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The Champion Spirit

A LOOK AT THIS YEAR'S
BUSINESS EXPO

The Case for Women

THE RISE OF FEMALE-
OWNED BUSINESSES

A NEW LIFE FOR AN
ICONIC SEK BUILDING

10 YEARS

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'START STRONG' IS A CLICHE THAT WORKS



GUEST COLUMN

By the time most area sales, advertising and marketing professionals read this they will have sat through one – or two – “Start Strong” Monday morning meetings. These annual round-ups are always a January favorite with marketing types.

I’ve been there. In fact, I’ve been on both sides of the “Start Strong” meeting cry.

During my 20-plus years in retail sales, radio, newspaper, magazine, television and digital advertising and marketing, I’ve led those first quarter rallies.

The boilerplate goes like this: “Pull out all of the stops,” “Plan your work and work your plan,” and “Leave no stone unturned.” That’s a lot of sales cliché balls to keep in the air.

I have with great zeal used all of those phrases hoping to inspire my colleagues and coworkers to “Hit the streets running,” “Knock on every door,” and “Don’t leave any money on the table.” And, while you are it, don’t forget to take care of your current customers, exceed performance expectations, nurture local goals, embrace corporate initiatives and keep your paperwork current.

I’ve also been on the receiving end of the “Start Strong” pitch delivered by every sales and marketing manager who, feeling downward corporate pressure to achieve, annually makes the same plea.

I’ve been “that guy” at the end of the table who rolled his eyes when faced with a budget increase. I’ve sat back in my chair and crossed my arms and tuned out, convinced the marching orders given were unreasonable and unachievable. It’s happened and I own it.

Often following the Start Strong meeting comes the down-low staff huddle during which coworkers cry, complain, dismiss and talk themselves out of a successful start to the New Year. I’ve done it and many of you have too.

A few years ago I decided to claim the clichés’ as my own, embrace the cry for new revenue, gin-up enthusiasm and scrap for every new dollar I could scrape up. After all, the old commission-based sales cliché’ proves true: You are the only one who can give yourself a raise every time you want one.

Professional benefit?

I’m not going to pretend it’s easy. I’ve failed at it on many occasions, but you can’t win if you don’t play (how about a sports cliché’ to hammer it home.)

Deciding to Start Strong is the only way to adjust your attitude and succeed. Decide you are going to make the best of every day. Be prepared for every sales meeting or sales floor interaction, and be the smartest and hardest working professional in your field.

Cliché alert: You have to be prepared to “pull out all of the stops.”

Is there a networking opportunity you can attend, rather than perching on a happy hour barstool at 5 p.m.? Do it. Can you get out an hour earlier and join a leads group or attend a chamber morning networking coffee? Do it.

Is it a physical and personal sacrifice? Yes. Does it offer a professional benefit? It does.

Experience tells me it’s easier to build relationships that will be financially beneficial when you hit the streets rather than sulking in the office, wasting an hour casually checking email, catching up on Facebook, drinking cheap company-provided coffee and stuffing your face with day-old donuts. I’ve done them all.

The only way to find new revenue is to get out of the office and knock on every door. Nothing makes a sales manager lose confidence in an account executive more than to hear that there are businesses where, you – a sales professional -- have never engaged the decision maker, let alone know who they are.

I’ve been guilty of it and know well the disappointed look on a manager’s face when the answer I offered was a reluctant, but honest, “No. I didn’t make that call!”

Get on the gravy train

Ask any sales manager what is the best kind of revenue? The answer is always the same: “New revenue.”

Why? It’s unplanned. It’s gravy on top of your budget goal.

Do you have a territory? Knock on every door. You never know what opportunity you may find. Retail floor sales your game? Never assume someone wearing cheap overalls and ratty boots doesn’t have the financial largess to write the check that – with one sale – can put you over the top of a challenging goal.

Is outbound sales your mission? Make an extra call every day.

Knocking on every door, shaking every hand and making that extra call is the easiest way to get to the gravy.

It’s not easy, but the math proves it every time. Sales is a simple numbers game the more folks you reach out and touch, the better your odds of finding that “yes” and closing an unexpected sale.

The best sales executives I’ve known during my two decades of beating the streets, knocking on every door, making the extra call and attempting to leave no stone unturned, share a couple of common traits: persistence in the face of “No” and exceptional organizational skills.

Full disclosure: I have seldom possessed both at the same time.

Approach every day ready to succeed. Have a plan in place, execute that plan flawlessly, and know your plan for the day, week and month. Set short-term and long-term goals, but be prepared to adjust your schedule to take advantage of unforeseen opportunity. Above all, commit to Start Strong every morning, not just every January.

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GUEST COLUMN

USING INFRARED HEAT A MFG GAME-CHANGER

What manufacturing process today does not require the application of heat at some point? From heating, drying, curing, thermoforming, annealing, potting, and more, almost every product created today requires heat at some point.

Heating applications run almost the entire gamut of industry uses. Heat processes are used in the manufacture of transformers, screen print powder, paint, concrete blocks, ceramic, fiber, biodegradable waste, polycarbonate sheets, adhesives, packaging and even pet food.

It’s used for drying paper pulp, preheating plastics thermoforming plastics finishing and repairing aircraft parts annealing metal and plastic products to increase their ductility potting (encapsulating) electronic components preheating corrugated metal warming and thawing pharmaceuticals welding and vacuum-forming plastic textile finishing and curing.

And with a process that is so wide and varied across the industry, it’s invariable that someone will come along and try to build a better mousetrap.

Efficient and precise infrared heating systems are quickly supplanting conventional gas and electric ovens as the go-to choice for this important step in manufacturing.

Because an infrared heater has no moving parts and radiates so effectively, it consumes far less energy than a conventional oven – which requires a fan and blower.

Infrared elements can even be retrofitted to conventional gas and electric ovens for further cost-effectiveness. Considering the costs of conventional heating equipment, which in heavy industrial cases can mean hundreds of thousands of dollars, retrofitting an aging machine can sometimes be a cost-effective alternative.

For example, Copper Standard, a global supplier of automotive parts headquartered in Novi, Michigan used to

do their batch annealing in a gas oven, but that was a two-hour process. Today they use the infrared heating after the injection molding press that makes appliques for automobile exteriors.

The company discovered that infrared surpassed gas and electric convection heating by way of its precision, speed and energy savings. Aside from the production advantages of using infrared for industrial process heating, the economic benefits seem to tip the scales even further toward that option.

Given that heating plays such an important role, the switch to infrared ovens yields substantial savings for any manufacturer, from reduced energy bills to reduced floor space requirements.

Gas fired ovens generally transfer heat by convection and hence require fans or blowers, with much wasted energy lost in the process. Additional losses stem from the requirement for heating the entire oven, even for small parts. Electric convection consumes even more excessive quantities of energy to produce its heat.

In contrast, electric infrared heating elements transfer energy to the substrate of surface area via electromagnetic radiation and thus can operate in a vacuum and never come

FORT SCOTT: Owner restored building in Kansas City

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improvement sales tax funds. "Our commissioners realized that we could spend \$1 million now to assess and get the clean up done, or we were looking at potential two or three times that to demolish the structure," Smith said. "So it was a no brainer for us."

Krsnich credits Smith and the city's involvement and "forward thinking" in helping to bring the project to fruition despite the building's asbestos and other environmental issues.

"Where as a lot of cities would take a look at the problem and kick the can down the road and all of a sudden have a building that still needs to be environmentally abated but five, 10 years from now not even structurally salvageable," Krsnich said. "The city chose to get out in front of that."

The Western Building endeavor is no new feat for Flint Hills Holdings. The team has given other historic buildings new leases on life, including restoring the 1920's Chatham Hotel in Kansas City into modern senior living apartments. The firm is currently working to do the same for the Parsonian Hotel—a former hotel and diner located in downtown Parsons, Kansas. The preservation and restoration of vintage buildings is a driver for the company.

"Four out of five projects we work on involve adaptive reuse of almost always using state and federal historic tax credits," he said.

According to Krsnich, Flint Hills Holdings Group, the parent company of Flint Hills Development Group, Flint Hills Management Group and Flint Hills Investment Group, formed approximately two years ago after garnering attention for

the team's efforts in historic preservation. Krsnich said the entity took on an investor so he and the team "could make a similar impact on a broader scale."

"...you'll find that most all of our projects involve the adapted reuse of old historic buildings, which is why we were attracted to the project in Parsons, as well as the project here in Fort Scott," he said.

Krsnich also noted there are hidden assets in the small southeast Kansas town, such as the community college, national landmark and proximity to Kansas City, that made the city an attractive place to develop. He foresees the Western Building project sparking other opportunities.

"As important if not more important than the total one-time investment is going to be the catalytic effect," Krsnich said. "The jobs are going to be retained, the jobs that are going to be created. I'm very very interested in taking a look at what happens to some of the other storefronts on Main Street as a result of this project. I'm interested in looking at future developments here in Fort Scott as well."

Fort Scott Area Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Lindsay Madison said the revitalization of the Western Building will help to bolster downtown living in Fort Scott.

"We are extremely excited, not only to have the beautiful building restored, a historic downtown that's been blighted for a number of years, but just to have the living and the residential apartments downtown and have activity to also help our other stores and restaurants downtown thrive more than they do already," Madison said.

Krsnich said the plan is to have the project completed by fall 2016.

HEAT: Infrared provides more control

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into contact with a part or material—all while generating temperatures approaching 1000 degrees or more.

On the other hand, electrically-heated infrared elements yield as much as 86 percent of their input as radiant energy that strikes the surface of a product, according to the Heating, Ventilating, and Air-Conditioning Systems and Equipment Handbook. Some designs may be as high as 95 percent in the form of useable heat, with the balance being lost through the power supply lines.

Duty cycle also factors into efficiency. For instance, if you buy a 70 kilowatt conventional oven and assume, for example, a 10 cent per kilowatt-hour energy consumption, that comes to \$7 an hour. But consider how often it is actually firing and consuming energy compared to how long product is inside? Whereas, an infrared oven might only need to run at a 40% duty cycle. Heating cost would drop to \$2.80 per hour in this scenario.

Since the amount of infrared energy varies at each wavelength, manufacturers can adjust the wavelength of electric infrared heaters to match the heat requirements of a given substrate in the oven for optimum performance and control. Infrared heating also offers very fast response times, which is beneficial when holding precise temperature uniformity.

One of the main reasons engineers are choosing an infrared solution is that this

technology can be customized to provide exacting control for any particular product. Every foot in a conveyor oven path can be zoned for maximum, continuous process heating efficiency, monitored by a thermocouple in each zone.

One of infrared's most useful characteristics is its adaptability. Whether used in batch ovens, walk-in ovens or conveyor systems, infrared can apply.

Electric infrared heater modules—typically in 12"x24", 12"x36", or 12"x48" sizes—become structural members of the oven. They can be designed to work individually for small areas, ganged together for larger areas, or even ceiling hung or wall mounted.

It's not a solution for every application every company is going to have unique needs and unique challenges. But if feasible, infrared heat systems can improve production, reduce energy consumption and give companies greater control over output. Like a solar system for your home, in the long run it's a sound investment.

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WOMEN Local owner: access to knowledge is key to success

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they act as a mature major market force, that's when we will grow our financial success and advance our nation's economic achievements," Dorfman said.

To help more women-owned businesses thrive, Dorfman pointed to the need for preparedness, which includes an acute awareness of one's business market.

"I think what women in business need to do, if they haven't started a business yet and they are considering it, they need to make sure their idea is viable, first off," she said. "Does the business idea fulfill a need of some sort and can they make money at it? They also need to build a foundation and make sure that they have put together a good marketing and business plan and do that before they quit their day jobs."

Pittsburg-based businesswoman Laura Samford grew her company, Laura's Fitness and Beauty, through market awareness.

"We felt the need that we kept hearing about from our customers," Samford said. "As they asked, we started looking at how we could take care of that. It's been customer-driven to see what they wanted to see."

Samford also said engaging in community activities, including events put on by the Pittsburg Area Chamber of Commerce, helped her business endeavors thrive and gain credence in the region.

"As I got more active in the chamber, that's when I

really started coming into contact with other businesses in town," she said.

Joplin-based businesswoman Ericka Hamilton, co-owner of Coco's Boutique and Erimish Bracelet Bar, said having access to knowledge is key for helping businesswomen succeed. For her, knowing the importance of advertising was something she wished she knew prior to co-founding her business.

"You think about Budweiser or you think about Coco-

Cola or Hershey's chocolate, they never stop advertising," Hamilton said. "Everybody knows who they are. Everybody. But they never stop advertising. That's a really fine line."

Both Hamilton and Samford said they have noticed a progression in women-owned businesses in the Joplin and Pittsburg regions.

But still, some women said there are still discriminatory barriers for women and by broaching this subject and pushing to conversation forward to advance women's influence, real change will happen.

"You can't deny that it still happens and it's out there, but I think it's gotten so much better," Samford said. "I think opening up those conversations is healthy for us if we do it in a positive way."

"We have to change the conversation and help everyone understand that by minimizing women and their roles and their ability to reach their full potential from a business standpoint, you are not just hurting the woman and her family, you're hurting her employees and her employees' families, and you're hurting your own economy," Dorfman said. "It's those employees that have the money in the pockets that spend money in the community."

"...when women come together and take ownership, advance women's clout, then we (can) work together to kick open the doors."

