

Greenfield Business Association

2007, a very good year

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Make sure we have your email to stay in the loop! gba@franklincc.org

G-Biz



Greenfield Business Association

Doing business together in Greenfield
Since 1922

greenfieldbusiness.org

September 2007

The GBA 2007

Annual Meeting

The Greenfield Business Association met for their annual meeting on June 29th at the Hampton Inn for a breakfast meeting where a new slate of officers for the 2007-2008 season were voted in and they are as follows:

President: Sue Dillon, Bank of Western Mass.

Vice-President: Elizabeth Fisk, WHAI, 98.3 FM

Secretary: Tami Beauregard, Wilson's Dept. Store

Treasurer: George Gohl, Garden Cinema;

Past President: Patti Waters, Green Fields Market;

The GBA is pleased to welcome four new Board members to its eclectic and energized Board of Directors.

- **Bryan Smith of the Town of Greenfield joins us from the Youth Services Department. We think it will be valuable to begin a connection with the younger generation in a number of ways and Bryan is apt to bring a great perspective to the work we do.**
- **We welcome Terri Cappucci, Executive Director of GCTV, and a creative and talented addition to our team. Terri brings with her innovation and professional experience and an interest in renewed vibrancy of the Greenfield community.**
- **Kristie Faufaw, who has been managing Ryan & Casey Liquor store for years, has an energy and dedication that is a great contribution to the Board and the Events committee. Kristie's flair for working out all the kinks is a true asset to our programs and activities.**
- **Saving the world from bad sound is one of Larry Clark of The Music Store's many talents. He will now be bringing his professional gifts to the table at the GBA board meetings. We are thrilled to have him join us.**

If you have been wondering what the benefits of joining the GBA might be for your business, please contact Becky Kurber at gba@franklincc.org or 774-2791.

What Matters to You Department

Decide If You Really Care What Your Customers Think

Goal: Engage in a true dialog with your customers, or don't bother at all.

Real feedback isn't for everyone, so make sure you have the fortitude required to make the effort pay off. Humility, a thick skin, and a receptive management culture are key prerequisites. "Be prepared to see and hear some things you might not want to. The people who participate may really like your business or your product, but the way they articulate it may be very different than what you'd do yourself," says Chris Arnold of Chipotle Mexican Grill, which invited college students to create advertising videos for the restaurant chain. If you think you're game for the experience, start by establishing some small, tangible goal, such as improving your product displays, pricing or reaching a new target customer. Be specific about identifying functional tasks that might benefit from customer input. Start out slow to ease into the process; begin by simply finding and listening to consumers online via customer surveys (both verbal and written) Internet forums, blogs and the old fashioned feedback box in your store.

Do You Have What It Takes?

If you can't answer yes to most of these questions, then you should probably forget about launching a customer feedback initiative:

- Does your company really respect its customers?
- Do you have a specific problem, goal, or task that your customers might conceivably help to address?
- Are you really interested in hearing what outsiders have to say, even if the way they say it may seem snarky or harsh?
- Are you willing to show outsiders how your business is run? Are you comfortable inviting them "backstage"?

- Are you willing to integrate a group of customers into the way you structure your business within your own walls?

- Will you be able to make customers feel important and respond to their questions, concerns, and ideas? Do you have the time and willingness to follow through on an outreach effort?

Learn Who Loves You (and who tolerates you) Goal: Identify customers who will provide the most useful insight.

Your customers can do a lot for you, if you first take the time to listen to what they have to say. Ask your staff members to identify outspoken customers who have a history of repeated interaction with your business—be it positive or negative. You can also introduce yourself via bag stuffers dedicated to your interest in their feedback. Be humble and be transparent. Make it very clear that your goal is to solicit input from people who use your product. It is easier and easier to use email and electronic sources for retrieving feedback. Ask for email addresses when purchases are made and make it a habit to check in on regular customers—being clear to assure them of the privacy of their email address. Betsy Weber, "chief evangelist" at software provider TechSmith, likes to begin by privately emailing individuals who have made themselves available to ask what they love or hate about her company's software and what TechSmith could do better. "They get excited because they get to participate," she says. Weber has recruited almost 600 customers to be part of a special "advisory board" that reviews and evaluates new products and services. If the advisory board doesn't like it, the new product doesn't get built.

What Not to Do: Be Honest or Be Damned

Never, ever plant your own people to pose as customers online. Do not misrepresent

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Decide If You Really Care What Your Customers Think (continued)

your identity, your goals, your motives, or your intentions. The blogosphere is full of armchair detectives who will go to great lengths to uncover false pretenses, and when a ruse is discovered, the damage to your firm's credibility can be severe. Sony learned this first-hand in late 2006 when fans figured out that a website on which two hip-hop "bloggers" had been raving about the PlayStation Portable (PSP) was actually registered to and produced by a marketing agency called Zipatoni. Sales of the PSP have been disappointing, and as word of the deception spread, Sony's woes were compounded by a humiliating hit to the brand's street credibility.

Make Engaged Customers Feel Special Goal: Reward passionate consumers with insider perks and benefits.

People will do many things for a business for free, simply because they think it's fun. Products and companies can become hobbies unto themselves, and many consumers will derive satisfaction from feeling like an insider at a company they're passionate about. In return, you should give them recognition, exclusive perks, the opportunity to interact with senior company managers, or free products. Following in the footsteps of nonprofit feedback initiatives such as Linux software and the Wikipedia online encyclopedia, Canadian shoemaker Fluevog offers customers fame—in the form of a shoe named after them—as part of an "open source footwear" project. Fluevog customers

are invited to submit their ideas for shoe designs. Web visitors vote for their favorites, and the winning shoe goes into production (subject to final approval from company owner John Fluevog). Customers who create winning designs gain elite status on the company's website, and they also get to help name the shoe. Fluevog's highly engaged customers become valuable brand evangelists, helping to build loyalty, reduce development costs, and increase the company's chances of making new product launches successful.

Nitty Gritty: Three Ways to Incentivize Your Customers

Give them stuff: Discounted products, cash prizes and coupons for creative contests can work wonders to motivate your customers to talk back, fill out a survey, or preview a new product.

Give them fame: People want to know they're extra-special. Give them special status in a customer community to indicate that their advice had an impact on the company's direction.

Give them VIP status: Whether it's a day-trip to your factory, their picture on your counter as customer of the month, or an online forum where they can chat and submit their ideas, give them a place to get the inside scoop and be noticed.

Bring Customers "Inside the Tent"

Goal: Give participants clear goals and integrate their ideas into your decision-making.

The world is full of smart people, and if you plan it right, your customers can become a valuable talent resource, much like consultants, contractors, and outsourced partners. In return, however, you must take their suggestions seriously, which may mean sharing information about product or marketing plans that you normally keep locked away.

Don't expect to control them; just let them be creative and be themselves. It's fine to lay out ground rules about how much control you're willing to cede, how much information you're willing to share, and what will happen to the work participants create. When soliciting creative input, for example, it's reasonable to maintain exclusive rights to video distribution or advertising submissions—just in case a customer generates an offensive ad on your behalf. For trade secrets, invite a small number of VIP customers to work more closely with you, and be sure they all sign non-disclosure agreements with their real names and addresses. The important thing, however, is to think differently about the way you structure and manage your operations to ensure that your feedback initiative can realize its full potential.

Article from BNET, slightly rewritten to better serve local businesses.

New Members for September 2007

Andy's and the Oak Shoppe and Homespun

352 Deerfield Street 773.3949 www.andysoak.com
Andy's specializes in woods such as cherry, maple, birch, parawood and pine. The Oak Shoppe specializes in oak and ash for its furniture pieces. Homespun by Andy's, our third and most recent store, specializes in curtains, shower curtains, pillows, braided rugs, lampshades and kitchen accessories.

Greenfield Games

228 Main Street 774.5225
www.greenfieldgames.com
"We bring fun to the table"

Bart's Café of Greenfield

286 Main Street 413.641.0030
www.bartshomemade.com

A full scale ice cream shop/café. Bart's has been voted Best in the Valley in the Valley Advocate Reader's Poll since 1981.

Thai Blue Ginger

298 Main Street 772.0921
www.thaiblueginger.com
Be healthier everyday at Thai Blue Ginger.
Authentic Thai Cuisine

Aliber's Bridal Shop

18 Federal Street 773.3939
www.alibersbridal.com
"No one does "I do" like we do"

The Country Jeweler

220 Main Street 772.0859
www.countryjeweler.com
Your Family's Jeweler, since 1973

Forbes Photo & Frame

300 Main Street 773.9898
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91 Main Street 800.622-9211
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Trust AAA for Travel, Automotive Services,
Insurance, and More