

# Tips from the Top

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



THE ALTERNATIVE BOARD

*Change Perspective.  
Improve Business.  
Enjoy Life.*



Gary Brunson

Debra Rider



John Kurtze

Dick Wooden



Don Stohler

## Employee Procedures

When creating an employee handbook, one of the things we include is a worksheet after each section that allows our employees the opportunity to comment and make suggestions on how to make the procedure work better for them or make it more clear. Then, when we are ready to update the manual, we have a ready list of all the suggestions for improvement.

*Anthony Baldino, JPG Electric Main & Construction Corp., Ronkonkoma, NY*

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## Managing Sick Time

Every company should have a sick-time policy that is administered equitably, and employees should take sick time seriously. One of the important components of an overall sick time policy is to insist that employees actually talk to a manager when calling in sick. Voicemails, emails, text messages and leaving a message with a junior employee are not acceptable ways of communicating absence due to sickness. Insisting that employees call in and speak with a manager helps to reduce sick time abuse. Besides increasing respect for the sick time policy, this also contributes to operational continuity.

*Brian Gilligan, Utility Solutions Corp., Toronto, ON*

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## Sticky Core Message

You can help your employees prioritize and make decisions by having a simple core message for your business that acts as a pass/no-pass filter. As Dan and Chip Heath explain in "Made to Stick," when Southwest Airlines was confronted with the "do we serve a meal to our customers?" question, the answer was obvious when they viewed the question in light of their core message: THE low cost airline. Finding a "sticky" core message—one your employees can easily understand and remember—will help them make the right decisions for your business.

*Diego Prusky, InStyle Digital Marketing, St. Louis, MO*

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## Fun and Valuable Hosted Events

As our board has focused on increased marketing efforts this year, some of our

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members have turned to hosting events for both clients and prospects to generate brand awareness and lead generation. Several key points we have developed as a group include:

- Sponsored and hosted events should provide fun and value to attendees.
- Introduce clients to others in the company.
- Prepare your employees with a consistent message and stress that they are ambassadors of your brand.
- Teach employees to network with attendees effectively using the FORE method (family, occupation, recreation, education).
- Follow up with attendees post event. Include a personal message from employees they spoke with and incorporate details of the conversation.

Overall, events can increase customer satisfaction and strengthen customer relationships, while having the added benefit of increasing employee morale.

*Genelle Brakefield, Ekon Benefits, St. Louis, MO*

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## Enforcing Non-compete Agreements

We all know how difficult it can be to enforce a non-compete agreement if a former employee is potentially going to violate it. You can, however, take certain steps to discourage them. Have your lawyer send the former employee a letter with a copy of the signed non-compete agreement. The letter should remind the employee what is stated in the non-compete. This is very non-threatening, but makes a point with the person. Another option is to present or review the non-compete during the employee's exit interview or termination meeting. If you choose this route, ideally you will want your lawyer there to hand it to the employee.

*Tom Schmidt, Greenwood Advisors, Aurora, CO*

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## The Power of the Sliding Scale

Companies often ask questions like, "How should we price X?" or "How would you compensate this employee?" For some reason, business owners seem to feel they need a "fixed" solution when it comes to pricing, compensation and the like. However, establishing milestones (dates and performance levels), you can use a sliding scale (or a range) for pricing your products and services, commissions, partner agreements and for compensating your employees.

How powerful is a sliding scale? Of our eight board meeting topics today, we were able to solve three of them using the sliding scale/performance method.

*Diane Smith, Smith & Associates P.C., Lakewood, CO*

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## Quick Tips

### Offer More Options

When presenting your client with product or service options, consider competing with yourself. Present your client with your two standard products and create a

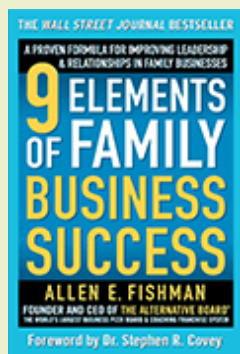
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third option of a product/feature set that is way outside their need or budget. Given two options, clients will usually choose the cheaper option. Given three options, clients are more likely to choose the middle-priced option, which may increase your revenue.

*James Brennan, VirtualCDO, Inc., Great River, NY*

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### Prospecting with Service

After working with a new client, I'll make two follow up calls that are service-related. The third call I make is a request for a referral. I point out that since so much of our efforts go toward service, we're not always focused on our marketing and would appreciate the compliment of a referral.

*Rick Duggan, Financial Liberty Group, Inc., Melville, NY*

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### Printers and Copiers Have Memories

Not only does your computer have a hard drive, but so does your printer! The memory in your printer saves everything you have ever printed, copied, faxed, or scanned. When the memory is full, the drive automatically erases the oldest information but keeps the rest. So, when selling, donating, or just getting rid of a printer, clear the hard drive just as you would with a computer to avoid private information becoming public.

*James Warner, QSkilled Staffing, Alto, MI*

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### ABOUT THE ALTERNATIVE BOARD®

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