



People Solutions

Getting Ahead with Technology

11/14/08

Finding Solutions

"Aren't you listening?" I thought as the teary-eyed office manager told everyone on the management team her frustrations. "This office is spending 20 to 40 hours a week trying to track down incomplete information, getting clarity around scribbled handwriting, and looking for lost invoices and ... I think Mary is going to quit." The owner had heard this reaction more than once before and did all that he knew to do. He looked at the production manager and made the proclamation, "Joe, tell the guys to get their paperwork filled out better and make sure the supervisors look it over before handing it in...." Now I could go on with what the production manager's response was and how this meeting headed into what we call a "BARKING SEALS' MEETING." But I'm sure you can relate to the picture of everyone talking louder and louder with excuses and reasons and no actions or commitments being made. Usually such a discussion ends with the president's next proclamation, "You guys get it worked out; I am tired of hearing about it."

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NOW, I don't feel like I am speaking out of school telling the above story because it has happened in more than a few meetings I have sat in over the last 20 years of sitting in management team meetings. That's why I am so excited about this week's newsletter. I'm not just excited because we are writing about Modeco Systems and the impact they have had on their clients, but because of what we can learn from this "SMART COMPANY" and how we might be able to apply it our own businesses. Over the past couple of years we have connected with several great companies



that we have partnered with under the common SMART COMPANIES brand because they all do the following things in servicing their customers:

- They see a need in the market they are serving and they fill it.
- They fill this need with passion and enthusiasm that gets their clients involved and believing in the product.
- They look to technology and innovation to do things that at times seem so simple you say, "Why didn't I think of that?"

Read through that list one more time. It does not matter if you are managing a Country Club, supervising a manufacturing facility, leading a hospital, or the head of a household, we all become smarter by finding a need, filling it with passion and using all the tools and options available to us to improve the quality of life for someone else.

You are going to read about several clients Modeco Systems has helped to truly Work Smarter through the use of their time tracking system. As you read, consider these questions ... HOW CAN THIS HELP ME? WHAT CAN I LEARN FROM THIS? HOW CAN I USE TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE? Make a list and then start to develop action plans and go to work. If you and I would consistently act on the things that could simplify our own lives and businesses, we would no longer find ourselves merely listening in "Barking Seal Meetings." Maybe, just maybe, by taking action to work smarter we could convert the energy lost in frustration and redirect it to accomplish great things.

Enjoy the stories below and let's both commit to just getting SMARTER ...

- Jim Paluch

Beyond the Status Quo



Sometimes a call to action that results in great improvements comes from our increased awareness to move beyond the status quo. Just like it feels ridiculous to imagine how difficult it was to move into the computer age 20 years ago, we can also be setting ourselves up at a disadvantage if we aren't continually looking for the best ways to do business today. All of us in fact have many practices that remain in place because we have always done them that way and have

actually never even considered doing them differently. Maybe just a lack of awareness to the amazing possibilities and resources available beyond our status quo keeps us from finding better solutions to many of the things we do day in and day out. Whether we are operating on systems that revolve around handwritten documentation that must be deciphered and translated by someone else or doing dozens of other simple practices that continue to lose precious time and money, we can find ourselves functioning with yesterday's answers to today's challenges.

In SETH GODIN's new book, *TRIBE* he approaches this issue directly and doesn't leave much room to question ...

Individuals who push their organizations, who inspire other individuals to change the rules, thrive. Again we're back to leadership, which can come from anyone, anywhere in the organization.

The status quo could be the time that "everyone knows" it takes you to ship an order, or the commission rate that someone should be paid . . . or the pricing model that everyone accepts because it's been around so long.

Whatever the status quo is, changing it gives you the opportunity to be remarkable.

Below are a few examples of companies that have challenged themselves to destroy the status quo and use technology to help their businesses and lives operate more efficiently. Besides the fact that they all share one thing in common, the use of the cutting edge "TimeScape" system offered by Modeco Systems, they also share a common drive to destroy the status quo and continually look for tools that will help them work smarter in everything that they do.

Simple Changes Changing Business

- Jeff Sousa, Sousa's Landscape Management, Bermuda

In 1998, Sousa's Landscape began to realize the importance of moving forward with technology when they launched their first website and at that time decided it was like having a 24-7 brochure that potential or new clients could view whenever they wished. In that same year, they introduced the simple concept of direct deposit payroll to the company. As team members' weekly pay went directly in to their accounts, managers no longer traveled to various job sites around the Island to hand out checks and team members no longer left the job early to cash their checks. At the time, it was a "no brainer," says owner Jeff Sousa but there was still initial hesitation from those that preferred to have that paper check in hand.



People are always resistant to change, but today this company even has clients making direct deposits on their accounts saving the wait on regularly mailed payments and processing. From those simple beginnings in technology, the company continued to look for the best tools available to them as they explored industry trade shows each year.

Introducing the Modeco TimeScape System two years ago, Sousa's Landscape Management had, like many in the industry, always used daily time sheets. "Buy-in wasn't immediate," says Jeff Sousa. "We all know the scenario where one team member looks over another's shoulder and asks 'What did you put down for ...?' There was resistance to the direct accountability at first and some saw it as 'BIG BROTHER' watching. But everyone soon learned that change is good and this simple scanning device made their lives at work simpler. After thirty-two years in this business, I have seen much change for the better and this one as was promised has paid for itself," Sousa says.

Team Supports Strategy for Technology

- Frank Bonanno, The Pattie Group, Cleveland, Ohio



The Pattie Group is currently finishing their second year in the Working Smarter Training Challenge, and finding ways to work more efficiently has become a part of their culture. Not only has this group become proficient at communicating better ways to get the job done, they have also become acutely aware of every technical tool that will help them work smarter as well. "The entire team at The Pattie Group is always looking for new technology to help us be more efficient. From equipment in the field, computer systems in the office, and even

computer systems in the field, technology will always bring us a smarter way to do things," says COO Frank Bonanno. "We continually look to technology to help us work smarter, solve problems and increase production."

"TimeScapes is one of the few technological systems we use at The Pattie Group that has saved time for our administration department as well as our field staff. Tracking our time with scanners and uploading back to our systems at the office helps us produce more accurate estimating. We save time and money as well with less handwritten records and manual data input.

Although it took us a couple of months to get used to it as well as finding out the best processes for us to fully utilize the system, just like with any new means of technology, we knew to be patient and it would pay off. The field staff loves having less paperwork to do, and the admin staff loves not having to key everything into our job tracking and payroll systems. It's become second nature to us now."

First Generation Trusts
Second Generation Improvements

- Michael Bonadio, A Bonadio and Sons, Waltham, Massachusetts

"I VERY much believe in technology," says Michael Bonadio, "and it has been a big part of our company progressing to each new level of success through the years. My father started A. Bonadio & Sons landscaping back in 1963 after immigrating here from Italy in 1956 with his father. They brought with them a very old-school, work-HARD attitude which has been instilled in me to this day. So, learning to work smarter, not harder, is something that doesn't always come first to either of us. But after some serious learning curves back in 1988 (while my father was on vacation), I purchased the company's first computer and stayed up all night learning how to type so I could enter all of my father's clients and materials into a homemade landscape billing program. Needless to say, that was the start of a new image and a new way of doing business at A. Bonadio and Sons ... no more handwritten invoices or proposals! It was also the last time my father did office work. Through the years, we progressed further in our thinking, and technology became a must in our daily operations with things like the ability to email from your handheld while in the field or log on to your office computer from anywhere, not to mention the importance of constantly being in tune with the web. Each step has been critical to our growth."



Bonadio continues, "Implementing Modeco's - TimeScape two years ago was one of those steps that we will always see as a turning point for us in technology. It has been amazing and I couldn't imagine working without it. It was just the perfect product that I had been looking for. I just wish I had thought of it first."

Bonadio and his team not only use the time tracking system to process their information more efficiently. They use it to make important decisions moving forward as they refer to the many reports available. The data that the handheld scanners collect for materials used has simplified their billing process and job costing which is so instrumental for estimating new work and contract renewals. When asked how they were able to bridge the technology gap from one generation to the next, he replied, "It was a blend of Dad letting go and me passionately taking the lead. We knew the importance of both and moved forward together."

***Best Technology
What Clients Expect***

- Dan Morgan, Lambert Landscape Company, Dallas Texas



Lambert Landscape Company has set industry standards in high-end design, installation and maintenance of fine gardens since 1919. We knew when contacting them about how they use technology that every improvement they have chosen would ultimately be related to the image they hold with their clientele. Dan Morgan, CEO, shares what he sees as one of the greatest benefits to using the TimeScape System. "Having the ability to show our clients exactly what it takes in the way of labor to manage their garden to our mutual satisfaction is extremely valuable. If the issue of price justification comes about, we can simply and immediately show our clients our actual time investment and then ask that they compare that to whatever competitive bid they may have received. Quite often, they quickly understand that others build their reduced price on the basis of significantly less hours. This quantifiable apples-to-oranges comparison is typically well received and easily accepted."

Lambert's also believes that this type of professional time tracking and management helps to differentiate them from those operating more from the seat of their pants. "When it comes time to propose contract renewals, the ease of producing accurate labor reports by project and by function is extremely valuable and again helps us to justify our pricing structures. Do our client's perceive value in this management system? I think they do and truthfully I think they would be surprised and disappointed with anything less."

"Working smarter with the best tools available can only improve the value that we offer to our clients." Morgan concludes, "The system allows our foremen to complete their time reporting quicker and more accurately thus allowing them more time to receive training, give training and perform their magic in the gardens. It also allows our managers to quickly and more accurately review and report production times, thus allowing them more time to spend in the garden and with the client. Now, more than ever, what could be more important? Finally, the speed and accuracy of the payroll processing by our admin staff allows them more time to quickly and accurately produce invoices, job costing reports, update estimating systems, manage a/r and a/p tasks, etc."

"Are we 100% there? No, but this is an example of functional technology that is helping us achieve our desired results versus providing continual excuses which generally hold us back."

As you have read the stories above we hope that you too can think of ways to work smarter through the use of technology. Although we consciously choose to never blatantly

promote a product in this newsletter, it is hard to hide raving fans when a product has changed the lives or businesses of those you talk to. Be sure to think again about the needs that you know your customers have and then open your mind to the amazing ways you and your team can fill those needs. Together as we strive to work smarter, we can help others work smarter too!

Quotes

"Restlessness and discontent are the first necessities of progress."

- Thomas A. Edison

"The most important thing to remember is this: To be ready at any moment to give up what you are for what you might become."

- W.E.B. Du Bois

"The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man."

- George Bernard Shaw

"Every great advance in science has issued from a new audacity of the imagination."

- John Dewey

"Time and tide wait for no man. A pompous and self-satisfied proverb, and was true for a billion years; but in our day of electric wires and water-ballast we turn it around: Man waits not for time nor tide."

- Mark Twain

Smart Companies

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companies are and
read a brief
description of what
they do.**



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