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Your Business Matters

October 2020

The Benefits of Optimizing the Systems in Your Business

The Power of a Simple, Efficient System

On Oct. 1, 1908, Henry Ford pioneered the assembly line system, which went on to dominate the world of manufacturing for decades. It's just one of countless examples of how the right business system can lead to greater productivity and profitability, and it can even overcome unexpected problems and challenges.

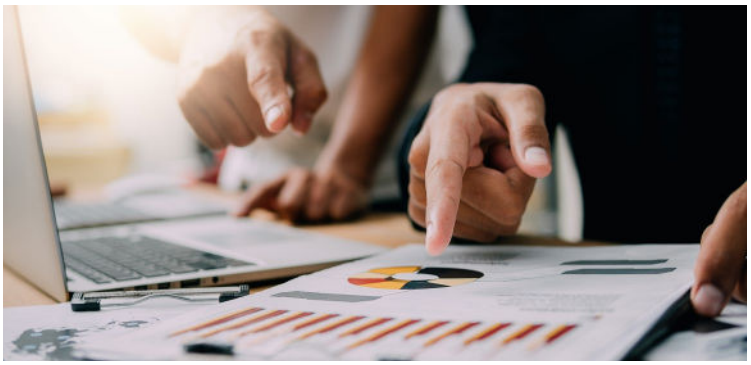
Having read "The E-Myth: Why Most Small Businesses Don't Work and What to Do About It" in 1994, I was an early "convert" to written processes and systems. I used them in my practice from the start to make sure things were done the same way no matter who did them. Little did I know how important these systems would become.

Toward the end of 2013, my legal assistant was hospitalized with pneumonia and out of the office from Thanksgiving to early January. Because the last quarter is usually busy with clients trying to finalize transactions by the end of the tax year, her absence during this time could have wreaked havoc on my practice.

At that time, my daughter was a sophomore in college and had just finished her semester exams. So, even though she didn't have any experience working as a legal assistant, I drafted her into service. I gave her our written legal assistant systems book and told her to do what it said, how it said to do it.

You might think that having an inexperienced 19-year-old take on the role of legal assistant in a busy transactional law practice wouldn't go so well. But everything went great. We finished 2013 without any problems because we had systems in place.

A good system doesn't have to be complicated. Even a checklist can make challenging processes a lot easier to manage. For example, when we design partnerships for clients, we're able to systematize the process with a 21-point checklist. This checklist makes sure we cover the foundational issues and enables us to focus on the special details of the partners' arrangement because those foundational issues are covered.



The first systems to put in place are "support" systems — activities that surround the technical work of your business but don't add value to your customer. These could be:

- A supplies checklist to ensure the right things in the right amounts are in stock so there aren't shortages or overbuying
- An engagement system to make it easy for clients to hire you
- A script and checklist for your receptionist so that each call is answered the same way and each caller has a fantastic experience

Having the right systems in place at our firm has made it possible for us to seamlessly work with clients and deal with unexpected challenges. Starting with simple checklists and turning them into valuable systems is a great way to improve your business and the experience your clients and customers have with it. I urge you to start now by creating one simple checklist.

–Ed Alexander

Stand Out

Chobani's Secrets for Making Waves in a Sea of Messaging

"We're in this together!"

"Getting America back to work."

"Stronger together."

Advertisements on our TV screens, on social media platforms, and in our mailboxes have been littered with these phrases — and many others — during the COVID-19 pandemic. You've likely heard the phrases somewhere, but there's a good chance you can't place the company or brand that is marketing this messaging. The wrong thing to do during and after the pandemic is remain silent, but it can be just as detrimental to have your message get lost in a barrage of others.

So, how do you stand out in a time when everyone is facing the same issue? Try following this yogurt brand's lead.

Taking a Stand

Having a great product to offer consumers is one thing, but it can't do all the talking. Trying to have your product alone do the talking means you're whispering while other companies are shouting. Chobani has led the Greek yogurt revolution, and it's continued to outpace its competitors and make big impressions on its customers. But it hasn't done so with great yogurt alone. Rather, its messaging has led to raving fans.

For starters, Chobani reinvented how we think about yogurt. This product has often been seen as the food to kick-start a healthy lifestyle, but Chobani put its competition on blast in a 2016 advertising campaign that highlighted common ingredients in other yogurts that were also used in pesticides and other harmful products. Try reaching for one of those products as you begin your new diet without hearing Chobani's warning in the background. It did the trick.

But the yogurt company didn't stop there. It outright claims to be purposefully reshaping the yogurt and food industry in an effort to create healthier communities and people. Their mission statement even ends with "Real change. Not just 'checking the box.'" From the beginning, the company's mission has been to supply the world with better food, products, and communities, one yogurt sale and philanthropic action at a time.

Doing the Work

You cannot talk the talk before you can ensure that your company can walk the walk. Sending out messages that promise to do one thing and then failing to deliver on that very thing creates distrust with your customers. You have to ensure that you can do what you're promising you will do *before* you send the message out. Then actively do it.

Chobani demonstrates this by setting an ambitious mission statement to create a healthier product, food system, and world and following that up with a high-quality product *and* company-led initiatives. It didn't just highlight the disgusting ingredients in its competitors' yogurt; it advertised and delivered a product that was free of those additives. Customers could trust that they were receiving the healthy food they expected.

Chobani has also created a food-funding program designed to invest in companies that are creating natural, healthy food products for consumers. The company has also invested in its employees. CEO Hamdi Ulukaya has ensured that 10% of the company's shares are disbursed back to its employees. Ulukaya also founded The Tent Partnership for Refugees organization, which is committed to helping refugees find jobs and get integrated into their host communities. (Nearly 30% of Chobani employees are refugees.)

'We Don't Sell Yogurt'

You don't have to be a yogurt aficionado to appreciate the business finesse and quality character that Chobani exhibits, and you can replicate their methods in your own industry. Find a cause that matters to you. Maybe it's guaranteeing that no one has to go without heat in their home in the winter, or maybe it's ensuring tech literacy by offering continued education and training in your community. Whatever it looks like, find a stance that you can take and make it part of your brand.

Soon, you'll discover that your customers are focused on your messages, and you'll have just as loyal of a following as Chobani.

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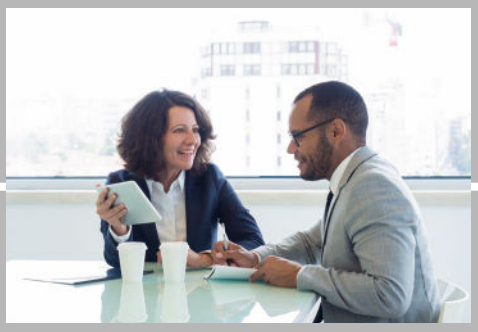
You're Not Alone

Learn and Grow With a Professional Association



Business is competitive by nature. If competitors didn't push our favorite brands to be better, they may not even exist. Our technology options would be limited without Apple's ingenuity. Shipping options would be limited without UPS or FedEx. And access to our favorite athletic gear would be more limited if no one was pushing the top brands like Nike to innovate. Competition fuels our greatest inventions, but behind every great leader or business is a core network of like-minded people and innovators supporting them.

Professional associations connect business leaders to fellow innovators in their industry without competition from local rivals. These organizations offer many benefits and little risk to business leaders looking to grow. If you haven't yet joined a professional association, these three benefits just might get you to change your mind.

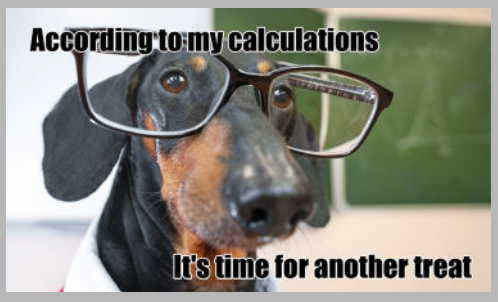
Education and Resources
Google is great for a quick answer, but when you need to learn something more nuanced, a simple internet search won't cut it. Professional associations offer tailored, more in-depth help and resources like industry-specific training and webinars, how-to guides, and coaching. From peer advice and education to scholarly studies and reviews, associations act as a library of information for your industry.

Networking and Mentorship
Why reinvent the wheel when you can adapt it with a mentor? Associations connect you to leaders who have stood where you are standing and succeeded. You can learn a lot from their failures, wisdom, and guidance. You can also connect with peers in your position and bounce ideas off of them. You won't have to worry about competitors "stealing" your processes, and you have an honest, go-to support team to help you refine them before presenting them to your team.

Personal Development and Growth
A business is only as good as the leader managing it, and all business leaders have room for improvement. An association can give you the tools to get there. And as you continue to learn, you'll discover personal and professional areas that can be further refined. This personal development only makes you and your business stronger.

Are you still not convinced you should join an association? Think of it this way: Your competitors could be growing through their involvement in an association while you remain stagnant. Push forward and connect with your peers today.

HAVE A *Laugh*



The Night Martians Invaded New Jersey

Orson Welles Recounts 'The War of the Worlds'

On the evening of Oct. 30, 1938, an eloquent voice graced the airwaves in New Jersey:

"We now know in the early years of the 20th century, this world was being watched closely by intelligences greater than man's, and yet as mortal as his own..."

And so began Orson Welles' classic radio broadcast, a retelling of H.G. Wells' "The War of the Worlds." Peppered in the retelling were fictional news bulletins informing the public of an alien invasion. Martians had arrived in New Jersey! Some listeners assumed the news bulletins were the real thing. Frenzied, they called local police, newspapers, and radio stations hoping for more information. The next day, the story broke across the country — newspapers reported on mass hysteria and stories poured out that the nation had erupted in panic.

However, as we now know, the extent of the panic was exaggerated. It turns out the person who was the most frightened was Welles himself who thought his career had come to an end.

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The Ol' College Try

How University Recruitment Tactics Can Get You More Customers

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed how we do a lot of things, but few institutions have been as shaken by this global event as education. When it comes to college recruitment, universities have had to become creative with their sales techniques for prospective students — and it's paying off. Here are two pivots universities have made and how you can cash in on the action, according to the American Marketing Association (AMA).

College Tours

Students typically lead tours throughout the hallowed halls of the university and end with presentations, Q&A sessions, and conversations with experts. Since having to convert to online tours, universities have been able to target a wider demographic. More students can tune into a live tour without having to travel, and administrators and professors who may not have had time for previous tours can offer their expertise with prerecorded presentations.

You Try It: Part of landing a sale is connecting with your prospective clients. What better way to do that than introducing what you have to offer in a virtual tour? Create a video of your team walking clients through your process step by step and introduce the prospective clients to your team. People do business with people they like, and when you showcase your culture on video, clients will feel that connection, even if they can't be there in person.

Direct Mail Campaigns

With more people at home and school platforms converting to the digital sphere, universities have a greater opportunity to directly target students. In the past, mailers would typically hit the junk pile at parents' homes. However, universities are using this

opportunity to improve the design of their materials and mail out more appealing brochures and other packets they'd typically hand out on campus.

You Try It: Mail has become more important than ever, but you need to stand out in a direct mail campaign. Play with the design of your typical mailers and consider adapting your e-newsletter to a print one. As Texas A&M's director of social media Krista Berend explained in a June 2020 AMA article, "Our world is dominated by screens." Engaging with your clients through the mail that goes directly to their homes — without targeted ads drowning out your message — is a much more intimate way to grab their attention.

You can learn other recruitment tactics at AMA.org.

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