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## DULY QUOTED

*"You can't overestimate the need to plan and prepare. In most of the mistakes I've made, there has been this common theme of inadequate planning. You really can't over-prepare in business"*

- Chris Corrigan

## WISH WE SAID IT

*"Traditional thinking is all about 'what is' Future thinking will also need to be about what can be"*

- Edward de Bono

## THOUGHT OF THE MONTH

### Dealing with Loss

There are losses and then there are losses. Some of the things we lose in business we can easily recover from, like an advertising channel or a single point of sale. Sometimes we can bounce back from losing a key employee without too much difficulty, and sometimes we can lose an account without losing sleep along with it. The issue isn't whether or not we will have losses, but rather whether we can exert some control over what we lose, and more importantly control the damage we sustain upon suffering the loss.

The idea that losses come unexpectedly is not completely accurate. While seasoned business professionals may not know the exact timing of a loss, in most cases, if he/she is reading his/her company right, the pending loss is visible. In some cases there is nothing that can be done to reverse the process, and in some cases the options available are as unattractive as the loss itself.

There are plenty of things a company can do to minimize loss. There are fewer options when the loss occurs. The way a company handles loss demonstrates not only its capacity to resist challenges, but also its ability to bounce back.

Sometimes a loss is nothing more than a temporary setback that can be offset with some simple changes or attention to detail. Other times the loss is critical and places the company in danger. The response chosen under these circumstances can mean survival or bankruptcy.

Tudog believes that a business loss, whether critical or merely inconvenient, indicates a warning sign that there are weaknesses in the company that needs immediate attention. The smaller losses are easy to ignore, but are no less important, because left unanswered, their underlying cause will bring about larger losses down the road.

The way to deal with loss is to confront it, openly, honestly, and critically. Be less concerned about who is at fault and more focused on fundamental weaknesses that contributed to the loss. By addressing it immediately and without ego, you will position the company for strength – transforming the short term loss into a long term gain.

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## CHARITY AS A MARKETING STRATEGY

By Craig R. Frank

Many companies are looking for ways to boost their image in the eyes of their consumers and some of them have concluded that rather than improve service, lower prices, or enhance the customer experience in some other meaningful way, the proper path to consumer appreciation is demonstrating support for a charity – and in many cases giving consumers the chance to support the charity as well.

Perhaps the somewhat sarcastic phrasing of the paragraph above reveals Tudog's view of "cause marketing". While we acknowledge that in some situations and for some companies the support of a charity can be an effective marketing strategy, our experience has shown that in most circumstances cause marketing does very little for the company, the consumer, or, unfortunately, the charity.

There are a lot of cynical people who claim that cause marketing is really about the company and not the cause. They point to the charities selected, such as AIDS and Breast Cancer and submit that these are charities that allow for the backdoor discussion of sex. They ask why, when more women die annually of heart failure, no major company has created a pink ribbon campaign for heart disease.

They may be right, but it's beside the point. Cause marketing is all about doing good and doing well at the same time. If Breast Cancer is a bigger seller, then the marketers are right to support it. There is nothing that says that the charities we support need to be most urgent or worthy. And besides, who would make those determinations?

The problem Tudog has with cause marketing is that all too often it is so poorly implemented that it is ineffective for both the company and the charity. It is not important whether consumers want the chance to support a cause as they shop. It is not even that important whether they would prefer one company over another if one supports a charity and the other does not. These issues are insignificant against a backdrop of poor planning and execution.

One challenge with cause marketing is that the marketer thinks that the fundamentals can be compromised because the appeal of the charity will carry the weight. This is completely untrue. Cause marketing, like every other type of marketing, requires the proper planning and attention. If you want to engage in cause marketing, Tudog suggests you keep these 6 points in mind.

**1. Pick the Right Charity** – Keep in mind what your reasons behind selecting a cause marketing strategy are as you select the charity you are going to support. The idea behind the campaign is to raise awareness of your company as a civic minded and provide your customers with the opportunity to learn about a cause that needs attention. You may even sell select items that provide consumers with the chance to contribute through their purchase. With all of this in mind, you need to make sure that the charity you select is consistent with your brand. For this reason many companies select charities that are environmentally focused or aid a disease that touches their demographic. The goal is to find the charity that means something to your customers, something to you, and that wishes to gain exposure through a campaign with your company. If you make it a win-win-win between your company, your customers and the charity, then everyone will be happy and the campaign will be effective.

**2. Be Genuine** – Nothing turns consumers off more than the appearance of exploiting a just cause in the interest of profit. You cannot give the appearance that your sole objective is enhancing your image. You need to make people believe you truly care about the cause. How do you do that? Pick a charity you truly care about. It isn't so hard to show you're being genuine when you actually are.

**3. Don't be Falsely Modest** – Supporting a charity is a nice thing. For all you know you make actually be a good person. You may not want to let the whole world know, but it can't hurt to let your customers know. If you are falsely modest people will suspect that you are actually seeking praise. If you acknowledge your good deed, people will assume it was for the right reasons. There is nothing wrong with admitting that you are doing something nice for a cause that means something to you.

**4. Know Your Goals** – Cause marketing is, after all, marketing, and you need to treat it as you would any other aspect of your comprehensive, integrated marketing plan. You need to make sure that the goals for the cause campaign are clear and that the tactics to reach those goals are in place and able to be implemented. Keep in mind that charity campaigns are not typically launched as a means of increasing sales. Rather, the reasons you might opt for a cause campaign gave much more to do with brand and reputation than bottom line. If you're lucky you may earn some points with your employees who, perhaps, are proud to work for a conscientious company. Oh, and on some level at least, the good you are doing should also be a goal.

**5. Keep it a Business Relationship** – Your interest in working with a charity is noble. If you lose sight of the fact that this is a business deal you will find your goals compromised and in the end the campaign will fail. There is nothing wrong with having a business relationship with a charity. There are a number of interests that they have met by working with you,, such as increased awareness, credibility by being associated with your brand, and perhaps some funds your activities provide. Your desired advantages must also be realized or the relationship will not sustain itself. You need to be certain that you judge and operate the campaign as you would any other. Only then will you be able to justify its continued existence.

**6. Use Business Metrics** – Like every other marketing endeavor you need to make sure you put into place the metrics you will need to measure the results of your effort. You need to make certain that the positive image and appearance of goodwill is being effectively communicated to your market and, more importantly, that your market is receiving the message and accepting it.

It is Tudog's view that the only real reason to engage in charity marketing is if you want to support a charity. There are no advantages to charity marketing that cannot be achieved via other marketing strategies. Your customers engage your company for the benefits they derive. You either solve a problem they have or satisfy a need of theirs. They do not come to you to engage in a charitable endeavor. However, if your company wishes to do something good and demonstrate that you are giving back, you will find that your customers will be happy to see that you are more than just a great company – you are a generous member of the community.

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Craig Frank is Tudog's CEO.



## LIAR, LIAR BUSINESS ON FIRE

By David Gilad

It has never ceased to amaze Tudog when marketers lie. Do they think that – assuming the lie works – the customer won't realize they have been lied to after they try a product that see that it doesn't meet the promises made? And when marketers intentionally mislead people to open mail or order a product, do they think that tricking the customer earns them anything other than disdain? When did our marketing objectives go from building long term relationships with our clients to being short term grabs for a one-off buy by customers we know we'll never see again (because we tricked them into being our customers)? We can't say it clearer, lying and misleading is bad business. Period.

The road of lies in marketing is scattered with many "clever" schemes that tricked consumers into buying because they were misled. Some really smart marketers fool people into opening direct mail by making it look official. They somehow think that once it is open the mediocre offer inside will compensate for the bad feeling the consumer has for having been fooled. Then, of course, there are the half hour paid programs (once upon a time called "commercials") on television that aim at the lowest intelligence levels while insinuating promises in qualifying language so as not to be called liars when the truth comes around.

You can call your used car "pre-owned" if you think your consumers prefer the sound of it. Nothing wrong with some creative language. The pre-owned concept worked because alongside the softer name for a used car came greater service, a better buying atmosphere, and some additional assurances. There was no lie here. There was great marketing.

The challenge for marketers is that the role they play seeks to persuade and with new technologies that measure results, the pressure is on to persuade in greater numbers. Add to this the "grow at all costs" mentality of most businesses who measure success by the dollars earned month to year, and you have all the ingredients you need to turn a generally honest marketer into someone seeking to stretch the boundaries a little bit further than they should be.

So what are these boundaries and how do we stay within them? Tudog has 4 suggestions and 3 guidelines. Follow these and you should be not only within the scope of honesty, but also with the range of good marketing.

### *The 4 Suggestions*

1. **Communicate Accurately What the Product Delivers** – consumers buy things because they either meet a need or satisfy a demand. If you communicate truthfully what your product can do you will find the market that needs or wants it. These people are your customers. Trying to get more customers by exaggerating claims is silly because you will not only lose those who bought your product because of the improved claim, you will also lose those who would have been loyal if you would have stayed modest.

2. **Meet All Your Promises** – there is no reason to say your product does something it cannot do. There is only a short span of time between your claim and the discovery of truth. There is also no reason to select best performance scenarios and promote them as the expected result. This too will only lead to disappointment. You need to keep in mind that you only get one chance to make a customer unhappy. Unhappy customers are usually called x-customers.

3. **Get Constant Feedback** – you should make it a habit to get feedback from your customers as often as possible. First of all, you will be gathering great testimonies to be using in your marketing. These real thoughts on your product offer you third party legitimacy and can be a powerful tool in getting a genuine statement of benefit communicated. Also, by speaking with your market you may discover additional benefits being realized by your customers and different ways your customers are using your products. These too can be excellent ways to supplement you marketing and expand the base of your market.

4. **Give a Guarantee** - one of the best ways to keep yourself in line is to make a guarantee that you prefer not to honor (but that you will every time it is necessary). For example, if you promise double money back, you will be sure to do everything you can to keep the customer satisfied so that they don't call in the guarantee.

### *The 3 Guidelines*

Keeping yourself honest also means adhering to certain rules or guidelines. Tudog recommends:

1. **Follow the Law** – maybe a silly thing to have to remind people to do, but nonetheless there are hundreds of examples where companies need to be brought back to the right side after allowing their marketing to stray over to the side of outrageous to the point of illegal. The Federal Trade Commission is mandated by the government to make certain that marketing does not try to deceive or mislead consumers. If you claims are false or your offers are insincere, you can be called to the carpet. And it makes no difference if you falsehoods were lies of commission or omission. Either way, when you cross the line, you are no longer considered legitimate.

2. **Puff it Up** – there are lies and then there is humor. Puffing it up is lying big time, but it's an okay way to lie because everyone knows you don't mean what you're saying. In most cases, like the old Isuzu commercials, the humor is obvious and the fact that the lies are bold makes it clear that there is no real intent to mislead. The puff rule is an important one to follow. If you're saying something untrue and it is not meant as a joke, you know you are crossing the line.

**3. Lay Off the Competition** – the greatest temptation, when it comes to stretching the boundaries of truth in our marketing, revolves around the things we say about our competition and the way we compare ourselves to the competition. The best way to avoid getting caught up in lies is to resist the temptation and not talk about your competitors directly. You can focus on points of difference between your products and “the others”, and you can even talk about how you are better, but you don’t need to name names when you do.

Honesty is a strategy. Dishonesty, by extension, is a strategy as well. The pursuit of dishonesty is not only ethically wrong, it is a poor business decision that demonstrates not only a lack of business acumen, but also a lack of vision. The idea that fooling people will lead to sales only demonstrates how little you understand about sales. And if the dishonesty isn’t the reason why people won’t do business with you, your clear lack of understanding of how to do business will be.

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David Gilad serves on Tudog’s Board of Directors



## REVERSING NEGATIVITY

By Ofer Kahane

Every company needs people who play devil's advocate and push decision makers to consider all aspects of a situation prior to making a decision that can have long term impact on a company's performance. True too is the idea that no leader should want "yes men" around him/her because it blocks debate and inhibits creative thinking. Yet, while dissent is desirable, the presence of a constantly and continuous voice of opposition can be problematic, especially if the warnings are always cast regard why something can't be done, as opposed to why it shouldn't be done. The raising of challenges without the suggestion of solutions can lead to a decline in the influence of the traditionally cautious. For while management may take kindly to reasonable debate as to why something is a bad idea, it will from upon obstacles being put in the way of executing good ideas.

Sometimes a negative groundswell occurs inside a company because performance has been down, or people have been fired, or some other setback affects morale. The danger of negativity is that it can become an unstoppable force that eats away at morale and diminishes performance. In instances where employee motivation is key (which is just about every possible instance), the successful countering of a wave of negative feelings is essential for company performance, and perhaps even survival.

Being the eternal optimists that we are, Tudog believes that every situation is redeemable and offers here 9 suggestions for transforming negativity into a positive thing:

1. **Be a Good Role Model** – let's face it, when a captain yells abandon ship, everyone starts jumping overboard. You, as management, need to keep in mind that your employees are always looking toward you (and at you) for signs of where the company is, and where it's heading. You need to make sure that you are always putting your "happy face" on and that you are not giving a sense that insurmountable trouble has befallen the company. You can point out weaknesses, but make sure they always come together with how they can be strengthened.

2. **Nip it at the Bud** – closing your eyes and pretending something doesn't exist works well for the monsters under your bed. In most real life situations however there is a need to confront problems as they arise, and the faster they are addressed, the better. The same applies for negativity in the workplace. Once you sense that there is a growing

discontent or that there is a sense of despair, act decisively to communicate both the true state of affairs and how the problems causing the worry will be resolved. Make certain to acknowledge that people are feeling negative, and without discounting or dismissing their feelings (or somehow making them seem illegitimate) demonstrate how they are unnecessary because the issues driving the feelings can and will be settled.

3. **Look on the Bright Side** – every company has small victories every now and then and yet sometimes we forget to acknowledge them. This leaves us open to the possibility of focusing on negative events. We need to make sure that we spot and recognize the silver lining in every situation. This does not mean you have to gloss over the problems – quite the opposite. By showing both the positive and the negative you are giving your team the motivation and reinforcement they need to put forth the effort and overcome the negative.

4. **Take the Bitter with the Sweet** – you cannot be a leader if all you do is criticize and point out errors. There is always some areas where an employee needs improvement and it is okay to push them to excellence. But at the same time you have to be certain that you are acknowledging and rewarding the positive elements of performance. Make sure you praise when praise is due. And most importantly, make sure you separate out the praise from the criticism. You dilute the praise when you criticize alongside it.

5. **Don't Get Caught Up** – sometimes negative sentiments build up over time and then when they finally are released they cause an avalanche of negativity. It is easy for one person to say something mildly negative and within a matter of moments have everyone in the room talking about what seems to be a complete disaster. You need to control these situations by making sure that the topic is brought around to the positive and that the negative comments, while perhaps valid and therefore acknowledged, do not rule the day.

6. **Give People an Outlet** – sometimes the best way to make sure people don't have negative feelings building up is to give them the opportunity to express their views and get answers to the questions they have. You can achieve this through management-employee meetings, an open door policy (where employees know they can come and ask you anything they want), or a web based mechanism that allows for questions to be posed by employees to management.

7. **Enable a Positive Environment** – some work environments are stifling. Not only do they serve to inhibit creativity, they also restrict freedom. People who are unhappy, for whatever reason, are also prone to being negative. Allow them to have their music, and their family photos, and their breaks, and their sense of being appreciated, and you will find that the little things that used to make them negative just don't seem that bad anymore.

8. **Invite Ideas** – people are more connected when they feel invested and they feel more invested when they are part of the process. You can never really know where the next great idea is going to come from and it does not hurt at all to invite all employees to present ideas they may have. Even if they don't come up with the next great idea (although someone probably will), make sure you respect the effort, even while rejecting the idea.

**9. Practice Collective Decision Making** – some companies find it very advantageous to open up certain decisions to the entire company. Sometimes these decisions are marketing based, like which logo is the best, and sometimes they are policy based, like whether the company should take on a competitor with a new product. The benefit to including the staff is that they have ownership of the decision and will work very hard to make it work.

There can be no complete avoidance of negative thought or feelings. In most cases you probably wouldn't want to eradicate it even if you could (you can't). The best you can do is be aware of the feelings, monitor the outbursts, and counter the affects through positive action. The windfall is greater than just happier employees, the payoff is in a healthier company.

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Ofer Kahane works with Tudog in Israel.



## PERFECTING DIRECT SALES

By Ilan Sarid

The evolution of direct sales has been somewhat remarkable over the past one hundred years. The decline of peddling and the rise of retail has caused manufacturers (not only in the consumer sector, but also in the industrial sector) to seek new ways to bring their products to market. What started with horse-drawn carts carrying every conceivable product is now a myriad of tactics designed to bring the buy opportunity directly to the consumer.

The idea that direct sales would compete with retail placed upon it a series of challenges that needed to be overcome. While the concept of direct sales was viable, the logistics, costs, consumer perception, and other issues meant that perfecting the art would take flexibility and forethought.

The downside of retail was the need to go to the store to pick up the goods. Direct sales offered the product delivered to the home. It also offered the opportunity to provide better one-on-one service. The challenge with direct sales was always timing. In retail the consumer engages the buy activity on his/her when he/she is interested in purchasing a product. With direct sales, the salesperson may approach a prospect at a time when he/she is not interested in the product or simply not interested in buying anything at that moment.

The need to overcome this challenge and the use of direct sales by some manufacturers as an effective counter to the power of retail has led to the development of strategies and tactics that perfect the direct sales approach. Leading the way were the giants of direct sales, such as Encyclopedia Britannica, Avon, and others.

The need to reduce risk, save time, and secure customer interest before the direct sales call has led to the use of a number of tactics that precede the salesperson. These tactics are used to create interest and draw the customer to consider the buy even before the salesperson has demonstrated the product. The tactics include:

- Telemarketing – although often poked fun at and sometimes despised by consumers, telemarketing is really the stepchild of the direct call. While 60 years ago a salesman might come to your door during dinner time to ask if the lady of the house would like to see how well his vacuum cleaner worked, today the call is made to see if there is any interest at all in buying a vacuum cleaner. In this

sense, telemarketing is actually a less intrusive form of direct sales, while also being a more efficient one.

- Direct Mail – also not a beloved tactic from the consumer perspective because it fills the mailbox with “junk mail”. Yet, direct mail is also very useful for consumers because it informs about new products and special offers. Direct mail helps consumers save money and stay informed, and again, it's better than having someone knock on your door at 6:00 pm trying to share with you the same information.
- Direct Response – the inclusion of a direct response card in a direct mail piece is there to assist the consumer in making the buy. Naturally the idea is that if the buy can be made conveniently then (at least some of) the resistance will wear down.
- The Internet – is there a better direct sales tool than the Internet? Absolutely not. The Internet is the direct sales person's dream tool. Through an excellent website a company can present its products, deliver its offer, and work out the logistics (payment, delivery). The Internet comes into the consumer's home when he/she wants it, so it's sort of like their being able to call the salesman of old up and say “come on over”. The idea of engaging in direct sales without the Internet playing a central component is not only poor execution, it is business suicide.

On the strategic side, the practice of direct selling has two options. They are:

- Single Level Sales – the lone salesperson working on his/her own, usually within a defined territory. In most cases the single level salesperson does not sponsor other sales people and does not receive additional compensation based on the performance of others. His/her compensation is derived solely from his/her own activities and is usually based on a commission and bonus.
- Multi Level Sales – a salesperson sets out to recruit additional sales people so as to build a wider network and broader base for sales. The notion is that each sales person is entitled to bring additional sales people into the network, each earning a commission from the sales of the people they brought in. The multi level sales strategy is often used for grassroots products and works up to a point, after which the lowest people in the structure tend to earn too little. There are some multi level plans that require people to invest money in order to become a sales person, often for initial inventory, or as a fee for entering the company. These are often far less appealing to the sales people, who now need to be shown how they will get their initial investment back, plus earn a livable wage. Taking a fee is also not always good business for the company because it changes their focus from selling their product to selling sales positions. The focus should be exclusively on the product.

Direct sales isn't for everyone. You need to have a certain outlook on life and the personality to go with it. You need to be able to take rejection easily (not personally) and be able to engage the prospect immediately with a smile and benefit statement. The use of direct sales as a means of bypassing other established channels is a time proven concept. If you can set up the system that brings you directly to your customer you will cut the costs of additional layers and build the consumer relationship as an asset for your company. All of these are worthy. Do it right, and the rewards will be yours.

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## TEAM BUILDING MISTAKES AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

By David Feingersch

The importance of a good team cannot be overstated. And yet, while we know that we need our employees to act in unison and support one another, we also set up workplace environments that are competitive and seemingly designed to work against our stated interests. We expect that good management and the rewards (and punishment) systems we have in place will lead to employee compliance and conformity. We are wrong.

The only way we can have a team atmosphere is if we construct one, and the act of building one is replete with potential errors that can be made – to somewhat disastrous consequences (for the team building effort). Tudog has decided to take a look at this very critical process that most companies need and should go through and determine where the pitfalls lie and how to best avoid them.

There are potentially six danger zones when trying to develop and deploy a team environment. They, and the ways to bypass them, are:

**1. Poor Team Model** - we all know that every team is only as strong as its weakest link, and so too is it true that every model used for the team is only as strong as its weakest component. In many cases teams are constructed by management (who, quite frankly, know nothing about team building) or consultants who have misconceptions about team building as see it solely as a function of communication or processes. These approaches, while providing some of what is needed, do not provide all of what is needed, and so they create the weak links that ultimately serve to place pressure on the entire team building program.

**Fix It:** You need to have a comprehensive model that serves all the elements of team building. Make certain that your training and post-training programs include:

- *Common goals and a vision that everyone on the team subscribes to.* A team works best together when everyone is working in the same direction and everyone believes in the same worthiness and desirability of the stated objective.
- *The necessary skills among the team players to meet the goals.* Remember, just about every professional athletics team goes on the field each day with the intent to win. The team with the right balance of skill does the winning, leaving the team without the skills constantly losing and very frustrated.
- *A clear delineation of roles and functions.* People cannot work together when they are stepping on each other's toes or competing against one another. The

best way to make certain that this sort of head-butting doesn't come up is by making sure that every member of the team understands his/her role and why that role is very important to the overall success of the team.

- *An agreement on rules and procedures.* The core definition of a team is everyone working at the same time toward the same goal using the same rules and procedures. You need to make certain that everyone on the team understands and agrees with the rules and procedures so that there can be no breakdown in compliance.
- *An understanding of the team's importance to the company.* You need to make sure that the team fully understands the role it plays in the overall success of the company and that they feel sufficiently important and appreciated.
- *A way to celebrate.* Every team wins sometimes and when they do they have every right to celebrate. You need to make sure you have the infrastructure in place to enable your teams to celebrate their victories, no matter how small they may be. By allowing them to celebrate you are not only acknowledging and reinforcing their success, you are giving them a valuable tool that will make them more cohesive.

**2. Poor Team Analysis** – just like every person is somewhat different even though there are commonalities in human behavior, so too is every team a bit different even though there are common trends to how they operate and what makes them work better. You cannot review each team's performance based on the same scale and you must be certain to analyze each team's performance based on criteria suitable for the specific team.

Fix It: Measure each team against itself, meaning when you measure a team's performance use your last evaluation as the guideline. Did the team succeed in meeting its objectives and was it successful in improving in the areas it most needed improvement? By analyzing the team based on its own performance you not only avoid comparing it to other teams, but you are able to focus on making the team better by strengthening its weaknesses and playing to its strengths.

**3. Quick Fixes** – like the guy who thinks the chewing gum is a solid short term solution for the whole in the dam, the use of mini-sessions, retreats and other such events that spike motivation but fail to address fundamental issues are short term solutions at best. In order for a team to function well long term you need more than the occasional pick-me-up session.

Fix It: Make sure you have a long term plan that allows you to grow and maintain the team environment. Your plan should include periodic sessions designed to build cohesiveness, continual training, constant reinforcement of roles and objectives, and celebrations. These combined activities will help build and maintain your team.

**4. Failure to Keep Up With Progress** – there is a need for team members to know where they are in the progress of their mission and how their performance is being viewed by management. The failure to keep up with progress leaves the team in limbo, not knowing whether their activities are being noticed and appreciated. Insofar as team building is a long term process, the lack of feedback can damage confidence, erode morale, and set back the team's development.

Fix it: Have scheduled evaluations. By putting the reviews into your process you will both engage in them as a matter of course, but also your teams will know when they can expect feedback. This will enhance the communications between you and the teams and also make sure that compliance is high, as everyone knows that reviews are forthcoming.

**5. Unfocused Leadership** – management is the foundation upon which teams are developed and sustained. It is easy for management to put the teams together, assign a leader, and then assume that the teams will function well without any additional intervention. Unfortunately, this assumption is wrong.

Fix it: Stay involved. As management you need to set the example and show that you too work as a team with your teams. Make certain you are complying with the processes you put into place, that you are communicating well, and that you are working within the context of the rules you set up. By being a team player and demonstrating how important teamwork is to you, you can reinforce the strength of the teams throughout your organization.

**6. The Absence of Openness** – teams that are malfunctioning are usually riddled with poor communication, competition, people seeking to blame one another, and an overall inability to deal with conflict. These teams cannot break out of their cycle of dysfunction without the ability to openly and honestly discuss what is wrong and the mechanisms to establish the rules and procedures that will correct them.

Fix it: If you do not have the internal expertise to address the issues facing the team and lead them to a better way of communicating and functioning, you should bring in an outsider who has the neutrality necessary for all parties to view him/her as an honest broker. The key is to make sure that everyone involved feels they have an equal chance to be heard and that the conflict will be resolved through consensus.

The development and continued deployment of highly functional teams adds to a company not only by making the work environment more pleasant, but also by adding efficiencies that reduce costs and improve profitability. The combined enhancements to your business and your people make team building a compelling proposition that deserves your energy and attention.

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David Feingersch works with Tudog in Florida.