

## Can your employees deliver on the promises you make?

By Margaret Seidler, Seidler & Associates, LLC

Are you spending precious dollars on marketing and advertising needed to draw new customers to your business? Are you then losing more and more customers and having to find new ones? Let's take a look at the links between what you publicly promise and what your employees can actually deliver.

Peter Wertimer, President and CEO of Advertising Service Agency of Charleston, SC, says that while amounts vary by business category, most companies spend between 2-5 percent of gross sales on devising a marketing budget. Meanwhile, national studies indicate companies spend only 1-4 percent of their payroll budget on employee training and development. The percentage of budget spent on people remains low in spite of the fact that revenues and overall profitability have been positively correlated with training expenditures in previous benchmarking studies conducted by the American Society of Training and Development.

While some business leaders believe advertising and marketing are enough, I believe delivering on those promises also requires a work culture to ensure high performance. Consider these questions:

Does the work culture of my business match my marketing strategy? For example, do you promise "fast, courteous service?" And, then do you ensure that your employees are allowed and are comfortable making "on-the-spot" decisions to meet unanticipated customer needs?

What is the impact of my marketing strategy on my employees? When developing and implementing your marketing strategy, have you thought about what is expected of your employees in terms of what is new and changing? For instance, are you going to start offering Saturday, Sunday or 24/7 service?

Do I need to consider changes in the structure of my business? Delivery of new marketing promises might even require a re-design of how work gets done or who actually does the work.

### LINKS BETWEEN MARKETING STRATEGY AND WORK CULTURE

While I believe there is no magic wand to "make" an employee into what you want, I do believe you can create a work culture to support your marketing message.

#### LINK #1: INTERVIEW AND SELECTION OF EMPLOYEES

As I mentioned in a recent edition of *Commerce Magazine* about Jim Collins' book, "Good to Great", successful business leaders ensure they "get the right people on the bus." An investment in your employee selection methods can play big dividends down the road when it comes to relying on your people to live up to your marketing promises.

#### LINK #2: CORE VALUES

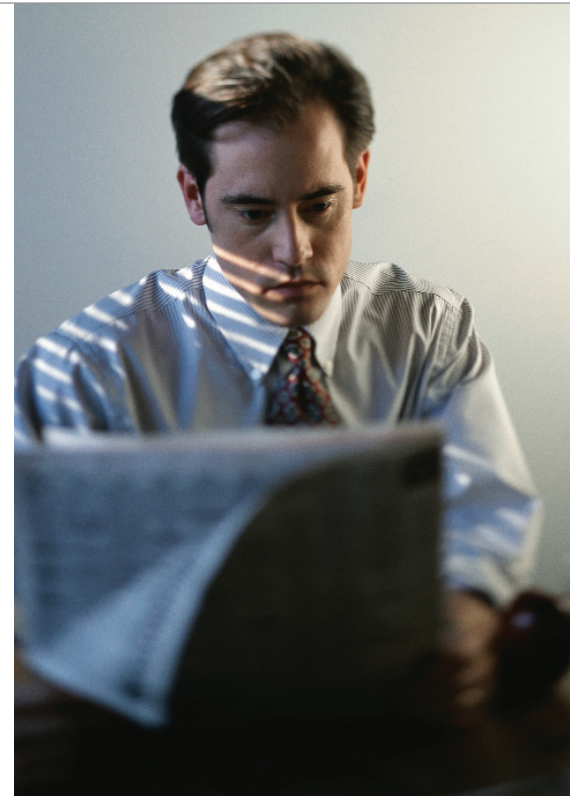
Business leaders who clearly define values, that is how people around the business treat each other and their customers, are ahead of the pack if those values are central to the Employee Selection process. For example, a local business recently turned down a candidate who had great and rare technical qualifications because he just didn't seem to fit in to the company's value system. That bold and courageous step is one they believe will serve them well in the long run. After their decision I heard, "This just wasn't someone I wanted to spend most of my waking hours with! We may love him for the first week and then it would have been downhill from there."

#### LINK #3: SERVICE STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS

Having the "right people on the bus" in terms of Values is only the start. Next, leaders must ensure employees know and understand the expectations of customers and how to interact; especially the employee "bounds of empowerment" of service delivery. This clarity increases the odds that the customer will experience what is expected from your marketing message.

#### LINK #4: TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Service standards and customer expectations drive training and development initiatives. Once business leaders hire the "right people," then it is



essential to provide the specific skills both technically and interpersonally. While employees are hired based on both values and technical capabilities, on-going training and development provide the vehicle to further shape and refine employees' strengths or perhaps even smooth out those "rough edges."

#### LINK #5: MEASUREMENTS

You've heard, "What gets measured; gets done!" Alignment of employee recognition programs rewards or incentives as well as performance evaluations emphasize what is important. I recall years ago when I worked for a major company, we had a marketing program which, if successful, would mean big bonuses for only a portion of our employees, even though many others played a vital role. The result of this kind of misalignment is low morale and even poor service delivery.

I challenge you to look across your business system and ensure that all you say and do are aligned and integrated to support what the external customer sees through the lens of your marketing strategy.



Margaret Seidler is an Organization Development Consultant & Master Trainer located in Charleston, SC. She can be contacted at (843) 573-3485, [margaret@margaretseidler.com](mailto:margaret@margaretseidler.com) or visit [www.margaretseidler.com](http://www.margaretseidler.com)