

# Quality Business Play All Out

By Tom Raffio

**D**uring 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 fourth article in a series of twelve that will position any business for success.

In my last column I discussed how to keep your team happy, healthy, fit, and productive. This is extremely important, especially in today's competitive fast-paced business environment, where it is increasingly difficult to outwork your opponents. If your team isn't healthy, you won't give your biggest competitors the challenge they need – you will make it too easy for them to win.

When I am out in the community and presenting to high school, college, or MBA students, I am often asked what the secret to my success is and I always respond: work harder than anyone else. That is the simple fact, I am willing to do more than the average person to get the job done and to make myself the best person I can be. Any successful businessperson outworks and out-hustles the competition and isn't afraid to put in the effort.

For example, at the end of a long day filled with meetings, presentations, and emails, I am tired. But, there may be two or three potential customers who have called and are expecting a call back before the end of the day. Instead of going home and leaving these follow-up calls for tomorrow, I will make the calls. This is something I impart to my Northeast Delta Dental employee colleagues, "Never put off until tomorrow, what you can accomplish today." You get ahead by not taking shortcuts and working harder than everyone else.

In 2004, Northeast Delta Dental underwent a major technology systems conversion and we did so without one complaint from a customer or dentist office. That can't be said for all insurance companies or banks. How often have you received a message saying "we are experiencing high volumes of claims/phone calls during our system conversion, please accept our apologies?" I bet you have and I bet you don't think much about the quality of that organization. To achieve this smooth system conversion, we rallied our employees and explained their individual role in

the conversion and we communicated how this related to the company's goals. Each employee was willing to work longer and harder to make sure the team met its goals.

There are no shortcuts. To be successful you must be willing to put in the work, and work harder and longer than anyone else. This will allow you to out hustle and outperform the competition and delight your customers. One example of this is Northeast Delta Dental's Customer Service Department. If a customer calls (during normal business hours), the phone is

answered by a live person at our New Hampshire headquarters with minimal waiting times and no computerized prompts. Our customers appreciate this, after all, we are here to serve them and help them navigate their dental (and/or vision) plan.

In summary, any successful business leader must outwork the average person and be a role model for his/her teammates. Doing so will foster an environment where your employees will admire you as a leader and you, your employees, and your company, will flourish. And of course, work hard, and don't take shortcuts.

