

Quality Business Communicate to Win

By Tom Raffio

During my more than thirty-five years in the business industry, I have learned, through experience and benchmarking best practice companies, what it takes to run not only a business, but a successful one. What follows is the eighth article in a series of twelve that will position any business for success.

In my last column I discussed the importance of applauding players who excel in an honest and fair way without taking shortcuts. While teamwork and accountability go hand in hand, effective communication is critical within any successful organization.

I want you to think about the last annual report you read. In this annual report, did the company or organization talk at length about their core values? How many of these organizations do you think actually "walk their talk?" I suggest doing your own qualitative research as I have walked into many organizations who did reflect the cultural climate in their annual report; however, I walked into a retail organization a few years ago, asked their corporate receptionist about the values described in their annual report and she explained that the company didn't really believe those values, it was simply "just the annual report."

At Northeast Delta Dental, we all sing from the same song sheet. Our employees know what is

going on in the company because we practice open and honest communication. Geography should be a barrier for us at Northeast Delta Dental because we are headquartered in New Hampshire and have sales offices in Maine and Vermont; however, we make every effort to ensure that the company's goals and progress are reported to all employees and our Board of Directors/Trustees in a timely, consistent, manner. After all, teamwork and communication are two of our core values. We regularly hold company-wide meetings and in-between, we make sure that our senior

management team keeps their direct reports informed.

We have an organizational chart at Northeast Delta Dental; however, we do not practice the hierarchical politics that are familiar in some organizations. What I mean by this is I will never put an employee through the charade of working through my executive team first if they want to meet with me. If an employee wants to meet with me, he or she asks me, and we make it happen. Our employees feel just as comfortable talking to me as they do with their manager, their department director, vice president, or even, me. My office is located right in the middle of our main campus building, and it was strategically designed this way – by our employees.

While you need to have strong internal communication, external

communication is also important. While some organizations might see social media and the speed of information as a challenge, Northeast Delta Dental sees this as an opportunity. With the introduction of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), this provided an opportunity for us to showcase our products even more to the general public. Before the ACA, most of our business was strictly employer-based. Consumers are much more aware of the cost of dental care, and as such, we have a greater opportunity to explain the importance of oral health to Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont's population of 3.2 million.

In conclusion, I believe it is impossible to communicate too widely, too often or too honestly. A successful organization should communicate all of the time to everyone through meetings, newsletters, emails, blogs and face-to-face interaction. To win, an organization must communicate honestly to all stakeholders in a timely fashion.

