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Do Your Business Practices Reflect Your Ethics?

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**Developing a
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THE LEADER'S CIRCLE

By Jessica Krznanic

Welcome to a new column geared specifically towards highlighting RIA members' expertise. One business-related question will be asked each month followed by answers from our specialized panel of "experts." This month examines how the values and business practices of organizations with diverse interests differ. Are a restorer's ethics that different from say an insurer's or a carpet cleaner's? Here's what the panel of experts had to say when asked the following question:

"What business practices do you enforce to increase your company's growth and employee performance?"

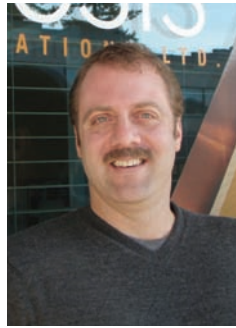


Dan Ayoub

Often, I'm asked by other business owners, "How does your company continue to grow and stay so busy?" I believe it's a combination of many things, but too many owners think it's only about doing a good job. It's a given, consumers expect a good job! There are a couple key components that all businesses should practice. First, exceed the expectations of the customer from the phone call to the follow up. The end result is just not enough—it's about the whole experience. By delivering positive moments of truth with trained employees who are professional, pleasant and accommodating, you'll create more than just a satisfied customer. You'll create a cheerleader eager to recommend your services. Secondly, establish an ongoing professional relationship with them by emails, free tips, specials or a simple phone call to say thank you. By instituting these practices, company-wide, the performance of your employees and company growth will soar!

I recommend reading *Moments of Truth* by Jan Carlzon.

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Graham Dick, CR, CMP

First off, I want it understood that quality is a much higher value than quantity to me, therefore creating a culture that produces an environment that makes me want to come to work is more important than growth for growth's sake.

In recent months, we've had several employees with family crises such as death of an uncle, grandparent, severe injury of a best friend, and severe health issues of one of our carpenters. The outpouring of gifts, compassion and personal sacrifice from management and staff overwhelmed the recipients, as well as confirming to each other that our mission statement is not just words.

Also, recently, two top performers were fired for severe improprieties. Again, the staff rallied as they understood clearly that we each carry the responsibility to protect each other and the company from situations that could jeopardize us. The business practice we try hardest to enforce is the golden rule.

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David Dybdahl, CPCU

As insurance brokers specializing in restoration contractors, we focus on understanding the customer's business so that we can predict what insurance products they will need before they know they need them. Anticipating the customers' needs allows us to develop products and services well in advance of the actual market demand for them. We know our customers want to spend as a little time as possible on insurance decisions. To make it easier for the employees to consistently deliver the best insurance values to their customers, we encourage knowledge sharing across the offices. Our employees are in constant contact with each other comparing notes. Through knowledge sharing we are constantly improving on the quality of the insurance products we offer. Through constant innovation and benchmarking, the employees are able to perform to meet the objectives of the firm.

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Cenmar Fierres

At our company, we like to use the term “Lifetime Value” when we refer to the opportunity a new or an existing client represents. For

us, the best type of growth comes from deepening further the relationships we already have with our clients.

Whether I like it or not, I think that my own values are at the very core of the company’s culture and performance. Even without knowing it, Sparkle’s employees quickly learn to emulate my traits and attitudes. I’m aware that no amount of HR training, value branding or strategic re-positioning can make up for the damage poor leadership behavior could cause my organization. At Sparkle, we encourage everyone to be honest and real. For example, I allow my employees to see the full spectrum of my personality, shortcomings and all, to demonstrate that I’m also human, make mistakes and take responsibility for my actions.

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William Lamb

The constant commitment to listen, learn and evolve is the key to prosperity and growth. We must strive to consistently create solutions to problems that

customers, clients, vendors and employees are facing. After analyzing wherein the problem lies, we then must

learn how to create a quality resolution for that current issue. After solving that issue, we implement the solution into our best practices and continue to evolve as we move onto the next hurdle. An evolving company has constant forward momentum for growth.

Employee performance is tied directly to the commitment to providing solutions. They are an integral part of the process. They are constantly immersed in the problems we face daily. If they have the opportunity to help and be a part of the solution process, they will have ownership in the end result. If we have an involved employee, we will have a dedicated and caring employee.

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Tony Legenstein, CRS

We practice in exceeding customer expectations every time to capture a lifetime customer. Quality service, appearance and the manner in

which we handle ourselves are of extreme importance. It’s easy to tell employees when they do something wrong, but it takes a leader to bring out the qualities of an individual and create company growth with a positive attitude.

If a company’s leadership team has values that are visibly sincere and caring, the employees will naturally want to perform in the same manner. The ones that don’t will quickly weed themselves out.

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Want to be apart of RIA’s expert panel for “The Leader’s Circle?”

Each month a different question will be asked to a revolving panel of experts. This is your opportunity to share your expertise on a variety of topics. If you would like to participate on our expert panel or have a question you would like to submit, email jkrzrnaric@restorationindustry.org.



Timothy McCormick

Nothing beats “doing it right, right away.” Our primary goal since our inception is to enforce consistency, documentation

and education. By adhering to industry standards and using simple science, we can restore damage quickly and precisely, saving both time and money.

Our staff is trained to educate the insured every step of the way so there is awareness of the processes involved and a feeling of control. We find our company growth is a direct result of consistent education for our staff. “Doing it right, right away” is more than a slogan for our team, it is plain and simple the way we do business.

We treat our team like family and train them with the best techniques, all while encouraging them to do the same while at the loss site. Information and understanding go a long way to having a successful and constantly

growing restoration firm. Creating high employee morale and consistently adding tools to their “tool box” encourages constant growth and excitement. Our team is the reason for our success.

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Rob Widmeyer

Hi-Tech Restorations and Contracting, Inc. has focused on two key factors to sustain company growth. First,

the relationships Hi-Tech has formed within the insurance industry have been critical to the business's success and hence growth. Understanding and servicing their needs, namely, timeliness, value and round the clock availability, have enabled Hi-Tech to not only maintain industry connections, but grow them.

Second, our experience in the property loss industry has revealed that exceeding the end-customer's expectations is an equally important focus. Providing superior quality, employing only knowledgeable and efficient employees, as well as remaining price competitive, allows us to grow based on our solid reputation.

It has been the strong work ethic of our management team at Hi-Tech that has mostly significantly impacted our employee performance. With management often working on-site with our technicians, there is a sense of camaraderie and overall improved performance. We also place great importance on the employee knowledge base. Therefore, all our technicians are provided the opportunity and encouraged to stay current in their certifications.

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Jessica Krznaric is RIA's communications specialist and a regular contributor to Cleaning & Restoration.