

Small Business Matters

Want more information and resources on this week's topics, ideas and events? Go to www.cose.org/smallbizmatters.

 **52 TIPS FOR YOUR BUSINESS**

How to Build Your Brand and Engage with Customers

COSE recently reached out to members of its Expert Network to address questions related to his or her field. Featured today is Carol Staiger, business coach and marketing consultant with Vantage Point Enterprises.

What is the biggest challenge your clients are asking about today, and how are they overcoming that challenge?

Ultimately, clients always ask for a path to an improved situation, whether it be obtaining new clients, improving financial results, or finding relief from an employee issue. As a Business Coach, one of the important benefits I bring to clients is awareness: 1) awareness of aspirations and self-imposed limitations, 2) awareness of options they have for improving their companies or their individual situations, and 3) awareness of resources to keep them from going it alone.

Once clients are really aware of these things, their demeanor changes, they are enthusiastic, a door has been opened. Yet many fail to walk through to the other side. Even though this side of the door may be dysfunctional, it is comfortable, it is known, and it works to some degree. Those who succeed at real change understand that it takes 1) a clear vision of what the improved situation would look like, 2) a clearly-



Carol A. Staiger,
VANTAGE POINT Enterprises

expressed SMART goal, 3) definitive action steps, and 4) practicing new behaviors.

Talk about Project Management. What are four things companies can do to help a project go more smoothly?

Project Management is often thought of as a discipline, one that plans, organizes, motivates and controls resources to reach a deadline-driven goal. Conversations abound over which methodologies and tools to use in various situations, and who in the organization might be the best (usually engineering) mind to be the Project Manager. Sometimes, the human part of the equation may be given short shrift, and the first three of my recommendations address that.

1) Are candidates for Project Manager evaluated at all on their communication and people skills? Why not? Obviously the project will require the coming together of many minds, hearts and hands to achieve successful completion. Does this candidate have the right combination of cognitive and social skills to complete the Project in the most effective manner?

2) The use of electronic communication tools to inform participants about Project information should be supplemented by face-to-face human interaction, even if that communication is accomplished remotely, using tools like Skype. And, yes, scheduling a team meeting may mean building in the cost of a day-long session at a nearby off-site facility, but it will be worthwhile. The opportunity to interact face-to-face with other team members will enrich the process and create synergy.

3) Regular reviews with Project Team or the Project Leadership group, will probably occur, and I support this. But there is no substitute for the Project Leader "checking in" with key individual Project Team participants from time to time. Is the goal clear? Does that task make sense? Is there an unanticipated roadblock that this person recognizes? It's intelligence like this that informs the Project Manager's next steps.


expert network

Want more expert advice? Check out COSE Expert Network, an online forum connecting business owners with creative solutions to the tough questions they face every day. Learn more at www.cose.org/expert

 **BIG IDEAS**

5 Takes on the Value of Internships

By Shana Marbury, General Counsel / VP Strategic Initiatives & Research, Greater Cleveland Partnership



Shana Marbury

The value of internship programs to the actual interns working within a firm isn't hard to see. The interns get an opportunity to put their classroom skills to work in a real-life environment while also getting a chance to add valuable contacts to call on during their impending future job search. But what's in it for employers? Some of the early returns to a Greater Cleveland Partnership survey on the value of intern programs have found hesitancy on the part of some companies to bring interns on, citing such reasons as not understanding the value interns can bring to an organization or not seeing a need to have an internship program in place.

Data around those companies that have such programs in place, however, indicates there is a benefit to employers who commit to internships. Employers made job offers to 64.8% of their interns during 2014 with 79% of interns accepting those offers, according to a study by the National Association of Colleges and Employers. The study found that employees who had completed either an internship or co-op program were more likely to be with their

employer at both the one-year and five-year retention benchmarks.

As part of the Greater Cleveland Partnership's ongoing internship study, which is being completed in conjunction with Cleveland State University, survey respondents were asked to identify their top reasons for bringing interns aboard. Five responses from North-east Ohio companies are below.

Citizens Bank

We have a Commercial Banking internship program to create a pipeline of diverse talent for future hiring. The college students are also a value-add for time-limited projects.

FIT Technologies

- Helps offset high staffing needs during summer season.
- Offers value at an economical hourly rate.
- Supports IT training and college programs.

foundation.

a brand and communication strategy firm

- Valuable assistance.
- Opportunity to make a positive impression of Cleveland on young talent in an effort to bring them back to this market.

Safety Controls Technology

Many of our interns participate in our intern-to-hire program. Interning with our company allows the student to see what an occupational safety and health company actually does and allows them to ascertain whether or not they're truly interested in the field. We find that interns who have completed service with us are more engaged and ready to start in a career the day after they graduate.

Turner Construction Company

Aid in success of future recruiting efforts. Increase diversity. Provide exposure to our industry for interested candidates.

ADD YOUR VOICE

The survey, part of a broad collaboration on internships between Dr. Ronald Berkman of Cleveland State University and GCP, should take no more than 10 minutes and asks about the perspectives of your organization on internship programs, your use of interns, and related questions. The information will help build mutually rewarding connections between the business community and local interns. To access the survey, visit www.gcpartnership.com/internshipsurvey. Also, stay tuned for information on the upcoming Cleveland Internship Summit presented by Cleveland State University and GCP on February 10.


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November 16

By The Numbers Internships



\$15.05
to
\$17.94

The average hourly wage rate for interns at the bachelor's degree level.

SOURCE: NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND EMPLOYERS

Connection Calendar

COSE WEBED SERIES: ATTRACTING AND RETAINING MILLENNIALS

Does your competition have the edge in attracting top millennial talent? When hire offers stack up, does your organization miss the mark with Millennials? Have you just lost your best millennial A player? Learn what drives this dynamic workforce generation to leverage your recruiting and, closely linked, retention strategies. We will discuss new research, the impact on talent attraction and actionable steps to hire, engage and retain millennial talent.

NOVEMBER 17

Cost: FREE

Register at www.cose.org/events.



TECH GROWTH: GROW REVENUE, EMBRACE THE CHANGING ROLE OF TECH SALES

All tech companies have a "sales process" with some more formalized and roles defined more explicitly than others. But tech buyer's behavior, from vendor research to sourcing solutions to securing quotes and more is constantly evolving. How does your company respond to that evolution? And how do your sales efforts (and processes and messaging and more) respond? During this instructive, engaging session you will hear from successful tech sales leaders on how to remain nimble and responsive to change to keep your company growing in 2016 and beyond.

DECEMBER 10

Akron General Health & Wellness Center, Akron

Cost: \$10 for members, \$20 for non-members
Register at www.cose.org/events.



Check out www.cose.org/events for all the latest happenings.