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News Conferences: Tying Up All The Loose Ends

By Heather C. Conover
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Having learned about planning and holding a news conference in the last two issues, you might think the job is complete. But very important work remains to be done once the news conference is over and everyone else has gone back to work or home.

Write thank you notes or make calls to speakers, members of the media, VIPs, donors, supporters, volunteers, staff, and others that came out to support your organization no later than the day following the event. Writing these letters in advance can be helpful if this is a large list. Hand-written comments can always be added immediately before mailing the letters. Also, knowing the recipients and their preference for e-mail, snail mail, or a telephone call is an important part of the news conference organizer's role.

Immediately after the event, follow up on any of the media's unanswered questions or requests for interviews or information. The media will understand if you couldn't answer all their questions or accommodate all their needs at the event, but may not

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Seven Equipment Productivity Thieves

by Tom McBride, Partners for Creative Solutions, Inc.

Our previous article entitled "Need More from Your Equipment?" described how to use the *Overall Equipment Effectiveness* (OEE) metric to compare the performance of your equipment to world-class. This article continues by discussing seven productivity thieves that reduce throughput and OEE.

- **Waiting** – The machine cannot run because material has not arrived (from vendor or internal source), an operator is not available, or there is some other management issue. Although waiting is more of a managerial issue than an equipment loss, it negatively impacts productivity.
- **Breakdowns** – These disruptions come when you can least afford them, extending schedules, requiring premium costs for repairs and overtime, and generally causing chaos. Breakdowns can be reduced with effective preventive and predictive maintenance systems, but achieving zero breakdowns requires that operators be equal parties in caring for the equipment.
- **Setups and adjustments** – There are proven ways to reduce set-up time, but some organizations do not go far enough. For example, a popular way to reduce die changeover time in a press is to create accurate reference points, add quick release fasteners, etc. However, trial runs and adjustments after the tooling has been changed are often 50% of total changeover time and must be addressed to gain maximum benefit.
- **Idling and minor stoppages** – Although these stoppages may be short, they add up over time. For example, a machine shuts down for no apparent reason several times a day. It only takes a couple of minutes to restart the machine, so the condition is tolerated. Minor stoppages can cost more in the long run than breakdowns, because nothing forces you to fix the problem.
- **Reduced speed** – Are machines being run at rates slower than the standard they are capable of achieving?
- **Quality defects and rework** – Defects and rework reduce throughput, increase production costs, and prompt firefighting. Fortunately, effective countermeasures exist that involve both early detection and prevention.
- **Start-up losses** – This is typically the scrap generated during a stabilization period at the beginning of a production run. Reducing these losses requires a good understanding of the process and ample creativity.

Sufficient data on equipment performance will enable you to identify the major culprits. Typically one or two are making a huge impact on OEE, and these can be attacked first. Learn more about improving equipment effectiveness using Total Productive Maintenance (TPM) at www.pcs-info.com/library.htm.

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Drop Catchers

By Rich Eichacker
Vibrance Technology Corporation

Each day roughly 20,000 domain names expire and are released by domain registrars such as VeriSign and Network Solutions because they were not renewed by their owner. As soon as these names are dropped "drop catchers," companies such SnapNames.com and GoDaddy.com, purchase the domains and auction them off. Those that don't sell are pointed to web pages loaded with advertisements.

Domain names have become very valuable in the age of the Internet. If your business has a presence on the web and you've registered one or more domain names to access that

site then you MUST protect your investment.

How the Drop Catcher gets your domain

The registrar sends an email to the domain's owner about 60 days before expiration. If the domain name is not renewed by the expiration date, the drop process begins.

Phase 1: Once a domain has expired, it is marked for deletion, but ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) guidelines call for a 45-day renewal period.

Phase 2: After the 45-days, ICANN guidelines call for an additional 30-day redemption grace period

Phase 3: At the end of Phase 2, the domain is finally dropped from the

registry after an additional 5 days (a total of 80 days from start to finish). It is now available to anyone.

Once the domain is dropped, there is a mad rush of companies that try to register the domain, literally flooding the registrar with requests (not unlike a denial-of-service attack). Many of these companies have contracted agreements with registrars that automatically transfers the domain to them during the Phase 1 period. An agreement between Network Solutions and SnapNames.com is one example.

The new owner will then auction off the domain name to the highest bidder. In some cases, the transfer and auction has taken place before the 80-day waiting period, making it even more difficult for the owner to recover their lost domain.

Ways to avoid losing your domain name

Good: Reserve the domain for as long as possible. Currently the maximum is 10 years.

Better: When registering a domain, use an email address that will not change. An email account with hotmail or yahoo for instance, may be more stable than the email provided with your internet service. Anyone who had email problems when attbi.com switched to comcast.net can attest to this.

Best: Schedule your expiration date so that you will be reminded to renew. This reminder can be easily setup in any number of software packages: Quick Books and Outlook, for example, or on your PDA.

In short, *DO NOT* rely on other parties, including your hosting company or the domain registrar, to keep track of expirations! Your failure to renew will result in the domain being dropped, and possibly lost forever, whether or not you got the registrar's email.

News Conferences: Tying Up All The Loose Ends

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be so understanding of any failure to follow up in a timely manner. Even if you're still working on finding answers, call and advise the reporter of your progress, steps you're taking to get answers, and a realistic timetable by which you think you can provide the requested information or interview. By failing to help them meet their deadlines, reporters may feel you have something to hide, turn elsewhere for answers, be less likely to cover future news from your organization, or all of the above.

Undoubtedly there will be a number of reporters that you invited that didn't attend your news conference. Some of these may have indicated they would come, but were assigned elsewhere that day to cover other breaking news. Sending the media kit from the news conference, a post-event release, and photographs will provide reporters and editors with your news and enable them to cover the announcement. Follow up with these individuals with a phone call or email (depending upon their preference) to offer to clarify any

details and/or arrange a telephone or in-person interview with the key news conference spokesperson(s).

On-line marketing is also an important component of the post media event activities.

If the news was important enough to merit a news conference, it should also be heralded on your web site. Post the media kit, news release, and photographs on your web site with a headline on the home page. The news release should also be optimized using key words. This requires writing for two audiences, people and machines, but will pay off in terms of increased coverage of your news by traditional and on-line publications, increased traffic to your web site, and higher search engine rankings.

Once you've tied up all the loose ends, you, too, can go home, or move on to the next task at hand.

Next issue: More About On-line Marketing

Protecting Company Assets in an Internet Banking Environment

By Sandra LeDuc, CPA, CVA
LeDuc • Sikowitz • Austin LLP

Financial Institutions and vendors have successfully enticed consumers with the ease of on-line banking such that the number of electronic payments in the United States now exceeds the number of checks written. It is no surprise then that the incidence of fraud involving electronic banking is on the sharp incline. Instituting strong policies and controls will help inoculate your company from harm.

E-Mail "Phishing":

The most common type of online fraud is called "phishing". Phishing is the term coined by Internet scammers who imitate legitimate companies in e-mails to entice people to share private information. In this day of crumbling boundaries and graphical illusion, it is not unusual for an email to take on the appearance of legitimacy. Develop a policy regarding the disclosure of company information on the Internet.

Check Authorization procedures of Financial Institutions

Financial institutions offering Internet-based products and services to their customers should have reliable and secure methods to protect their customers such as multi-factor authentication, (customer ID and password) and layered security (such as encryption, firewalls and routers). Check that their on-line banking policies are comprehensive as they relate to transaction security and customer privacy prior to initiating an on-line banking relationship.

"Pre-authorized" charges to closed credit accounts

It is important to know that credit card accounts that are in fact "closed" by the consumer are kept open by the credit card company in the event that an outstanding payment comes due. They accept any "pre-authorized" payments (i.e. annual membership dues) to even closed accounts.

Therefore, you need to alert any merchants of changes in account status in addition to simply closing your account.

Safe Practices for Protecting Assets

- Always protect confidential information such as user names, passwords and account numbers.
- Always exit the browser when you are done with your on-line banking transactions or whenever you leave your computer.
- Monitor your accounts regularly
- Contact your bank or Credit Card Company if you think you may have replied to a fraudulent E-Mail with sensitive personal information or if you notice any unauthorized activity on your account. You also can file a complaint or learn more about ID theft by going to the Federal Trade Commission Web site at www.ftc.gov or calling 877-382-4357.

Creative Incentives – Part I

By John A. Haas, Ph.D., Management Strategies Group

Regular readers of this newsletter know that I have written several articles about the strategic and tactical benefits of well-designed and well-implemented performance-based incentive compensation plans.

Ultimately, the purpose of establishing an incentive plan is to improve the chances that business goals will be met. Incentives help focus participants' efforts and align their interests with those for the business. Participants are rewarded in direct correlation with meeting or exceeding business goals.

Here are some interesting twists to help assure participant efforts reflect business priorities.

Increase Payouts at an Increasing Rate

The intent is to increase efforts to achieve higher performance levels. For example:

Gross Margin \$	Commission per bracket
\$0 - \$50,000	2% (up to \$1,000)
\$50,001 - \$100,000	5% (up to \$2,500)
\$100,001 - \$150,000	9% (up to \$4,500)
\$150,001 - \$200,000	14% (up to \$7,000)
Over \$200,000	20%

So generating \$235,000 of gross margin of would pay \$22,000 commissions.

Pay for Cost Reduction

Useful for reducing controllable costs. For example, driver carelessness or neglect was generating extremely high unplanned repair and maintenance costs to trucks, equipment and property. To

control these, drivers were offered temporary incentives:

- \$25 per week for \$0 unanticipated costs.
- An additional \$50 for \$0 unanticipated costs for 4 weeks (\$150 total).
- Another \$100 for \$0 unanticipated costs for a quarter (\$550 total).
- For "minor" unanticipated costs (to be defined), driver must "earn" the equivalent of those costs to again be eligible for this incentive.
- For unanticipated costs that exceed "minor," driver must earn the equivalent of \$X to again be eligible for this incentive.

These are examples only, and would normally be part of a more comprehensive incentive plan. But they do suggest ways of changing behavior, benefiting the business and reinforcing the need through compensation that participants can control through their own efforts.

Toot Your Own Horn: Self-Promotion Made Easy

By Susan Bellows
Director of Susan Bellows & Associates

Let's face it. Unless we are professional sales people, most of us just don't like to sell. But marketing ourselves -- our skills, talents, and products/services -- is crucial to the development of our business.

Guest Column

So, when someone asks "what do you do for a living?" be prepared with a 30-second commercial. If you know what makes you, your product or your service unique, as well as what motivates your customers and prospects, you can develop and perfect your commercial by using the following six proven secrets.

Secret 1: Paint a memorable picture.

If you see a black, cone-shaped hat, what do you think of? That is top of the mind awareness. You need to paint a self-portrait with words to remind your clients and prospects of you - not a product or service that others offer - but you and what you can do for them.

Secret 2: Include your Unique Selling Proposition.

People want to know "What's in it for me?" We're constantly scanning conversations, thinking "So what?" until we hear something that is of help or interest to us. Create your Unique Selling Proposition to get past the "So what?"

Secret 3: Incorporate customer language.

You should have different 30-second commercials - each one targeted to a specific audience - so you can "talk the talk." Incorporate customer-specific words and phrases in your commercials, but avoid using jargon and acronyms.

Secret 4: Practice, vary and test your commercial.

Practice out loud, incorporating purposeful pauses. You don't want to sound as if you've memorized a string

of words. You want the words to flow.

Vary your commercial so that you have appropriate commercials for different audiences.

Test your commercial so you can make changes based on feedback.

Secret 5: Ask prospects what their major challenges are before answering what you do.

The most common reason people buy is pain - something is wrong that they want fixed and they are prepared to pay to fix it. The best sales professionals don't sell. They uncover pain and make it go away.

Secret 6: Listen 70% of the time.

By listening you will know your prospect's pain and be able to introduce yourself through your targeted 30-second commercial as the person who can end the pain.

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