

**PATRIOT BUSINESS COACHING  
CLARITY OF PURPOSE, SYNERGY OF GOALS**

## *The Interview Process is a Two-Way Street*

While marketing your company during a recession is just as important as doing so during good economic times, so is taking the correct approach to the interview process.

At no time is the interview process a one-way street. In other words, at no time should a candidate's time be considered less valuable than yours, especially if the candidates you seek are the best in the industry. Remember, the candidate is interviewing the company at the same time that company officials are interviewing the candidate.



### ***Making a connection***

A common mistake in a down economy is to assume that there's urgency on the part of the candidate, that they'll be grateful for whatever time you can give them. That might be true of those candidates who are unemployed. However, the true superstars—the candidates you're **really** seeking—are more than likely gainfully employed at the moment, no doubt because of the very skills that you covet.

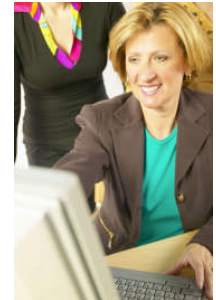
Remember that in times such as these, candidates (including superstars) assume a "hunker down" mentality.

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## *Providing Opportunities for Employee Engagement*

Employees who have a passion for what they do are practically self-engaging. In other words, they seek out reasons to stay engaged in their job and with the company. But what about those employees who aren't quite as passionate, for whatever reason? The fact of the matter is that you can lead them down the road to engagement just by providing *opportunities* for them to do so.

Many times, employees don't need a reason to become engaged. What they really need is the chance to become engaged. Below are five ways in which you can provide opportunities to do just that.



- **Recognize the accomplishments of employees and celebrate them** – Both parts of this initiative are important. By both recognizing *and* celebrating, you not only increase engagement and retention, you also build a greater sense of camaraderie among the members of your team.
- **Celebrate traditions within the organization** – This is another way in which to increase both engagement and camaraderie. This could be an annual awards dinner, or it might be something as simple as a summer picnic or Christmas party.
- **Initiate a mentoring program** – Once again, you're accomplishing two goals at the same time. With this initiative, you're facilitating a knowledge transfer between employees, in addition to bolstering engagement and retention.
- **Create a cross-training program** – Most employees want to sharpen their skill set and increase their abilities.

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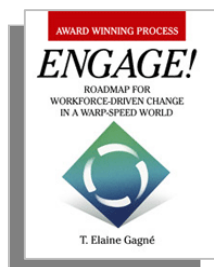
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*Leadership can be thought of as a capacity to define oneself to others in a way that clarifies and expands a vision of the future.*

~ Edwin H. Friedman



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**Patriot Business Coaching**

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They also want to know that they have room for advancement within the company. This will accomplish both objectives.

- **Involve employees in decisions (whenever possible)** – Of course, this might not be feasible in all situations. However, by involving them in the decision-making process, they'll feel more a part of the company.

Evaluate your company and the culture that it offers. Are you providing opportunities like the ones listed above? Are there areas in which you should improve or make a more concerted effort? By simply providing opportunities for your employees to become engaged, you might be surprised by how readily and easily they do so—with no further prompting from you.

If you have any questions about this article, or about how we can help you with your current performance, leadership, and/or hiring needs, please call us at 910.575.1286.



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That is, they become more adverse to risk, and this mentality most certainly applies to their employment situation and their career. That's why attention to the interview process is crucial to securing the talent of the very best employees.

When you interview a superstar candidate, you should strive to do more than just accurately assess their skill set and their potential for fitting into the company culture. You should also strive to **make a connection** with the candidate and build a sort of camaraderie or rapport with them. The reason? The candidate needs a *very good reason* to make the jump to a new company.

### ***Giving them a good reason***

As mentioned above, all candidates – including superstars – are avoiding risk at the moment. There's a mental block that exists, no matter how good the opportunity is or might seem to them. Candidates are looking for reasons **not** to make a move. That's why it's critical for companies seeking to stock their teams with the best talent available to give that talent a **good reason** for doing so.

Analyze your interview process. Are you marketing yourself to each person interviewed? Are you giving tours of your facility to those candidates who stand out from the rest? What reasons are you giving to superstar candidates to convince them to take advantage of your opportunity?

Your answers to these questions might just be the deciding factor in how prepared you are to take advantage of the good times that ultimately lie beyond today's challenging economic environment.

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## Understanding Small Business Marketing



Bob Stinson

### The Three Areas of Planning Focus

Over the last six years, we have had the opportunity to work with a wide range of small businesses located throughout the southeast. In most cases, our programming involved the development of a business plan. Of all the elements in the plan, the most important to the business owner or manager was marketing. They simply wanted to increase sales.

A recent study conducted by the Small Business Center at Brunswick Community College reinforced this conclusion in our minds. The study was a survey of over 100 small business entrepreneurs in the county and concluded that their two greatest needs for knowledge were in the areas finance and marketing. It should not be suggested that finance is easy, but it can be taught and there are many excellent accountants with a wealth of experience available for these entrepreneurs. But marketing is a more subjective subject. Marketing consultants are primarily geared to the field of advertising and promotion, both of which can put a major stress on the start-up budget.

A small business must start with the basics, have a marketing plan, learn to execute that plan and monitor results. In developing that plan, one should consider the three areas of planning focus; mass prospecting, network management, and customer loyalty. Let's define each area of focus and see how they vary based on the nature of the business.

**Mass Prospecting** is the method by which you turn suspects into prospects. Suspects could be anyone in the local population. Prospects are people in the local population who need your product or service, know your company, and can make a decision to make a purchase. Some of the

tools of mass prospecting are media advertising, trade shows, participation in community events, websites, and attending networking events such as BNI or chamber of commerce afterhours.

**Network Management** is not just the process of creating a network, but how you use that network to grow your business. Having a list of prospective names is not enough. Network management is how you organize yourself to continuously remind prospects that you are the type of people with whom they should do business. In addition to prospective customers, there are those who are a continuous source of new customer referrals. Reinforcement of their help in growing your business needs to be considered. The tools of network management include; contact management systems such as ACT, schedule reinforcement programs such as Send-out cards, newsletters, and special acknowledgements to key referral sources. All of these are effective and not expensive.

**Customer Loyalty** involves the method of developing a customer base that will purchase your product or service regularly and bring other customers to your business.

After your mass prospecting and networking, customers will come for an initial experience with your business. That experience can be negative, satisfactory or excellent. If it is negative, you will need to spend more time and money in finding new prospects to bring to your business to replace those which were chased away. If it is satisfactory, your business will be considered on-par with your competitors and will receive some portion of the customer's future purchases. But if the experience is excellent, the customer will tend to only purchase from you and will tell all his friends and neighbors.

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"Criticism, like rain, should be gentle enough to nourish a man's growth without destroying his roots."

~  
Frank A. Clark

Continued from page 3... **Marketing**

The development of a business with a loyal customer base is not as easy as learning to use a product or service as in the other two areas of focus. It does require a careful analysis of all points of connection between your company and the customer. Once completed, planning is required to make each contact point a positive emotional experience. Yes, a positive emotional experience, because there is some emotion positive or negative involved with all human interactions. A business coach can be very helpful with this process.

**The Areas of Focus** differ from business to business. If one thinks about the areas of focus as three balls that are used to play the small business marketing game, one might be the size of a baseball, the second the size of a basketball and third the size of a beach ball. Or, they may all be the same size.

Consider a retail business such as a supermarket. The two most important areas of focus are mass prospecting and customer loyalty. They must get a large number of customers into the store and provide them with an experience which makes them come back. Networking is of little use to a supermarket or the local gas stations. Retailing usual depends on advertising, promotion and a good shopping experience. You will not find too many retailers at BNI or the chamber afterhours.

Accountants, attorneys and other professionals have a different set of ball sizes. Their major areas of focus need to be networking and customer loyalty. Advertising in the yellow pages will make some suspects into prospects, but if you're looking for a good accountant or a good attorney your first instinct is to ask someone who you know and trust. When you find a professional who does a good job, you are very likely to give a referral to them. If you belong to a civic organization, you first look to those who you know in the profession and those who have exhibited outstanding personal characteristics within that organization.

Businesses range the spectrum from those with high emphasis on mass prospecting to those with the need for high emphasis on networking, but common to all is the need for high customer

loyalty. Those with high customer loyalty spend less time and money on attracting the kind of customers who provide greater profitability to the business. Those with lower customer loyalty spend excessively on advertising and promotion because they lack the loyal customers who will keep coming back and bringing with them new customers. Big companies with the resources to spend can afford those costs. Small companies cannot.

For more information on this subject email:

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## Sales Statistics

- **48% of sales people never follow up with a prospect**
- **25% of sales people make a second contact and stop**
- **12% of sales people only make three contacts and stop**
- **Only 10% of sales people make more than three contacts**
- **3% of sales are made on the first contact**
- **3% of sales are made on the second contact**
- **5% of sales are made on the third contact**
- **10% of sales are made on the fourth contact**
- **80% of sales are made on the fifth to twelfth contact**

*Let us help you get to  
the next level!*



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