

TPI BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

TURFGRASS PRODUCERS INTERNATIONAL

By direction of the TPI Board of Trustees, this is the last stand-alone issue of the *Business Management* newsletter. This and 50 of the past issues will remain on the *For Members* section of the TPI website. Content similar to what has been published in this newsletter will now be incorporated into *Turf News*. TPI encourages your feedback. If you have ideas for article topics for *Turf News* magazine please contact Steve or Suz Trusty at 1+712-366-2669 or stevetrusty@TurfGrassSod.org or suztrusty@TurfGrassSod.org
Sincerely, Steve & Suz Trusty, Co-Editors

The Best Bosses Are

...What Every Employee Wants from You as a Leader

By DeEtta Jones

Do you ever feel overwhelmed as a manager? Being overburdened by the responsibility of having to figure out what others want and need of you is a familiar feeling shared among leaders.

Fortunately, there is a “best practice” for obtaining just the kind of information needed to increase your leadership effectiveness—ask them what they want.

The following 10 traits have emerged when front line staff, supervisors and middle managers have been asked to describe the traits they look for in a boss. As you read through their “wish list,” think about the kind of boss you are, you want to be, and what you look for in a good boss.

Employees want bosses who are:

1. Innovative

Good bosses have good ideas but their role in innovation is more as facilitator than consummate mastermind. They are not threatened by the talent of their employees, and cultivate a working environment that allows each person’s creativity to come forward. They facilitate innovation.

2. Coaches

Good bosses provide important education and guidance that helps an employee see how her work is contributing to the larger goals of the organization. They help employees build confidence by giving stretch assignments that require demonstration of new skills and right-sized risk, then feedback that

allows needed course corrections to be made early enough to avoid a major failure. When employees do fail, good bosses encourage reflection and identification of learning that can be applied to future endeavors.

3. Caring

Good bosses listen to their employees and show an interest in their opinion. They provide opportunities to talk openly, showing interest in their employees’ opinion. They encourage personal and professional growth, sometimes by giving access to resources (like professional development experiences) and sometimes by removing barriers.

4. Strategic

Good bosses can make hard choices and have the finesse needed to get people behind even sometimes unpopular decisions. They are able to secure resources for important initiative worth pursuing. They use analytical frameworks for guiding change, promoting transparent processes and communication. Strategic bosses are decisive (not to be confused with closed-minded or dogmatic). Once a decision has been made, they stick with it and avoid changing directions quickly or sending mixed messages.

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5. Visionary

Good bosses are also visionary managers, able to clearly see and build a commitment toward a compelling future state. They articulate a sense of direction, map out the path and shepherd the process.

6. Demonstrate Trustworthiness

A good boss is genuine, has integrity, and behaves in a manner consistent with his word and values. Employees trust bosses they know to be intelligent, capable and have a demonstrated track record of acting in their best interest. They give and receive (even invite) feedback, affirmative and constructive. They are fully aware of their scope of power in the organization and in their relationship with employees, how an off-handed comment or unpleasant glance may ruin someone's entire weekend.

7. Accessible and Adaptable

Good bosses are able to balance how they give support and direction with the freedom employees need to do their work, acknowledging the level of experience and expertise over his domain. They understand that each employee comes to the workplace with unique experiences, needs and cultural lenses that will require individualized attention and support, and can adapt their own style to ensure effective communication and levels of productivity.

8. Passionate

A good boss has a fire in their belly about something—particularly the vision, mission of the organization and the people with whom they work and who their products and services are meant to touch. They are the first to roll up their sleeves to contribute, and model the level of motivation and quality required for achievement of organizational goals. They help employees stay connected to their own passion by encouraging the sharing of ideas and then helping to shape them to fit within and be supported by the larger organization.

9. Champions

People want to know that the person to whom they report is on their side, even when mistakes are made. Champions look for opportunities to catch their employees doing a good job, and go out of their way to point it out. They don't take the credit for their employees' work, and they don't throw an employee under the bus—ever. They "influence up" by being a conduit between their employees and higher level decision makers, often helping their employees develop the language and influence strategies needed to take an idea to the top of the organization.

10. Fun

Good bosses are willing to laugh and value a work environment that encour-

ages meaningful relationships between colleagues. They inspire us by making the connection from our head to our heart about the importance of our work and our value to the company.

Here's the leadership next step: reflect on the list and identify qualities you are modeling. Think about where there is room for growth in your leadership practice—growth that will lead to increased levels of motivation and engagement. Finally, begin today encouraging your employees to share their own needs allowing for timely adjustments.

Remember, leadership is a journey. Bon voyage!

DeEtta Jones is a leadership strategist, social justice advocate and author. She has more than 20 years of experience working with individual leaders and teams in some of the world's most prominent universities and corporations. Her multidimensional background and fresh perspective leaves clients feeling heard and empowered to take on some of the major organizational and workforce challenges of our times. For more information or to have DeEtta speak at your next event, please visit <http://www.deettajones.com>.



Rethink Employee Retention

7 Guidelines for Engaging and Accommodating Your Older Staff

By Ruth Crocker

Mary loved her job as a recreational therapist in a skilled nursing facility. Her co-workers marveled at her ability to assess the needs of residents and propose exactly the right activity for a patient recovering from a brain injury, stroke or other trauma. Her thirty plus years of experience in all manner of expressive arts therapies helped her serve her patients well. She worked efficiently and effectively with quiet compassion.

And then came the inevitable hours of paperwork. For Mary, writing long detailed notes in medical charts was a normal part of her day. But, she wasn't as speedy as she had been in the past and documentation requirements were increasing. While a physicians' notes are usually transcribed from a dictated

recording, medical support staff still struggle through pages of writing by hand in many facilities. Her immediate supervisor, fifteen years her junior, pushed her to speed up. Mary felt stressed and unable to cope with the continuing pressure. After starting to dread her job and feeling like she was getting worse instead of better, she applied for and received a medical leave of absence. Was this the best solution for Mary and her employer? Probably not.

Mary is one of many valuable older workers who could have stayed productive on the job with some modifications in her work environment. Employers today are facing the fact that we need to keep our older workforce in place longer and we need to help them stay healthy. Baby boomers make up about one-third of the U.S. workforce and for the first time in several gen-

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erations, there are not enough younger workers to replace them. Key industries, especially those that rely on workers with proven performance, knowledge, skills and self-confidence, will be forced by labor shortages to rethink employee retention and how best to ensure health and safety by adjusting equipment and the work environment.

There are many fears and myths about “getting old” in our culture, but the reality is that people are living longer and healthier and can remain robust contributors to the workforce much longer than any previous generation. While age does not determine fitness, there are predictable changes that occur with age and can be accommodated. The following are guidelines for employers who want to maximize the working environment for their most valuable asset: the reliable, responsible, loyal, conscientious, co-operative, collaborative, wise older worker.

- Maintaining an unmoving position for a long time is very tiring, especially standing which puts pressure on blood vessels. Repeated and prolonged static work can be harder on the body than dynamic work. Provide opportunities to change posture or position during the workday. Adjust work surfaces to encourage position changes.
- Sitting is generally good if chairs are well designed and adjustable. To

avoid the dangers of prolonged sitting (weakened abdominal muscles, digestion and breathing problems and damage to spinal discs), provide training and information on sitting properly and permit opportunities to walk about and stretch.

- Provide appropriate equipment for assisting in any type of lifting. Workers of all ages are vulnerable to injury by improper lifting technique and lifting objects that are too heavy. Teach them to decrease the need to twist the trunk of the body during lifting, using leg strength rather than leaning over and placing the load as close to the body as possible.
- Because hand grip strength gradually decreases as we get older, the right grip or handle becomes important. Smaller handles become more difficult to use. Provide tools and controls with user friendly handles.
- Light reaching the retina of the eye declines by as much as 75 percent from age 20 to 50. Improved lighting helps all workers. Problems with adjusting to lighting contrasts can be improved by ensuring that the level of lighting in the room is similar to the light level on computer screens in the environment. Reduce glare by using low or non-glare computer screens.
- Gradual, age-related hearing loss and decreased ability to hear high-pitched sounds can be addressed by

installing sound-absorbing material (to neutralize sound) and minimizing air-conditioning noise.

- Offer incentives to encourage people to take part in fitness classes and quit-smoking campaigns. Older workers are more vulnerable to the possibility of sudden-onset and lasting health problems especially if they are unfit and overweight.

The previous tradition of older supervisors and younger workers has changed especially where workers are opting to stay on the job longer. It is important that younger supervisors be aware of different generational values and attitudes and avoid adopting a “child to parent” attitude towards an older worker. At the same time, treat older workers with the same requirements for performance and safety issues. Whether older or younger, each individual is different. In Mary’s case, her facility eventually adopted a voice-activated recording system which helped staff at all levels of the organization to get their notes written in a timely manner.

Businesses can improve their employee practices by having supervisors attend workshops on aging and the workforce. Talk to other employers who have successful experiences with hiring older employees and encourage employee feedback on aging issues by surveying your employees and listening to their concerns and suggestions. Hiring and retaining older workers can help your business grow.

Ruth W. Crocker, Ph.D. is an author, writing consultant and expert



on recovery from trauma and personal tragedy. Her book, *Those Who Remain: Remembrance and Reunion After War* describes her experience following her husband’s death in Vietnam and how she found resources for healing. An excerpt

has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize in 2014. She is Writer-In-Residence at Riverlight Wellness Center in Stonington, CT where she teaches the art of writing memoir and personal stories. She is available for workshops, readings and public speaking. Contact her at www.ruthwcrocker.com.

The Ultimate Guide to Getting Retail Right: nChannel Releases its Top Vendors & Tactics for Effective Multichannel Management

Editor's note: We believe this article will be of special interest to those members who have retail or B2B outlets with many more items beyond turfgrass sod.

Columbus, OH—Online retail sales hit a record-breaking \$305 billion in the U.S. in 2014, according to the Commerce Department. To fully capitalize on this momentum, successful retailers need to deliver a superior experience across multiple channels. Shoppers today are armed with more information on merchants and products than ever before and have become accustomed to having more control over their entire buying process. As a result, nChannel, the leading provider of multichannel management software that simplifies selling for all retailers, today announced a comprehensive Multichannel Implementer's Guide to help

merchants get the most out of their end-point systems, better support multichannel initiatives and understand the best ways to deliver a standout customer experience.

“A multichannel approach is no longer just nice to have, it's a necessity for today's B2B and B2C merchants,” said Steve Weber, president and CEO of nChannel. “We're in a unique position as we are the foundation for effectively managing a cross-channel experience, and therefore, have worked with dozens of eCommerce, point-of-sale and ERP vendors. This report aligns with our mission to simplify the process for sellers and aims to help them better understand where to make improvements and how to streamline operations.”

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Based on findings from its extensive experience in the multichannel management space, nChannel compiled its top five strategies, along with standout vendors that are helping today's merchants get retail right.

* **Inventory Management:** Inventory management is a critical part of the multichannel management process—specifically features that maintain real-time inventory across all channels and tools that deliver access to supplier inventory levels.

true for multichannel merchants. Many variables play a role in selecting the right returns solution—for example, which cost center is hit on the returned revenue, where inventory will be returned to and from where a replacement item will be shipped.

√ *nChannel's Recommendation:* While no single software package is the silver bullet for returns management, *Microsoft Dynamics NAV* has the strongest API, which provides retailers with the most flexibility to design a returns process

“nChannel has become a trusted resource for us – both in helping us manage our multichannel platform effectively, but also in its ability to provide unbiased expertise on the market,”

√ *nChannel's Recommendation:* Look at *Lightspeed*, an all-in-one POS System for retail stores. The cloud is an invaluable asset for inventory management, because inventory status is a real-time reflection of what's actually in the store. Moreover, store personnel can see inventory status across the chain.

* **Item Listing:** The key to listing items in a way that serves you and your customers well is to implement a solution that allows you to easily manage product attributes. Amazon has taught consumers the value of navigating, sorting and comparing items based on key features, so every retailer now needs to follow suit to win over today's shopper.

√ *nChannel's Recommendation:* *Magento* is the leader in providing attribute management capabilities. While others have emerged in the marketplace, *Magento* is the pioneer and continues to do it very well. They allow sellers to create and reuse attributes so they can present detailed, searchable product information on their website and thus mimic the experience that Amazon provides.

* **Order Management:** Fulfilling and managing orders may seem like a no-brainer, but it's important that retailers implement a solution that helps them handle partial shipments of orders across multiple fulfillment locations (stores, warehouses, third parties or suppliers).

√ *nChannel's Recommendation:* *NetSuite* can split orders by line items and can make intelligent choices on where each item is fulfilled based on user-defined business rules. You can define suppliers by item and automatically create purchase orders for those items when they are sold.

* **Product Returns Management:** Unlike order processing, no two companies handle returns the same way ... this is especially

based on their personal needs and use cases.

* **B2B Support:** For many retailers, the ability to sell to and support B2B customers is a missing link that's hard to master—but it is also an essential component to the growth of today's multichannel merchants.

√ *nChannel's Recommendation:* *Bigcommerce* understands the importance of B2B in eCommerce and supports it with its feature set. They can create customer groups and apply group discounts, and also support phone orders, making it easier for sales to track leads.

“nChannel has become a trusted resource for us—both in helping us manage our multichannel platform effectively, but also in its ability to provide unbiased expertise on the market,” said Kevin Cooke, eCommerce manager at *TroutsFlyFishing.com*, a Colorado-based specialty shop with an expanding online and brick n' mortar presence. “This Implementer's Guide is a perfect example of why nChannel is a main ingredient in our recipe for how to master a quality customer experience.”

To download nChannel's comprehensive 2015 Multichannel Implementer's Guide, which includes more insight into top multichannel management vendors and strategies, [click here](#).

nChannel is the leading provider of multichannel management software that simplifies selling for retailers of all sizes. nChannel provides a single, cloud-based platform that easily integrates with existing systems to help sellers improve the management of product information, streamline supply chain processes and enhance the overall shopping experience for customers. With better business intelligence and increased exposure, nChannel subscribers are improving multichannel operations resulting in new opportunities for repeat business and revenue and making them more competitive than ever before.

Reflections on Worker Visibility

Editor's note: This article is reprinted with permission from the Health and Safety Report—Volume 13, Issue 3

This is the monthly newsletter produced by the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS)

There is danger in the shadows. It could be working on a highway at night or in a loading bay at dusk. Low light and poor visibility can make it difficult to see workers, and this fact puts them at risk for serious injury or death.

Construction workers, emergency responders, and miners are examples of workers who are regularly exposed to the safety hazards associated with working near road traffic, moving construction machinery, and other moving industrial vehicles. This work is often done in low light and poor visibility conditions, increasing the risk of the worker not being seen. In Canada and the United States there are safety standards that specify what clothing or apparel can be used to visually signal that a worker is present. The apparel is designed to provide the user with conspicuity (high visibility) in hazardous situations under any light conditions and under illumination by vehicle headlights.

Conspicuity is enhanced by high contrast between clothing and the work environment against which it is seen. The CSA Standard Z96-09 (R2014) provides performance requirements for materials that should be used for high-visibility apparel and specifies classes of garments, minimum areas of coverage, and placement of these materials.

High-visibility safety apparel

High-visibility safety apparel includes clothing such as vests, bibs, and coveralls that workers can wear to improve how well other people “see” them (their visibility).

Why you need it

High-visibility safety apparel is required personal protective equipment (PPE)

for Canadian workers in a number of workplaces. Requirements for Canadian workers are found in the CSA Standard Z96-09 (R2014) “High Visibility Safety Apparel” and in the related guideline “CSA Z96.1, Guideline on selection, use and care of high visibility safety apparel.” The United States standard is the ANSI/ISEA 107-2010 American National Standard for High-visibility Safety Apparel and Headwear.

High-visibility safety apparel is needed if you work when there is low light and poor visibility, especially if you are working around moving vehicles including cars and trucks, or other machinery traveling under their own power such as forklifts and backhoes. High-visibility items allow you to be seen by the drivers of those vehicles sooner and more easily. High-visibility headwear can also be worn in situations where part or all of the wearer’s body could be obscured by objects in the work environment such as leaves, trees, traffic barriers, and construction materials.

High-visibility materials

The human eye responds best to large, contrasting, bright, or moving objects. Workers are more easily seen when the colour of their clothing highly contrasts with the work environment against which it is seen. The materials used are usually fluorescent or retroreflective.

Fluorescent material takes a portion of invisible ultraviolet light from sunlight, and through special pigments, sends it back to the viewer as more visible light. This material only functions where there is a source of natural sunlight. Fluorescent material will appear brighter than the same coloured non-fluorescent material, especially under low natural light. These materials increase daytime visibility, especially at dawn and dusk. Fluorescent colours provide the greatest contrast against most backgrounds.

Retroreflective material returns light in the direction of the light’s source. This property allows a driver to see the light being reflected from the retroreflective material on a person’s garment when the person is standing in the light’s beam. Retroreflective materials are most

effective under low-light level conditions.

Tips for selecting high-visibility safety apparel

Size:

- High-visibility safety apparel providing full body coverage, 360 degrees around the body, provides better conspicuity.

Fit:

- Garments should be fitted to the person, taking into account the bulk of the clothing that might be worn underneath the garments. The garments should sit correctly on your body and stay in place during your work.
- Apparel should be comfortable.
- Garments should be selected and worn so that no other clothing or equipment covers the high-visibility materials (e.g. gauntlets, equipment belts, and high-cut boots).

Brightness:

- Daylight—Bright colours are more visible than dull colours under daylight conditions (e.g. fluorescent materials are suitable for daylight).
- Low light conditions—Fluorescent colours are more effective than bright colours under low light (e.g. dawn and dusk) and reflective materials are also suggested.
- Dark conditions/worksites—Retro-reflective materials provide high-visibility conditions and are preferred over bright colours. Fluorescent materials are ineffective at night and less visible than white fabrics.

For more details and to learn about the different classes of high-visibility safety apparel refer to CCOHS’ OSH Answers High-Visibility Safety Apparel Fact Sheet. http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/prevention/ppe/high_visibility.html



Ten Dumb Things Smart People Do When Testing Electricity

Anyone who makes his or her living by working with electricity quickly develops a healthy respect for anything with even a remote chance of being “live.” But, sometimes even the most seasoned electricians feel pressured to get a job done quickly, which can result in careless mistakes. Anyone working around electrical equipment should keep the following in mind.

Below is a reminder of what not to do when taking electrical measurements.

1. Replace an original fuse with a cheap one
2. Use a bit of wire or metal to get around the fuse
3. Use the wrong test tool for the job
4. Grab the cheapest DMM on the rack
5. Leave your safety glasses in your shirt pocket
6. Work on a live wire
7. Ignore proper lock-out/tag-out procedures
8. Keep both hands on the test
9. Neglect your leads
10. Hang on to your old test tool—forever

This information came from a safety bulletin from Grainger, Inc., Lake Forest, IL, a major supplier of personal protection equipment and information to help in developing safety programs. They may be contacted at www.grainger.com.



Influence: The Ultimate Power Tool

By Dr. Robert Cialdini, Ph.D.

In business today, effective influence is essential. Want your ideas implemented? You must influence others to act on them. Want more clients? You must influence people to buy from you. Want more advancement or responsibility? You must influence executives to see the value you offer. And to be an effective leader you must be able to influence others. In all respects, being able to influence others is the ultimate power tool.

So, what makes people say “yes” to your requests? Researchers have been studying influence for over 60 years. While it’s nice to think that we are all logical beings who study facts and information to guide our thinking and decision making process, scientific research shows otherwise. Following are the six proven universal principles of persuasion, that when used ethically, can influence others to change their behavior.

1. Reciprocity

There’s a powerful rule that says that we should try to repay what others have done for us. If someone gives us a gift, we feel compelled to give a gift in return. If someone extends us an invitation, we should extend one to them. And if someone does us a favor, we owe them a favor in return. By virtue of the Reciprocity Principle, people feel obligated to the future repayment of items, actions, favors, gifts, and concessions.

You see Reciprocity initiated in business every day, even if you don’t immediately recognize it. From suppliers sending relevant industry specific information to clients, to managers providing personalized guidance, to co-workers helping each other meet a deadline, Reciprocity can be initiated in many ways. *The key to effectively using Reciprocity is to be the first to give and be sure that your “gift” is personalized and unexpected.*

2. Scarcity

Have you ever noticed that people seem to want more of those things they can have less of? That’s the Scarcity Principle at work. Marketers know the power of this principle, which is why their ads often contain such phrases as “Limited Time Only” or “Limited Quantities Available.”

When true, Scarcity affects the value of information too. In other words, information that is exclusive is more persuasive. So the next time you gain access to information that is not readily available and that supports an idea or initiative you would like the organization to adopt, gather the key players and say, “I just got this information today. It won’t be distributed until next week, but I want to give you an early look at what it entails.” Your listeners will lean forward and listen intently. *The key to using Scarcity successfully, whether for a product, service, or information, is to not just honestly tell people the benefits they’ll gain, but also point out what’s unique and what they stand to lose if they don’t move in your recommended direction.*

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3. Authority

Research shows that people typically follow the lead of those they perceive as credible and knowledgeable experts. For example, physical therapists are able to persuade more of their patients to comply with programs if they display their medical diplomas on their office walls. That's because people tend to defer to legitimate experts for information and guidance on what to do.

Surprisingly, people mistakenly assume that others recognize their experience. To ensure that they do, first determine what your **relevant** background, experience, and expertise are for the person you are trying to influence. If you don't do this, you will be sabotaging the power

4. Consistency

People feel compelled to be consistent with their prior behaviors or statements. When someone makes a commitment actively, either by writing it down or speaking it out loud, it's even more likely that they'll follow through with that commitment. You can activate the Consistency Principle by looking for or asking for small initial commitments.

For example, suppose you want a co-worker, Jim, to submit his reports in a timelier manner. Once you believe you've won agreement, ask him to send you a summary of that decision in writing. By doing so, you'll have greatly increased the odds that he'll fulfill the commitment, because

people tend to live up to what they've written down. *The key to using Consistency successfully is to look for voluntary, active, and public commitments ... and get them in writing.*

5. Liking

People prefer to say "yes" to those they know and like. But what makes someone like you? Science tells us there are three important factors that contribute to likeability: 1) we like people who like us (and tell us so); 2) we like

people who are similar to us; and 3) we like people who cooperate with us toward mutual goals. *The key to using Liking successfully is to be honest in your praise, find genuine similarities, uncover opportunities to work together toward common goals, and get to know people more meaningfully before talking business.*

6. Social Proof

Humans are social creatures. And as such, we rely heavily on the people

around us for cues on how to think, feel, and act. In other words, people look to the actions of others to guide their own. This is why using testimonials from happy and satisfied customers is so effective in marketing campaigns.

You can use Social Proof when attempting to get your ideas implemented. Imagine that you're trying to streamline your department's work processes, but a member of your group is resisting. Rather than try to convince this group member yourself, ask a couple of veteran employees who support the initiative to explain their support for it at a team meeting. The veterans' testimony stands a much better chance of convincing the resistant group member than yet another speech from the boss, as Social Proof is often better exerted horizontally rather than vertically. *The key to using Social Proof successfully is to have similar others present their positive story to your target; this is why testimonials are so effective.*

Exert Your Influence Today

Influence is a very powerful tool. When you ethically implement these six scientifically validated principles of persuasion, you'll be making small, practical, and often costless changes that can lead to big differences in your ability to change others' behavior. In the end, you'll not only achieve your objectives, but you'll also guide the other party to the best decision for their needs. That's when true success emerges for everyone involved.



INFLUENCE AT WORK (IAW®) was founded by Robert Cialdini, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus of Psychology and Marketing and author of the New York Times bestseller, *Influence*. Dr. Cialdini is a highly sought after keynote presenter on the ethical business

applications of the Science of Influence. Additionally, IAW offers customized, in-house Principles of Persuasion (POP) Workshops conducted by Cialdini Method Certified Trainers. For availability please call 480-967-6070 or visit www.INFLUENCEATWORK.com. Follow us at @robertcialdini.



of your own message. For maximum impact, arrange to have a third party communicate this information. Another option is to direct the person you want to influence to something in writing that highlights your credentials (i.e. LinkedIn profile, your bio on your website, etc.) *The key to using Authority successfully is to signal to others what makes you credible and knowledgeable before you make your influence attempt.*

10 Ways to Turn Around Negative Word of Mouth

No matter what you sell or what industry you're in, **you're going to experience negative word of mouth**. It just happens. Things break, problems come up, and employees have bad days. But it's how you handle negative word of mouth that separates you from everyone else.



Remember: **Negative word of mouth is an opportunity.**

A great response strategy can convert angry and upset customers into loyal, raving fans. The rule of thumb is that while unhappy customers talk to five people, formerly unhappy customers you win back talk to 10.

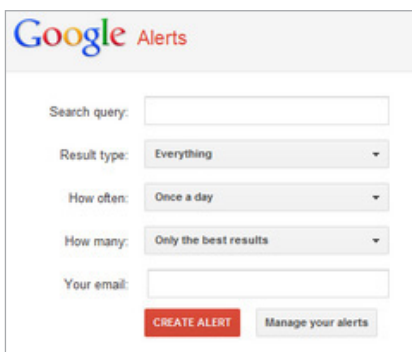
So get out there and embrace the negative word of mouth. Start responding. You'll stop the negative, you'll earn new fans, and you'll generate a ton of respect.

#1: You can't respond to conversations you don't see.

Great response starts with great listening.

Set up Google Alerts for your brand and industry key terms, keep a close eye on your Facebook page, listen on Twitter, and read all Yelp, TripAdvisor, and Zagat reviews. Make a list of any forums or communities where your customers congregate and regularly check in on them.

Whether you're paying attention or not, the conversations are happening. But a great listening program makes it easier for you to **catch negative buzz and spot issues before they catch momentum** and become much harder to turn around.



Share this! We love word of mouth, so pass it on. But please follow the rules. You can post, copy, forward, or share this with anyone you want, as much as you want. But: 1) Don't change it, 2) Mention that it comes from WordofMouth.org, and 3) Link to www.wordofmouth.org.

Learn word of mouth! For more word of mouth, visit www.wordofmouth.org.

#2: Determine if it's worth a response.

Not all negative comments are worth a response, and not all critics are worth trying to win over. Sometimes, as hard as it can be, it's best just to move on.

Avoid these situations:

- The criticism is on a really small blog or forum, and **your response will only bring attention and credibility** to an issue nobody saw in the first place.
- It's a **blatant attack** that's clearly rude and outrageous – and anyone who reads it can see the critic has a personal problem.
- A **known crackpot who is only looking to pick a fight**.

There's just no way to win in these scenarios. So stay out, move on, keep your head up, and *focus on the wrongs you can right*.

#3: Act quickly.

When you're facing negative word of mouth, time is not on your side. The longer you wait to respond, the angrier the customer will get – and the more likely others will pick up on the issue and spread the negative buzz.

At the very least, say this:

"Hi, my name is _____ and I hear you. We're looking into it now, and I'll get back to you as soon as possible. If you have any questions, contact me directly at _____."

A message like this does two things:

- 1) The ranter knows they have your attention – there's much less incentive to keep spreading the anger, and

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2) It makes a real person with real contact info available, so if they're still angry, you've at least given them a place to vent other than online.

#4: *Speak like a human.*

The only thing worse than ignoring upset customers is to respond with a canned corporate response. If you thought they were mad now, wait until you see how they react to an excerpt of your policy terms and fine print.

Show empathy, bring a friendly tone, and use your real name. And if the forum supports it, it helps to include your actual photo.

It's easy to yell and scream at an anonymous company. But when someone shows up and says, "Hi, this is Emily and I'm so sorry for the trouble..." — it changes everything.

The critic now realizes he wasn't yelling at a giant, faceless company. He was yelling at Emily. Quickly, the anger fades — and you'll often get an apology.



Check out how Zappos replies to this fan. It's human, it's friendly. And even though they couldn't immediately fix the problem, you can bet this fan will be back.

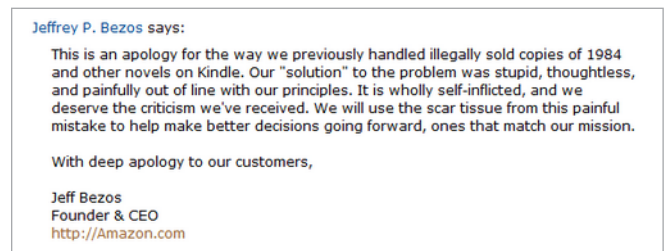
#5: *Offer a real apology or don't apologize at all.*

A strong, direct apology will always earn more respect than a flimsy, kinda-sorta' apology.

Consider the difference between an apology like "We're sorry you feel that way" to "**Absolutely, positively unacceptable**" — which was the headline to FedEx's blog post after an employee was caught throwing a package over a customer's fence. (<http://blog.fedex.designcdt.com/absolutely-positively-unacceptable>)

The post included a straightforward video from Matthew Thornton, a senior vice-president at the company. (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ESU_PcqI38)

And it doesn't get much better or more direct than Jeff Bezos' apology for how they handled pulling copies of 1984 and other novels off Kindles:

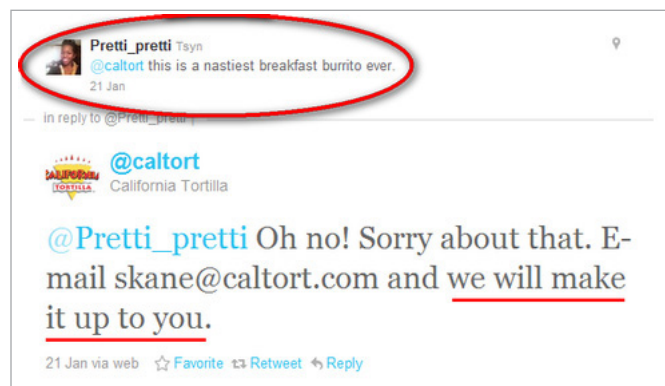


#6: *Offer to make it right.*

Apologizing is part of turning around negative word of mouth, but actually fixing problems is how you really win over critics.

We all make mistakes. **It's how we fix them that people remember.**

At burrito chain California Tortilla, **making it up to customers is part of every response they send when someone is upset.** It's this simple:



10 Ways...Continued on page 11.

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10 Ways...Continued from page 10.

#7: Never get into a fight.

Any time you win an argument online, you're losing. All anyone really remembers is that you're a fighter.

This doesn't mean you can't respond, explain your side of the story, and start a conversation. You just need to be in the right mindset:

1. Don't get emotional.
2. Remember it's a real person. Just as they see you as a faceless company, it's easy to see them as just another complainer.
3. The critic is actually doing you a favor. They're helping you learn to be a better company. For every person who actually speaks up, many more walk away quietly – never to return.

For more on how to reply, check out this quick explanation from Jeff Diamond of Oakland's Farmstead Cheeses and Wines (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJ_DJGDIIMM)

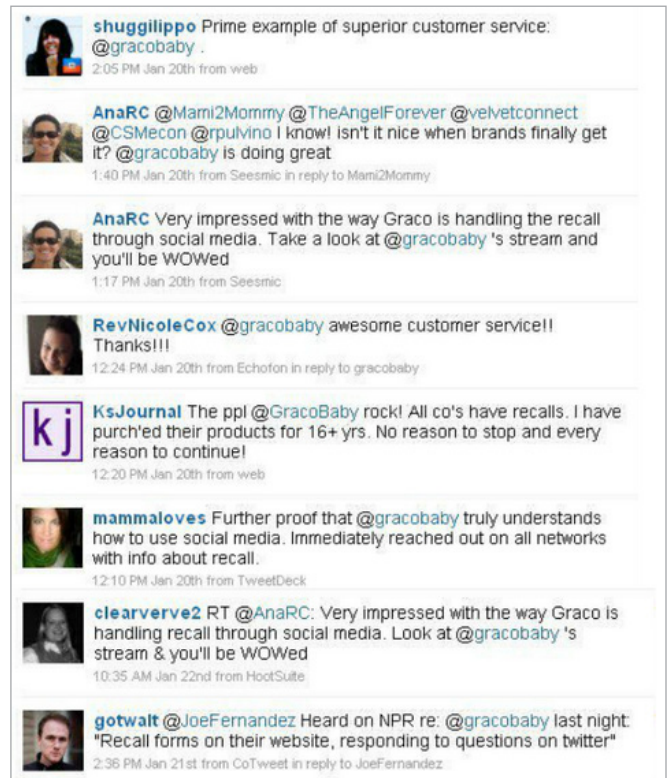
#8: Keep the discussion in the open.

When a negative issue comes up, a common gut reaction is to ask to move the conversation offline. But when you do this, **the world can't see all the effort you put into fixing the problem.**

Nobody sees the private email where you give that sincere apology. We can't search for that phone conversation where you politely explain why the situation happened in the first place.

But when you do it online, in public, you earn word of mouth. **For the same effort and cost, thousands more people see that you actually care about customers.** Plus, you save on all the people who now don't need to call in (or write a similarly angry post) to find an answer to the same question.

Graco's quick and transparent use of Twitter during a recall of more than 2 million strollers, for example, helped get an important message out much more quickly, showed customers how much they cared, and it just might have saved some lives, too. (<http://goo.gl/313DT>)



10 Ways...Continued on page 12.

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10 Ways...Continued from page 11.

#9: Use fans and third-party sources to help tell the story.

What you say about yourself isn't as powerful as what others say about you. It's true when people are promoting you, and it's true when people are calling you out.

When their brand was under attack from a competitor-led PR campaign, UPS' Debbie Curtis-Magley and her team pointed to third-party content from news articles and industry experts to help explain the full story. (<http://goo.gl/6ERki>)

And even more powerful than experts can be the voice of your fans. You never want to put them in an uncomfortable situation, but it's OK to ask for help sometimes. For example, a blogger might share how they're frustrated with a particular product feature. In which case, you might turn to your Facebook or Twitter fans with this message:

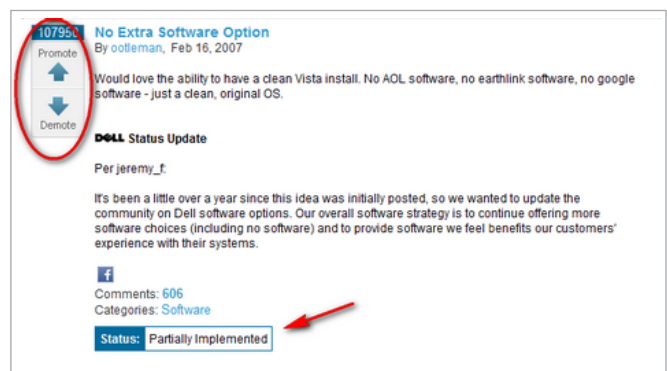
"Hey guys! Chris over at [blog name] is having trouble with [feature]. Can anyone help share how they're using it?"

#10: Involve them in the fix.

If someone's criticizing you, it's often just a form of tough love. They're doing it because they care. They see potential, and they want you to do better.

So instead of seeing them as critics, start looking at them as frustrated fans who might have some worthwhile ideas.

On one hand, Dell's IdeaStorm is just a big list of things people think they're doing wrong. But it's actually a release valve – a proactive community that gives people with ideas, suggestions, and complaints to share and vote on their favorites.



A platform like IdeaStorm isn't right for everyone, but giving your biggest critics a way to get involved is. Try inviting yours to customer advisory boards, beta tests of new products, and brainstorming sessions.

So see! Negative word of mouth doesn't have to be so bad after all.

How do you handle critics? How are you making the most of negative word of mouth?



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The Five Critical Skills for IT Success

By Don R. Crawley

Editor's note: Please share this with your IT people. While this article is directed to IT professionals the skills outlined, if followed, will help any management professional become more successful.

Are you fully prepared for a successful career in IT? The most effective IT professionals possess a particular set of skills—five of them, to be exact. Your mastery of the five critical skills is critical to your career success. These five skills will, when mastered, allow you to positively influence not only your career, but also the people around you, and even the world.

1. Deep Technical Skills

In any field, you must have the technical skills necessary to solve technical problems quickly and permanently. In addition, your technical skills must be deep enough to allow you to anticipate and prevent future problems. You gain such a deep level of skill through education, reading, experimenting, and experience. Attend seminars, workshops, and conferences. Go back to school and take courses related to your field. Work on professional level certifications. Set up test labs at home or in the office using virtualization tools. Strive to be the best in the world at the technologies you support.

2. A Sense of Compassion

The second skill is compassion, the act of caring about the well-being of another. Being compassionate means having a profound awareness of another's suffering combined with a desire to alleviate it. When our end users and customers place themselves in our care, they are first and foremost human beings. We may not like their political views, we may not like the way they look or act. We may not like anything about them, but they are still human beings de-

serving of our care, understanding, and respect. When you genuinely care about what happens to other people, when you are truly compassionate, you instinctively look for ways to better their experience.

3. Empathy for our Fellow Humans

Empathy is the ability to connect with another individual emotionally—to feel what they're feeling. It's often known as "putting yourself in someone else's shoes." The use of empathetic phrases, such as "I'd feel that way, too, if it happened to me," or "I can see how frustrated you are and I don't blame you," goes a long way in establishing and building relationships. It's also important to be authentic in your empathy. If you simply can't relate to the other person's situation, it's okay to say so when you combine it with honest human understanding. For example, you can say things like, "I've never been in your situation, so I'm not going to tell you I understand. I can't even imagine what that's like, but I am going to do everything possible to help you." Be careful though; if you're simply saying the words without trying to understand what the other person is going through, you'll come across as phony or condescending. The key is sincere, human-to-human empathy.

4. Excellent Listeners

The fourth skill is the ability to listen, meaning that your sole focus is on what the other person is saying. It takes practice, so don't expect to master this skill the first time you try it. Effective listening means focusing on the other person instead of yourself. Many listen attentively, but while they're listening, they're also preparing their response. To be a great listener, focus entirely on understanding what the other person is saying. A technique that can help is to listen as though you're going to be tested on what is being said. If you know there's a quiz, you'll find a way to sharpen your focus on the speaker!

5. Acting Respectfully

The fifth critical skill is the ability to treat everyone with respect, regardless of how you might feel about them. In fact,

it's not necessary to respect someone to treat him or her with respect. Respecting someone is a matter of how you feel about that person and whether they have earned your respect. It's internal to you. Treating someone with respect, however, is external. It's about your behavior and, frankly, is a reflection of how you feel about yourself. People who have a high level of self-respect, tend to treat everything about them more respectfully.

In your role as a provider of service to people, you may find yourself dealing with others whom you don't like or respect. You maintain your own dignity and self-respect when you treat all living things respectfully.

It Becomes a Way of Life

The interesting thing is that, when you begin to apply these principles in your interactions with end-users and customers, they start to become second nature. You will stop worrying about your differences from others and start enjoying your interactions. In the process, you will intuitively provide outstanding customer service or end-user support.

By developing deep technical knowledge, living compassionately and with empathy, by listening, truly listening, to the people around you, and by treating all living things with dignity and respect, you will automatically become a customer service master which leads to IT career success.

Don R. Crawley is an IT Customer Service



Expert, speaker and author of *The Compassionate Geek: How Engineers, IT Pros and Other Tech Specialists Can Master Human Relations Skills to Deliver Outstanding Customer Service*. With more than four decades of experience in workplace technology and automation, he

is dedicated to helping IT and other technical staff master the art of customer service and communication. For more information on Don, please visit www.DonCrawley.com



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Do you know of a deserving individual who should be recognized by Turfgrass Producers International for their contribution to our industry? This is your opportunity to submit their name(s) for consideration in TPI Honors & Awards.

Please submit your nominations by October 1, 2015. Visit TPI's website or click [HERE](#) to download your nomination form.

MEMBERSHIP DUES NOTICES

The new membership year is approaching (July 1, 2015-June 30, 2016). Your Board of Trustees and headquarters team want to thank you for your continued support of the organization.

If you have not received your dues notice please contact Anne Footle at 847-649-5555 or afotle@TurfGrassSod.org. TPI must receive your dues renewal no later than July 31, 2015 for your farm/company to be included in the printed 2015-2016 Membership Directory.

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REMINDER: TPI members can purchase an additional subscription to *Turf News* magazine for \$125.00.

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SPREAD THE WORD!



A growing number of members have reported they are sometimes asked by lawn care professionals, landscapers or contractors if they are members of TPI. Promote the fact that you're a TPI member—it's good for you and your business. Placing the Proud Member of TPI graphic on your website, Facebook page and on your promotional/marketing materials is a great way to let customers and prospects alike know that you belong to a great association. Here is the [link](#) to the TPI Proud Member graphic or you can email TPI's Marketing & Membership Manager, Anne Footle at afootle@TurfGrassSod.org.

TPI BUSINESS PARTNER PROGRAMS: NEW BENEFIT FOR TPI MEMBERS



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- and much more!

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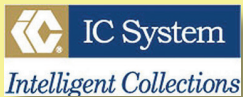
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See full story on page 6 of the May/June issue of the TPI E-Newsletter
The article is titled: "The Lawn Institute announces funding for two research studies."

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