



See for yourself how The Alternative Board® can help you take your business to the next level. Watch our video and Learn how TAB helps business owners manage a variety of business challenges and issues.

[Click here](#), to view the video.

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A WORD FROM THE TOP

The Alternative Board is:

TAB helps business owners grow their businesses, increase profits, and often in fewer hours per week. We do this through systems of peer advisory boards and executive coaching.

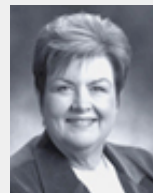
BUSINESS SEMINAR

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THE ALTERNATIVE BOARD®

Achieve Success with Peer Advice and Coaching



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See for yourself how The Alternative Board® can help you take your business to the next level.

Watch the video

TAB West Michigan Is Pleased to Announce Our New Emerging Entrepreneurs Boards

For Executives, Business Owners, Entrepreneurs

For More information [Click Here!](#)

Contact us at info@tabmichigan.com, if you want more information on our new boards that are forming.

MARKETING

How to Get the Most Out of Your Marketing Agency

By Blair Entenmann, President of MarketingHelp! and TAB West Michigan Member

There is a saying in the advertising and marketing agency world that the work is as good as the client. Having worked on both sides of the desk (on the client and agency side of the business), I believe this is true. Most clients accept this concept of mutual responsibility. To keep your outside marketing resources properly motivated and stimulated to do their best work, we offer the following suggestions:

- 1. Cultivate a close personal and business relationship.** Working together in a climate of mutual trust and confidence with open and honest communication is critically important. Develop compatibility in philosophy, work style and communication. Treat them as a "partner," not a "vendor."
- 2. Provide the opportunity to contribute.** Encourage input in the direction and management of the company or brand. Get them involved early in your strategic and tactical thinking. They have a wealth of information and resources to draw on that might help you make a better decision. Marketing and advertising people are very creative by nature and have many new ideas, approaches, and innovations. The more you involve them, the more motivated and productive they will become. Nothing de-motivates an outside marketing resource more than being the last to know about a strategic change.
- 3. Trust your agency and be willing to accept their thinking.** Be open-minded and always evaluate their thinking or proposals on the basis of objectives, not on your own preconceived ideas. Listen to their input and recommendations with a positive frame of mind. Over-exercising your prerogative or judgment often demoralizes an outside resource. You must be willing to accept their judgment in areas where they clearly have relative and relevant expertise.

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QUICK TIPS

No Solitaire Here

Our company, like many others, has periods of peak activity and times when things slow down a bit. One approach we use to keep everyone busy is our "Down Time" list. This list is posted for all employees to see and refer to when the phones aren't ringing. In fact, we solicit input from employees for the list— increasing their interest in getting things done by policing it themselves!

Carol Oliver

Wildlife Control Supplies

East Granby, CT

Show-up Technique

I got frustrated with paying for my staff to attend events only to have them decide at the last minute they couldn't attend. To change this behavior, I now make them pay the cost of admission to the event and then reimburse them through their expense report once they attend.

Jacob Schwartz

Jacobson & Schwartz

Rockville Ctr., NY

4. Give efficient direction, backed by sound logic and encourage directional improvement. When giving direction, make sure they know exactly what is needed. This will channel and focus the agency directly on the assignment. Give them the license to build upon the core concept or suggest better alternatives that you may not have thought of. Clear direction avoids "wheel-spinning" on non-productive efforts that ultimately leads to no resolution.

5. Give proper recognition for their efforts and accomplishments. Although you pay them a good hourly rate or media buying commission, thank you's can go a long way to getting a little extra effort or consideration when it's really needed. A simple memo acknowledging their efforts does more than say thanks; it builds greater and more productive involvement. Further, on internal documents, acknowledge the agency contributions. This will not only indicate to them that you want input, but also that their time and effort is indeed valued.

It certainly is not an all-inclusive list, but by following these points, you can build a better, more productive marketing team effort, which will ultimately mean higher sales, market share and profits.

Blair Entenmann is President of MarketingHelp!, a Grand Rapids based marketing firm specializing in helping clients catch and keep customers with better marketing strategies, programs and implementation. For more information, visit www.mktghelp.com or call 616-866-1198.

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FINANCE

Cast Expenses in Revenue Terms

We have always watched our costs extremely closely, but have become much more effective at controlling them since we started expressing costs saved in terms of top line revenues. For example, in a business where each dollar of revenue represents a gross margin of 25 percent, each \$100 of expenses eliminated translates into \$400 of revenue you would otherwise need to achieve the same result. Go one step further and look at the underlying activity needed to create revenue (in our case, patient visits) and the dollar savings start to have a real impact. When you communicate the impact of savings in this way, people really start to see the business in a new light—and it is wonderful to see expense reductions fall through the profit and loss statement all the way to the bottom line.

John Dugan, Farmingdale Physical Therapy, Farmingdale, NY

Calling References When Hiring

When calling hiring references, don't just call the references that the candidate gives you, call other people you know in the industry that may have worked with, or might know the person you are hiring. They are more likely to give honest answers because they have no vested interest in whether you hire the candidate or not.

TAB Winnipeg Board

Winnipeg, MB

Now Available:



Click on the book cover at left to order your copy of the #1 business book best seller* the **7 Secrets of Great Entrepreneurial**

Masters by Allen E. Fishman, Founder and CEO of The Alternative Board®.

*800 CEO Read, Aug. 1st, 2006.

SALES

Time to Lease

We typically lease about five to ten percent of our new sales. With money being tight, we have pushed leasing in our proposals and sales meetings, and found 25 percent or more of our new sales are choosing to lease. Now when our salesperson is told, “We are planning to purchase, but money is tight,” we show per month rates and finance the sale, closing an extra 20 percent of sales that may have been postponed or lost.

Walter Ross, Legiant, Austin, TX

HUMAN RESOURCES

Putting Carvel Out of Business

I got fed up with people having birthdays in the office. I didn't like the lack of productivity of the employee that day, the insidious pressure of who should pay for the cake, the party in the office and the ensuing work disruption. My solution was to give employees their birthday as a paid holiday—allowing me to avoid the issues. While it costs me a day's pay, I probably make it up in productivity. We party on my terms, not the biological clock of the employees. And Carvel (an ice cream company) isn't getting fat at my expense.

Paul Sperry, IDP Consulting, Jericho, NY

FINANCE

Raising Prices

Raising prices is always a difficult and potentially nerve-racking process that can result in a temptation to procrastinate. We have found that it is far better to raise prices little and often; it conditions clients to expect it, and the raise is never enough to become a point of contention. When you do raise prices, don't get locked into the idea that you have to increase all your customers/clients at the same time. While it takes more administrative time, staggering the increases by client over time gives you a chance to test the waters and lessens the exposure.

Jacob Schwartz, Jacobson & Schwartz, Rockville Ctr., NY

HUMAN RESOURCES

Beware of the Blackberry Redial

You may be surprised how common “the unintended” voicemail is becoming. During a recent group discussion, many of the business owners had “stories” of involvement in unintentional voicemail messages. One involved an employee who was out with a buddy discussing the details of the recent termination at the company of a high-level manager. What he did not know is that when he had set his cell phone down it had dialed the main office number and recorded the complete conversation on the general mailbox for many to hear the following Monday morning. There were other almost humorous stories of which no one wants to be a part of.

Dan Meyer, Amdien, Bellevue, WA

MARKETING

Education is the Most Important Part of Marketing

Our board was focused on marketing and how to differentiate themselves from the competition. Most significant to our board was, that thoughtful and ongoing education as to why their product better served potential client needs, was the most essential part of eventually making a sale.

Eastern Connecticut Board, Branford, CT



THE ALTERNATIVE BOARD®
Achieve Success with Peer Advice and Coaching

The Alternative Board® brings business owners, CEOs and presidents of non-competing businesses together in boards, where members can present challenges and opportunities to the board for seasoned, practical advice from other owners who understand one another's perspective and contribute meaningful solutions. The boards consist of up to 10 members, meeting monthly under the guidance of a TAB-Certified Facilitator. Over 300 TAB Boards are operating each month across the United States, Canada and South America. Since its inception, thousands of businesses have benefited from membership in The Alternative Board®. For more information on The Alternative Board®, visit www.TABMichigan.com

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