

The ABCs of Effective Small Business ©copyright by Robert (Bob) W. Lucas

While many small businesses do not have the money, staffing or experience to expand their facilities and initiatives when they first start out, there are some things that business owners and managers can do to play with the big companies and be competitive.

Act like a big company (e.g. get as much exposure as possible by using free or inexpensive publicity, demonstrate professionalism at all times, and create the impression of a multi-level organization).

Begin focusing on tomorrow's growth today.

Create a network of business professionals who can act as resources.

Develop a knack for identifying opportunities by continually watching for trends and patterns in media, advertising, products and services.

Endeavor to make every customer contact one that will result in future business by focusing on how to satisfy customer needs.

Find new ways that will result in increased effectiveness and efficiency when conducting everyday functions.

Generate enthusiasm for your products and services by continually stressing their benefits rather than their features to customers.

Help employees feel responsibility and ownership for the organization by including them in the decision-making process when creating new products or services.

Invite customers to provide feedback on their perception of your product and service performance periodically.

Join and actively participate in a variety of business and professional organizations (e.g. Chamber of Commerce, Better Business Bureau, and industry specific organizations).

Know what the competition is doing by mystery shopping their products and services and comparing them to what your organization offers.

Leave nothing to chance when planning a new product or service rollout. Ask employees, customers and peers for help in evaluating and modifying the proposed campaign.

Make sure that you continually show employees that you value and support them. One of the key reasons given by employees for leaving an organization is an issue with management.

Never forget the "Platinum Rule" of customer service, which is "do unto customers as THEY would have you do unto them."

Organize meetings and other activities to minimize disruption of employee work schedules and take advantage of any down time.

Prepare employees to handle daily situations by keeping them informed on a regular basis about organizational goals and initiatives.

Quantify any process that is done so that you can later measure effectiveness and make decisions on what to keep and what to change.

Remove barriers in the form of outdated or inefficient policies or procedures so that you can increase employee success and self-esteem.

Strive to make yourself available to customers and employees whenever they need you.

Train employees to recognize customer needs and seek to satisfy them.

Use organizational reports (e.g. performance, sales, attrition, and production) to analyze and modify performance on a regular basis.

Visit with successful entrepreneurs and peers periodically to "pick their brains" and ask advice.

Wait for the right time (based on industry and economic trends) before launching new advertising and product or service campaigns.

Xcel at leadership by striving to set the example in words and deeds. Be ethically and professionally beyond reproach.

Yearn to be the best and then act like it!

Zero in on at least one new improvement or enhancement a week. Be in a continual quality improvement mode.

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