

YARD & GARDEN

Dealer Success Guide

Appealing to a Changing Market

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volume 16

A Supplement to Yard & Garden

Learning is a Lifelong Process

To All Servicing Dealers,

Well-known professor and business management consultant Peter Drucker once said that “learning is a lifelong process of keeping abreast of change.” Whether it is participating in the latest manufacturers’ training programs, industry educational seminars like The Dealer Experience at GIE+EXPO in Louisville, or your subscription to the *Dealer Success Guide*, staying current on industry and product information is a lifelong requirement for maintaining your competitive edge.



With that in mind, STIHL has developed a proprietary technician training curriculum, STIHL Service Advantage, which includes factory certification for all who pass the final exam. Nearly 1,000 dealers and service technicians have earned their Gold Level factory certification on STIHL products. In this issue, you’ll learn about a unique group of individuals who have achieved this certification and who represent the changing face of today’s service technician.

Online training programs, such as STIHL iCademy, are especially valuable to servicing dealers who, like the rest of us, battle the “time bandit” every day. Over 4,000 dealers are now finding information and training at www.stihlicademy.com for their technical, sales and merchandising employees, who are taking classes online, often either after hours or at home. This means maximum benefit and minimal impact on daily business productivity.

Also in this issue of the *Dealer Success Guide*, the folks at *Yard & Garden* have included stories from some highly successful dealers who never quit learning how to improve their businesses. Some you may already know as past winners of the *Yard & Garden* Dealers in Excellence awards. Nonetheless, we all know that learning best practices from proven performers is always a smart idea.

So go ahead, and see what you can learn. You might just surprise yourself, and your customers.

Best regards and good learning!

Fred J. Whyte
President
STIHL Incorporated

Welcome to yet another edition of *Dealer Success Guide*. Thanks to our exclusive sponsor STIHL Inc., we're now up to Volume 16. If you're missing any of the past volumes, please visit yardngarden.com to download them.

I'm often asked by readers, colleagues here at Cygnus Business Media and elsewhere, "How do you keep coming up with more stuff for these Success Guides? First of all, it's not just me. I often get ideas from dealers, distributors, the talented people at STIHL, consultants and others. My co-workers here on *Yard & Garden* come up with ideas. It's a concerted effort—as most creative endeavors are.

Some of the tired old business concepts do not change. How you approach and address them can, however, which is why we try to present ideas from an assortment of management consultants and leading dealers.

This issue is especially interesting, I believe, because times are changing. The consumer market is changing. The labor pool is changing. The economy is changing. Equipment is changing and could be changing even more in coming years. Some industry insiders often point to the average dealer's "fear of change" as an obstacle to progress. I might be inclined to place as much blame on some of those industry insiders' willingness to change for the worse, but that's another story. At any rate, now's not a good time to fear change.

This issue talks about the increasingly important Baby Boomer and female demographics. Articles addressing how to effectively manage a more diverse employee base are presented. The lead feature on page 4 highlights an emerging trend in STIHL's Service Advantage program. Dealer Success Stories starting on page 24 talk about how leading dealers are diversifying their product offering, using the Internet to create new revenue streams, and adapting their service offerings to what today's commercial and residential customers need and demand.

As always, we hope you gain an idea or two from this edition of *Dealer Success Guide*. Please write or call to let me know what you think, or what you'd like to see in an upcoming issue. This publication is for you—the servicing dealer. As with most creative endeavors, together we can make it better. ■



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By Lisa Danes

As Good as Gold

Four women use their passion and STIHL Gold level certification to prove their worth as outdoor power equipment technicians.

In the male-dominated outdoor power equipment industry, four women have successfully completed the STIHL Gold Level training to improve their skill while assuring skeptics of their ability.

With a technician shortage taking place, opening up dealerships to these ambitious women may prove to be a terrific opportunity. The pride they take in their work along with the close attention paid to detail could help bring equipment servicing to the next level.

POLISHED SKILL

The plan to create a STIHL outdoor power equipment technician certification program, that would allow dealers to provide the best STIHL service possible, began in 2002. STIHL Inc. hired Eddie Anderson to create, as well as put into action, the Service Advantage Training.

"The goal of the program is to train the service technician to be fast, accurate, and productive in diagnosing faults and problems and doing repairs on STIHL products," says Anderson. The first Bronze and Silver programs were introduced in 2003 with Gold Level following in 2004.

More dealers are sending technicians through training as an investment into the success of their dealership. Technicians themselves are seeking the training to become well-rounded outdoor power equipment professionals. As of November 2007, Renee Holdren of Paul's Lawnmower in Westminster, CO, was the fourth woman

to complete her STIHL Gold Level training.

Tracy Gazzo of Allen's Seed Store in Exeter, RI, also recently completed the STIHL Gold Level training. She is the third female outdoor power equipment technician to have finished the program.

"My certification leads to more referrals for the dealership," says Gazzo. "If people go online to see who is STIHL Gold certified, they will likely choose them. It's not rare for them to go 20 miles out of their way to see someone who is Gold certified." Gazzo is the only Gold Level certified mechanic working in her shop and plans to renew her certification every three years to maintain the trust of her returning customers.

Thanks to the Internet and the positive impact of the extensive training on the tech's skills, the STIHL Gold certification is becoming more of an influential factor for consumers when seeking equipment services. "The customers used to just be content that I fixed the machines in a timely manner," explains Rhonda Winters, of Andover Auto Parts in Andover, KS. "But now the certification is becoming more important to them."

The impressive skills acquired through the training can also aid in a smooth workflow within the shop. "Other techs feel comfortable consulting me as a resource because I am the only one that is Gold certified," says Winters. "If I'm caught up I can jump over and help whoever by filling in."

For some techs, earning the certification is an honor. Joann Kalina, a tech at Nelson's Ace Hardware in Selma, CA, has been in the outdoor power equipment business since 2000 and is proud to be STIHL Gold certified. "In this industry, if you get the STIHL certification it means you know their equipment," says Kalina. "The customers and other techs know you can put your hands on a piece of equipment and fix it. I earned to be where I am and I get a lot of respect because of it."

RELUCTANCE MEETS ENTHUSIASM

Sometimes, despite their impressive qualifications, these women as a rarity in the industry face a lot of challenges. Despite their best intentions in becoming

In 2005, Rhonda Winters was the first woman to achieve STIHL Gold Level status.





Joann Kalina earned her STIHL Gold Level status in May 2006.

qualified and talented mechanics, many customers still struggle to look past their outer appearance and see the skills they possess.

The reluctance of the customers was not a surprise to these women. They knew that entering this industry would be a challenge, and each one of them was prepared for it. Kalina had a plan for easing into the industry. Kalina discovered her natural talent for engine repair when her car broke down on the side of the road. She knew that her new desire to be an outdoor power equipment technician would not seem as natural.

"My name Joann has not been known in the business as long as Joe," explains Kalina. "It's a male-dominated field, and I knew this getting into it. I knew I would have some problems so I started going by Joe so that people would think I was a guy. When their equipment was fixed by Joe the mechanic, they accepted it until I came walking out front and they saw that Joe was a girl."

To gain the trust and acceptance of their customers, these women have to prove their skill level almost daily. "I've been doing this for seven years and I still get the

older gentlemen who are surprised I know how to work on this equipment," says Gazzo. "But the other day a customer came in just to tell me I did a good job and they were surprised. They don't initially trust my skills."

Earning the confidence of their peers proves to be much less difficult. At first glance they see a woman in a man's world, but once they see them at work, they understand how seriously these women take their profession and skill.

"The guys I work with know I've been doing this a long time so I know what I'm talking about," Kalina explains. "The newer techs are reluctant because I'm a girl, but once they learn of my skill level they trust me much more and don't have a problem asking questions."

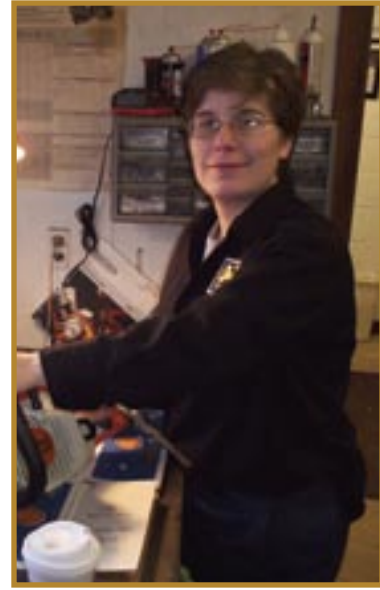
While there are a pretty large number of disbelievers, others embrace what these women are doing. "It's really been a mix," says Gazzo. "I've had people say they really think it's a good thing what I'm doing. It makes me proud."

EVER-CHANGING WORKFORCE

While it is uncommon to find women back in the shop working on equipment, it is not unusual to find them working the parts counter or answering phones. "Women have always been involved in dealership parts sales," explains Anderson. "This is especially the case when it is a husband and wife running the dealership."

For some women, the parts counter isn't the work they are cut out for. The pull towards equipment maintenance and repairs is something rooted deep in their background or experiences.

"I was born and raised farming," shares Winters. "And when you are farming you try very hard not to pay labor." For Winters, it was



Tracy Gazzo reached Gold Level status in 2007, making her the third woman to earn the certification.

growing up working on mechanical farm equipment that instilled her interest in outdoor power equipment repair and helped to refine her skill.

Kalina, who brought her natural skill to industry after hearing "little hands, little spaces," regularly visits local high schools, encouraging young women to consider working in the male-dominated outdoor power equipment industry. She would like to see more women working in the industry but believes they don't necessarily make better mechanics.

"Being a woman doesn't make me a better technician," says Kalina. "It is my love for what I do that makes me a good tech. I take a lot of pride in the fact that I know how to do my job well."

Regardless of gender or background, the industry needs qualified and passionate technicians. With the continued tech shortage, recruiting should be done energetically from all areas of the workforce. Once trained, these newly engaged individuals will support the continued success of dealers. ■

Are You Relevant ... TO WOMEN?

Improving your relevance to women could mean a growing market share and an increase in equipment sales.

The typical outdoor power equipment customer is male, and many dealers have adjusted their marketing efforts to this fact. Many companies, however, are living in denial of the reality that women account for over 80 percent of all consumer purchases. While they are not the primary power equipment consumer, they have proved their buying power with the \$5 trillion they spend annually on new homes, healthcare, consumer electronics, investment advice, automobiles, vacations, bank accounts and do-it-yourself projects.

WOMEN COMPLAIN FOR A REASON

Research indicates that of 1,000 random registered complaints made regarding a product or service, more than 80 percent were written and registered by women. When the transaction goes badly, most women

will get mad and stay mad. Their complaints are often constructed of words like “embarrassed,” “helpless,” “out of control,” “hurt,” “crushed” and “rejected.”

These are the same words many women would typically use in an intimate, loving relationship. This is because many women don't differentiate a personal interaction from a business event; business is personal and emotional to them.

WOMEN STARTED VIRAL MARKETING

Not only do women tend to complain about the perpetrator, but they also tell everyone else about the experience. Faith Popcorn, author of “EVEolution – Understanding Women,” says that the average satisfied female customer will recommend a service, shop or client to 21 other people. Since women speak an average of 20,000 words a day—vs. a man's 6,000—women



were indeed the first “viral marketing” machine. Therefore, when women have a good feeling about the service your business provides, it can create a vast army of female unpaid spokespeople for you. Can you do better than that with traditional marketing?

WOMEN ARE LOYAL CUSTOMERS

If you make an effort to understand the emotionality of a woman’s purchase, she will start to form a relationship with you. This is critical because an emotional bond is the only factor that breeds true customer loyalty; not “favored customer cards,” not reward points or discounts, not even repeating their name in a friendly manner. Women don’t want “service” from you, they want empathy. They want to be understood. Once women feel you have understood and appreciated them, you have not only a loyal customer, but a referral engine as well.

OFFEND WOMEN AND SUFFER

When you scorn or offend women, look out. Consider the detrimental effects to the Tom Cruise movie, “Mission Impossible III.” It was largely thought to be the best film of the trilogy, yet when Cruise blathered in the press insisting his then-girlfriend Katie Holmes have a “silent birth” as prescribed by Scientology, his immense female fan base stayed home. Opening weekend ticket sales dipped over 30 percent. Don’t mess with women or their sisterhood.

WOMEN GET STRONGER WITH AGE

The largest purchasing body is baby boomer women. Many of these baby boomer women have money to spend. Additionally,

these women have a strong say in any household purchasing decisions. Ken Dychtwald, author of “The Power Years,” says that by 2015, at least \$15 trillion dollars will land in the hands of baby boomer women. Wouldn’t you like them to be spending some of that money with you?

HOW DO YOU GET INTO A WOMAN’S WALLET?

1. Think and behave like a woman. Understand that women crave appreciation for their immense buying power and influence. Know that they want you to succeed because they love to introduce amazing new discoveries to their friends. Behave in ways that are caring and honest. Showing her attention and empathy will cause her to become your advocate; an unpaid spokesperson for your company.

2. Be emotional. If you sell a product, write emotional content that speaks to her heart and provides reasons for her to own what you sell. If you sell a service, get personal and sell yourself. The female consumer wants to buy from people who won’t make her feel helpless, anxious, embarrassed or vulnerable. The Nordstrom clothing chain has been wildly successful because the salespeople are warm, friendly and personal. There is also no risk in buying from them. Nordstrom will let you return your purchase for any reason, at any time. Nordstrom breeds trust and confidence.

3. Don’t suck up to women. Don’t pander to women or try to exploit the obvious media stereotypes. Not all women are shoe fiends and show biz tabloid readers. If you take that approach, you’ll offend the Mensa moms, as well as the shoe fiends and tabloid readers. Women want authentic-

The Dealer’s Take

Two readers of *Yard & Garden* have already discovered the importance of marketing to their female consumers.

“Our garden supply center helps to take the edge off of being an equipment-focused store. It really helps with our female customer base, which is growing all the time. Children like to look around as well. It makes for more of a family shopping environment, while also helping our bottom line.”

— **Shaun O’Connor of O’Connor’s Lawn & Garden in Oklahoma City, OK**

“If I can sell a woman whose husband cuts the lawn on a mower, she’ll drive her husband nuts until he agrees to buy that mower. If she cuts it herself and I can get her on one of our mowers so she can see how it feels, how comfortable it is and that she will be safe, I can usually sell her too. Then the husband can go fishing or play golf, so he’s pretty easy to sell too.”

— **Bruce Purcell of Quik-Kut Hi-Performance Lawn Equipment in Claxton and Hinesville, GA**

ity from you, not hype or false promises.

4. Rethink current strategies. To learn about what women think about today’s marketing techniques, visit marketingto-womenonline.typepad.com. This organization has a robust website to answer your questions. They also hold an annual conference complete with big name speakers and workshops to help you navigate these tricky waters. ■

About the Author

Ross Shafer is the author of “The Customer Shouts Back, Nobody Moved Your Cheese,” and the upcoming, “Remaining Relevant: How Great Organizations Avoid Extinction.” Shafer is also one of the nation’s most popular convention keynote speakers on these subjects. To learn more please visit RossShafer.com.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

A Marketing Boom

How to attract the Baby Boomer market



Today's Baby Boomers are a marketer's dream come true. But if you want a share of the \$3 trillion that this market has as disposable income, slick ads and catchy jingles will only take you so far. To really appeal to this market of over 78 million people, you need to go beyond traditional marketing and consider the Boomers' real needs. When you make taking care of Boomers' needs your top marketing objective, you will not only sell more products and services, but you'll also build a loyal customer base that will help your dealership grow.

So what are the Boomers' real needs? Since many Boomers are in a time of transition (doting parent to empty nester, member of the workforce to retiree, etc.) their lives often involve transitioning to a new life stage or cycle. For this group, upcoming retirement is now an issue. Health changes are occurring. They're taking care of aging parents. They require money to fund a new lifestyle or pay for a child's college education. Being a grandparent also suddenly becomes a focus. No matter what the situation, many are shifting from an "achievement" mindset to "quality of life" values and concerns.

Some outdoor power equipment dealers are starting to realize how lucrative the Boomer market can be and

are creating marketing campaigns that target two of the many needs that Boomers have: that of transitioning into the "new" retirement, and of connecting and identifying with similar people.

As a marketer, you need to know your audience and speak their words. The same concept applies when marketing to Boomers.

No matter what industry you're in, whether it's outdoor power equipment retail, construction, health care, insurance, banking, media, or any other business or occupation, the best way to market to Boomers is to focus on serving their needs. To help you do so, following are the five C's of Boomers' real needs.

1. COMMUNITY

Belonging to a definable group is very important to Boomers, because they're often losing an identity in other areas of their life. For example, now that the kids

are grown and out of the house, they're no longer the "soccer mom." With retirement looming, they're no longer the "over-achieving executive." That's why they want a place where they can connect with others who share their values and beliefs. And while the value of community is important in everyone's life, if you're marketing to Boomers, you need to use words and concepts that create a sense of belonging to a group of like-minded people. Consider such things as preferred shopper or savings clubs. The more you appeal to the idea of joining a group of active people, who share similar interests or business goals, the more Boomers will take notice of what you have to offer.

2. CONNECTIONS

As a marketer, you need to know your audience and speak their words. The same concept applies when marketing to Boomers. Use words and phrases that resonate with them and their needs. Some words/phrases to consider include:

- Active
- Balanced life
- Choices
- Club
- Connection
- Experienced
- Future
- Growth
- Health
- Independent
- Mature
- New
- Not too late
- Options
- Passion
- Reinvent
- Start now
- Time for self
- Well being
- Wise

For example, if you carry a brand that has been around a long time, but has recently come out with a new product, try to market it in a way that appeals to wisdom of the old and the excitement of the new.

3. CONTRIBUTION

Boomers need to feel a sense of contribution to a greater cause—a feeling that their life matters to someone or to a group. When we're in our 20s and 30s, jobs and parent-

ing roles often fill that contribution need. But remember, Boomers are in transition and may be losing some of those roles. So show Boomers how your product or service can help them make a difference. For example, promote equipment that is environmentally friendly, either by the use of new technology, or

best to suit their business and equipment needs. In addition, offer flexibility in choices when it comes to pickup and delivery of equipment. When you give Boomers choices and a chance to leave their creative mark on your offering, they'll eagerly become a loyal customer.

When you make taking care of Boomers' needs your top marketing objective, you will not only sell more products and services, but you'll also build a loyal customer base that will help your dealership grow.

alternative fuels. In addition to environmentally friendly equipment, remind commercial and consumer customers that with the use of your products, they are creating a visually appealing landscape. Think of the big picture and how your business, products or services enable customers to feel like they're making a difference.

4. CREATIVITY

Boomers grew up with the sixties mentality of "Don't tell me what to do; let me choose." Today, Boomers respond well to choices, menus, options, samples, etc. They want to create their own packages to meet their needs. They are bursting with new ideas and new ways of looking at old problems, and they won't settle for being pushed into pre-defined categories or choices. To get them to choose your product or service, make sure they have plenty of options to define or customize their purchase from you.

A great way to give them a lot of options is through offering several product warranty and equipment service packages. The customer can then choose which package works

5. TIME FOR A CHANGE

In the sixties, Boomers changed the way people looked at life. In the eighties, they changed the way people looked at work. Today, they're changing the way companies will look at marketing. In outdoor power equipment retail, if you focus on the five C's of Boomers' real needs, you can reap the rewards of selling to this demographic. Remember, Boomers, like all people, respond better when marketing messages are tailored specifically to them. "Speak" to this \$3 trillion market and watch your dealership's profits soar. ■

About The Author

Karla Freeman, licensed clinical social worker, is a leading voice for the Boomer generation. Her popular and practical book, "Creating Magic in Midlife: 101 Questions and Answers to Reinvent Your Work, Relationships, and Life!" is a guide for living a full and joyful second half. She speaks and leads seminars internationally for groups and organizations on trends, health and well-being, and creating magic. For more information, visit magicofmidlife.com.

Negotiating to Reduce Costs and **INCREASE** Sales

Avoid these 10 common negotiating mistakes to further the success of your business.

To be successful in negotiating is a lot like becoming proficient in martial arts. You must learn to use timing, power and leverage to your advantage. In bargaining contests there are some common mistakes that often keep us from getting the best deals.

MISTAKE #1: BEING AFRAID TO BARGAIN

Some of us are timid when it comes to haggling because we're afraid of being rejected. In reality, there is no rejection in negotiating. If you ask for a discount from a vendor and they say, "No," what have you lost? Nothing. Now you have the choice of continuing to pay full price or taking your business elsewhere. It's totally in your control.

MISTAKE #2: NOT HAGGLING OVER SMALL ITEMS

Many people only think about negotiating when it comes to big-ticket purchases like cars and houses. The real savings is realized when you get discounts on things you buy more frequently. Try to get discounts on items like cleaners used in shops or oil changes on company vehicles. The savings will add up each time you receive a discounted item or service.

MISTAKE #3: FORGETTING THAT EVERYTHING IS NEGOTIABLE

Anything is negotiable under the right circumstances. You would be surprised to find what others will do to earn your business as long as you keep in mind that there must be a benefit to them for accepting your offer. If purchasing new shop uniforms, search for the company that will offer you the best deal on initial purchase price and cleaning.

MISTAKE #4: THINKING ABOUT OURSELVES FIRST

Many people only consider what they'll get out of a negotiation. Try to think about what is in it for the other person to accept a deal. If there isn't a clear benefit to the other party, they will never seriously consider an offer. Finding ways to help people solve their problems will make it easier for them to give you what you want. Most businesses make their money on repeat business because this eliminates their marketing costs. If you are a regular customer, you may very well deserve a discount for saving them money.

MISTAKE #5: MAKING THE FIRST OFFER

Try not to make the first offer anytime you bargain because it limits your options. Even if the price is clearly marked, you can always ask, "Would you take less to sell this today?" If you are a buyer who makes the first offer, it sets the lower limit because now you can only raise your price. If you are a seller who names a price, you can only go down from there.

MISTAKE #6: BEING TOO NICE

If you must make the first offer, make it low if you're buying and high if you're selling for the reason stated above. It sets the lower or upper limit and reduces your options. Being aggressive with your first offer leaves room for negotiating. Don't worry about being nice as the other party can always turn down your offer. You never want the other party to agree to your first offer because that leads to the next mistake.

MISTAKE #7: BEING TOO EAGER

Take your time when bargaining. In America "time is money" but in other countries it is used for building relationships. There is one word that a talented negotiator never wants to hear early in the bargaining process—"okay." This means that you paid too much



or asked too low a price because you got impatient. Take your time and don't put yourself under any unnecessary time pressure.

MISTAKE #8: NOT DOING HOMEWORK IN ADVANCE

Most martial arts tournaments are won or lost before they ever begin, and it's the same with negotiating. Just like a fighter would never step into the ring without having spied on his opponent, you shouldn't either. If you're purchasing inventory, search around to find the best deals and the best times to buy. No matter what you are buying or selling you can find out valuable information such as: what the current demand is, the profit margin, and other priceless data.

MISTAKE #9: NOT PLAYING TO WIN

Everyone has heard that in negotiating you want to develop "win-win" solutions but, in reality, nobody believes in tying. You

don't want your opponent to get the better end of the bargain. This is not to say that you try to take advantage, but you should always try to get the best deal you can and assume that the other party

By negotiating more often you not only put more money in your pocket but also increase your negotiating skill.

will do the same. You don't need to be concerned about fairness because, if they agree to your offer, they must feel it benefits them as well.

MISTAKE #10: MISSING THE OPPORTUNITY TO NEGOTIATE

Every time you pull out your wallet to pay for a purchase you

should ask yourself, "Is this a chance to practice my bargaining skills?" This is not to say that you absolutely must bargain on everything, but every transaction adds up, and the more you bargain the better you become.

By negotiating more often you not only put more money in your pocket, but also increase your negotiating skill. Black belts practice every day and so should you. Practice using timing, power and leverage to your advantage and remember to avoid the common mistakes that will get in the way of bargaining success. ■

About the author

Michael Soon Lee, MBA, is the author of the new book "Black Belt Negotiating" (AMACOM Books, 2007), and is a world class negotiator and martial artist. He has bargained on everything from major real estate purchases to discounts on gas for his car. Michael shows people how to use martial arts secrets to gain leverage in any bargaining situation. You can assess your negotiating prowess on his website at SeminarsUnlimited.com or by calling 800-417-7325.



The Secret to Reaching Goals

Define your dream and develop habits to make it a reality.

Get a pen and paper and write down your specific dream or goal, along with the date when you are going to achieve it.

In business and in your personal life, when you are missing a clearly defined goal, it is like trying to achieve a vague dream, without a map or action plan to reach it. There's no big secret to achieving what you want out of life or for your business. The way to make your goals a reality is by empowering yourself with intellectual, emotional and practical tools, and converting them into habits. Here are the seven tools you need to achieve your professional or personal goals.

1. DEFINE YOUR DREAM

Many of us dream about earning more money, increasing product offering or retiring. Have you ever asked yourself why it is that once you have achieved those dreams you still aren't happy? The reason is probably because you haven't defined what your dream really is. It might not be the extra cash, but the means to open a second location; it might not be about increasing your product offering, but selling more of the products you already carry; dreaming of retiring could mean you would like to bring a family member in to help with business operations.

It's not until you know what your dream truly is that you will be able to do the work necessary to achieve it.

2. CONVERT YOUR DREAM INTO A GOAL

The difference between a dream and a goal is a written date. Writing down a specific goal and a date forces us to do things we might never have done. It permits us to measure our progress and keeps us focused on reaching that dream.

Get a pen and paper and write down your specific dream or goal, along with the date when you are going to achieve it. If you won't commit to paper and pen, you won't be able to commit to the reality of accomplishing the task when faced with challenges. Write it down on your calendar so that you can keep track of your progress and make the efforts necessary to reach it.

3. VISUALIZE AND WRITE OUT YOUR GOAL

Each morning as soon as you wake up and each evening before you go to sleep, read the goal you have written down. Envision yourself as that successful person. Picture the layout and location of your second store. See yourself sitting at your desk looking over an impressive sales report. Imagine delegating tasks to your son or daughter who will one day take over. Make it yours in your mind.

Write down what you have envisioned, making sure that it is specific and strongly motivates you. For example: "On April 30, 2008, I, Henry Smith, will open my second outdoor power equipment dealership just 20 miles from the original one. All product lines are selling well. The service department is constantly busy. I've brought Henry Jr. on to help manage the increased workload. Business is good."

4. MAKE A LIST OF YOUR ASSETS AND RESOURCES

An asset could encompass your education, experience or personality; it could include the people you know, your bank account, your personal appearance and even your car. If you have a hard time coming up with your assets, ask your friends, colleagues and family about your good qualities.

In Henry's pursuit of opening a second store, he might say he is hard-working, determined, honest, organized and intelligent. He also has a good sense of humor and likes people. All of these qualities would be great to have when expanding a business.

Your resources, such as the people you know, the people you employ, your education and experience, can help you achieve your goal. Henry knows that his friend Sam opened a second location just a few years ago. Perhaps Sam would be willing to help, or knows someone who could. Your education is another resource. Does your school have an alumni association or networking events that you could attend? Do you need additional education to make your goal a reality? Consider your resources, and utilize them often.

5. WRITE DOWN YOUR OBSTACLES

The moment you set a goal, you and others will find a million reasons why you can't or shouldn't go after it. You will not attract obstacles or the naysayers, just because you are aware of them. In fact, the purpose of preempting barriers will facilitate your recognizing them when they occur, and not use them as excuses to give up on your dream.

For example, Henry's obstacle list may include: fear of failure, lack of staff required to man another location and the inability to handle the stress of two stores.

Henry wants something but is sabotaging himself with negative thoughts. Before he begins his action plan, Henry needs to work on believing in himself and his abilities. Many of the obstacles he faces are mental, but all can be overcome with careful planning.

6. WRITE OUT WHY YOU WANT THE GOAL

Do you deserve to be happy and have what you want? What are you willing to sacrifice to achieve your goal? Do you want this more than anything else and are you willing to face anything to achieve it? If your "why" isn't strong enough, you will not achieve your goal and will then blame the perceived obstacles.

Your "why" should look something like this: "I want to open a second location because I have proved successful in operating my first store, and would be proud to showcase that with growth and expansion. I want my family and friends to feel happy about my achievements. I want to do more for myself and my family, and by accomplishing this goal, I can provide them with the lifestyle they deserve."

7. WRITE YOUR ACTION PLAN

A book is read from the first page to the last, but goals are set from the end and work up to the beginning. Where do you want to be in 20 years, 10, three, one year, a month from now?

Most of us spend our time putting out fires, helping others and dealing with life's daily activities, many of which have nothing to do with our dreams. From now on, you should focus. Everything you do should lead you to achieving your goal.

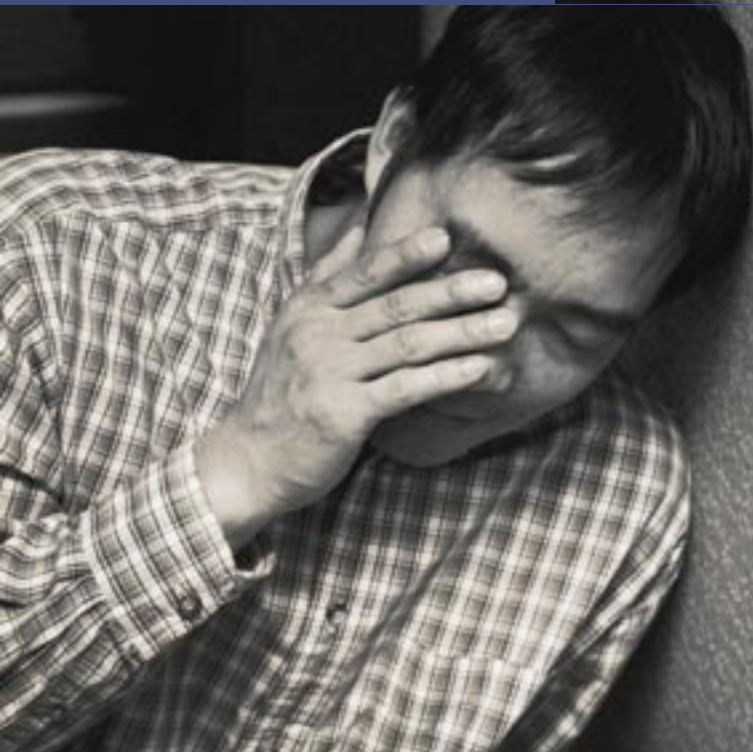
It's not until you know what your dream truly is that you will be able to do the work necessary to achieve it and receive the satisfaction and rewards you deserve.

Now that you know what your goal really is, and the exact date for achieving it, you need to possess a strong action plan. Who do you have to call? What do you have to read? What do you have to buy? What is the first step? And the next?

Remember, there is no secret to achieving your goals and living out your dream. All it takes is careful planning and prompt execution. Once you know what you want specifically and how to get it, it is time to follow through and achieve your goals. ■

About The Author

Linda Nacif, author of "Jump and the Joy Will Follow: How to Live in Conscious Joy and Health in Every Stage of Life," is a bilingual author and speaker with a Master's degree in clinical psychology. Through Linda's breakthrough techniques and passionate communication, she encourages clients to dare to go beyond their comfort zone by being adventurous, fit and enthusiastic. For information, call (619) 733-2071 or visit lindanacif.com.



Lead Staff Through Difficult Times

Use four essential guidelines to face company challenges head-on with staff by your side.

Challenges are a normal part of business—that's a fact. And every outdoor power equipment retailer, whether a start-up, a business in a high-growth phase, or even a long-standing established organization, will face both small and large hurdles every year. No matter what your company faces, if you move through the challenge in a specific way, you will find opportunity in the adversity and come out stronger.

Think of a challenge as any type of "difference" in the way you do business or in your company structure that has an impact on your organization. Many dealers have to face the challenge of a slow season that requires layoffs in order to be profitable. When working with a close-knit team as many dealers do, laying off one or two employees can rock the core of the rest. Unfortunately, as things like this occur, typically company leaders and their staff grind to a halt and refuse to move forward. Why? Because they fear making a wrong move and further worsening the problem. And while most company leaders do eventually see the challenge through, they waste time in the process and make the journey harder than it needs to be.

Before your next company challenge becomes apparent (or if you are in the midst of a challenge right now), take note of the following four guidelines. Following them during any crisis will shave precious moments off your reaction period and will enable your company to move forward in record speed.

1. RECOGNIZE AND ALLOW FOR THE NATURAL REACTION OF THE STAFF

Regardless of the challenge, you need to allow your staff to share their feelings. During this process, realize that everyone has different feelings and has their own unique process for dealing with the situa-

Use the company's vision to guide your intended new path or plan, and continue to share the next steps with your entire team.

tion at hand. For example, some people may be sad at the sudden adversity, some angry, and some will feel more driven than ever before. All of these feelings are normal, and no one right way to feel exists.

As a leader, you need to listen to all these different feelings and acknowledge each person. Also, this is a time for "no pressure." Therefore, embrace the fact that productivity will drop, at least for the immediate moment. Take the time to talk to people individually or in groups and create a space where people can be open. If you don't create this space, people will feel unimportant and won't want to move past this initial phase. Once you allow people to get their feelings out about the current challenge, they'll start to move forward.

And don't forget about yourself during this time. Even leaders need an outlet to vent and express their feelings. So make sure you have some sort of support system where you can air your concerns, such as family, friends or peers. For a leader to be strong during these times, he or she needs to be emotionally fit.

2. HAVE OPEN LINES OF COMMUNICATION

Communication is the key to making a difficult process more effective. During a challenge, you'll have a lot of important information you need to relay to people. Look at the culture of your dealership and determine what is the best way to deliver news. For some dealers, town hall style meetings work well; others do better with smaller group meetings. Speaking with employees one-on-one may also work well when discussing important news about the dealership's state.

The communication from you as the leader needs to be positive, proactive, motivating and authentic. Your staff will know when you're merely giving lip service. Also, reiterate the company's vision and mission and get everyone on board with the necessary course of action.

Whatever you do, do not deny what is happening, and do not downplay the severity of the situation. People will be more willing to go the extra mile and do "whatever it takes" when they know the leader is being honest and straightforward.

3. ALLOW YOURSELF TO RECEIVE SUPPORT FROM STAFF

The hardest thing for most leaders to do is receive support from

their employees. Realize, though, that you'll often see your staff at their best during a challenge. They'll step up to the plate and take on more responsibility. So rather than think you need to do everything yourself and keep your feelings bottled up, delegate tasks and share your feelings with employees. As long as you've been

No matter what your company faces, if you move through the challenge in a specific way, you will find opportunity in the adversity and come out stronger.

honest with them, they'll willingly and enthusiastically want to help any way they can. In fact, the more you allow them to "step up to the plate," the more empowered they'll be and the faster your company will move through the challenge.

4. LEAD YOUR STAFF BEYOND THE CHALLENGE

If you've allowed people to express their feelings, communicated authentically, and relied on your staff for support, then you have no choice but to move forward quickly. In fact, stagnating in the challenge is virtually impossible now, because everyone, from technicians to the salesman, will feel that they're important and that they have the power to make some serious change.

So at this point, you need to identify the opportunities that are apparent. If you've listened to your staff, chances are they will have pointed out new ideas you may never have thought of. Use the company's vision to guide your intended new path or plan, and continue to share the next steps with your entire team. No matter how limited you may feel

your options are at this point, stay positive and proactive. You will push through to better times.

A NEW PATH TO SUCCESS

Unfortunately, many companies neglect these four steps. But when people don't get a chance to air their feelings and don't feel a strong sense of communica-

tion, they shut down and become paralyzed by fear. When this happens, everyone is in denial of the problem, and shop gossip takes center stage.

Your dealership never has to be stuck in that scenario again. Yes, there's a lot of vulnerability when it comes to leading during difficult times; but in that vulnerability there is also a lot of growth. Your company can come out the other side of the challenge stronger and smarter than ever before. Follow these four steps during any challenge, big or small. When you do, you're guaranteed to forge a new direction for your dealership—one that leads to newfound avenues of success and prosperity for all. ■

About The Author

Anne Houlihan is president of Satori Seal, where she tripled revenues in one year and increased profits 140 percent with innovative budgeting and leadership techniques. In addition, Houlihan is founder of Golden Key Leadership, where she combines more than 25 years of hands-on corporate experience and coaching to help companies of all sizes. With her speaking and consulting, she helps improve management techniques, empower employees to be decision-makers, bridge the generational gap and overcome adversity. For more information, go to GoldenKeyLeadership.com or call 951-235-5405.

A Greener Shade

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* according to current data posted on the EPA Web site as of November 2007

** as measured per ANSI B175.2

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VEGETABLE OIL BASED, BIODEGRADABLE BAR & CHAIN OIL STIHL BioPlus™ Oil

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LOW-EMISSION, LOW-VIBRATION CHAIN SAW

MS 441 STIHL Magnum™

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of Orange



LOW-EMISSION MULTI-TASK TOOL

STIHL KM 130 R

Delivers Versatility

The STIHL KombiSystem is a family of multi-task tools comprised of a STIHL Kombi-Motor (KM) and numerous KombiSystem attachments. Powered by a larger-displacement, lower-emission engine than the KM 90 R or KM 110 R, the KM 130 R Kombi-Motor offers the cleanest-running engine in its class, according to current data posted at the EPA Web site as of November 2007. The KombiSystem tools offer great flexibility for tasks such as blowing, trimming, edging, pruning, hedge trimming, sweeping, cultivating, and more. This system saves on cost, as well as storage and transportation space.

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FULLY SYNTHETIC, BIODEGRADABLE 2-CYCLE ENGINE OIL

STIHL HP Ultra Engine Oil

Biodegradable by 80% in 21 days, STIHL HP Ultra 2-Cycle Engine Oil is specially suited for high-performance chain saws and power tools. Your customers will appreciate this oil's outstanding engine cleaning characteristics and its "ultra" superior lubricating qualities in comparison to other 2-cycle engine oils.

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LOW-EMISSION GRASS TRIMMER

STIHL FS 130 R – Cleanest in its class*

The STIHL FS 130 R grass trimmer is powered by a 36.3 cc, low-emission engine delivering 73% lower emissions than EPA requirements. This larger engine offers 40% more power with only 8 ounces more weight than the STIHL FS 110 R.

** according to current data posted on the EPA Web site as of November 2007*

For More Information Circle 204 on Reader Service Card



Motivating a Multigenerational Workforce

Preserve your employee base by understanding and meeting the needs of every generation.

Many outdoor power equipment retailers struggle with the challenge of managing today's diverse workforce. Businesses can't assume that people of varying ages will understand each other or have the same perspectives and goals. In order to be successful, managers and owners of outdoor power equipment dealerships need to better understand generational differences. Failing to do this can result in failure for all parties involved. Following are some of the most common differences between the generations and ways to make sure that each group's talents are recognized, accepted and maximized.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS WORK

One of the most common complaints Boomers often make regarding Gen Xers and Gen Yers is that they don't have the same work ethic. It is true that they don't, but

this doesn't mean they are not hard workers. Instead, it means that they place a different value and priority on work. While many Boomers have a love/hate relationship with work, and do work to work, Gen Xers and Gen Yers, on the other hand, work to be able to fulfill other priorities and desires. To keep them interested in and dedicated to their work, they must be motivated with business practices that appeal to their generation.

While Gen Xers and Gen Yers are motivated by different things, both age groups often prefer frequent communication in the workplace. This includes being told "why" they are assigned a task, and not just the "what" the task entails. In addition, both like to be included in events and conversations regarding topics of business that do not affect them directly. All the while, both really like to be employed at a company where they can have fun doing their jobs.

In order to be successful, managers and owners of outdoor power equipment dealerships need to better understand generational differences.



Gen Xers, who were born between 1965 and 1976, enjoy being given the opportunity to collaborate with others in a team-oriented environment. When a job is done well, they should receive recognition in a way that connects with what they value the most. Some value handwritten thank you notes, while others are motivated by a tangible gift, such as flowers or gift certificates.

When it comes to work hours, Gen Xers really enjoy having a flexible schedule that allows them to better manage their priorities outside of work. This flexibility can be given just as simply as providing schedule changes to accommodate these needs. As an employer or manager, it is important to understand that these are needs, not wants, and treat them as such.

Flexibility is also of extreme importance to the Gen Yers (born between 1977 and the present). They work well when they are given flexibility and options regarding when and where work is done. The Gen Yers will often resist what they see as rigid workday starting times. They do not understand why coming to work 15 to 30 minutes late is viewed by Boomers as irresponsible behavior, and prefer the freedom to start and end the work day when they see fit. In retail, the doors don't open without a body in the store. A store owner or manager should arrive early to open up shop, but others may be afforded more flexibility. If you have a technician that prefers to come in later in the mornings, allow them that opportunity, and extend his or her workday past the store's hours of business to make up for the late start.

It is also important to continuously assign them challenging tasks and provide a variety in work. It is not uncommon for the Gen Yer to leave a higher-paying job for the opportunity to experience something new.

This relates to the different way in which they view a career path. They do not see career paths as linear, and their tenure in a particular job is often no more than two to three years.

Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964, are often motivated by a high-status position, power and prestige. They are often traditionalists, and the perks of a certain position appeal to them most. They want titles and authority that correspond with the level of responsibility.

Baby Boomers, like Gen Xers, also enjoy working with others, but prefer to do it in a more formal setting. They like to participate in associations and conventions that keep them professionally connected to their peers. Boomers are motivated by working together on professional projects in affiliation with others like them. When it comes to compensation for their hard work, they prefer rewards that are more long term, such as profit sharing and health care benefits.

COMMITMENTS AND LOYALTIES

Boomers have always been seen as loyal to their companies. They feel a sense of belonging and dedication based on the history developed with their employer. This is not the case for the Gen Xers and Gen Yers. They are more focused on the present and future, and don't see a problem in moving on as soon as a better opportunity comes along. This may be viewed as disloyal by their current employer, but that isn't necessarily true.

Gen Xers and Gen Yers can be very committed to their work, although not to a particular job. They will do what is required, but not because of a sense of belonging based on tenure or what the company has provided in the past, but because

they find meaning in the work. Because of this, it is important to continue to motivate employees by providing them with meaningful and challenging work. They need to feel that they are making a difference by doing what they do.

To motivate the Gen Xers and Gen Yers who are loyal to themselves first, employer second, you must directly connect the job to their interests. To keep them satisfied, they must find meaning in their work, and enjoy doing it.

To provide a fun and enjoyable workplace, coordinate group outings that relate to the culture and interests of the techs and salesmen. These should be optional, because not every employee will be interested in attending.

Each generation requires a different set of standards to motivate them at work. In order for a company to be truly successful, all coexisting generations in the workplace need to understand and value each other, even when their perspectives and goals are vastly different. Management plays a key role in how the different generations will interact together.

Instead of looking for a quick solution, spend some time getting to know the talent with whom you work, focusing on their perspectives and goals. Then, everyone will be in a better position to capitalize on the strengths of the differences, minimizing the challenges. ■

About The Author

Patti Fralix, author of the book "How to Thrive in Spite of Mess, Stress and Less," inspires positive change in work, life and family through speaking, consulting and coaching. She is founder and president of The Fralix Group Inc., a leadership excellence firm based in Raleigh, NC. Patti has spent the past 20 years providing practical solutions to audiences of all sizes. For more information, please contact her at pfralix@fralixgroup.com.

The Value of Mentors

Dealers can see career success by teaming up with an industry mentor.

Benjamin Franklin once said, “There are two ways to acquire wisdom; you can either buy it or borrow it.” By buying it, you pay full price in terms of time and cost to learn the lessons you need to learn. By borrowing it, you go to those men and women who have already paid the price to learn the lessons and get their wisdom from them.

This is the essence of the mentor-protégé relationship. By going to people who are ahead of you in the personal or professional arena and opening yourself to their input, advice and guidance, you can save yourself the time and money required to learn it on your own.

M.R. “Kop” Kopmeyer, a respected success authority, once told me that perhaps the fastest way to get ahead was to study the experts and to do what they do, rather than trying to learn it all on your own. He mentioned that no one lives long enough to learn everything they need to learn starting from scratch. To be successful, we must find people who have already paid the price to help us learn the things that we need to know in order to achieve our goals.

CHOOSING A MENTOR

Mentors should be people you respect, admire and want to be like. The advice you seek should be guidance regarding your character and personality as well as specific ideas on how you can do your job better and faster. There are two vital qualities to look for in a mentor: character and competence.

Character is by far the most important. Look for a mentor who has the kind of character you admire and respect. A person who has high degrees of intelligence, integrity, judgment and wisdom is a good choice. The more you associate with the individuals, who are advanced in the development of their character, the more you will model after them.

The second quality you look for in a mentor is competence. This means that the person is extremely good at what he or she does. A good mentor in your career is one who has the knowledge, skills and abilities to move ahead far more rapidly than their peers.

WORKING TOGETHER

The impact of a mentor on your life is dependent on

two additional factors. The first is your degree of openness to being influenced by another person. Openness is important because many people, especially young people, are extremely impatient, always looking for shortcuts. When they get advice on something that another person has spent many years learning, they often try to add their own variations and improve on it without ever having mastered the original instruction.

Remember, when you open yourself up to guidance and input from another person, concentrate first on understanding and learning exactly what that person has to teach you. Afterward, you can modify and change that lesson to suit your changing circumstances.

By going to people who are ahead of you in the personal or professional arena and opening yourself to their input, advice and guidance, you can save yourself the time and money required to learn it on your own.

The second factor that determines the influence of a mentor on your life is the willingness of the mentor to help you in every way possible to achieve your goals. We know that the more emotionally involved someone is in our lives, the more susceptible we are to being influenced by that person. When you seek out a mentor, look for someone who genuinely cares about you as a person and wants you to be successful in your endeavors.

For a good mentor-protégé relationship, you must be open to their influence and instruction, and at the same time, the mentor must be genuinely concerned about your well-being and your ultimate success.

FINDING SUCCESS

Having mentors can be crucial toward achieving in all areas of life. Following are 12 steps for building successful mentor-protégé relationships:

1. Set clear goals and know exactly what you want to



To be successful, we must find people who have already paid the price to help us learn the things that we need to know in order to achieve our goals.

accomplish before you start thinking of who can help you to do so.

2. Determine what you will have to do in order to achieve your goals, the obstacles you will have to overcome, and the roadblocks you will have to surmount.

3. Identify the areas of knowledge, skill and expertise you will have to acquire in order to overcome the obstacles existing between you and your goals.

4. Search for the most successful people in the areas in which you will need the most help.

5. Join the clubs, organizations and business associations these successful people belong to.

6. Get the attention of the people you want to meet by being actively involved and volunteering for responsibilities within the organizations.

7. Work, study and practice continually to get better at what you do, developing a reputation for being up-and-coming in your field

and attracting mentors.

8. When you find a potential mentor, don't make a nuisance of yourself. Instead, ask for 10 minutes of his or her time and nothing more. Most potential mentors are busy people, and they may be opposed to someone's trying to take up a lot of their time.

9. When you meet with a potential mentor, express your eagerness to be more successful in your field. Tell them you would appreciate some guidance and advice to help you move ahead. Ask for an answer to a specific question, for a specific book or audio program recommendation, or for a specific idea that has been helpful to him or her in the past.

10. After the initial meeting, send a thank you note expressing your gratitude and appreciation for his or her time and guidance. Mention that you hope to meet again if you have another question.

11. Each month, drop your

mentor a note informing them of what you are doing and how you are progressing. Nothing makes a mentor more open to helping you further than your making it clear that the previous help has done some good.

12. Arrange to meet with your mentor again, perhaps on a monthly basis, or even more often if you work closely together.

Over the course of your life, you will have many mentor-protégé

relationships. As you grow and develop, you will seek out different mentors, the people who can give you the kind of advice that is most relevant to your current situation.

Successful people are very open to helping others who want to be successful. This is especially true if they know you are willing to be a mentor to others who are younger and less experienced than you. The more open you are to helping others up the ladder of success, the more open others will be to helping you. ■

About the author

Brian Tracy is a legend in the fields of management, leadership and sales. He has produced more than 350 audio/video programs and has written over 42 books, including his just-released book "The Way To Wealth." To receive a free copy of one of Brian's CDs, go to briantracy.com and click on the Special Offers, Free Audio Program. Also check out Brian Tracy University of Sales and Entrepreneurship at briantracyu.com. Brian can be reached at 858-481-2977.

Take a “Smart Break”

Enhance your productivity in 20 minutes or less

If you tend to feel rundown, burnt out, or just plain tired by mid-afternoon, you're not alone. Many studies show that people naturally experience a drop in energy and alertness around 3 p.m. Unfortunately, many people attempt to get through this natural low time in unhealthy ways.

They raid the vending machines, believing that caffeinated beverages and sugary snacks will give them the energy they need. While soda and candy do offer a short energy spurt, within an hour they often experience the “crash” and end up feeling more tired than they did

initially. Even worse, they repeat this cycle daily.

Rather than succumb to the lure of the vending machine, consider taking a 10- to 20-minute “smart break”—a break that physiologically and psychologically rejuvenates you so you can refocus on your most important tasks. By doing so, you will feel more energized for the balance of the day, with a net gain to the overall quantity and quality of your work. In the day-to-day hustle and bustle of an outdoor power equipment dealership, a break may not seem like a possibility. It is important to understand that taking a few minutes now will lead to

Taking a few minutes now will lead to more productive work later.



more productive work later.

The smart break is smart for a number of reasons:

1. It's specially designed to give you a high-powered recovery period that recharges your physical energy, emotional balance and mental focus.

2. It affords a quick "attitude adjustment" interval, during which you can check your mental thermostat and consciously turn it a few notches to the positive.

3. It's a performance booster, enabling you to review your daily objectives, stay focused on key priorities, and make the last quarter or so of your work day as productive as possible.

SMART AND ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS

A smart break has two important components: 1) a relaxation component, and 2) an energy boosting component.

The relaxation component is downtime. It includes activities like closing your eyes, deep breathing or muscle relaxation. The goal here is for you to step back from the intense effort you've been exerting all day, so you can deactivate, disengage, and totally relax for these few minutes (or few seconds, if that's all you can spare).

In the energy boosting part of your break, you reactivate, reinvigorate, and prepare yourself for a productive afternoon of work. This is what makes the smart break a performance-enhancing tool. Instead of having your productivity steadily decline until you pack up for home, a smart break helps you access a higher level of functioning, where you're firing on all cylinders. You're refocused on your priorities, and recommitted to a high-energy afternoon filled with equipment repairs or sales.

PRACTICAL TIPS

So, what can you do during your smart break to trigger both the necessary components? The break has to be simple and flexible enough to fit into your schedule and environment, but significant enough to revitalize your energy and performance levels. Following are examples of activities to include in your smart break:

- Switch to a less demanding activity to give your brain a rest. Read the paper or trade magazine, listen to music, check e-mail, etc. Especially if you're involved in a thinking-intensive task, momentarily switching to something mundane activates a new part of your brain, which triggers alertness.
- Go for a brief, brisk walk. A 10-15 minute walk gets your heart pumping and your blood circulating, giving much needed oxygen to your brain. If you can't get away for a walk, then get up from your work station and do some light stretching, or at least check your posture and straighten up.
- Eat a light, healthy snack. Avoid sugary or fried foods. Fruit, nuts or cheese are smart options for mid-day snacking.
- Drink a glass of water or decaffeinated tea. Caffeine will actually dehydrate you, causing you to feel tired.
- Do a deep-breathing exercise, which will quiet and clear your mind.
- Make sure you're focused on what you need to complete today. If you're not making progress on your daily objectives, make a plan to get back on track immediately.
- Check your attitude; make it energized, relaxed and focused. You are what you think. If you

constantly tell yourself, "I'm tired," then you will feel tired. But if you tell yourself, "I feel energized and ready to finish the day with a bang," then you will.

- Commit to finishing the day strong, with a flourish of productive activity.

SMART BREAK TODAY

While you can do any combination of items on this list (and can likely think of more things to add), the last three items are non-negotiable. You have to do these to make the smart break work for you.

Ideally, your smart break should last 10-20 minutes. That's what experts say gives your body and brain an optimal period of rejuvenation. Now, reality dictates that many afternoons you don't have 5 minutes to slow down, much less 20. Even if you're blazing around at 100 miles per hour, you can have an "on-the-fly" break that consists of taking a couple deep breaths, straightening your posture, reviewing your priorities and committing to finish the day strong.

To experience the benefits of your smart break, you have to take it. Schedule it, and make it automatic. Think of it as a "productivity break" to feel better about not working for a few minutes. Tell yourself, "The fourth quarter is mine"... and it most likely will be. ■

About The Author

Peter McLaughlin is an internationally recognized author, speaker and consultant who works with businesses to maximize productivity and achieve peak performance. He is co-author of the best-selling book "Mentally Tough: The Principles of Winning at Sports Applied to Winning in Business." Selected in a national poll as one of the best business speakers in the nation, Peter has worked with companies such as American Express, Hewlett-Packard, IBM, Microsoft, Target and PepsiCo. For more information, please contact Peter at 303-321-5008 or at peter@petermclaughlin.com.

“When you carry several lines, more and more of your time and money is spent managing those lines. As a result, less and less time is spent marketing and selling those lines.”

— Dealer Success Guide, Volume 11, Page 12



Carl's Mower & Saw in Ferndale, WA

At Carl's Mower and Saw in Ferndale, WA, Carl Levien improved his business's profit numbers by focusing his dealership's efforts on its most profitable lines. A 2006 Dealers in Excellence Award winner, Levien came to this decision after evaluating what each of his product lines had to offer.

“We looked at our sales histories and profitability line by line,” Carl says. “We decided to focus on the four lines we felt were the most profitable for us and the strongest in our market.”

By eliminating the underperforming lines, Levien was able to focus more attention on those that offered more profitability. “We were now able to focus our merchandising, marketing and sales efforts on these four brands,” Carl points out. “We were more effective. Customers were drawn in.”

Initially Levien thought the books would show a drop in sales. Levien was proven wrong when the intense focus placed on the left-over lines led to a growth in sales. Additionally, pushing the service behind the lines also helped in making the few choices appear more attractive.

Focusing on service is one of the great selling points at Carl's. To meet the service needs of their commercial customers, Levien created several services that provide convenience and unmatched value. Commercial-customer services available at Carl's include: the Trade a Blade system, a wash slab, training and education, as well as free five-hour check-ups.

With the rapid Trade a Blade service, the commercial customer is able to store a spare set of purchased blades at the shop. When the blades become dull, the mower is in and out of the shop in a matter of minutes for a quick blade change. The dull blades that were left behind are sharpened and stored until the next visit. Once the blades are worn out from sharpening, they are replaced free of charge.

Marketing products with the service works well with the free five-hour check-up. After five hours of

use, customers may bring in their mowers to receive a full check-up consisting of an oil change, blade sharpening and general equipment lookover. This allows customer to enjoy free initial maintenance while technicians can search for minor problems that have the potential to become big issues. This service is offered to residential customers as well.

Levien continues to evaluate the lines he has backed with unmatched service. He frequently assesses their success, in an attempt to maintain an average gross wholegoods margin of 23 percent. “We have more competition in our market for certain lines and products,” says Levien. “So we may only get 20 percent on certain items. The point is that we're constantly looking at it and thinking about it.” ■

Carrying fewer lines allows Carl's Mower & Saw to focus more on equipment service.





Vance Outdoor Power Equipment in Glasgow & Bowling Green, KY

At Vance Outdoor Power Equipment, the customers that had enjoyed their products and service for over 30 years began visiting the big box stores for the same products. In order to remain competitive, Garnett Vance began by assessing the good qualities that his competitors possessed. "We wanted to remain an independent dealer, but also become a savvy marketer and retailer," Vance says.

The big box stores surpassed Vance's business with better parking, extended hours of operation, a larger variety of inventory and sizeable displays. Vance, however, offers his customers better product knowledge with a trained sales force, factory-trained service department, substantial parts inventory, and a variety of name-brand inventory.

After assessing the outstanding qualities that both he and the big box competitors possessed, Vance rewrote his business plan with the intention of excelling in all these areas. In doing so he would improve the success of marketing as well as the customers' experience.

Moving into a new facility allowed Vance's goal of becoming a more competitive dealer to take shape. Nestled in a supreme, high-traffic area, the large facility features a sizeable parking lot with a drive-around service department. The store hours were extended, as well as pick-up and delivery hours per customer request. Outdoor displays and an 8,000-square-foot showroom offer customers plenty of choices.

In addition to the facility and service improvements, Vance has enhanced their marketing techniques. Displays are changed often to show customers equipment in a new light. They utilize moving displays, videos and music to entice the customer, all in an effort to stand above.

"If we are to survive," Vance emphasizes, "we have to elevate ourselves to where we are a customer-friendly operation." ■



In order to remain competitive, Vance made changes to his dealership that would improve the success of marketing efforts as well as the customer's experience.

“In many cases, the quality of your relationship with the customer is the competitive advantage that enables you to edge out others who may have similar products and services.”

— Dealer Success Guide, Volume 8, Page 4



Fun Wheels Power Equipment in Marietta, GA

At Fun Wheels Power Equipment in Marietta, GA, they do more than just offer first-rate products and service. They go above and beyond by educating their landscape customers through informational classes on topics such as equipment maintenance and parts stocking. In educating the landscape crew members, Patti Loveless of Fun Wheels hopes to build a connection that will help build sales.

Loveless understands the value of information, and wants to pass it on to her customers. Educating landscapers on proper maintenance and parts stocking regimens helps drive sales. Customers not only purchase more products as a result of gained knowledge, but realize that they are gaining more than just products when investing in what Fun Wheels has to offer.

The larger landscape customers of Fun Wheels can take advantage of the training classes provided free of charge to their company and employees. If Loveless

or another member of the Fun Wheels staff notices a landscaper coming in for repairs that seem to be a recurring problem with their equipment, they will approach the landscape company's management. Suspecting that the chronic equipment trouble may be resulting from a lack of proper maintenance, the Fun Wheels team will suggest setting up a maintenance class for the landscaper's staff.

News of these classes has spread, and Fun Wheels is often approached by a landscape customer who would like their staff to be better informed. When approached for a class, Loveless and her staff will schedule something as soon as is convenient. “We have classes whenever the need arises,” says Loveless. “If we have a lot of interest, we will invite several landscapers to the shop for a class during the late fall or early winter.”

The landscape crew members and leaders are mainly instructed by Loveless' husband Ron, but distributors are also willing to offer their expertise in educating the masses. If a class contains several Spanish-speaking workers, Loveless will make the appropriate arrangements and have a Spanish-speaking employee or distributor lead the lesson.

Both the landscape companies and Fun Wheels benefit from the courses designed to transmit knowledge from dealers and distributors to the landscapers. “The crew members learn a lot about maintaining the equipment and increasing its life,” says Loveless. “They will usually start stocking maintenance parts like air filters, oil filters, oil, spark plugs, etc.—things they will use on a more regular basis. Overall, the classes seem to be appreciated a great deal by the owners and the employees.” ■



“If you are going to be in this business, you need to think of new ways to stay successful. You need to stay profitable year-round.”

— Dealer Success Guide, Volume 1, Page 31

Hill Country Outdoor Power in Austin, TX

Andy Fogarasi and his partner purchased Hill Country Outdoor Power roughly five years ago with little experience in the outdoor power equipment industry. Upon purchasing the business they had a plan to one day offer online parts sales, but only after gaining the experience they felt necessary to do it right.

“We knew we wanted to offer Internet parts sales,” explains Fogarasi. “We didn’t know how we were going to do it or exactly what the focus was going to be, so we dedicated a couple of years to just figuring out this business.” Fogarasi and his partner spent a few years just running the business. They began to better understand the service end of the business, sales and dealing with commercial customers.

In 2004 they felt ready for their next endeavor and hired a computer science graduate to add parts sales to their dealership website. The simple addition to the website didn’t bring the dealership many parts sales, so they decided to create a separate entity. “By the end of 2004, we had created partstree.com and were quickly booking 30 orders a day,” says Fogarasi. At partstree.com orders for delivery can be easily placed for both outdoor power equipment and parts. The service offers users convenience and resources for finding the right parts for their equipment.

With the newly created partstree.com, Fogarasi along with his partner, wife and staff were working together diligently each day—and often into the night—to print and fill the 30 parts orders they received daily. According to Fogarasi, this was all a part of the plan to perfect online parts sales. “We were all filling orders until midnight,” explains Fogarasi. “We were killing ourselves and knew it. It was all planned to help us understand how the process works, determine what needed to and could be automated, and identify all of the holes in the system.”

For the next two months, Fogarasi and his team continued to fill orders as they had been, all the while assessing the system. Fogarasi surveyed his team on where they felt improvements should be made. “After two months we shut off the advertising and outlined a

program of what we were going to have to improve so we could get above 30 orders a day without killing ourselves,” says Fogarasi. They worked together to identify and prioritize the problems. “Two years later we still have yet to fix everything,” shares Fogarasi. “But we have built a really substantial set of software that basically eliminates a lot of problems.”

After building on and improving their online parts sales system, sales continued to grow tremendously, so much so that they were forced to rent an 8,000-square-foot facility up the street to keep up with the demand. The facility interior has been outfitted to suit the parts needs perfectly. Shelving is arranged to accommodate as many parts as possible while aiding in their overall organization. A conveyor that stretches the length of the building allows parts to be pulled from shelves and carried down to the person responsible for their packaging and shipping.

There are 10-12 employees dedicated solely to handling the partstree.com business. In addition, the added parts business helps to keep technicians busy in the slower winter months. It also helps to stabilize overall business sales throughout the year, allowing Fogarasi to keep his best employees on the payroll year-round. In the winter months, Fogarasi sends out 80-100 orders a day. In the spring and summer months, sales peak at 300-400 orders a day.

With the addition of the new facility, Fogarasi has limited the amount of parts inventory stored at their dealership’s location, but can get needed parts when necessary and with great ease. All parts for the dealership are ordered through partstree.com. Ordering the dealership’s parts in this manner saves on manpower at the dealership because all manufacturer parts orders are done by partstree.com staff.

According to Fogarasi, having the online parts store is a major benefit to all areas of the business. “It gives us more parts for our retail store, and helps with revenues during the off-season so I can afford to pay my technicians and have better-quality people working in my store,” explains Fogarasi. “With better-quality people I take better care of my customers.” ■

“Not only does the diverse offering provide a steady income year-round, it creates floor traffic and an opportunity to build relationships with customers.”

— Dealer Success Guide, Volume 4, Page 25

Mast-Lepley Ag-Hardware-Turf in Apple Creek, OH

This Apple Creek, OH, dealer has figured out a way to stay successful in an ever-changing marketplace. The diverse product offering at Mast-Lepley Ag-Hardware-Turf attracts customers rather successfully, keeping the sales going all year long.

The diversification in product offering at Mast-Lepley began with an attempt to improve the service department operations. Dave Steiner, Mast-Lepley's general manager, thought that stocking the store with hardware used on a daily basis in the service department would save them both time and money. Technicians would no longer pay retail price at the hardware store down the street.

Steiner felt the time and money savings were enough to warrant bringing in the hardware items. Any additional hardware sales were welcome, but not expected. Though it was not anticipated, the hardware items offered at



Mast-Lepley offers their customers the ability to purchase apparel when visiting the dealership.

Mast-Lepley flew off the shelves. The success of the hardware sales led to thoughts about an even broader product offering.

Soon, Mast-Lepley became the one stop shop for Steiner's rural and commercial customers alike. Aside from outdoor power equipment, which still remains the store's focus, customers could now purchase Carhartt clothing, Red Wing Shoes, Reddy Heaters, rakes and shovels, trailer parts, paint, plumbing and electrical supplies, and pet food among other things. Due to their history in the silo-building business, they were already offering silo feeding, milking and manure-handling equipment.

The many different products offered at Mast-Lepley are all sold with a side of quality service. "That's what builds a large repeat customer base," says Steiner. The business has continued to succeed thanks to customer service that excels and a product offering that surpasses. "We've been willing to add new lines of equipment and products to stay diversified. As weather or economic changes have arisen, we've been able to ride out the lows while remaining financially strong." ■



Crescent Springs Hardware in Crescent Springs, KY

At Crescent Springs Hardware in Crescent Springs, KY, they are willing to admit that they were nervous when a popular box store opened up just two blocks away from their business. Two years later they have realized that the nerves were unnecessary. A loyal customer base and diverse product and service offering proved to be what they needed to sustain as a business.

At Crescent Springs they go beyond outdoor power equipment and offer customers other products in the area of plumbing, electrical and general hardware. The product mix has been this diverse since the store opened. "We've been here for 35 years," says owner Rose Wilson. "Our product offering just keeps getting more and more diverse."

Wilson concedes that having the additional products available in the store helps them to sell their outdoor power equipment. "Many people who come in for hardware will come back to shop our lawn and garden section," reports Wilson. "Just the same, people who come in for a piece of equipment will shop our hardware store."

The range at the family-owned business that Wilson operates with her four children and two grandchildren goes beyond products, and into their service department. "Their six full-time certified technicians will fix anything from a chainsaw to a screen door," says area distributor Vernon Stone.

When asked what they won't do, Wilson explains they will only refuse low-quality, inexpensive, two-cycle equipment. "If a person buys a weed eater or a chainsaw for \$89.95 and they need it repaired, after the repair order is written, the mechanic tears it apart to see what the problem is, parts are ordered and equipment is reassembled it will cost him \$40-50," says Wilson. "The customer will be irate since they only paid \$90 for it brand new."

Since opting not to take in or repair the inexpensive two-cycle equipment, Wilson and her team will suggest the customer purchase a higher-end, quality piece of equipment. "We would be glad to sell them something that is quality and will last," Wilson tells.

"We have been here so long that most people know we will fix about anything," Wilson explains. "Sometimes someone will come in and say a friend or neighbor told them that we do repairs. Word of mouth is our best advertising."

As for the mix of equipment, Wilson says it works well year-round. "The two really complement each other nicely," Wilson explains. "There are times of year when lawn and garden will carry hardware because they are slow or hardware will carry lawn and garden because they are slow. It's a wonderful mix." ■



4 Seasons Equipment in Tupelo, MS

4 Seasons Equipment was doing pretty well for itself when business partners Barry Jagers and Russ Harrington (pictured) decided they wanted more. In an attempt to grow sales and diversify their business, they began searching for a product that would allow them to do just that.

Six months after opening a new facility, Harrington began looking for a diversifying product that would offer off-season revenue, and additional sales for parts and service. In searching for a new addition to their dealership, he discovered Yamaha Motorsports.

"The Yamaha dealer in Tupelo had just closed after many years in business," Harrington tells. "So there was already a large customer base for parts and service." Yamaha's popularity as a brand would ease marketing pressures. "Yamaha is a big name in motorsports," Harrington points out. "They have about 25 percent market share."

Harrington and his partner Jagers knew that the Yamaha line was what their dealership needed to diversify. The next step was convincing the Yamaha rep that the line would perform well in their dealership.

"I started calling the local Yamaha rep," Harrington says. "At first he didn't even want to talk to us because he didn't want his product in a lawn mower shop. When he finally did visit and saw our operation, he changed his mind."

After the Yamaha rep was impressed with the operation Harrington and Jagers were running, they sought more. The dealership was responsible for collecting demographic, market, statistics and traffic information for the rep. Once the deal was finalized, roughly 40 percent of the 7,000-square-foot show floor was reserved for the Yamaha products.

One full-time employee was hired specifically to manage the new line by ordering wholegoods and parts, merchandising and selling. A full-time technician was also brought on to service solely Yamaha products.

Sales for the Yamaha line have been growing at a steady pace of 25 percent each year. ■

“The easiest place to exceed your customers’ expectations and differentiate your store from the big boxes is with your parts and service department.”

— Dealer Success Guide, Volume 10, Page 16



West Chester Lawn & Garden in Liberty Township, OH

At West Chester Lawn & Garden in Liberty Township, OH, Dale Magie has focused on guaranteeing the success of his business by continuously growing the size and popularity of their parts and service. Abundant product options and rapid service have helped him to do so.

Magie has invested extensively in both his parts and service departments, and he wants his customers to see that too. Each customer is treated to a tour of the expansive parts department and the service department which operates like a well-oiled machine.

The parts department at West Chester exemplifies their slogan: “Your one stop lawn shop.” The significantly large department houses over \$500,000 in non-serialized parts. Magie also offers an eBay storefront that carries OEM and aftermarket parts. To push parts sales even further, Magie awards technicians with a commission on the parts they sell.

The service department at West Chester runs smoothly thanks to the mobile computer system that provides Internet access, various equipment software and parts lookup. The parts lookup system affords technicians the luxury of locating a part within the system and printing a part delivery request ticket. A parts department employee will then locate the necessary part and deliver it to the appropriate tech. This time-saving technique means a faster turnaround time on repairs. It also increases the technicians’ billable hours.

If customers prefer not to bring their equipment into the shop, West Chester offers the utmost convenience with at-home repairs. A factory-trained technician arrives at the customer’s door ready to perform routine maintenance or additional repairs. Customers can request the service by phone or 24/7 via the Internet. If the technician is unable to repair equipment onsite, qualifying customers are provided a piece of loaner equipment.

The zero down time, mobile service is available for any brand no matter where the equipment was purchased. This service satisfies customers with its convenience, and Magie with additional sales in slower seasons.

Magie appreciates the hard work employees put in to help in the success of the business, and doesn’t let them forget it. “We reward our entire staff for achieving certain levels of production,” he explains. “After all, everyone participates in the details and customer relations to deliver the highest possible service satisfaction.” ■



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*Terry, Brian and Kevin Deaver
Peninsula Ace Hardware
Hampton, Virginia*

“With profits going up, I know I’ll have a business to hand down.”

Hardware and retail have been in the Deaver bloodlines since 1948. Today, Terry Deaver knows that sons Kevin and Brian will inherit the business when he retires – as he did from his father – and he’s proud of that legacy. Terry is confident that the business will be alive and well when succession time comes, and going STIHL exclusive is a big reason why. “Our sales are up 28% and have more than doubled in five years,” Terry says. “By selling

high-quality STIHL products and using all of the resources they make available, we really stand out from the competition,” adds Kevin. “Family means everything around here. And the way STIHL treats us, you know they feel the same way.”

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