Best Practices Series

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The Best Practices Series

Each business has established best practices in place. Whether the best practices are good and timely the practices that are put in place and used evolve to be best practices. The importance of renewing, revising and replacing best practices is driven home with the changes that the Internet and social media require. Hence we devoted a most of the blogs in this series to best practices around social media.

Potentially we could post blogs for a very long time without end detailing best practices for business. Instead, all of the Soltys Inc. blog series include best practices sprinkled throughout.

In this series we addressed a few key areas in addition to those related to Internet media.

- Defining best practices.
- Looking at what happens when best practices are not in place, communicated and followed.
- The importance of leadership
- Best practices related to new hires
- Change in best practices.

We hope that you will enjoy and find value in the series. Please subscribe to our blogs and newsletters for additional information. The links can be found at the bottom right of www.soltys-inc.com. We also invite you to see our posts on Facebook and Twitter.

Contents

Best Practices

When I first started in business, I kept hearing the term "best practices" used almost as if there was a commodity that you could go and buy off the shelf to install in your company. Did these come in a set, or were they individual units that required assembly. Each time I asked about this mystery ingredient for great business, I got a different answer.

Some people seemed to suggest that it was a packaged tool set, others suggested a recipe and yet others referred to systems, processes and procedures. All of these were right, to a degree, but did not really define what best practices were or where I would find them.

Our definition:

> **Best Practices are the defined methodologies aligned to an objective that drive the desired results with the greatest consistency.**

We employ best practices as habit in our everyday life. A best practice for me is putting my keys in the same place every time. Breaking it down – the objective is efficient use of time. Consistency – same place every time. Consequence: Using the best practice wastes no time looking for keys. Not using the best practice means time wasted and mood altered with potential of being late for my destination. When there is a fail or interruption that occurs when the best practice is not used, there is a compounding effect to the problems that will result. In the case of the best practices with keys, there is now a greater likelihood that something else will be forgotten because the rhythm has been broken, time will be stolen from something else and that the door seems to be open for other challenges.

There are simple best practices such as the routine of the keys above and far more complex processes that may be multidimensional. It is a part of the role of leadership to develop, define and maintain best practices in a company utilizing the resources and talent in those directly using and or impacted by the result.

Best practices do not insure or give a guarantee of results only a greater likelihood of achievement in an efficient and effective manner. Best practices also age, need review and updating and may need to be retired when no longer relevant or necessary due to other business changes. Like all other cogs in a business machine, best practices potentially impact many other components in the business.

This month, our blog series will focus on best practices. We will address the leadership role, definition, management, accountability, results, maintenance and making sure that best practices in place due not stifle innovation. Some of our blogs will use vignettes to tell the story. Mallie Hart will take to the blog keyboard sharing her expertise regarding Internet and Social best practices including protecting your company, professional and personal reputation. She will also address the rules of engagement and sharing. This will be a fun and meaty series, comments and questions are welcome.

In the Absence of...

In the Absence of...

You have probably, at one time or another, driven through or walked near a construction area where dirt, sand or clay may be mounded into piles and barren of vegetation? Rain in these areas randomly cuts a path through the mound, meandering as gravity pulls it along. Sometimes it cuts a new path, at other times it follows a path that has already been created. All of these are usually freeform, without a plan, eroding through the mound. If the construction company creates a channel, gutter or other place to be fed by the runoff water guiding it to a specific place, the mound will have a better chance of remaining intact.

Best practices are a channel that reduces random methodologies and consequences. Most companies have best practices in place. They are not necessarily those that would be found in anything created by the company. In the absence of best practices in place, each person develops practices of their own that meet individual needs within their perspective of the right way to do things.

Expense, risk and delays can be reduced by having communicated best practices in place. The example below is simple and illustrates a challenge when best practices are not defined and communicated.

Out of Coffee Again

Meagan ran a very tight ship and put many practices in place in order to ensure efficiencies and controls. All ordering was from the central office and based on inventory of supplies and usage tracked, with just in time ordering in place. Carefully crafted vendors relationships led to deep discounts. Each location had a limited inventory that was replenished from central supply. The series of best practices certainly achieved the objective of cost control and managed purchasing.

One day, a key location ran out of coffee. Running out of a staple item never happened in this company. No one knows for sure how they ran out, but one of the newer admins decided to solve the problem by going to the local store to buy coffee. The coffee machines required a specially packaged coffee pod which was not carried in grocery stores. Knowing that there was an important meeting to be held in the office, the admin decided to buy an inexpensive coffee pot, filter and the coffee. Several types of coffee were selected. When the admin got back to the office and went to set up the coffee, it was found that the other coffee pot had a permanent water line. No other convenient water source was available and there were no available outlets and no space in the coffee bar to set up even a small coffee maker.

The admin decided to set up the new coffee maker on one of the break tables in the kitchen. This meant carrying coffee to the coffee maker and taking away space that employees routinely used and did not necessarily leave in the same condition they found it. The coffee cups and condiments were near the regular coffee maker.

When the meeting was in progress and coffee requested, only ten cups could be made at a time taking staff away from other tasks. It took extra effort but they managed to serve the meeting. Afterwards, the admin wanted to be reimbursed for the cost of the coffee maker, coffee and filters. There was no method in place for the admin to submit an expense. This created an exception to the processes in place, since there was no way to enter a personal reimbursement of this type in the current accounting system. The first thought was to reimburse the admin out of petty cash but this exceeded the amount for a petty cash expense without documentation. The challenge rolled through the company, from the costs and time to address the problem to the level of exasperation. This expense which should have been less than $100.00, with all costs calculated, now had cost the company over $500.00 and caused many deviations in processes. This did not even include the cost of overtime for the admin to complete critical tasks that could not be done while the admin was in search of coffee.

The whole issue could have been circumvented if training had included the processes defined by the best practices methodology of the company, which included an emergency replenishment method. Cost of using the best practice in place would not have cost any additional dollars and certainly would not have created the havoc that the path taken independently did in the company.

Just like water eroding the mound of dirt at a construction site, this un-channeled and independent effort now had eroded processes in place so that what usually would have flowed smoothly, without obstruction, now included twists and turns, ruts and new rivulets that held little purpose.

Lack of communication creates an absence of best practices replaced by individual methodologies. This simple challenge grew to be a costly experience for the company. It could have been easily averted if the best practice in place had been trained and communicated. As is often the case, the best practice is not defined and communicated until it has cost the company money.

Digital Business: Pitfalls amidst Potential Profitability

There's no getting away from it. In some way, shape or form **EVERY** business is connected to the Internet. Doing business in the digital age means digital business touches all business owners and managers, no matter the size, scope or niche of that business. From your web site to your personal profiles on a variety of social media platforms (even those accounts you consider "personal") your actions and reactions are seen by the very people with whom you'd like to do business. How are you coming across? Yes, we all have a right to a personal life and some privacy. However, the advent of social media and the rapid sharing of information requires a set of best practices that take into consideration the very broad reach of digital messages and the vast and varied responses that can result from just one post.

A seemingly innocuous joke or video shared by your college-aged son might seem harmless to you, as you share much the same sense of humor. But will every "friend" on Facebook, every follower on Twitter agree? Have you accepted friendship requests from clients, co-workers, and bosses? They are seeing the articles you read, the videos you watch, even the music you listen to (thanks to the popularity of Spotify). Are they all family friendly? Are there any potential biases that might spark conflict? Does an article lean too heavily toward one political ideal, thus possibly alienating potential and/or current clients that might lean the other way? Could the joke you see as family friendly strike someone else as inappropriate? Is there the possibility a less mature audience might come into contact with material better suited to mature minds and eyes.

The potential for pitfalls in social media and digital business might seem great, even daunting or scary. But with best practices, training, policies and carefully communicated strategies and tips, you can maintain a stellar online reputation while building a relationship with your target audience. The goal of social media, as a part of a sound digital business practice, is to humanize your business with the telling of stories in place of sales pitches. Those stories further the relationships that build online word of mouth. You want that word of mouth, though it is of a digital nature, to promote your business in the best light.

Over the next two weeks we're going to discuss the best practices - from post type and frequency to content curation, from app selection and integration to absolutely improper online behavior we see far too often - that will allow your online reputation to remain unsullied as you build lasting relationships with the audience and target market that best suits bottom line.

Do You See What I See?

Yes, we can. As a matter of fact we can see everything you read, view and even those things to which you have listened. And so can every business contact with whom you have become friends.

This post targets Facebook activity. Specifically the content you view and subsequently share with the view. The content others can and do see.

- The articles and videos about co-eds gone wild.
- The songs with inappropriate titles or album graphics.
- The shared photos with spoofs on inspirational messages, movie themes and as seen on TV gadgets.

Allowing Facebook's many video and article apps to automatically post to your news feed (the place where most of your friends view your content) isn't necessarily the best practice you can undertake if you're trying to maintain a professional online reputation. The applications post to your profile by default. You have to take steps to disallow them from posting to your wall or choose not to sign up.

While the occasional posting of a funny item is humorous and will often earn you likes and comments, a closer look at such behavior by those with whom you already work or those with whom you'd like to do future business might not put you in the best light.

Here's just one example: Will women want to do business with a company if the owner is known to appreciate photos and videos that showcase young women behaving in a promiscuous fashion?

Here's another example. I know a real estate professional who talks business a lot on his personal profile. On that same personal profile he often shares photos of scantily clad women and sometimes adds to these photos by asking his friends to post a caption. While he does have a professional profile, it is obvious this individual has issued friendship requests to individuals that are business acquaintances? How am I sure of that? I'm one of them.

Let's take it just one step further. What if you don't own the company, you're just an employee. How can reading these types of articles or allowing an app to post that you're watching videos on your personal account cause anything negative in your work environment. Are you friends with your supervisor? How about the owner of the company? Now they know you're watching videos during the hours where you're supposed to be engaging in the tasks that fall under your job description.

While allowing something like Spotify or Yahoo! News to automatically post to your personal profile might seem within your rights as an individual it is important to remember the transparency of social media and the Internet in general. If you occasionally enjoy an article on a risqué topic, that's your choice. Just don't choose to broadcast it automatically to your social profiles.

Leadership Best Practices

The current political race brings a lot of opportunity to look at best practices for leadership, communications and platform support. While I have very specific thoughts, views and preferences, this is not the place to share, so let's look for lessons that can be applied to business.

Leadership Best Practices

Every company leader has a business position that has similarities to a Presidential campaign. While you may not be seeking election, how you conduct yourself and the leadership you bring to the business certainly will determine the viability of your company, business and indeed your position.

- **Best Practice # 1**
  Decide to be a leader. Being a leader is a decision not an appointment. A leader recognizes that the job includes many tasks, comes with plenty of risk and, most importantly of all, requires the ability to gain followership and move that followership along the path that aligns to the objectives of the company.

- **Best Practice # 2**
  Be decisive. You are expected to make decisions in terms of direction, approach, methodology and with those, make a commitment to action. You will not always make the right decision and may have to make some corrective decisions but your troops cannot march in place for very long before they make their own decisions.

- **Best Practice # 3**
  Take action. You will be judged at the end of the day by what you did and not what you said. Opportunity in business waits for no one.

- **Best Practice # 4**
  Engage. While you will never have to shake as many hands or kiss as many babies as a candidate, you do have to show a connection to your followers, your community and your business peers to gain information, share information, gain commitment and buy-in. You have to connect.

- **Best Practice # 5**
  Empower. If you are the only one empowered, it does not take long to burn out or ignite the flame of competitive leadership. The best leaders grow other leaders with aligned objectives. Leadership and mission grow together.

- **Best Practice # 6**
  Excite. You have to make the mission and pursuit worthy. High energy and production come when there is excitement in the work and the accomplishment.

- **Best Practice # 7**
  Employ. Purposeful work is a great satisfier and the successful results often spur higher production. As you chart the path, employ others in the pursuit with meaningful positions that stretch abilities and build talent.

- **Best Practice # 8**
  Communicate. Communications are never one way, they are an exchange. Too many leaders feel that if they use their position as a bully pulpit and deliver their message and objectives frequently enough, it will become the thought of the masses. That tends to bring very shallow results and high dependency as it does not fuel new thoughts, ideas and does not have any way for those to be shared.

- **Best Practice # 9**
  Update & Validate. You have the best perspective to report on status, progress, and worthy effort. Updates and validation are always appreciated, especially when it comes with recognition for work, attainment of goals and challenges successfully met.

- **Best Practice # 10**
  Use timing as a tool. The absolute best in leadership understand using timing to their advantage. Well used it is powerful. It can be used to set pace, position, increase or decrease emphasis and build anticipation. Timing as a tool in the style and delivery of communications, initiation of actions, launch of ideas and just about anything else a leader touches impacts the outcome.

Imagine our companies if leadership applied the best practices needed to constantly be elected to their jobs. They would have to build their machine to work on their behalf. There would still be talking heads and pundits, but, just like in the campaigns, most are looking for true leadership to talk about. In the absence of leadership gaffs and mistakes take the spotlight.

What are your best practices for leadership?

For the Group, For the Individual

AKA: There's a Difference Between Posts and Messages

Its common sense, and common courtesy, to know that you wouldn't discuss an issue with a co-worker in front of your entire department at a company outing. You'd save that conversation for a time when you and your superior could have it in relative privacy, behind closed doors.

As a member of Powercore, a closed networking group like BNI, I've had it drilled into my head that good news is shared with the group, while bad or negative news or topics are discussed one on one. It's a sound policy, a very smart and savvy best practice.

Yet, I'm often shocked to see this common sense principal regularly violated on Facebook pages, in blog comments and in emails sent to the group.

An email message between two people is simply that, a message. But when you hit Reply All it becomes a post. You can state something bothersome, or of concern in a message. It's okay to tell Bob that you're concerned about his personal hygiene in a message. It's the epitome of rude, embarrassing and crass to post on that potentially embarrassing and hurtful topic.

This best practice must be taken one step further with social media. Twitter, Facebook, Linkedin and Google+ all have means of private messaging. And the best practice would be to use those means to send messages that should, by all intents and purposes, be private.

We've become far too used to seeing social media used to post complaints. We all fall prey to this behavior from time to time. I had a gripe with Priceline.com and voiced it on Twitter. But, ONLY AFTER I had tried to get the issue resolved through private means, with a phone call and an email.

Asking questions on a Facebook wall or via a Twitter feed should follow the same protocols you'd follow in an office environment. Would you ask that specific question in front of the group? No? Then don't post it for the entire world to see on a Facebook page or in a Google+ circle. Would you shout out potentially damaging information in front of every vendor at a trade show? No? Then don't post that same potentially damaging information in a Linkedin industry group.

Common sense and etiquette are best practices for a reason, both on and offline.

Delete Doesn't Mean It's Gone

It's something we've all done. Something we see on the Internet, be it an email, a comment on a news article, a post on Facebook, sets us off and we reply, a little too quickly, with commentary that, later, upon reflection, seems a bit over the top. Now what?

You might think that we can simply delete that Facebook or Twitter post. But how many people saw it show up in their ticker or news feed before you had the change of heart and deleted it and did they share it? Or perhaps paraphrase you? You can't delete what others might quote or misquote.

Email? Just because you deleted it from your sent folder doesn't mean it's been deleted from the recipient's folder or your ISP's back-up files. Your IT guys have access to all of those files. If your boss requests your email from the last year, what might he or she find? You don't own that company email address. The company has every right to check on and track the comings and goings from your in and out boxes.

What about that old blog post? You deleted it, so it's gone...right? No, not necessarily. Did you know that Google can and does archive old pages from web sites that it has searched, spidered and listed? It does. It can show a screen capture of what a page looked like before it was deleted and that screen capture can stay up for quite some time.

But that embarrassing photo you posted on Facebook, it's gone as soon as you delete it, right? Sorry. Here's an article that might surprise you:

Facebook photos: Deleted today, still there tomorrow

Just because you hit DELETE doesn't mean the service provider, Facebook, Linkedin, Twitter, Google+ has deleted the files from their company servers. So, those files could still be accessible via a direct link.

Deleted may, in some cases, mean a file is gone. But forgotten? Not necessarily. How many sets of eyes saw the text, photo or video before you chose to delete? Did they share it, paraphrase, and/or take a screen capture?

Sharing vs. Spamming

Have you ever stopped following a page or feed because you felt the information shared wasn't of the best quality? It's a common practice, one many of us think about on a frequent basis. How do you keep your own fans and connections from contemplating doing the same with you? One simple and effective way to ensure you keep your followers happy, thus keeping your followers, is knowing the difference between sharing and spamming.

There's a lot more to spam than Viagra ads and large amounts of money left to you by kings and other types of distant foreign leaders.

When you share a link or other information without verifying it is actually valid and valuable, that's spam. While sometimes simply annoying, sharing this kind of information can lead to the transmission of viruses and malware. Does something sound too good to be true? It probably is. Does something sound off-base and untrue, like maybe it's a scam? Before passing it on check www.snopes.com. More often than not something that sounds "scammy" is a scam or a hoax. Passing it on as truth is spamming.

Putting out a monthly newsletter that you're sure is full of relevant and interesting information? Great. Did you allow everyone to opt-in to your mailing list? No? That's a shame. Adding someone to a mailing list without their knowledge is definitely considered spamming. And if they ask to be removed, please ensure you do so right away. Most email newsletter software allows people to opt-out directly from the sent message. It's a best practice to make it easy for a subscriber to opt-out.

Want to share your new Facebook page with all of your family, friends, co-workers and clients? That's great. But there's a proper way to do it. Sharing or posting your new page directly on their wall without permission is like putting a sign in their front yard. That's their digital real estate. Get permission before posting. Better yet, share the new page in a private message with details why the individual might like the page.

We'll continue the discussion of spam with a look at embedded links and other hacks tomorrow.

Passwords, Protection & Prevention – No Hacks

With the recent press about Linkedin's hacking debacle (it isn't often that a social media platform tells you that you'd better change your password) there's been another rise in privacy concern.

Ever since social media became a buzzword there have been concerns and complaints about security and privacy. For the most part, it has been left up to the individual to maintain a level of vigilance in order to maintain a secure status quo. When the big platforms (especially Facebook) make changes, most of us know to take a look and verify our privacy settings are correct and proper.

That being said, even the most digitally savvy amongst us fall prey to laziness and curiosity, the two main ways hackers battle our defenses and get into our data.

We have to create, remember and use an awful lot of passwords in our day to day digital dealings. We all know the mess it makes when we fail to remember a password and have to go through the process of getting it reset. Many people, unfortunately, combat this by using one password for everything. Bad idea. Why? Because when one platform gets hacked, another might be just around the corner. So, when someone sorts out your Facebook password, do you really want them to test it out to see if you use the same password to access online banking or your retirement funds? We think not.

Even if we do have separate passwords for different accounts, we often keep that same password for far too long. Most tech security experts recommend you change passwords every 3-6 months, the shorter period if you often log in via public computers (work, the library, etc.). This is especially important with shopping sites like Amazon.com where your credit card details are stored. Same goes for both business and personal banking and financial accounts. Your social media accounts? Every six months is probably fine, unless you see something odd or notice something amiss. The most secure passwords are a combination of letters and numbers, with differing cases on the letters, and the occasional special character like an exclamation point or question mark (if allowed).

You've heard the curiosity killed the cat, of course...but did you know that curiosity is one of the main ways hackers connect with you and corrupt your accounts and data? Ever see a Twitter post telling you that people are saying horrible things about you? **Don't click on the link**. If you do, your account will start sending the same message to every one of your followers. You're then forced to change your password to stop the barrage of spam you are sending to people who trust you're passing on viable information.

So, how do you know if it's spam and you shouldn't share, how can you prevent sharing information that could lead to hacks? If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is - so don't click the link and don't share. If the grammar is off or the syntax is strange - don't click the link and don't share. If you hover over the link and see that it's nothing like what the link text states - **don't click and don't share**.

Part of engaging in digital business is keeping yourself and those with whom you do business secure and safe. Simple precautions and some careful thought and calculation before you click will help you do so.

If You Build It...

We all know how that quote ends...and while it might be true with baseball fields, it rarely measures up when it comes to digital business.

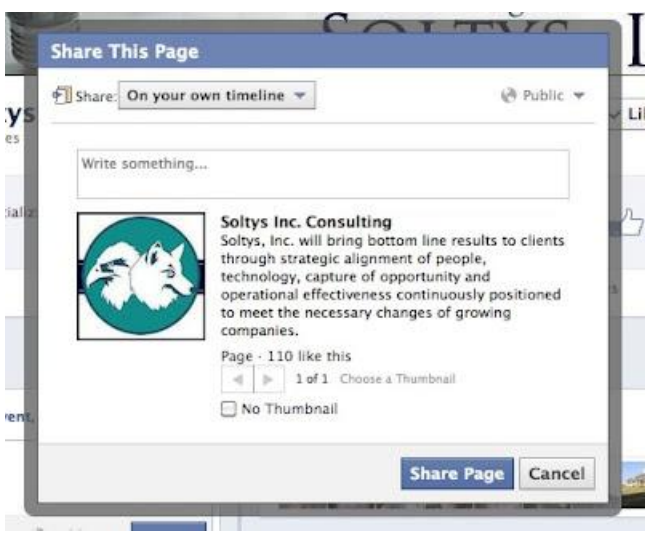
We were going to post our first vlog (video blog) today, but some technical issues arose, so we'll save that for next week and use screen captures instead. So, we apologize for posting this so late in the day.

You have embraced the concept of social media and you've designed and set-up your new Facebook business page (formerly known as fan pages). But, after you liked it and got your business partner, wife and teenage son to like it, you're at a loss. How do you get those first 25 likes so that you can secure your custom Facebook domain? And how do you keep building those numbers?

You "share" it. And here's how:

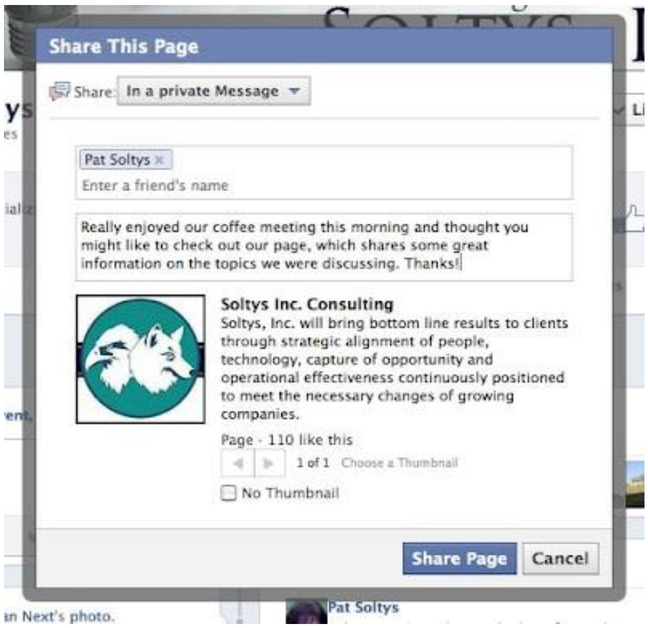
Underneath your large cover image, next to your Like/Liked button is a pull down menu denoted with a gear. Click that, then click share and you're on your way. But, there are several sharing options...some better than others.

If you do not have permission from a page or group owner, do not share to a page or group. This is, essentially, spamming. Much like putting up a sign in your neighbor's front yard. Not a best practice.



You have the option to share your new business page on your own Timeline. This is perfectly acceptable, but it's something you should do infrequently. Write a short note inviting your friends to check out your new page. Make sure to tell them what they can expect from your page, the type of posts and information that you'll share.

You'll see that there is an option to share your new page on a friend's timeline. Don't. Not until you've asked and received permission. Just like posting on a group's wall or another page, this can be considered spamming. Especially of this "friend" is really just an acquaintance. The sanctity of someone's digital real estate should not be breached.



The absolute best practice for sharing is the "In a private Message" feature. You choose a recipient (or several) and you can customize your message to their needs. Tell them why the page would be a benefit to them.

We'll continue the Best Practice series with some more "like", "follower" and "connection" building tips tomorrow.

Digital Business – Top 10

As we finish up the Digital Business portion of our Best Practices blog series, we thought a top-ten countdown of the ultimate best practices would be a good way to round out the sub-section of the topic.

10. K.I.S.S. - This principal works pretty much no matter where you place it, but it definitely has a place in your digital business practices. Keeping it simple, without geek speak, with images that make impact and links out for further information is definitely a best practice.

9. Share - Great content is at your fingertips. You don't have to create it all yourself. Sharing shows you keep on top of industry news and it can help you build new connections.

8. Editorialize - Why should your fans read the article you linked? It's not enough that you post it. What did it do for you? Share a new thought or idea that came from the article. Ask a question.

7. Give Credit - Did you find the great article link on another Facebook page or Twitter feed. Give credit for the person who posted the link initially, as well as to the article's author.

6. Consistency is Key - Regular posts encourage repeat visits. Digital business is a marathon, not a sprint. Begin as you plan to maintain.

5. Converse, Don't Broadcast - Posts are not sales pitches. Conversations and stories build the relationships that further social business.

4. Do Unto Others - The kind of community you'd like to build is, more often than not, the kind of community others are trying to build. The tone you'd like to see used on your pages is the same tone you should use on the pages of others. Polite, engaged, inquisitive.

3. Don't Forget the Photos - While great content is king, photos still create the best engagement. Pictures really are worth a thousand words.

2. Make Time For Responses - You can't just post and dash. You need to ensure you check back for questions and comments. On Facebook, on Twitter, on your blog...wherever you're doing digital business.

1. Reciprocity - To be liked, you have to like. To get followers you must follow. To build connections you must make connections.

Best Practices – New Hires

Best Practices - New Hires

A lot of companies do a great job selling a person on why they should work for their company. Then, welcome them like they would a celebrity visitor but drop the ball on putting a path for success and accountability in place.

I spoke with several companies recently who are experiencing challenges in terms of accountability and fulfillment of the job. The challenges were similar whether or not they were employees or 1099's and whether they were in a leadership or a production role.

Several best practices had not been implemented that could have made a lot of difference.

1. The On-Boarding Process

The on-boarding process with the exception of mandatory paperwork was left largely to the discretion of the manager in each case. That included timing, meetings, introductions, orientation and walking through critical tasks. If a manager happened to be out when a new person came on board, they might have made arrangements for someone else to get the new person started or might simply have left the new person to fend for themselves until they had the chance to catch up again or until a problem arose.

There were a couple of companies who thought they had an onboarding process in place but in most cases three quarters or more of the process was related to mandatory documents.

A best practice implemented by one company basically mimicked the AAA Trip Tiks in which the new hire was presented with a document constructed for them that would guide them through their first few days and become a resource afterward. It included a little info about people they would meet, with pictures, and how they would interact with that person in their job. It included maps that would be necessary to navigate the company including processes they needed to understand. It also included features and attractions as what to do if they needed help. Today, this could be done online and delivered in a mobile or online format.

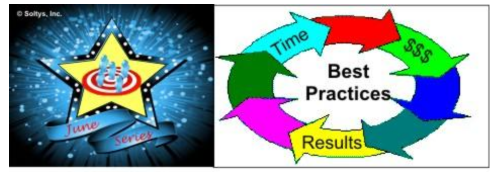
2. **Alignment of job description to tasks, responsibilities, accountability measurements and compensation.**

The job description to which they were hired was often an orphan once the person came on board, sometimes dusted off for periodic reviews. The job description in many cases had been written by an HR professional or from a template and represented a wish list for the job with an umbrella type scope. Compensation was another orphan except where it was tied specifically to production. Accountability was a calendar appointment and responsibilities did not have measurements.

A best practice we use is a simple spreadsheet tool that breaks down the job description and actual job expectations into components. Each has the expected tasks defined, results anticipated, measurement, points of accountability and compensation that are tied to execution. There are many areas where the compensation for the component is included in the base compensation as we do not want mis-interpretation. We usually then review our job descriptions to make sure that they are aligned with the job as it is broken down. All of this becomes a communication and management tool that does not have the challenges of verbal communications that are often social or selling during the hiring and first days on the job.

There are a lot of other best practices related to hiring and managing people but these two alone can make a significant difference in results and long term relationships.

Changing with The Times



Changing with the Times

This month I spent a week with my son, daughter-in-law, their son and newborn daughter. While I admit to being rusty in the baby and toddler care departments, I am always amazed at how much things have changed. The best practices we knew were not necessarily wrong, but not necessarily the best for these times.

In our businesses, best practices need to be kept current. Periodic looks at the best practices in place will lead to some changes, which may be modifications or full scale change. Keeping best practices current also requires communicating and training the changes so that they are fully implemented. It is a process and not an event.

You have morphed many best practices over time and probably not thought much about it. Take photography as an example. I do not know about you but it has been a lot of years since I took film to be developed and printed. The best practices you may have had implemented took into account the cost, lag time for processing and that you had to manually work with the photos once they came back. You also had to store them in a way that you could find what you wanted in a reasonable manner. Now, using digital technology, all of that has changed including how you share the photos you take. The new best practices for businesses related to photography are certainly different and have all but replaced everything you may have had before.

I was reminded yesterday of another practice that has changed when a person asked me to send a “wet” signature on an agreement. Almost everything is now digitally signed and sent via email or through services that track the signatures. This one, being a more recent and accepted change, probably has not been changed in many company operations manuals, training and staff orientation.

Best practices must become the standards of the company but must be able to evolve systematically to meet new requirements, embrace new technologies and take advantage of better methods.

A good example is the printing of documents that are sent and transacted by email. Companies that are able to help their people reduce paper dependency can reduce costs in paper, toner and demand for copiers. Using good digital document processes also reduces errors that are made by having multiple live documents floating at once.

There are many other examples but perhaps one that comes to the top of mind is financial management. A company I was working with today is very concerned about using Internet based financial tools and account management. Their best practices while very good, do not embrace efficiencies they could realize. The impact is a cost and time issue. Their transition will require gaining comfort in the security of online banking and transactions.

All in all it comes back to focusing on the definition of best practices we gave in the first post of this series. **“Best Practices are the defined methodologies aligned to an objective that drive the desired results with the greatest consistency.”**

This post concludes the best practices series. Best practices can be found throughout our blog posts. The July series is called "Christmas in July = Dollars in December". In the month of July we will look at the drivers that will churn dollars. Think of it as mid-year business plan review.

The Authors and the Company

The authors of the Best Practices series are Pat Soltys and Mallie Hart.

Pat Soltys has a long business and consulting history helping companies not only through tough times but more frequently in achieving their objectives. She understands the mechanics and structure of business as well as the challenges. Her writing aligns with a philosophy of content, communications and commerce. For more information see Pat's bio on our web site. You may contact Pat directly at psoltys@soltys-inc.com

Mallie Hart shared some of her insight in social media in the social media related posts. As the Director of Online Initiatives for Soltys Inc., Mallie brings expertise in maximizing the impact of social media, websites and more to our clients. She is able to help from strategic concept through delivery including "ghost posting" for clients. Her consulting helps clients realize the elusive ROI of Social Media. For more information, see Mallie's bio on our website. You may also contact Mallie directly at mdein@soltys-inc.com.

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