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November, 2008

BACK TO BASICS

The ABCs are still the Golden Rule

By Fern Nissim



It probably dawns on you, once you get stuck behind the big yellow school bus, that fall is slowly arriving in front of your eyes. All of the dreams of summer plans and goals are fading into the leaves and reality starts to set in. If you have not ramped up any efforts to build your business over the summer, the new season is the time to get back to basics.

Here are five Golden Rules that should provide a checklist of basics to get you started.

Sharpen your pencils. It's time to take a look at the budget. Depending on whether you are a service or product provider, or a nonprofit organization, this is the time of year to review those numbers and adjust spending or development to meet end-of-year goals. Sometimes a little creative coding needs to be determined to re-evaluate the bottom-line numbers. Now is the time to do that and prepare for the holiday season ahead.

Prepare all your supplies. Like any new student, businesses need to evaluate their inventory. Do you have all the resource materials, support and information you need to round out the year? What shape is your client data base in? Do you have a client reward and customer referral program in place? Is this the time to refresh some of those print materials and update your website? It is important to take a close look at marketing efforts to support the season.

Check your test scores. There is no room for failure here; only As and Bs are acceptable. Research can be a helpful tool in bringing your scores up. Have you surveyed your past clients to evaluate their experience? Getting customer opinion is key to building on successes and determining failures. Consider online or telephone surveys to benchmark

your efforts.

Do your homework. Have you looked at your competition lately? What are they doing this fall that might catch the eye of your customer and maximize your share of market? Be savvy about your industry and keep up to date with all the latest news, regulations, market shifts, etc. Resources for that are everywhere with the Internet. The world is changing in a heartbeat these days and you need to be prepared for that change.

Be tops in your class. You can be an all-around student and stand out in your class or industry by allocating time to the most important basic of all. Be visible and build credibility this season by making a new effort to participate in various gatherings, speaking opportunities, networking events, trade shows, etc., that will showcase your capabilities and give you the opportunity to build new business relationships.



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The ABCs of running a business or organization include basic elements that are true in all seasons across all industries, but many managers lose their focus when getting caught up in the business of doing business. This fall, take a step away from that for a day...even if you just came back from vacation...take the time to revisit what it is you're trying to accomplish.

It doesn't take a lot of creative planning to build the basics into your business. It does take some due diligence and an allocation of your time to make it happen. But the time investment will help you prepare for the new seasons ahead in a well-organized manner...and any teacher would give you a gold star for that effort.

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