don't post it on a social media site.

Make it clear in the document that if they break any of the rules outlined, their job is in jeopardy. Additionally, reveal whether HR is monitoring the emails, posts and tweets. Have each employee sign off on the social media rules and place a copy in their employee file.

Start small and progress in phases

Rather than let everyone jump in feet first, start by forming a social





media committee. Send out an invitation to your staff for people to join the committee (make sure they know it's optional). Those who come to that meeting will be the best people to represent you on the Internet.

Work with them to help clarify the rules of engagement and to help define your company's purpose for being on the social media sites. Then, allow these people to become social media advocates for your company. After a few weeks, have them report back to you on what's going well, what they've learned, and what's not working.

After you make policy or implementation adjustments based on their

feedback, open social media up to another group of people, and then another, until you have everyone on the sites who wants to be there. Don't force it on anyone. If someone doesn't want to tweet, blog or do Facebook posts, that's OK. Forcing people to be your social media voice will backfire and cause more harm than good.

Make it fun

To get people excited about social media, have an internal contest. Give everyone (or every department) a promo code for something happening in the company, such as a special sale or event. Then, let people market to their family, friends, customers and social networks.

Whichever person or department has the most promo codes redeemed gets a gift or prize. It could be a catered lunch or even a day off. The point is to engage the company meaningfully so you can see some bottom-line results.

Consider your IT and other staffing needs

When implementing social media access company-wide, your IT considerations are critical. You're opening your company outside your corporate firewall. Therefore, make sure you're protecting your company's assets and work with your IT team to make sure you're protected before opening those portals.

Additionally, while doing social media posts can be a rewarding part of people's day, eventually you will probably need a staff member to oversee your social media activities.

In fact, within the next two years, every company over \$2 million in revenue should plan to have that full-time position as part of their company structure. Big companies already have such dedicated positions in place; take your cue from them and start planning now.

Implement from the top down

Your company's top-level executives need to be willing to dive into the company's social media activities as well. If your employees see that the CEO is on Facebook and posting tweets on Twitter and blogging regularly, and that he or she is having fun doing it, your employees will embrace social media as well. No matter what the company size, structure or culture, the use of social media needs to work its way down.

The Way of the future

Contrary to what some people may think, social media is not a fad. It may morph and change over time, but it's certainly not going away. Those companies that embrace it now and get its employees involved will be the ones to reap the most rewards. So set up your social media guidelines and gradually phase social media into your operations. Not only will your employees' productivity increase, but so will your company's bottom line. ■

About the Author

Heather Lutze has spent the last 10 years as CEO of The Findability Group, a Search Engine Marketing firm that works with companies to attain maximum Internet exposure. For more information, visit www.FindabilityGroup.com.

Being *Social* Not Just in Social Media

Dealers should step beyond the popular social media and embrace the important face-to-face time with members in their local community to build the staying power of their business.

Many dealers and business owners are using social media to attract members of their local community to their business's doors. While this is often an effective strategy, it's important to also be an active, visible member of the community.

Supporting community causes

A company's Facebook page or group can acquire many "fans" and "likes", but what about the value of spending time out in the community supporting a business or cause? It is important that dealers realize that the members of their community are what allow their business to thrive.

"Our company is in a rural area surrounded by several small towns that support our sales efforts," says Carole Miller of Bertels Sales & Service in Dorsey, IL. "We make an attempt to support most functions which we are invited such as local benefits, schools and churches."

Donations of goods

Dealers can donate both their time and their money to community events and

causes. When some causes are not tax-deductible, other items can be considered for donation.

"Since some things are not tax-deductible and we do not want to contribute with cash, I have had some affordable items, such as pens, lunch bags, T-shirts and hats, printed with our company logo," says Miller. "These items promote our business by keeping our name out there and are purchased through our advertising budget."

Open house events

An open house is a great way for dealers to showcase their products and services, but is also an ideal opportunity to involve community. By inviting community members and not

just big-ticket customers to an open house, it shows that you appreciate their support.

"Our employees, and their families, are asked to help out with our annual open house. This event is a social, fun day that the employees, customers and the community enjoy," says Miller. "The employees do the cooking and the family members, including the children, take care of serving food, keeping the coolers filled with soda, emptying trash and helping with attendance prizes. We sincerely show how much we appreciate everything."

Miller relates that the employee participation helps to build relationships. Customers and community members enjoy knowing they are dealing with a business that has caring employees who care about the business and the quality of service it provides.

Building trusting relationships with members of the community and other business members is important to the staying power of your business. In supporting other local businesses and community events, your business then gains support from neighboring businesses and residents. ■



Carole Miller continuously looks for new ways she can reach out and connect with her community.

BUILDING TRUST

A relationship of trust between managers and employees leads to a healthier work environment that fosters better performance.



Any positive working relationship is based on trust. An environment of trust assumes that both parties will be safe, and it carries with it an implicit message that you have each other's best interests in mind. That is why employees can accept criticism and even anger from a boss they trust. The employees know deep down that the boss really means to help.

Once trust is lost, it is hard to recapture and can destroy a relationship. To have optimum working relationships, all parties must feel a sense of trust. So how do you develop trust between people in the workplace? Following are ways to be proactive and create an environment of trust apparent to all.

Limit lecturing

To ensure that employees will make good decisions, managers often begin to lecture. If you reflect on this, you will soon realize that lecturing implies that you do not have faith in the employees' decision-making abilities. This can result in their becoming defensive. In addition, the employees can lose faith in their own confidence to make decisions. If people do not have faith in themselves, then the manager's faith in them decreases even more and the lecturing begins again.

Even well-intentioned lectures convey the subtle, negative message that the employee has, or is expected to do, wrong. This often results in defensiveness and resistance. All people are sensitive about being told

what to do, and they often want to prove themselves in the workplace. Telling or lecturing staff robs workers of the satisfaction of using initiative. So rather than lecture employees, consider using reflective questions about what they think.

Listen to learn

Listening to learn and valuing people's feelings and ideas is what promotes the ability of managers to effectively communicate with and influence their staff. Listening to learn means not inserting your opinion and not judging what the person says while he or she is speaking.

For most managers, their first reaction is to evaluate the employee from their own point of view and then approve or disapprove of what the person says. This can shut down the employee's self-confidence, initiative and open communication. An easy strategy for replacing this tendency of listening autobiographically is to cultivate the habit of

listening to learn.

Listening is a skill that can be improved—and improvement starts by taking the position of a good listener. It's getting ready to hear what is about to be said and refraining from the all-too-common practice of hearing a few words and then jumping in with a response. You may have experienced the feeling that arose when someone finished your sentence before you had finished it yourself. The feeling is not a positive one. When a manager interrupts an employee who is attempting to communicate, it prompts a negative emotion. Interrupting is an indication that you don't care about hearing the other person's viewpoint as much as your own.

A manager who listens well acknowledges his or her employees' feelings and opinions. Being a better listener is the surest way to improve communication and build trust. It is important to let people know that you are willing to listen, even though it may not result in agreement. Listen before you talk, and



their skills.

Accept the fact that growth comes through struggle. Babying your employees hinders their professional development and implies that you don't have faith in them. Focus on treating your staff as responsible and empowered individual to increase

There isn't any empowerment more effective than self-empowerment. Continually ask yourself how to communicate in a positive way. People change more by building on their strengths and aptitudes than by working on their weaknesses. This does not mean that an area of weakness should not be worked on, but it does mean that a manager's emphasis should be on what the employee can do, rather than on what the employee cannot do.

Without trust in the workplace, communication and teamwork will erode. Additionally, morale will decrease while turnover will rise. However, by using these three strategies you can build your employees' trust in management, thereby making their workplace a healthy environment filled with innovation, creativity and ultimately higher profits for all. ■

A manager who listens well acknowledges his or her employees' feelings and opinions. Being a better listener is the surest way to improve communication and build trust.

when you feel a temptation to interrupt, ask yourself: Will I be more effective if I listen first?

Work smarter

Many people often say, "If I want something done right I have to do it myself." Yet effective managers know that delegation of tasks is essential for building trust in the workplace. When you hold onto tasks and don't delegate, you deprive your employees of an opportunity to advance

their chances of becoming just that.

Once the employee completes a task, the objective should be to focus on progress rather than on perfection. If the person's result does not meet your expectations, you can still find something positive to comment on while helping the employee understand what the initial expectations are. This is far more effective than comments that foster guilt or a sense of failure. A positive approach prompts incentive for the next task.

About the Author

Dr. Marvin Marshall is an educator, writer, and lecturer, known for his programs on discipline and learning. More information is available at marvinmarshall.com.

HOW TO Improve Team Morale

Adjusting the perspectives of your employees goes a long way in improving morale and output.

Many times a person's perspective determines one's morale or attitude more so than any actual situation does. While issues like pay cuts and layoffs have a real impact, it is best to not let emotions tied to these issues cause a dip in morale.

To improve employee morale is to change the team's perspective versus looking for a golden answer. An organization can spend all of their time focusing on these changes and continue to experience negative emotions, or they can choose to change the perspective of their people.

Facing low morale head-on

When a leader is faced with low employee morale, their job is to hold their team members accountable by teaching them to be grateful even if they are not necessarily content. It is all about perspective.

It does not do any good to sympathize with employees when they are complaining about workload, removal of benefits and even pay cuts. In fact, the bad morale is created when leaders and workers start to sympathize with each other on the struggles or unfairness of the job. The intent of these leaders is to show compassion and empathy for their team members, and therefore hopefully help them turn around their morale. Instead, they end up confirming why the morale *should* be bad.

To improve morale, the leader must change the team members' perspective. It is an empathetic approach that says the feelings the person is experiencing are real, but may not be necessary, helpful or have a purpose. The leader's job is to give the team members hope and understanding, not sympathy.

Seeing opportunity in challenges

When a team complains about workload increase due to layoffs or people leaving the company, the leader should discuss how the individual now has the opportunity to step up even more than before. Leaders should challenge staff to own up to the job and see the opportunities. Express what it will take for them to see success in their position and let them decide if they are committed and willing.

Leaders need to take a look at their team and their situation and know they are the only ones who can change it. Poor morale is a result of the actions, or rather lack of actions, from the leader and the team. By taking action and embracing a positive attitude, the individuals win, the company wins, and everyone reaps the rewards.

Together as a team, you can truly change perspectives. Be grateful and move forward with a purpose, taking advantage of each opportunity. Deep down everybody truly wants to be happy. However, people are not happy because they are successful—they are successful because they are happy. ■

About the Author

Nathan Jamail is a motivational speaker, entrepreneur and corporate coach. To learn more, visit NathanJamail.com or call (972) 377-0030.



Making the Case for Paperless

An electronic document management system can save you thousands—paying for itself in less than a year.

Increasing business efficiency is the most compelling reason to invest money in a project. According to research from Cabinet NG, investing in an electronic-based document management system can not only help you increase efficiency, but also save thousands of dollars a year.

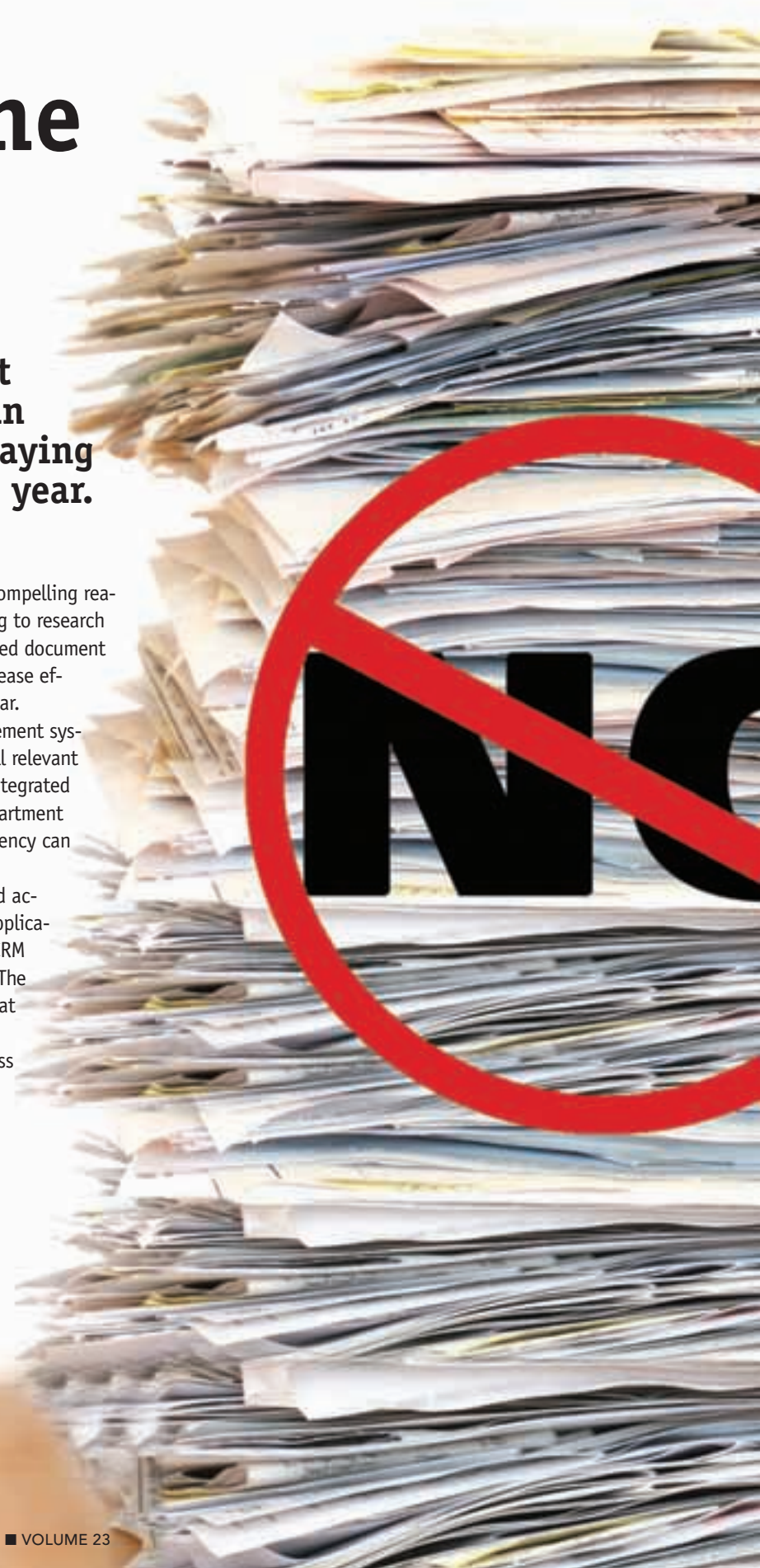
A comprehensive electronic document management system (EDMS) can provide a method for storing all relevant documents in your office. If the EDMS can be integrated into the point software solutions that each department uses, significant gains in productivity and efficiency can be gained.

For instance, the accounting department could access documents online from their accounting application. Sales could access documents from their CRM (customer relationship management) software. The goal of an EDMS should be the software glue that ties the different software packages together in such a manner that all departments in a business gain efficiencies.

What is a document management solution?

Simply put, a document management solution is a system that can replace not only the paper files and documents in an office, but enable the user to send an electronic document through the same steps a paper document or file would follow.

For instance, a service order has to make its way from the service counter to the technician in the shop and back again. A document management system must provide this same path. Along the way



it must also protect documents so that only the necessary people can view them.

An EDMS is a step up from the point solutions like spreadsheets and word processors as the entire office must be capable of using them. Therefore, an EDMS must be easy and straightforward to use—and ideally would integrate with other applications the office is already using with a minimum of effort.

Benefits of a document management solution

Documents are stored in an electronic format which is easily backed up and can be copied offsite relatively easily. Multiple copies of the documents can be made easily and cheaply. *A paper-based system requires copies of each piece of paper as they are generated. At 5 cents per page, this can become prohibitively expensive.*

Filing documents is

paper-based system can be impossible to find depending on how and when they were misfiled. Ultimately, they can cost you hundreds of dollars a month in lost productivity, missed billings and angry customers, etc.

Moving documents from one point in the workflow to another is simple. Determining who has a document or folder in workflow is available at all times. *Finding a paper folder somewhere in a workflow can be difficult at best, particularly if it's buried on someone's desk or workstation.*

Using electronic forms allows data to be pre-filled, eliminating many of those common human errors. *Filling out paper forms can be tedious and prone to human error.*

The cost of remaining paper-based

In addition to the benefits of going paperless listed above, there are other paper-based costs you should consider:

- How many people handle each document?
- How much time does it require to retrieve a paper document?
- A standard four-drawer filing cabinet requires at least 12 sq ft of office space, and each square foot

The goal of an EDMS should be the software glue that ties the different software packages together in such a manner that all departments in a business gain efficiencies.

relatively easy, particularly if the electronic document management system is integrated with other software packages your company uses. *Filing paper documents requires a trip to the filing cabinet. This can cost you nearly \$100 or more per month in lost productivity depending on the size of your company.*

Misfiled documents can be easily found using the search capabilities built into the electronic document management system. *Misfiled documents in a*

costs about \$15 per year. How many cabinets do you have? If you have six, they're costing you more than \$1,000 a year.

- Do you rent an offsite storage facility? What is the monthly cost?
- How much do you spend on filing supplies per month?

By now it should be evident that an EDMS can be a very valuable tool for small to mid-size businesses. When you add up all of the productivity gains and other incidental cost savings, a solid EDMS can normally pay for itself in less than a year, oftentimes in eight months depending on the size of your operation.

Article based on a White Paper written by Andrew Bailey, President of Cabinet NG. Download it free of charge at greenindustrypros.com.

Parts PER

For a growing outdoor power equipment dealership, the parts department inventory is ever increasing. Using smart storage and management keeps the space required to house the inventory at a minimum, and customer satisfaction at a maximum.

Outdoor equipment dealerships are moving with the times. Generally thought of as a little behind automobile dealerships in modernizing their facilities, many are now actively looking at emulating auto dealerships in terms of maximizing revenue from parts and service departments.

At the same time, industry trends are creating fewer and larger dealers. Bigger dealerships are getting bigger and smaller dealerships are becoming less common. Many outdoor power equipment dealerships are finding that maximizing space and increasing volume are critical to growth and improved profitability.

For Ahearn Equipment Inc., replacing 300 existing storage shelves with 14 new high-density drawer storage units allowed them to reduce their parts department footprint by 50%, while increasing the number of parts stored. The system helped them decrease average transaction times, better manage inventory and expand sales, all without having to incur the bricks and mortar expenses of an addition.

Expand without adding real estate

Ahearn Equipment, located in Spencer, MA, offers a broad product line, selling everything from push mowers and chainsaws to specialty \$150,000 excavators. Its customers

are about 60% homeowners and 40% contractors; the dealership is moving to adjust the mix to be 50-50.

Mirroring the industry trend of fewer, larger outdoor equipment dealerships, Ahearn has tripled in size and simply run out of space to stock the inventory they need to support the rapidly increasing number of lines they carry.

This was despite the fact that a new building was built only five years ago.



“We were in a bind and were seeking ways to expand our parts department to accommodate the larger equipment and larger parts we were bringing in,” says Jeremy Ahearn, general manager of the busy dealership, charged with making sure day-to-day dealership operations run smoothly in all departments and facilities. “With the high cost of going the bricks and mortar route, we needed another option.”

In addition to being cramped for

space, the existing storage system was extremely inefficient and unorganized. Thousands of parts were stored in more than 1,200 plastic bins (300 metal shelves, with four bins per shelf).

“We frequently were losing parts that would fall out of the bins or were of odd sizes and would not fit



well into the bins,” says Ahearn. The shelves were 36 inches wide, a foot deep and spaced about 12 inches apart vertically, leaving a tremendous amount of space between the top of the bin and the shelf above it.

In addition to overflowing bins and wasted space, the system left the parts vulnerable to a significant

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amount of dust. Though the facility was extremely clean, parts sitting in bins collect a lot of dust, so packaging is subject to fading.

Seeking to achieve a reduction in the square footage of the parts department, Ahearn also wanted to become much more efficient in finding parts and reducing lost-sale numbers due to missing parts.

"We had been plagued by the fact that a customer would come in, our inventory system would indicate that we had a particular part, but we couldn't find it when we went in the back to look," Ahearn explains. "It may have fallen out of one bin and ended up in a different one. We really wanted to eliminate this issue."

The freed-up space would also allow Ahearn to expand display and showroom space to accommodate their continually expanding wholegoods inventory, without adding new buildings.

Big dealer, small footprint

Ahearn worked with outdoor equipment industry consultant Bob Clements International, Inc. (BCI) to help them figure out a way to reduce their parts department footprint while still allowing them to expand the number of parts they could carry. BCI suggested installing a high-density storage system made by Lista International, a leader in the manufacture of modular drawer

storage systems. Lista is BCI's industry-approved supplier of service and repair shop and storage systems.

Fixed shelves spaced 10 to 15 inches apart contain a considerable amount of air. In fact, shelving 18 inches deep and 84 inches tall usually offers no more than 50% of its capacity, and sometimes as low as 30%. Three to five sections of shelving (about 9-15 linear feet) can usually be condensed down to a single cabinet measuring about 28 by 28 inches. Using the complete cubic storage capacity of each drawer allows the parts department to store the correct parts in the correct drawers.

Lista began by conducting an inventory of all the manufacturing lines and parts that Ahearn carries to identify how many drawers would be needed for the inventory carried, the best drawer sizes, and other storage needed for Ahearn's particular inventory.

Based on the inventory, Ahearn installed 14 cabinets (including two counter units), each 5 feet tall. Each of the cabinets has a variety of drawer heights. "This type of storage unit best suited us because we deal with a lot of different-size parts, the majority of which are smaller than a basketball," shares Ahearn.

Gains in space and efficiency

With multiple vendors and multiple part number codes, Ahearn needed a system that would enable them to place all the parts in the drawers using a consistent numbering system, so they could find parts more easily.

Ahearn also took advantage of Lista's drawer divider design to remove parts from their packaging and place the parts in drawers in a way that they can be easily found. "It's manageable and aesthetically pleasing," he explains. "The dividers make everything uniform. When we open a drawer, it is impressive to see 40 parts in divided compartments, and all labeled. Being able to remove parts from plastic bags offers a slight space savings and gives a real uniformity in parts storage."

The parts department has reduced its footprint by 50%. Plus the location of parts in drawer cabinets keeps the parts looking new and dust-free. It also enabled Ahearn to organize multiple manufacturers with similar parts together for easy cross referencing. When customers come in looking for parts, the parts clerk can open up the drawer that has all of that particular part from a variety of manufacturers stored together. They can select the correct one without having to rely on what can be a time-consuming parts lookup function.

Purchasing a high-density drawer storage system is a significant investment. As a result of the efficiencies achieved by the new cabinet storage system, Ahearn now plans on staffing one less person in its parts department, making the return on investment only about six months. ■

Article contributed by Lista International. For more information, visit listaintl.com.





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