



Small Business Monthly

The Source for Business Owners AUGUST 2023

STL's Top Accountants

St. Louis' Best Attorneys

The Keys To Handling A Crisis

Best BOSSES in STL

Meet The Best Leaders
In The Area
And Learn What Makes
Them Special

Steve Kuhlmann,
Principal,
Gray Design Group



Build Leads...Increase Sales...
Exhibit Your Product
or Service at the BizExpo



Nov. 8 - St. Charles Convention Center
(Booths Still Available)
STLEXPO.COM

ST. LOUIS BUSINESS EXPO

Grow - Learn - Network



St. Louis Business Expo

November 8 | 11AM to 5 PM | St. Charles Convention Center

Promote Your Products And Services – Sign Up For A Booth Today

STLEXPO.COM

Booths & Sponsorships Available



Honored as one of

St. Louis' Best Business Attorneys

by St. Louis Small Business Monthly
2018, 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023

Thanks to our clients for your continued support. It is a privilege to serve you and provide for your legal needs.

The Law Offices of
Robert Grant Pennell, LLC

Attorney & Counselor at Law

The firm that gets BUSINESS done!

314.863.1555 | www.RGP-Law.com

The choice of a lawyer is an important decision and should not be based solely upon advertisement.

Congratulations Steven Cohen

Voted one of the BEST Attorneys in St. Louis.

BC&B prides itself on being well prepared in its consultation, persuasive in its negotiation and aggressive in its litigation.



8000 Maryland Ave., Suite 1500 | Clayton, MO 63105

The choice of a lawyer is an important decision and should not be based solely upon advertisements.

314.721.7272
www.bcblawlc.com



“I’m most excited to have my children be part of our business to take on leadership roles.”

Kay Allen
Lights-Direct, Inc.

Stacia Peterson
Carrollton Bank

CARROLLTON BANK

www.carrolltonbanking.com

AUGUST 2023

- 14** Best Attorneys
- 16** Best Health Insurance Brokers/Agents
- 18** The Keys to Handling a Crisis
- 20** Best Bosses in St. Louis
- 26** Top Accountants in St. Louis

DEPARTMENTS & COLUMNS

- 6** Publisher's Letter
- 7** Sales Moves
- 7** Ask The Banker
- 8** Financial Fitness
- 8** Entrepreneur's Toolbox
- 8** Mastering LinkedIn
- 9** Women Leaders
- 9** CultureCentric Leadership
- 10** Totally Terrific Tips
- 10** Focus on HR
- 11** Marketing Works
- 12** Technology Trends
- 29** The Ethics Advantage
- 29-** Legal Matters
- 30** The Extraordinary Workplace

RON AMELN, *president*
314-569-0076, ext. 100
ron@sbmon.com

PAT COATES, *vice president*
314-569-0076, ext. 109
pat@sbmon.com

**ADVERTISING OR
EDITORIAL INQUIRIES**
314-569-0076
info@sbmon.com

PHOTOGRAPHY
BILL SAWALICH, *Barlow Productions*
314-994-9990
info@barlowpro.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS
\$21.50 for 12 issues.
Online: <http://store.sbmon.com>
Pat Coates
314-569-0076, ext. 109
pat@sbmon.com

OUR EDITORIAL FOCUS

Our country was founded by visionaries who believed in free enterprise through individual determination. We support that spirit and hold that the future of our area lies in the growth and development of small businesses and the efforts of entrepreneurs. We are dedicated to supporting and promoting that growth.

St. Louis Small Business Monthly is St. Louis' locally owned business publication, bringing business tips, strategies and analysis to the presidents, CEOs, owners and top executives of 16,000 businesses in the St. Louis Metropolitan region. SBM, founded in 1988, publishes every month and also provides information at www.SBMon.com and through a variety of business-related forums and events.

ST. LOUIS SMALL BUSINESS INC.
2451 Executive Dr., Suite 109
St. Charles, MO 63303
314-569-0076/314-432-7016 fax
www.sbmon.com www.stlouisbusinessexpo.com info@sbmon.com

© St. Louis Small Business Monthly 2023. All rights reserved.

FOUNDED BY
Katie Muchnick & Bill Schneider 1988
Judy Meador
Owner & Publisher 1991-2007

Matt Frauenhoffer, Executive Creative Director and Partner at Notion, is one of the 2023 Top Bosses in St. Louis.

Congratulations

Matt Fraenhoffer was voted as Best Boss in St. Louis by Small Business Monthly. Thank you for always guiding our team and clients to think more creatively.



Matt Fraenhoffer
Partner and Executive Creative Director
B2B Marketing Specialist and Visual Storytelling Expert

Notion collaborates with B2B marketers and communications teams to create thoughtful, strategic designs that serve a purpose and move audiences to act. Our areas of creative expertise include brand identity, thought leadership, corporate communications, product marketing, sales enablement and data visualization.



Learn more at [notionpartners.com](https://www.notionpartners.com)

 **notion**
Creative Minds + Strategic Design

Good for St. Louis, good for business.

Thanks for naming us
Best Bank for 3 out of
the last 4 years!

 **Midwest
BankCentre.**
RISING TOGETHER®

MEMBER FDIC | NMLS #685869

THE WALDMANS | MIDWEST BANKCENTRE CLIENTS
ORV KIMBROUGH | CHAIRMAN AND CEO



The Meaning of Life.... And Other Deep Thoughts

What is “The Meaning of Life?” Pretty deep, huh ... especially from a former sports reporter. Reading a column by a former sports reporter pondering the meaning of life is like listening to an Enron executive discussing integrity (okay, it's not that bad).

Seriously, what is “The Meaning of Life?”

To me, the meaning of life is affirmation. It is knowing you make a difference in the world. That's what we all want and crave. People want to know they matter. If they know what they do makes a difference, they will almost always step up to the plate. They will be more fulfilled and content.

So, where does all this fit into your business? Do your employees know they matter? Make a difference?



I know as a business owner I do a HORRIBLE (yes, capital letters) job of letting people who work for me know how they make a difference. I am an intense person, and I am usually 100% focused on my daily tasks — a trait shared by many business owners. I just assume employees know they make a difference. I do not think I am alone.

In fact, a recent study reported that 50% of entrepreneurs ranked themselves as poor when it came to employee recognition. Another study identified “recognition” as the top motivator, according to employees.

These are just some of the reasons we are excited to highlight our Best Bosses of 2023 (Pages ??-??). These top managers and bosses, all nominated by their employees, share some of the best practices on building better cultures and employees.

Building better cultures and keeping employees engaged are critical today.

It is all about “The Meaning of Life.” Every employee wants to know they make a difference and feel they matter. If your communication focuses on these things, your business and employees will reap the rewards. ■

Ron

Our dedicated team knows there's nothing

small

about your business.

Call or visit us today for all your business banking needs.



Royal Banks
OF MISSOURI

Investing in our communities, one client at a time.
(314)-212-1500 | www.royalbanksofmo.com



Guiding Aspiring Brands Through Today's Maze



BRANDING + DIGITAL MARKETING + WEB + SEO + DESIGN + PRINTING

www.1905newmedia.com

15 Reasons Holding Salespeople Back



This could sound a bit negative, but this is the real thing. I've been dealing with prospecting and helping salespeople for a long time now. Having been around the block, I know these 15 things are holding salespeople back from success.

Looking at this list should help you know you're not alone. But even more so, I hope to show you how each is a false assumption that is holding you back. Once you overcome them, your results will change.

1. Fear of rejection

Who doesn't have this fear ... if even a little?

Fear of rejection — We can all be told, "No."

2. Lack of confidence

I'm just not confident in what I'm doing.

I'm just not a born salesperson.

Oh, Mark, you're known as "the sales hunter." You must have been born to do this.

No, I was not. I was fired from my first two sales jobs.

3. Fear of failure

Fear of failure is not a reason to back out of something. You can overcome that.

4. Uncertain about what to say, what to do

I need to prospect, but I just don't know what to do.

By reading this blog you're already at a great starting point. Be teachable. Seek knowledge. Find mentors.

5. Lack of belief in prospecting

Oh, prospecting doesn't work. We just need to do more advertising, or we need to do more marketing, yeah.

Wrong.

6. Not believing in leads

This excuse drives me crazy.

If I had better leads, I could sell more.

False, I think that's garbage.

7. Discomfort with cold outreach

Oh, no! I have to call people, and they don't know who I am.

I'm going to share some stories with

you in the coming weeks that will blow your mind.

8. Uncertain about the value proposition

Okay, this is what we sell. This is how my company says we make a difference. But I don't believe it. I think it's a bunch of junk.

Disbelief in the value proposition means you really don't believe in the product. If you don't believe in what you sell, why are you working there?

9. Poor training

Most "training" happening at companies isn't sales training. It's product training disguised as sales training.

Kudos for seeking knowledge and tips from experts on your own here! If you sit around waiting for someone to train you, perhaps you want to be a lousy salesperson.

10. Negative past experiences

This could be last week, last month, last year, but there's stuff that harbors in your mind, and you can't get past it.

What would it look like for you to beat the odds and get past it?

11. Poor time management skills

It's easy to mismanage our time in sales, whether that's spending too much time with current customers, chasing shiny objects that will never become qualified prospects, or even going down a CRM or research rabbit hole for too long.

I advocate for a lot of time management strategies, whether that's time blocking or

the 10 a.m. rule.

12. Time spent on existing accounts

I'd prospect, but my boss and everybody needs me to take care of these accounts.

Those are excuses.

Well, I could do this, but these accounts — you don't realize how important they are."

Keep that up and your pipeline could begin to look scary.

13. Failing to have a plan

I don't really have a plan, so I don't know what I should do, so I'm not going to do anything.

There's only one thing worse than not having a plan. It's not doing anything at all.

14. Believing prospecting is someone else's job

I was working with a company the other day, and the vast majority of their salespeople don't believe in prospecting because they always say, *It's that department's job.*

Wrong, it's everybody's job to prospect.

15. Low self-esteem

You just don't believe in yourself enough and, as a result, it hurts. ■ *Mark Hunter, of The Sales Hunter sales motivation blog, is the author of "High-Profit Prospecting: Powerful Strategies to Find the Best Leads and Drive Breakthrough Sales Results."*



ASK THE BANKER

Presented by:



RISING TOGETHER®

Member FDIC <http://MidwestBankCentre.com>

What are the Risks of Check Fraud, and What Can I do About Them?

Check fraud has been on the rise locally. Criminals gain access to mailbox drop-offs, steal checks, then wash and alter the checks to steal funds from businesses. By law, businesses only have 24 hours from the time a check clears their account to report it as fraudulent. After that there is no guarantee that the funds can be recovered.

Banks offer services such as Positive Pay to help reduce the risk of fraud. With Positive Pay, a business will send their bank a list of their checks, and any check not on the list will be flagged. The business can then review the check and decide if it's ok to pay or not. There are similar services that can be used to protect against ACH fraud as well. Ask your banker for information on fraud protection products. If you already have them in place, it is still a good time to revisit the conversation with your banker to see if there are any new enhancements to fraud services that you could utilize.

In addition to fraud prevention services from your bank, there are a few other best practices you can implement to further protect your business. Avoid using outdoor public mailboxes to mail checks, switch to paying by ACH when available, and be sure your staff is properly trained on how to spot check fraud when reviewing check images, online banking transactions, and bank statements. ■



Answers provided by Pete Zeiser, President - Chesterfield Commercial at Midwest BankCentre. He can be reached at 314-633-6762 or pzeiser@midwestbankcentre.com.



How Much Are Unproductive Meetings Costing You?

Per Business Insider, \$37 billion is lost annually in the US due to unproductive meetings. What are the losses in productivity? Meetings that last longer than they need to; meetings with unneeded participants; meetings that fail to yield decisions and require additional meetings; people waiting on those decisions; and loss of employee engagement from poor facilitation.

Before we talk about how to conduct productive meetings, let's clear up a misconception about meetings: Meetings aren't intrinsically bad; there are just BAD meetings! 'Good' meetings are needed to run any business!

Productive meetings have two elements:

1. Effective format and structure: Start and end on time, same day, same time, and same agenda.

2. Focused on action vs. reporting. (Reporting meetings are the main reason for unproductive meetings.)

Meetings with an effective format and structure allow participants to schedule and prepare without impacting the rest of the day's schedule. Meetings focused on action address issues — as opposed to reporting meetings where time is spent explaining, justifying and defending results. Addressing an issue means identifying a problem's root cause and selecting the best solution to eliminate the cause forever, in contrast

to endlessly discussing and discussing and discussing the same issue.

Are your meetings action-focused or reporting-focused? What are unproductive meetings costing you in \$\$\$ and engagement?

P.S., A great example of a productive meeting can be found in the bestselling book "Traction" by Gino Wickman and is called a Level 10 meeting. You can learn more about weekly Level 10 meetings at eosworldwide.com. ■

John Gross is an EOS Implementer who helps businesses achieve Vision, Traction, and Healthy. You can contact John at John@DrivingChangeInc.com or call 636.667.0579.



Now For Some Real Growth...

Last month we covered the seven deadly business sins in a slowing/recessionary environment. From our view and of the experts we follow, the end of this period may be on the horizon, but not until mid-2024, even 2025, for some industries.

Until an economic turnaround begins, last month's guidance is best. However, understanding what your business needs to look like when we return to growth will shape your decisions today.

Knowing when to change your behavior to a growth orientation is difficult, especially for companies leading the recovery. How do we recognize the economic turnaround early to gain maximum benefit from the upswing? Consider three sources of objective information:

First, use your annual sales growth 'rate of change.' Annual Sales Growth can be measured by dividing the past twelve months' sales by the same period last year, less 1. The result will be a positive or negative percentage. Track this macro trend on an ongoing basis. Also, pay attention to quarter-to-quarter sales, changes in your open P.O.s/Sales orders, and changes in bid volumes; all represent indications of market direction. Take care, though; it takes several months to indicate a trend.

Second, identify your leading economic indicators. Identifying what industries, companies, or economic indicators lead your company's performance takes effort. Ideally, these indicators 'lead' by 6 to 9 months, allowing you to spot trends early. In addition, track your customers' leading indicators to gauge their buying habits in advance. The federal government and some industry associations publish indexes regularly. You can also purchase this data from companies that track the indexes for you.

Third, trust your gut. Ultimately, no one knows your business, customers, and supply chain better than you. Talk (LISTEN) to people in your industry and take proactive action accordingly.



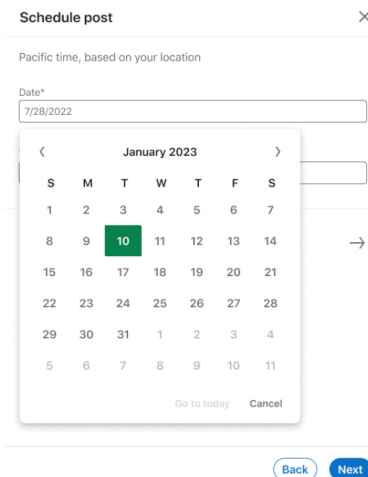
What to do when growth is coming:

1. Assess your financial position, your financial strengths, and weaknesses.
2. Revisit your SWAT analysis and market strategy. The recession has a way of changing markets. The weak players are potentially damaged, and smart players may become aggressive.
3. Recognize that economic recovery is not predictable or linear. Do not get ahead of yourself.
4. Determine your maximum sustainable growth rate. Growing too fast strains cash flow, and business failures happen when they run out of cash.
5. Pay attention to your systems and evaluate their scalability. Invest accordingly in capacity and efficiency improvements.
6. Make sure you have enough inventory on hand and/or a ready timely supplier and working capital. The quickest way to blow up your company is by selling from an empty wagon.
7. If you can acquire a company, this is a suitable time. Company values tend to be lowest near the end of a recession.

Economic recovery is an exciting time to be in business. Be ready, and you will prosper. ■

Mark O'Donnell, CPA, is Partner at Schmersahl Treloar & Co. He can be reached at 314.966.2727.

Reach Your Audience When You Want With Scheduled LinkedIn Posts



As a business owner or marketer, you know it takes persistence and hard work to create and publish LinkedIn content to continually reach your prospects. To help you share content when you want, LinkedIn now lets you select the precise date and time for your personal and company page posts to go live on the platform. This new feature helps you build efficiencies while fueling a constant content pipeline to engage your audience.

You can pre-publish as many posts as you'd like — up to three months in advance — whenever you have time to schedule them, saving time and ensuring that your personal profile or company page content stays fresh and visible. Scheduling posts is easy whether from your desktop or mobile. After writing a post on your LinkedIn home page newsfeed (either as yourself or as a representative of your company), click the clock icon to set the specific date and time for the post to go live.

To edit or change the timing of your scheduled posts, or to view all the scheduled posts at once, click into the "Start a post" box on your home page newsfeed, select the clock, and then choose "View all scheduled posts." To learn more, visit <https://tinyurl.com/bdd98ztu>.

If you are a confirmed early bird or a night owl like me, you'll love the scheduled post option to ensure your prospective customers view your messages when they are most active on LinkedIn. ■

Kathy Bernard (kathy@wiseru.com), CEO of WiserU.com, is a St. Louis-based LinkedIn expert/trainer who trains and equips individuals and businesses to maximize LinkedIn for sales, marketing, or fundraising.



Susan McLaughlin

When you began your career did you ever imagine you would have a leadership role like you have now? What advice would you give your younger self?

Yes, I did imagine having a leadership role when I began my career. The combination of proactive goal setting, intentional self-development, focus on developing strong interpersonal skills, and commitment to building a network early in my career have helped me to achieve the leadership roles I envisioned. It is important to focus on networking to help you learn from others, stay current on industry trends and open opportunities for career advancement. Start early and be intentional about developing a diverse and supportive network.

Who inspires you and why? What is your most valued attribute in the leaders you respect or mentors you have had?

I am inspired by the Jackie Robinsons and Ruth Bader Ginsburgs. These figures are known for their courage, resilience and trailblazing efforts in breaking down barriers. As for the most valued attribute in leaders and mentors, trailblazing is an admirable and important quality. Leaders who have the courage to innovate and persevere, challenge the status quo, and think and see differently can inspire others to do the same. Creative problem solving is also a valuable attribute in leaders, as it can lead to new solutions and approaches that may not have been considered before.

What did it take to trust yourself to step into leadership?

Observing and absorbing helped me to learn from others' experiences and perspectives, which expanded my knowledge and resulted in a well-rounded leadership style. Failing and prevailing helped to build my resilience and problem-solving skills as well as a deeper understanding of my own strengths and weaknesses. Building self-trust is an ongoing process that requires self-awareness, reflection and a willingness to take risks and learn from mistakes. By giving myself the respect and time to learn and grow, I developed the confidence and skills needed to step into a leadership role.

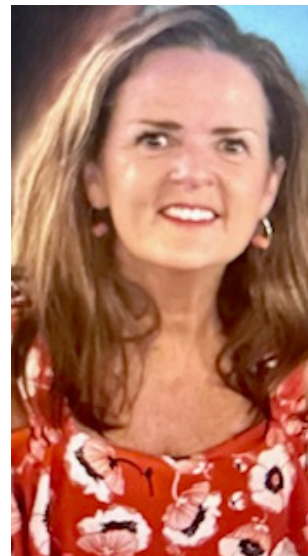
Have you experienced any hardships and how did you overcome the obstacles. When did you know that the business was going to make it?

I faced a variety of challenges in my career and have developed a proactive and solution-focused approach to overcoming them. Focusing on what is most important helped me to prioritize my actions and make strategic decisions that benefit my company, employees and customers. Being adaptable and flexible in my approach is also important, as solutions may need to be adjusted or modified based on feedback or new information. I knew our software start-up was going to make it when we signed a multi-year agreement with a large enterprise company. This kind of partnership provided a reliable source of revenue, served as a valuable reference for prospects, demonstrated the value of the product and service, and contributed to a positive reputation in the industry.

To what do you attribute your success?

I wish there was a secret to success—we would bottle and monetize it. Belief in oneself, adaptability and a commitment to

lifelong learning are important qualities that contribute to success. Having a strong support system in the form of family and friends can also provide a sense of balance and perspective and help you to maintain a positive outlook during challenging times. Success is not a one-time achievement, but rather an ongoing process of growth and development. Finally, I ask myself why success is so important. One of the most gratifying parts of success is the ability to pay it forward. Sharing knowledge and mentoring others not only benefits those around you, but also provides a sense of fulfillment and purpose.



What advice would you give other local women leaders?

The advice I would give other local women leaders is, "Reflect before responding." This can be especially valuable in leadership positions, as it allows you to consider multiple perspectives and make more thoughtful decisions. It is important to be open to new ideas and approaches and to continuously seek out opportunities for learning and improvement. Overall, being thoughtful, maintaining a sense of humor and embracing opportunities for growth can be valuable traits for women leaders. ■

Join the GRIT Community:

<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8987243/>

A professional women's group that provides support, encouragement, and tools for women to thrive.



Jennifer Bardot (jennifer.bardot@wtwco.com or 314-630-1451) is an Associate Director, Health & Benefits for WTW



Marianne Biangardi (mbiangardi@stcpa.com or 314-322-4871) is Business Development Manager for Schmersahl Treloar, CPAs

Boost Your Culture with a Book Club



As we continue to face employee retention challenges, many companies are using book clubs as an unconventional addition to enhance their employee engagement strategy. Book clubs help employees get to know each other outside their primary roles and have positive conversations about new ideas.

Consider starting small with your leadership team, reviewing your annual goals, and choosing a book that supports one of the company's goals (or enhances or changes company culture). This will allow you to establish realistic guidelines and gauge the benefits of the book club before rolling out a company-wide program to all employees.

Be clear on your strategy and purpose for starting a book club.

- Encourage participation, but do not make it a requirement. Let the law of attraction promote the club.
- Let employees choose titles that most interest them.
- Encourage leaders to have team-specific reads.
- Promote open discussion and sharing of ideas.

Here are some tactical tips for starting a successful book club:

1. Assign a point person to lead the effort for the company.
2. Choose your book(s) based on criteria set in your book club strategy.
3. Choose a comfortable location and book it.
4. Promote the book club, including employee benefits and guidelines.
5. Assign a host for each book, especially if it's one they recommended.
6. Order books for everyone who signs up.
7. Have the host prepare discussion points for all chapters.
8. Hold the book club.

Incorporating a book club into the workplace offers opportunities to build and improve relationships, spark creativity and innovation, enhance culture, and boost employee engagement. ■

Jonathan Jones (Jonathan.jones@vistagechair.com or 314-608-0783) is a CEO peer group chair/coach for Vistage International.





How to Attract and Retain Talent in a Tight Labor Market

Having trouble finding or keeping workers? You are far from alone. Since May 2021, nationwide there have been more positions available than workers to fill them. This past May, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that there were 1.6 job openings available for every unemployed person. While that's better than the 2-to-1 ratio of last year, it's still a challenge for many businesses to remain fully staffed.

So how can you, as a small business owner, attract and retain talent in this environment? There are tried and true methods, including raising wages and providing flexible work from home opportunities, but they're not always feasible for every company.

Midwest BankCentre was recently recognized as a Top Workplace for the third year in a row, an award based solely on employee surveys. As Chief Human Resources Officer, I want to share with you a few of the ways our Bank has been successful in talent acquisition and retention.

Promote Your Purpose

The hiring process starts long before you see an application. If you want to attract talent, your company needs an attractive reputation, and reputation is rooted in purpose. Workers today are interested in more than making money; they want to know they're making a difference. They want their work to have purpose. Our Bank has done a tremendous job communicating our purpose through both words and actions, with a concerted social media strategy that includes a partnership between Human Resources and Marketing. We have been consistently told that our orientation toward purpose is why new recruits are interested in our Bank.

Prioritize Development

Most applicants want more than a job; they want a career. New hires often share with us how many companies offer promises of internal opportunities but lack the follow through. When an employee joins our organization, we ensure that they feel part of the team, regardless of their role or location. We offer a genuine plan for further development within the organization through Rising Together University and our one-year onboarding program. Then, employees have opportunities to engage in programs that further their development, including mentoring programs, internal training classes, tuition reimbursement, and support for certifications.

Focus on Diversity

Create a culture where people can show up as their authentic selves. Not only is this the right thing to do, it is good business as well. By embracing diversity, we spark innovation that allows us to better understand and serve our customers. When employees feel seen, heard, and valued, it creates an atmosphere that fosters positivity, creativity, engagement, and growth - both as individuals and as an organization. At Midwest BankCentre, diversity, equity and inclusion is infused into every decision



we make, including where we source candidates, our interview process, and how we onboard and retain talent. Our Diversity, Inclusion, Culture, and Engagement (DICE) Committee helps cultivate the Bank's culture, connect our people, and provide learning and leadership opportunities for all employees. With 6 sub-committees, there are multiple committee chair and co-chair opportunities for employees to embrace their culture and passion, while also growing as an employee and leader.

In addition to ensuring our Bank is an employer of choice, we also actively seek out career-minded candidates that share our values. We do this by leveraging multiple points for connection and interaction with potential employees, such as:

1. Partnerships and networking with educational institutions and professional organizations.
2. Presence at college recruiting events and other campus events to connect with young talent.
3. Developing an intern program.
4. Video-based job postings and recruitment efforts to panoramically show who we are.
5. Referral bonuses for employees who recruit successful candidates.

Keep in mind, attracting and retaining good employees is an ongoing effort. If you intentionally create an environment where people want to work - a space where people can both contribute to a larger purpose and reach their full potential - it will be significantly easier to fill positions as your business inevitably grows. ■

Julie Tuggle-Nguyen is Chief Human Resources Officer at Midwest BankCentre.

Confidence

No matter what job or position you hold, talking and speaking with confidence is critical.

Here's a short message using the letters of the word confidence to help you remember.

C - Communicate clearly. Use simple language your clients can understand and avoid company jargon that may confuse them. Don't use military language on civilians.

O - Own your blank spots. You don't want to sound like a "know it all" and it is OK not to know everything. Most important is to explain you'll find out the answer and get back to them.

N - Never assume. Always confirm your understanding of any concerns and clarify questions you're not 100% sure of. 'Thinking' you know something and knowing that you actually do is a huge difference.

F - Follow through. Not following up with clients and even family friends is a huge mistake. If you make a promise to follow up on an issue, make sure you do it when promised.

I - Invest in your knowledge. Lifelong learners gain confidence more easily than other people.

D - Don't be afraid to ask for help. It's a show of confidence. It shows you're committed to finding a solution.

E - Empathize with your clients. And learn the difference between empathy and sympathy. Telling them "I know how you feel" is not a great statement for confidence.

N - 'No' at the start of a sentence reduces the power of any confidence and is a complete turn off to the people you're trying to assist.

C - Courtesy! Please, thank you, and you're welcome will seldom, if ever, go out of style.

E - End every conversation with confidence and a smile. And use confident statements - "I'm glad to help." "My pleasure." (Telling somebody "no problem" does nothing. Leave it out!) ■

Nancy Friedman, Founder/Chairman, Telephone Doctor Customer Service Training, bringing you Zoom programs, and our www.serviceskills.com, a popular boutique, unique online eLearning platform. Nancy is a featured speaker on customer service, communications, and sales. www.nancyfriedman.com or call 314-276-1012.





Making Business Personal: Creating Engaging Email Marketing Campaigns

In an increasingly digital world, the most successful businesses authentically connect with their prospects and customers in meaningful ways. Email marketing remains one of the most effective tools for engaging with customers and building lasting relationships. In fact, over 90 percent of small businesses say email marketing is a key element in their marketing strategies.

To be sure, generic and impersonal email campaigns often end up in the spam folder or are completely ignored by recipients (delete, delete, delete). To stand out and make a positive connection, successful businesses focus on creating personalized and engaging email marketing campaigns that deliver value to the recipient. Let's explore some effective strategies to make your email marketing campaigns more personal and engaging.

Segment your email lists.

Building stronger connections with your audience begins by segmenting your email list based on customer demographics, behaviors, and preferences. This allows you to send targeted content that resonates with specific groups, leading to higher open and click-through rates. Whether it's based on location, past purchase history, or engagement level, tailoring your messages to each segment ensures that your emails feel relevant and valuable to recipients.

Personalize subject lines.

The subject line is the first impression of your email. Make it count by using personalization tokens like the recipient's name or location. Studies have shown that personalized subject lines have a higher open rate compared to generic ones. Additionally, A/B testing different subject lines can help you identify which type of personalization works best for your audience.

Use dynamic content.

Dynamic content allows you to customize the email's content based on individual user data. This could include showcasing products related to the recipient's past purchases or highlight-

ing location-specific offers. Developing content tailored to the recipient's interests and preferences creates a more engaging and personalized experience that encourages your audience to take action.

Create "triggered" email campaigns.

Implement triggered email campaigns based on specific actions taken by the recipient. For example, you can send a welcome email to new subscribers, follow-up emails after a purchase, or abandoned cart reminders. These automated emails can help nurture leads and guide customers through the buyer's journey, providing timely and relevant content based on their interactions with your brand.

Be a storyteller.

Engaging email marketing campaigns go well beyond sales pitches. Share compelling stories, customer testimonials, and valuable content that educates and entertains your audience. (At Spoke, we believe you haven't effectively communicated your story until your customers can tell it.) Storytelling humanizes your brand and helps customers relate to your business on a personal level. Providing valuable content also positions your brand as an authority in your industry, earning trust and loyalty from your subscribers.

Encourage two-way communications.

Encourage recipients to engage with your emails by including clear calls-to-action that prompt them to respond or provide feedback. Respond to customer communications promptly, showing that you value their input and are eager to build a meaningful relationship.

Creating engaging and personalized email marketing campaigns is essential for modern businesses seeking to connect with their audience on a deeper level. Remember, personalization is more than just inserting a name; it's about delivering relevant and valuable content that makes your subscribers feel seen, valued, and eager to engage with your brand. ■

David Meyer is the Chief Marketing Officer at Spoke Marketing. Spoke Marketing (www.spokemarketing.com) provides fully-integrated marketing and sales programs that define and activate the customer buyer journey.

FREE DINNER SEMINAR

RETIREMENT, YOUR WAY: TIPS FOR SMARTER INVESTING

AUGUST 17, 2023 | 5:00 P.M.
HOLIDAY INN ST LOUIS SW - ROUTE 66

Join FINRA, the Missouri Securities Division and special guest U.S. Rep. Ann Wagner (MO-02) to learn about:

- Building financial security through investing
- Avoiding common investing pitfalls
- Safeguarding your assets for the long run

Register at FINRA.org/InvestorForumMO

Learn More



This is an educational program. No sales materials or presentations will be permitted during the program. If you have questions about the event, email investoreducation@FINRA.org.

FINRA is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to investor protection and market integrity. For more information, visit FINRA.org.

FINRA

It's Time To Talk About Benefits.

✓ simply.com

Simplified Employment.

Upgrading Software And Hardware, Why The Pain Might Be Worth It - Part One Of Three

BY SCOTT M. LEWIS

We have all been there: We have just finished upgrading our systems and software, and now we're being told it's time to do so again. The question is when does the process end? Will I ever be able to stop upgrading? Upgrades are here to stay, but it's all in the value proposition when it comes to deciding when and how often to upgrade. Upgrades are driven by customer demands for new features and functionality; increased reporting functions; business intelligence enhancements; compliance issues; or compatibility with third-party applications. Since upgrades are here to stay, it's best not to regard them as negative or a nuisance, but rather to manage them in such a way that the timing and return on investment are worth the aggravation.

What is driving the dislike or fear of upgrading? The most significant negative reaction is based on fear of unexpected changes in the look and feel of the software. Software developers sometimes make you feel the only reason for the changes is to make things harder or force a work process change internally. That's typically not the case, but customer feedback about how they use the software in the real world often dictates work process changes within the software. Another topic that often comes up is the time it takes to roll out an upgrade. We have all had implementations that took longer than expected, and it can be challenging to explain and support the reasons for those delays. Disruptions to users are essential when planning an upgrade and publicizing positive aspects of the upgrade is vital.

Change is often perceived as "bad" based on habit. Regardless of whether we're talking about a good habit or a bad habit, words like "change," "new," and "different" strike fear in users and organizations because of the unknown. Your staff has spent a considerable amount of time coming up with workarounds, short cuts, or spreadsheets to account for software shortcomings. Upgrades may cause those workarounds to become irrelevant or stop working altogether; however, the changes may be for the better in some cases. When software and hardware upgrades take place, management needs to understand there will be complaints and hesitation. In some cases, it will fall to managers to serve as positive voices in the chaos.

Replacing panic or stress around upgrades with excitement can be challenging. Still, you must remember that your company is one of many. Is it possible that the masses have found a better, more streamlined way to do something or improve your business processes besides

the created workaround? An important, pre-upgrade planning step would be to work with your software vendor to see what information is available about the new system. Better yet, are there videos available that could ease the stress? When employees see the proposed improvements, they may decide those improvements have little or no impact on them, or they may see them as a better way to do things. Either way, the stress and fear of the unknown will have less of an impact.

Performing routine upgrades is essential. From a hardware perspective, there are new and faster CPUs, faster hard drives, and increased process power through additional processors. However, the most significant drivers of hardware upgrades are the software and its needs to operate properly on the hardware platform. Another primary driver for hardware upgrades is the age of your hardware. At some point, you could face a lack of warranty coverage or available parts. However, hardware upgrades can provide a more robust and reliable working environment, especially in 2021, when companies have significantly more employees working in home or mobile environments. New hardware or infrastructure can allow you to take advantage of new technologies that will not support older hardware platforms. However, they might create compatibility issues with older software, resulting in an unstable work environment. Hardware upgrades can also provide opportunities to take advantage of new and more reliable mobile technologies or software integrations, and to develop more efficient work processes and increase user productivity.

From the technologist's perspective, upgrading is critically important for security reasons. The longer an operating system is on the market, the more its weaknesses become publicly known. The more those weaknesses are documented and made known, the more they will be exploited by hackers, malware, or other viruses. Ensuring that patch management is in place is critical to network security. Routine patching is one of the best security measures you can take. Software manufacturers don't release patches, hotfixes, or other upgrades because the software is perfect. They do so because the mass of users reports bugs, security holes, or other shortcomings within the software that have been discovered and need to be corrected. Improper patching and failing to perform routine software maintenance can create compat-

ibility issues or leave security vulnerabilities exposed.

With inadequate upgrading, you could be missing out on the software's framework upgrade or the software developer's back-end code changes, which could contribute to poor software performance or security issues. These framework and integration issues can extend to third-party applications or custom software. Most manufacturers have a methodology for integrating their software with other software that avoids creating security leaks. However, most major software applications don't typically consider custom applications or third-party apps when releasing a new version. This incompatibility can create security issues or errors in one or both applications.

Watch for Part Two of this article in next month's Small Business Monthly! ■

Scott Lewis is the President and CEO of Winning Technologies Group of Companies, which includes Liberty One Software. Scott has more than 36 years of experience in the technology industry and is a nationally



recognized speaker and author on technology subjects. Scott has worked with hundreds of large and small businesses to empower them to use technology to improve work processes, increase productivity, and reduce costs. Scott has designed thousands of systems for large, medium, and small companies, and Winning Technologies' goal is to work with companies on the selection, implementation, management, and support of technology resources. Learn more about Winning Technologies at www.winningtech.com or call 877-379-8279. To learn more about Business Manager 365, visit www.businessmanager365.com.

Hostirian
Done For You - Website Design & Ad Management
We completely design and manage your website & online advertising.

Why Trust Us...
Businesses both large and small trust us to help take their business to the next level by removing the hassle of website, security and advertising management.

Running the gamut is tough enough, I don't have time to fool with a website. So I let them handle it.
Sarah Cox
The Young Club - Dallas

Moving to Hostirian for web hosting services is the best technology decision our nonprofit has made.
Louise Briggs
Officer

Wonder, Sansone, Cultivation Capital, Bayer, Dabble

www.hostirian.com | info@hostirian.com | 314-216-2040

Protect your company with **DARK WEB MONITORING & PROACTIVE THREAT HUNTING**

NTP
CYBER SECURITY INTELLIGENCE

Proactively Manage & Minimize Risk!
24/7 Monitoring & Rapid Response Team!

NTP offers a broad range of solutions to help your organization monitor, defend, and respond to today's continually evolving cyber threats.

636-458-4995 • NTPCyberSecurity.com

Congratulations to Shareholder Kristy Bourgeois for being named one of the Best Attorneys in St. Louis.



LAW UNFILTERED

BUSINESS

BUSINESS LITIGATION

HEALTH LAW

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

PRODUCTS LIABILITY

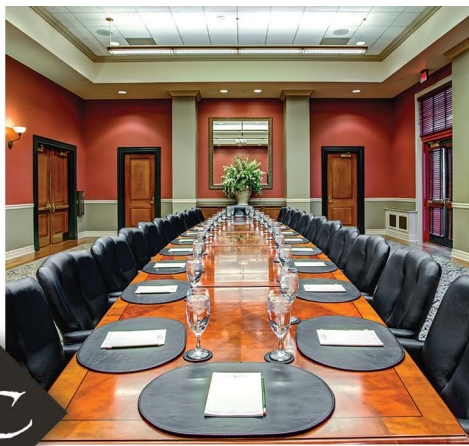
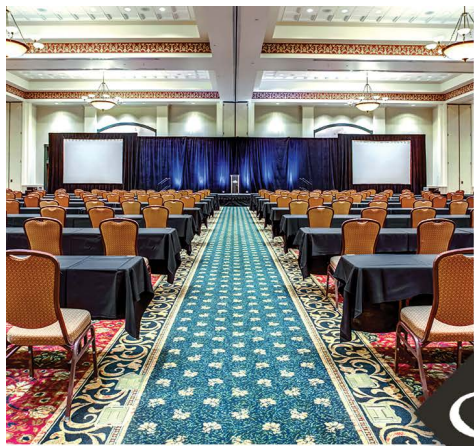
SANDBERG PHOENIX

www.sandbergphoenix.com

314.231.3332

ST. LOUIS, MO
CLAYTON, MO
ST. CHARLES, MO
KANSAS CITY, MO
EDWARDSVILLE, IL
O'FALLON, IL
GAINESVILLE, FL
TAMPA, FL

The choice of a lawyer is an important decision and should not be based solely on advertising.



MEET AT THE ST. CHARLES CONVENTION CENTER

Our award-winning and full-service facility boasts 85,000 square feet of flexible space, new creative culinary offerings, and a dedicated staff that treats you like family.

At the St. Charles Convention Center, *your experience is our promise.*

One Convention Center Plaza | St. Charles, MO 63303
stcharlesconventioncenter.com | 636.669.3000



Quality Breeding & Batters For Fish and Chicken



For more information or recipe ideas:
www.andysseasoning.com

Unlimited
Water Processing, Inc.



Unlimited Year Round Refreshment Where You Work!

- Variety of Styles
- Premium Drinking Water or Spring Water
- Cold or Hot/Cold Dispensers
- Water by the Case
- Cups
- Coffee Service

314-227-4602 www.unlimitedwater.net

6891 Hazelwood Ave. - Berkeley, MO 63134





Best Attorneys

Attorneys have always been known as one of the best advisors for growing businesses. The following attorneys were voted the best in St. Louis. Make sure you check out the Awards page at www.sbmon.com to stay up to date with other Best in Business nominations for 2023.

COMPANY NAME	CONTACT INFORMATION	
John Fox Arnold, Lashly & Baer, P.C.	314.621.2939 lashlybaer.com	● 714 Locust St. St. Louis, MO 63101
Jim Borchers, InNovare Law	636.946.3030 innovarelaw.com	● 6700 Keaton Corporate Pkwy., #101 O'Fallon, MO 63368
Kristin Bourgeois, Sandberg Phoenix	314.231.3332 sandbergphoenix.com	● 600 Washington Ave. St. Louis, MO 63101
Mark Boyko, Bailey & Glasser, LLP	314.863.5446 baileyglasser.com	● 34 N. Gore Ave., #102 Webster Groves, MO 63119
Christopher Byron, Byron Carlson Petri & Kalb	618.655.0600 bcplaw.com	● 411 St. Louis St. Edwardsville, IL 62025
Emily Cantwell Lathrop GPM	314.613.2800 lathropgpm.com	● 7701 Forsyth Blvd., #500 Clayton, MO 63105
Timothy Callahan, Kilo, Flynn, Billingsley, Trame & Brown, P.C.	314.647.8910 kiloflynn.com	● 5840 Oakland Ave. St. Louis, MO 63110
Steve Cohen, Berger, Cohen & Brandt, L.C.	314.721.7272 bcbslaw.com	● 8000 Maryland Ave., #1500 Clayton, MO 63105
Richard Coughlin, Gillespie, Hetlage & Coughlin, LLC	314.863.5444 ghc-law.com	● 120 S. Central Ave., #650 Clayton, MO 63105
Bradley Crandall, Carmody MacDonald, P.C.	314.854.8600 carmodymacdonald.com	● 120 S. Central Ave., #1800 Clayton, MO 63105
Brad Cytron, SpencerFane, LLP	314.863.7733 spencerfane.com	● 1 N. Brentwood Blvd., #1000 Clayton, MO 63105
Courtney English, Upscale Law	314.325.9155 upscale.law	● 231 S. Bemiston Ave., #800 Clayton, MO 63105
Mallory Fisk, Summers Compton Wells	314.991.4999 summerscomptonwells.com	● 8909 Ladue Rd. St. Louis, MO 63124
Corey Franklin, FordHarrison LLP	314.257.0300 fordharrison.com	● 7777 Bonhomme Ave., #1710 Clayton, MO 63105
Rachel Jeep, Thompson Coburn	314.552.6000 thompsoncoburn.com	● 505 N. 7th St. St. Louis, MO 63101
John Kilper, Hamilton Weber, LLC	636.947.4700 hamiltonweber.com	● 200 North Third St. St. Charles, MO 63301
Carl Lumley, Curtis, Heinz, Garrett & O'Keefe	314.725.8788 chgolaw.com	● 130 S. Bemiston Ave., #200 St. Louis, MO 63105
Rob Mahon, Armstrong Teasdale	314.621.5070 armstrongteasdale.com	● 7700 Forsyth Blvd. St. Louis, MO 63105
Emmett McAuliffe, RiezmanBerger	314.727.0101 riezmanberger.com	● 7700 Bonhomme Ave., 7th Floor Clayton, MO 63105
Mark Mueller, The Law Offices of Mark F. Mueller, LLC	314.610.2526 muellerlawstl.com	● 1123 Boland Place St. Louis, MO 63117
Andie Patton, Lewis Rice LLC	314.444.7600 lewisrice.com	● 600 Washington Ave., #2500 St. Louis, MO 63101
Robert Grant Pennell, Robert Grant Pennell Attorney and Counselor at Law	314.863.1555 rgp-law.com	●
James Sanders, Amundsen Davis, LLC	314.719.3700 amundsendavislaw.com	● 120 S. Central Ave., #700 St. Louis, Mo 63105
Jim Schleiffarth, Schleiffarth Law Firm	314.315.4117 sch-law.com	● 75 W. Lockwood Ave., #1 Webster Groves, MO 63119
Daryl Sohn, Goldstein and Price LC	866.464.6985 gandp.law	● 700 Market St., #1500 St. Louis, MO 63101
Graham Stevens, Summers Compton Wells, LLC	314.991.4999 summerscomptonwells.com	● 8909 Ladue Rd. St. Louis, MO 63124
Pete Woods, Haar & Woods, LLP	314.241.2224 haar-woods.com	● 1010 Market St., #1620 St. Louis, MO 63101

Unlimited
Water Processing, Inc.



Unlimited Year Round Refreshment Where You Work!

- Variety of Styles
- Premium Drinking Water or Spring Water
- Cold or Hot/Cold Dispensers
- Water by the Case
- Cups
- Coffee Service



314-227-4602 www.unlimitedwater.net
6891 Hazelwood Ave. - Berkeley, MO 63134

CONGRATULATIONS JOHN KILPER

Honored by SBM as part of its 2023
Class of STL's Best Attorneys



Your dedication to our
clients and community
is exemplary.
We are honored to have
you on our team.



www.hamiltonweber.com
636.947.4700

The choice of a lawyer is an important decision and should not be based solely upon advertisements.

Subscribe To
SBM.
Only \$21.50
A Year
[http://store.
sbmon.com](http://store.sbmon.com)



More than a Mail House

www.specialtymailing.com

Congratulations!

Emily Cantwell has been named to the
list of Best Attorneys by the readers of
St. Louis Small Business Monthly.

Thank you for your leadership
and commitment to the
St. Louis community.

Working together,
we build exciting futures.



Emily Cantwell
314.613.2800
emily.cantwell@lathropgpm.com



This is an advertisement. The choice of a lawyer is an important decision and should not be made based solely upon advertisements. Neither the highest state courts nor state bar associations review, recognize, or approve certifying organizations, certifications of specialties or specialist designations in the practice of law. The certificate, award or recognition is not a requirement to practice law. Lathrop GPM, 7701 Forsyth Boulevard, Suite 500, Clayton, MO 63105. For more information, contact Emily Cantwell at 314.613.2800.



Best Health Insurance Brokers/Agents

When it comes to benefits, nothing is more important than health coverage. The following firms were voted Top Health Insurance Brokers/Agents in St. Louis. Make sure you check out the **Awards** page at www.sbmon.com to stay up to date with other **Best in Business** nominations for 2023.

COMPANY NAME	CONTACT INFORMATION	
Arch Brokerage Inc.	314.849.6363 archbrokerage.com	● 8084 Watson Rd., #100 St. Louis, MO 63119
Beattie & Associates, Inc.	636.532.4300 beattieandassociates.com	● 16666 Old Chesterfield Rd. Chesterfield, MO 63017
Cornerstone Insurance Group	314.373.2900 cornerstoneinsurancegroup.com	● 721 Emerson Rd., #500 St. Louis, MO 63141
Crestwood Insurance Agency	314.822.3002 crestwodinsurance.com	● 9800 Watson Rd. St. Louis, MO 63126
Denny & Associates, Inc.	636.887.4700 dtdinsurance.com	● 1022 Peruque Crossing Ct., #B O'Fallon, MO 63366
DeWitt Insurance Steven Alonzo	314.845.9120 dewittins.com	● 2821 Oledel Rd. St. Louis, MO 63125
Douglas & Associates	314.423.7500 daastl.com	● 2031 S. Big Bend Blvd. St. Louis, MO 63117
Graves Insurance Group	314.394.2121 gravesig.com	● 10097 Manchester Rd. St. Louis, MO 63122
Heartland Insurance	636.477.8700 heartlandinsurance.net	● 2451 Executive Dr., #200 St. Charles, MO 63303
Hovis & Associates	314.380.2030 hovisandassociates.com	● 3660 S. Geyer Rd., #190 St. Louis, MO 63127
Insurance Advisors of St. Louis	314.842.0960 iaastl.com	● 8050 Watson Rd., #190 St. Louis, MO 63119
K. Flynn Insurance Agency	636.528.6363 kflynnins.com	● 112 Professional Parkway Troy, MO 63379
Kreismann-Bayer Insurance Agency	314.567.3344 kreismannbayer.com	● 652 N. New Ballas Rd. St. Louis, MO 63141
Lang Insurance	636.229.7000 langinsurance.com	● 3920 S. Old Hwy. 94, #39 St. Charles, MO 63304
Meyer Insurance Services, Inc.	314.631.0900 meyerinsurance.com	● 9312 Tesson Ferry Rd. St. Louis, MO 63123
Naeger Family Insurance	314.802.8841 naegerins.com	● 4657 Hampton Ave. St. Louis, MO 63109
O'Connor Insurance	314.434.0038 oconnor-ins.com	● 12101 Olive Blvd. St. Louis, MO 63141
Powers Insurance and Risk Management	314.725.1414 powersinsurance.com	● 6825 Clayton Ave. #200 St. Louis, MO 63139
St. Louis Benefits Group	636.349.0401 stlbenefits.com	● 106 Brook Fenton, MO 63026
The Bremer Group	314.725.2700 bremerbenefits.com	● 8000 Bonhomme Ave., #213 St. Louis, MO 63105
The ECCHIC Group	314.997.8865 ecchic.com	● 11704 Lackland Industrial Dr. St. Louis, MO 63146
Weiss Insurance Agency	636.787.7777 weiss-ins.com	● 683 Trade Center Blvd., #100 Chesterfield, MO 63005
Yavitz Insurance Group	314.991.3100 yavitz.com	● 12225 Clayton Rd. St. Louis, MO 63131

COMPLIMENTARY

SECOND OPINION

Let us review your recent tax returns.
We may find some tax saving ideas for you!

WE FIND **MONEY**
OTHERS MIGHT MISS.



Call us for a Second Opinion 314.966.2727
connectwithus@stcpa.com

SCHMERSAHL TRELOAR, CPA's
trusted advisors



Awards • Promotional Products Personalized Gifts • Signs

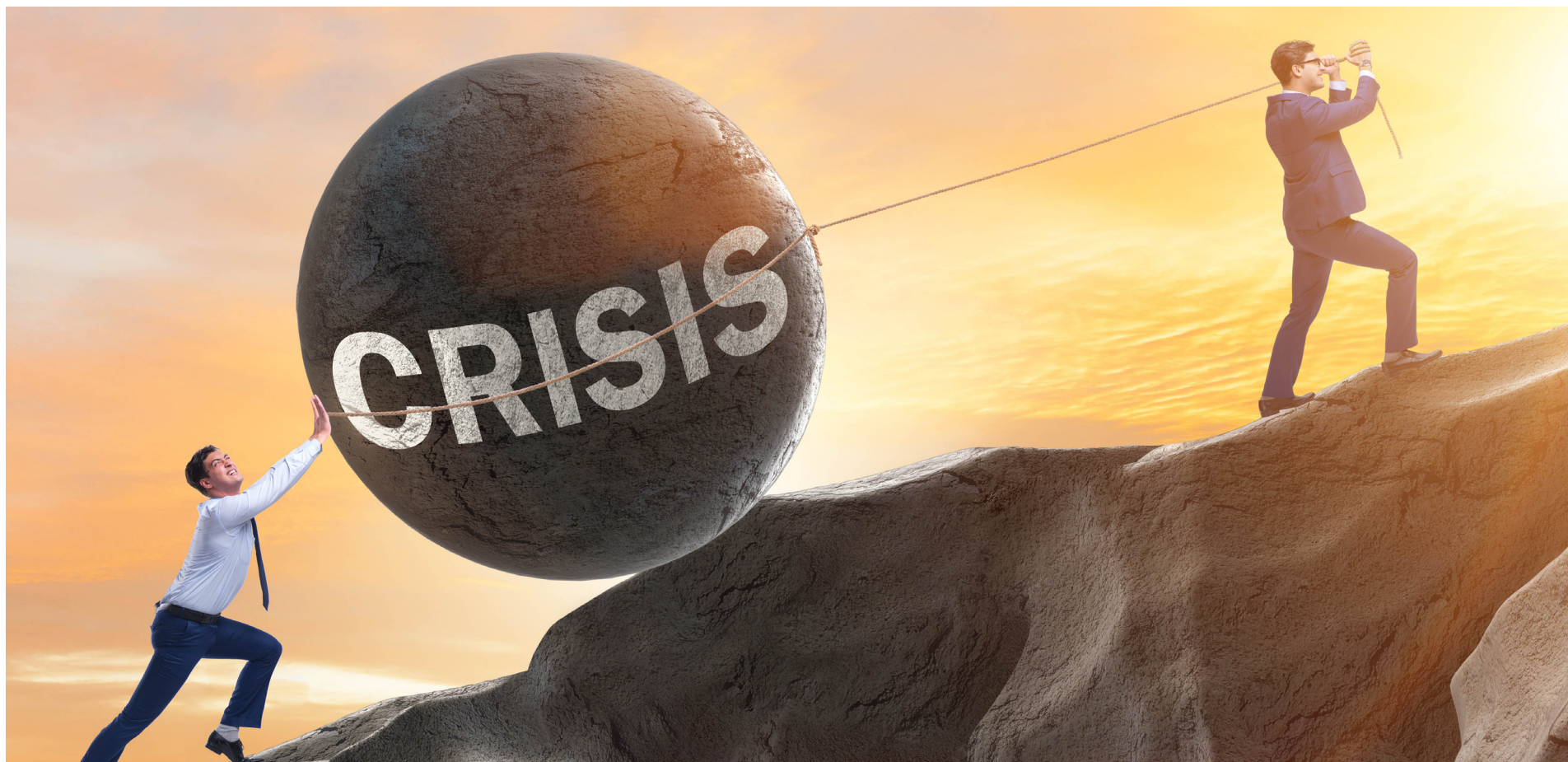
Showrooms: Kirkwood, Fenton & Online

SBA's 2019 Veteran-Owned Business of the Year for Eastern MO

314-966-8800
ArchEngraving.com
facebook.com/archengraving



Crisis Is a Given. The Key Is How You Handle It. (A Few Dos and Don'ts)



Written by **Robert L. Dilenschneider**

No leader ever wants to face a public relations crisis. That's unrealistic. Any company that puts itself out there – no matter how cautious and diligent its people are – can and likely will experience a mishap. Sometimes the mishaps are minor; other times they have deadly consequences. And thanks to the always-on nature of today's media, how you handle your (inevitable) crisis will determine whether your reputation is destroyed or preserved, and in some cases strengthened.

The key to good crisis management is three-fold: preparedness, responsiveness and transparency.

Crisis management is not only about handling situations once they have happened. It's about foresight, anticipating potential crises before they occur, and having a robust plan in place to address them effectively when they do.

The preparedness piece comes first. My book "The Ultimate Guide to Power & Influence" quotes my colleague Jonathan Dedmon (who wrote a crisis communications chapter in the 2022 book "The Public Relations Handbook") regarding the value of

putting together a small and agile core team, taking inventory of past crises (to determine if they might recur), imagining future possible crises, and developing a written plan for each.

In a crisis, every second counts. Quick decision-making, clear communication, and a unified message can make the difference between a company that survives and thrives and one that takes a serious hit to its reputation.

With that in mind, here are a few things **TO DO** and **NOT TO DO**:

DO: Tell it all and tell it fast.

Some crises take hours, and some draw out for months. In the early stages, the best strategy is to tell it all and tell it fast. Be disciplined and know that nothing happens automatically. Making sure the core team is on the same concise page is very important, as mixed messages hinder the company's ability to navigate the crisis.

EXAMPLE: Johnson & Johnson Extra-Strength Tylenol Crisis

Johnson & Johnson's handling of the Tylenol crisis remains the gold standard regarding what to do and is a case study still taught four decades later. Seven people had

died in the Chicago area in 1982 after taking Extra-Strength Tylenol capsules that had been poisoned with cyanide. What set the company apart was how they responded: They recalled 31 million bottles of those capsules and replaced them all with a safer product free of charge.

The outcome was Johnson & Johnson barely lost market share and customers. After releasing their tamper-proof packaging – which changed the industry – they rebounded well, even if it did cost them almost \$100 million.

The point is this crisis could have been lethal. Yet they were able to turn it into an opportunity to rebuild public trust (instead of losing trust) by getting out in front of the story and putting their customers and public safety first instead of trying to spin the story.

In addition to moving quickly and transparently, make sure your message contains a heavy dose of empathy. As Dedmon writes, “It is a generally accepted rule that the best messaging has a strong emotional component versus simply a logical and rational argument.”

A few more tips:

■ Talk from the viewpoint of your audience and to their self-interest.

■ Avoid jargon and euphemisms. An explosion is not an “incident.”

■ Tell the truth, even if it hurts. Don’t be defensive.

■ If the media gets something wrong, correct it immediately.

■ Never say, “No comment.” If the information is private – say, about personnel – explain the reason. Then find something else to say.

DON’T: Try to escape accountability at the expense of your customers’ well-being.

EXAMPLE: General Mills Shrimp Tail Incident

In March 2021, podcast host and comedian Jensen Karp tweeted a photo of what he said he found in a box of Cinnamon Toast Crunch cereal: two shrimp tails. After offering to send Karp a replacement box of cereal, the social media team tweeted that those weren’t shrimp tails; they were cinnamon-sugar clumps.

Keep in mind that Karp’s tweet had included a photo, so thousands could see for themselves that the “accumulation” looked exactly like shrimp tails. As can and does happen in the Twitterverse, a flood of ridicule and memes followed.

Soon, the shrimp tails leapt from Twitter to news stories in publications such as the New York Times, Washington Post, and Business Insider and broadcasts such as Fox News and CNN.

The social media team for Cinnamon Toast Crunch should have responded with the alacrity and seriousness appropriate for a matter of consumer health, even if it couldn’t verify the contamination or quickly trace how it might have happened. In fact, one manager responded that it couldn’t have happened in his facility, which sounded like passing the blame, not reassuring customers.

Bottom line: Instead of the ridiculous explanation of accumulated cinnamon sugar, General Mills could have responded by recalling all the boxes sold at Costco, where Karp had purchased his cereal. Stories like this live on via the internet, and if you Google “Cinnamon Toast Crunch,” you’ll see lots more sordid details.

Crisis management is not just about handling the situation once it has happened. It’s about foresight, anticipating potential crises before they occur, and having a robust plan in place to address them effectively when they do.

DON’T: Try to spin the story or be dishonest.

EXAMPLE: Volkswagen Crisis

While Johnson & Johnson’s handling of the Tylenol scare is a model for the right way to address a scandal, Volkswagen offers a wrong way. They were accused by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 2015 of deliberately violating the Clean Air Act through software that permitted their cars to pass emissions tests, which wouldn’t have passed without that software. No one likes to be misled, and that includes the EPA.

Company executives bungled the response. First, they lied about it, then later admitted they knew. Then they proceeded to lay off 300,000 workers. Although the move probably was unrelated, the perception was that employees were being fired to make up for the loss in profit. In response, consumers took to social media to charge the company with deliberately deceiving them.

It takes a long time, if ever, to repair

this type of damage to a company’s reputation and rebuild trust. In contrast to the Tylenol scare, Volkswagen executives’ response made things entirely worse.

DON’T: Tweet “thoughts and prayers” or give another canned response.

EXAMPLE: Amazon Tornado

In December 2021, a tornado ripped through an Edwardsville, Illinois, Amazon warehouse, destroying it. Six people died. But instead of an immediate and appropriate response, Jeff Bezos’ first acknowledgment of the tragedy came as a tweeted statement 24 hours later and came across as insincere. The lesson learned here is that any statement’s wording is crucial. Part of Bezos’ tweet was “our thoughts and prayers are with their families and loved ones,” but apparently unbeknownst to Bezos, the phrase “thoughts and prayers” has become an overused line by politicians and others responding to mass shootings and other mass casualty incidents.

...

fruit brought in daily. Two grapes in 600,000 crates were found to be injected with cyanide.

The FDA commissioner was about to ban the sale of Chilean grapes when a lawyer called me to help the Chilean government deal with the crisis.

We went to work quickly and made sure the Chilean government was able to present a single, consistent position to the Department of Commerce, the Federal Trade Commission, and the FDA. We reinforced with the FDA the risk of inappropriately submitting to terrorist demands. The real villains were unknown, but the victims would be the American consuming public and the fruit growers of Chile.

Fortunately, the danger to the public was not real. If it had been, we would have handled the situation differently. We were able to convince the FDA to lift the ban, and then we broadened the field of information to include the trade, the industry, the media, and consumers, and we demonstrated the absurdity of being bamboozled by two grapes in 600,000 crates. However, we were careful to never try and dismiss the public’s fear directly.

Finally, never dodge the media. If a crisis is a tragedy, then reporters will have to write or broadcast stories no matter what. You can’t completely control the narrative, but you can make sure the company’s message is heard.

Build relationships with the media long before a crisis occurs. Know the journalists who cover your industry. Feed a reporter something interesting (not self-serving) that’s going on in your company or industry. Tip them off when a big announcement is about to be made, such as a change in leadership or relocation of headquarters. Answer calls and emails. Building trust during good times will prove a valuable foundation in a time of crisis. ■

Robert L. Dilenschneider, author of The Ultimate Guide to Power & Influence: Everything You Need to Know, formed The Dilenschneider Group in October 1991. Headquartered in New York, Miami, and Chicago, the firm provides strategic advice and counsel to Fortune 500 companies and leading families and individuals around the world, with experience in fields ranging from mergers and acquisitions and crisis communications to marketing, government affairs, and international media.

St. Louis' Best Bosses 2023

Shaping the Future Workforce

PHOTOS BILL SAWALICH

For many employees, the difference between a great job and a horrible (I dread going) experience often falls directly on the boss. A great boss can keep employees motivated and inspired to come in each day. A horrible boss can make even the most loyal employee searching for a way out.

This month, we are proud to present some of the best bosses and managers in St. Louis. When we asked for nominations, we were searching for managers who inspire, motivate and positively challenge their teams not only to make them more productive but also make work more fun.

These are not your average bosses, they are the best in the region.



Steven Kuhlmann | Gray Design Group, Inc.

Position:

Principal, Vice President of Operations, Gray Design Group, Inc.

What was your first job?

Working at Kroger grocery store in Maryland Heights. I gathered carts and bagged groceries, then served as a cashier in the days before barcode scanners!

What led you to your industry?

It started as an interest in construction. Then I developed an appreciation for the many aspects that the architectural profession encompasses.

What was the smartest thing your company did in the past year?

We made improvements to our benefit package, making sure it remains at the top in our industry, and we increased our investment in design and accounting software programs. Our biggest recent change was adding branding and graphic design to our list of services, which has made a huge impact on how we service our clients.

Who is your role model and what have you learned from him/her?

My father is the person I think of every day and for whom I have the utmost respect. He had an amazing quality of leading by example. He taught me the value of having a strong work ethic – and that nothing comes to you without putting in the effort it deserves. Most importantly, treating people with respect.

What's the best part of your job?

Two things come to mind immediately. First, working side by side with our amazing colleagues whom I learn from every day. Second, being in the business of designing buildings. This affords the opportunity to learn our client's personality, understand their business structure, and design a building that supports their strategies and culture.

What is your top tip for leading people?

Lead with integrity and foster a positive work environment that incorporates collaboration and trust. ■

Jen Schulz | AnswerMidwest

Position: President and Owner

What was your first job?

I was a waitress at York Steakhouse when I was 15 years old.

What led you to your industry?

The thing to which I was led wasn't the industry itself. I had a desire to be part of the legacy that my parents started: investing in people's lives by offering solid jobs in the community we love. This industry is an especially great way to do that as we get to serve businesses and their clients. I also enjoy the people I get to work with every day.

What was the smartest thing your company did in the past year?

In May we were finally able to add mental health support benefits for everyone in the company. We're still in the early stages, but I'm so proud that we have the opportunity to bless our team in this way. Everyone needs a little extra support sometimes, and we've had a goal for many years to provide that to everyone we work with completely free of charge.

Who is your role model and what have you learned from him/her?

My parents have been amazing role models. They taught me the importance of listening to wisdom from others who have walked this road before me, even as I trust my intuition when it leads me in a different, new direction. Above all, they taught me that chasing personal gain will never bring fulfillment: Integrity and treating people well are what's always important at the end of the day.

What's the best part of your job?

Without question the best part of my job is finding ways to bless the amazing crew with whom I get to work and to see them grow. My job is to support, encourage and build people up in every aspect of their lives. Seeing them happy and successful is what really fills me up.

What is your top tip for leading people?

Never be too busy to deeply listen, and always treat people the way you want to be treated. These two points have never failed me.

What is your favorite part of St. Louis?

I love the diversity that St. Louis offers! All of us grow when we engage with views and experiences that are different from our own, and St. Louis brings a beautiful array of ideas in so many aspects of life. It's a city of wonderful people all contributing in unique ways to a one-of-a-kind culture, and it's a joy to be part of that. It's an amazing place to call home! ■



Matt Frauenhoffer | Notion

Position: Executive Creative Director & Partner, Notion

What was your first job?

While in high school (Hazelwood Central), I was a bus boy/dishwasher at the local Denny's. Because I was an introvert, the job pushed me to learn how to interact and communicate effectively with others in a high-stress environment. I discovered joy in hard work and shared camaraderie — especially when facing the Sunday morning rush and working double shifts.

What was your worst job?

I hope this doesn't sound clichéd, but I've never had a bad job. From waiting tables (and wearing loads of flair) at T.G.I. Fridays to spending a decade at FleishmanHillard learning to juggle deadlines and thrive in the creative agency setting, I've always considered myself fortunate to have the opportunities I've been given while surrounded by a supportive team.

What led you to your industry?

I'm a life-long learner who loves visual storytelling and breaking down complex things into simple, easy-to-understand concepts. My degrees in technical communication (writing to instruct/inform) and creative writing were perfect complements to my interest in design. After years of developing and designing PR communications and B2B marketing materials, I was captivated by a new challenge: starting my own creative agency with two former colleagues, John Senseney and Louis Kokenis.

What was the smartest thing your company did in the past year?

During Notion's first five years, we grew very quickly ... until COVID forced us to slow down and prioritize our culture and team development. We've continued to embrace those silver linings: our hybrid working model (the highest-ranked workplace perk, according to our annual employee engagement survey), an increased emphasis on community/nonprofit work (press release), and a renewed focus on mental health and team support.

Who is your role model and what have you learned from him/her?

Heather Husek became a key role model during my career transition from art director at an agency to becoming an in-house marketer at a large corporation. I learned from her engaging spirit, never-ending optimism, and passion for life-changing work and found the right blend of being confident, challenged and comfortable. What I learned: Be confident to take on any challenge and have comfort knowing your team always has your back.

What's the best part of your job?

I thoroughly enjoy helping my team grow professionally and guiding my clients to think more creatively. Most of my job entails training team members and providing opportunities to build their confidence and careers. With clients, I love serving as a collaborative partner where I can share our expertise in creative problem solving. Each year I look back with amazement at how much our team and client relationships have grown.

What is your top tip for leading people?

Maintain a long-term vision and have faith in your team. Exceptional teams, driven by hard work, require leaders who actively listen, prioritize their team's needs, celebrate their accomplishments, and encourage their career aspirations. My focus is on fostering and affirming employee confidence while being vigilant for signs of creative burnout and giving team members the time and support they need to be their best. ■





barlow

PHOTO + VIDEO



(314) 994-9990 | studio@barlowpro.com

barlowpro.com

Andrew Turnage | Saint Louis Development Corporation

Position: Senior Neighborhood Manager, The Saint Louis Development Corporation

What was your first job?

Check verification clerk for US Bank (Summer job between college semesters)

What led you to your industry?

My education (Bachelor's degree, Business Administration, with an emphasis in Marketing; Master of Business Administration) focused my attention on supporting economic development through business development. Working in business development for the Saint Louis Development Corporation taught me the importance of being impactful for people, which led me to Neighborhood Development. Providing resources and opportunities to amplify people's voices creates a stronger equitable business community.



What was the smartest thing your company did in the past year?

The Saint Louis Development Corporation implemented the Economic Justice Action Plan, which focuses on providing economic opportunities to areas and populations that have been denied those chances in the past. Distributing resources equitably throughout the city of St. Louis.

Who is your role model and what have you learned from him/her?

Two people come to mind: my parents, Melvin and Rebecca Turnage. My father has shown me true focus and dedication to his craft as a musician and entrepreneur through a strong work ethic, and he empowers me to go after my dream. My mother, who has 30+ years of experience in Human Resources and corporate structure, has taught me the skills of sound decision making and leading with a people-first mentality.

What's the best part of your job?

The best part of my current role is the ability to support my team and help them believe in themselves and lead with their best selves, or superpower.

What is your top tip for leading people?

My top tip is to know that leadership is servitude. Create space for the people you lead to be themselves and take ownership of their work, and guide them to make decisions that best serve them and the mission. Your role as a leader is to serve those in your stewardship. Serve the people.

What is your favorite part of St. Louis?

The hidden diversity of the city. St. Louis has 79 neighborhoods with different cultures, foods and lifestyles. I was raised in North City, attended school in Clayton, and now live in South City, and I've been fortunate to experience all of Saint Louis. I encourage everyone to travel the city and explore something new. ■

Sharon Reus | CPG Agency

Position: President, CPG Agency

What was your first job?

I worked as a bookseller at Waldenbooks. This was before the days of computer inventory, and we were each assigned sections of the store to order for and maintain. I managed the children's book section and loved researching and selecting the stock and helping customers find the right books for their kids. I still love children's books.



What was your worst job?

Three unhappy weeks as a bank teller. I wasn't prepared for the rigidity, in everything from dress code to how you spent your lunch hour.

What led you to your industry?

From a young age, I loved writing, telling stories, and creating events and environments. That prompted a degree in communications and from there I've spent time in print journalism and publishing, television, and corporate events. I get great satisfaction from helping our clients communicate with their audiences.

What was the smartest thing your company did in the past year?

Coming out of the dark days of Covid, which hit the events industry incredibly hard, we have rebuilt our team with several "boomerang" employees - returning star performers who know our company, clients, and industry well - and some fresh new faces who are already making their mark. It's a great mix and I'm excited to grow with them.

Who is your role model and what have you learned from him/her?

I've been fortunate to learn from so many great people including my parents, teachers, leaders, and colleagues. Our agency sage, Steve Friedman, has been a good example around resolving tough issues. He taught me to always come into a situation with an attitude of curiosity, rather than approaching with frustration, blame, or judgment. Remaining curious allows us to consider all aspects of a problem before settling on a solution.

What's the best part of your job?

I love collaborating with the team to solve problems for our clients. We are entrusted with helping to deliver critical messaging from our clients to their most important audiences, and we don't take that lightly. Working with our creatives, strategists, producers, and account teams is so rewarding.

What is your top tip for leading people?

Discover what each person's strengths are, and help them live into and work from those strengths. I'm not a fan of pushing people into situations where they are uncomfortable or unhappy. We are most successful when our work aligns with our strengths.

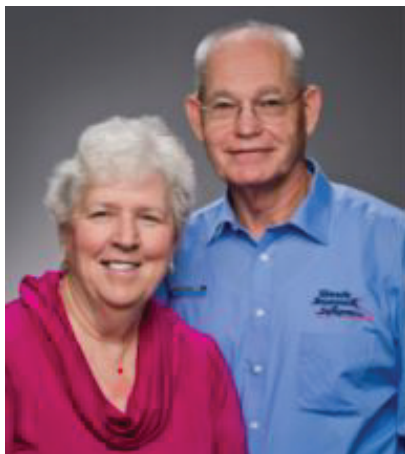
What is your favorite part of St. Louis?

I'm a "born and raised" St. Louisan, and I've been happy to raise my daughter here. St. Louis has such a wealth of unique experiences - the Muny, City Museum, our beautiful FREE Zoo, Botanical Garden, and so much more. While we have a lot of work to do to unify the metro area, we have much to appreciate. ■

From Basement, to Beautiful

In August 1986, Rick Woods and his business partner started a small business in Collinsville, IL. Today that small business has grown to a team of over 200+ employees solving homeowners' problems throughout the bi-state region. At the very beginning, the partners would do one repair a week, sometimes two. "After Rick sold a job, his wife Anna Lee and son Wayne, would help Rick with installing the repair work," says Dave Thompson, the company's marketing director. "Now with 27 trucks and crews helping more than 60 homeowners every week their company has grown into a multi-million dollar company."

Rick Woods took the time for hands-on training within his team. This helped Woods to develop an industry-leading company that always provides WOW!, service its customers, co-workers and community. "First we do what is right and remember that we are serving a homeowner – not just repairing a home," says Thompson. "That's at the heart of the training. Second, we do all the work that is required and never quit until the homeowner's expectations are exceeded."



From basement waterproofing to basement finishing and basement foundation repairs for bowing in walls and settling basement and crawlspace foundations, the Woods team has done over 73,000 installations. Woods Basement Systems does so much for the basements in homes it coined the phrase, "All Things Basementy™", as part of the worldwide dealer network, Basement Systems out of Seymour Connecticut. "As a top 10% dealer, the repairs performed by Woods Basement Systems are also backed by the National Dealer Warranty," says Thompson. For more information on what Woods can do for your basement, call 314.965.1980 or visit WoodsBasementSystems.com

"Woods celebrated our **37th ANNIVERSARY in 2023**, and we want to thank our team," Thompson added, "for these past 18 months or so of performing exceptionally well in difficult circumstances. Everyday, they get up and go out to help homeowners solve problems and we are so proud of them!"



Our Family Serving Yours



BASEMENT FINISHING



ROCKWELL EGRESS WINDOW



BASEMENT WATERPROOFING



FOUNDATION REPAIR

314-965-1980
WoodsBasementSystems.com

Thank you for voting us
TOP FAMILY BUSINESS
Thank you for voting us
BEST IN VALUE!

2014, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021 & 2022

Our Salute to the Numbers People

2023 Top Business Accountants

For entrepreneurs, their accountant plays an active part in the financial success of their businesses. The following accountants have proven their dedication to helping small businesses in St. Louis grow and have been named the Top Accountants for businesses in 2023. In the following profiles, this year's top accountants share their wisdom for your business.



Kevin Fine Fine & Associates, PC

Number of years serving business owners: 27

Motivation to help business owners:
Helping them achieve success.

Obstacles you help entrepreneurs with:
Many small business owners are good at their craft but struggle to run their business. This is especially true when it comes to company finances and taxes, which is where we can help.

Best advice for small business owners:
You cannot do everything yourself. You need to surround yourself with competent professionals to help you along the way.

Biggest mistake that you see business owners make:
Not taking the time to understand the books and financial statements. This is information that will help you make important business decisions.



Keith Slusser F.E.W., CPAs

Number of Years Serving Business Owners: 22

Motivation to help business owners:
The personal satisfaction of making a difference for our clients by providing tax and accounting expertise, contributing to their growth, and building trust.

Obstacles you help entrepreneurs with:
We assist business owners with overcoming obstacles related to financial reporting, tax planning, regulatory compliance, and proper business structure to help them achieve their business goals.

Best advice for small-business owners:
We emphasize the importance of maintaining organized and accurate financial records. We encourage business owners to keep track of income, expenses, receipts and invoices. This will make tax preparation, financial analysis, and decision-making much easier.

Biggest mistake that you see business owners make:
The biggest mistake I see new small-business owners make is co-mingling business and personal assets. They should establish separate bank accounts for their business transactions. This separation helps maintain clarity and makes it easier to track business-related expenses and income.



Brian T. Ostendorf Conner Ash P.C.

Number of years serving business owners: 15 years public accounting; 4 years industry accounting.

Motivation to help business owners:
To help them accomplish individual and business goals.

Obstacles you help entrepreneurs with:
Developing and implementing business strategies in a tax-efficient manner.

Best advice for small-business owners:
Do not lose sight of the big picture.

Biggest mistake that you see business owners make:
Focusing on short-term goals and sacrificing long-term opportunities.



CONGRATULATIONS!!!



Brian Ostendorf, CPA
On being named,
Top Accountant in St. Louis



www.connerash.com | 314.205.2510

St. Louis Business Exam, Question #11

Why advertise in *St. Louis Small Business Monthly*?

Because you:

- A. understand the importance of thriving local businesses
- B. can't wait until the Spring and Fall St. Louis Business Expos
- C. want to leverage the buying power of 70,000 business owners
- D. are smart with your marketing dollars
- Ⓔ ALL OF THE ABOVE



A+
Great Job!

sbmon.com • 314.569.0076

Discover the Pinnacle of St. Louis Business Excellence!



**2023 BEST IN BUSINESS
AWARDS LUNCHEON
HONORING THE BEST BUSINESSES
IN ST. LOUIS**

**November 8, 2023 - 11am-1pm
St. Charles Convention Center**

presented by:



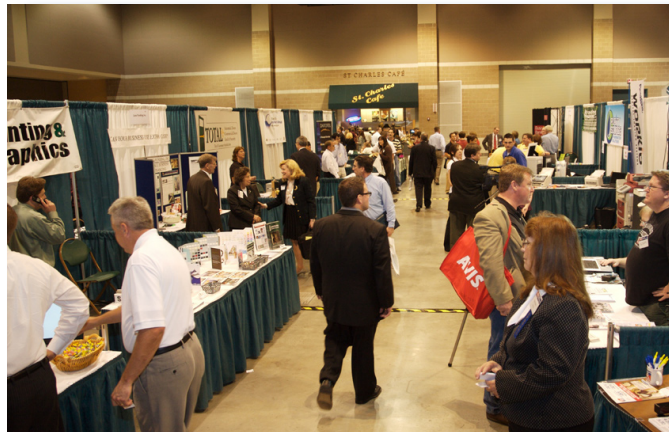
**Network with the Elite - Unlock Success Secrets
- Honor Excellence**

Tickets: \$55 (Tables of 10=\$550)

SBM-STORE.COM

THE BUSINESS EVENT OF THE YEAR

ST. LOUIS BUSINESS EXPO & BUSINESS GROWTH CONFERENCE



Missouri's Largest
Biz-to-Biz Trade Show
Nov. 8, 11am-5pm
St. Charles Convention Center



100 + B2B Exhibits - Networking Opportunities -
FREE Seminars - Special Events

Exhibit Booths
Available

Contact: Pat Coates
314.569.0076, ext. 109
pat@sbmon.com

www.stlexpo.com

TOP ACCOUNTANTS

Harrison Klemm
Klemm & Associates, LLC



Number of years serving business owners: 8

Motivation to help business owners:

I enjoy helping business owners fulfill their business goals and potential. I like assisting business owners throughout their journey of owning a business and helping them tackle new situations they encounter along the way.

Obstacles you help entrepreneurs with:

Establishing and maintaining best practices for records and bookkeeping; optimizing the success and growth of the business; and minimizing tax exposure by implementing tax strategies in day-to-day business practices.

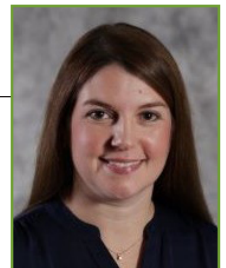
Best advice for small-business owners:

Build a strong foundation for your business. Surround yourself with professionals and experts with a variety of skill sets and experiences that put the business's needs first. Do not be afraid to lean on these experts and their advice so that you, as the owner, can make the best and most informed decisions for your business. Doing so allows you to do what you do best by giving you the time to focus on the operations, growth and success of the business itself.

Biggest mistake that you see business owners make:

Making uninformed decisions. Many times, I have seen new business owners make uninformed decisions before consulting with an expert in their area of expertise, which can result in major, costly, time-consuming setbacks to a business's growth and success. Another mistake we see is business owners not giving the business enough time and resources to grow at a sustainable rate.

Robyn Klingler
Scheffel Boyle



Number of years serving business owners: 26 years

Motivation to help business owners:

I've always been a team player and strive for success. As a member of my clients' teams, I enjoy bringing my best effort, knowledge and ideas to win together.

Obstacles you help entrepreneurs with:

Simplifying the complexities of running a business. I love to listen to their needs and customize our approach to best meet their small or larger needs.

Best advice for small business owners:

Plan before you act. It never hurts to call first. With everchanging tax rules, you better check on what you don't know. And pay your estimates!

Biggest mistake that you see business owners make:

Poor recordkeeping, which leads to so many headaches with accuracy, deadlines, reliable numbers to make informed business decisions, and cash flow surprises.



Your Business and the ADA: Ensuring Accessibility and Inclusion

It is important for small businesses to be aware of and comply with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA has two sections that can potentially impact small businesses: Title I and Title III.

Title I of the ADA applies to businesses with 15 or more employees (or 6 or more employees under the Missouri Human Rights Act) and requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities. This means making modifications or adjustments to the work environment that enable employees to perform their job duties which could include providing assistive devices, modifying work schedules, or allowing telecommuting.

Title III applies to all businesses, regardless of their size, and requires them to make their physical premises accessible to individuals with disabilities. A key aspect is the removal of architectural barriers that may hinder accessibility and ensuring that physical structures are designed and constructed in a way that accommodates individuals with disabilities. Elements such as entrances, parking spaces, ramps, doorways, hallways, and restrooms must be accessible to people with mobility impairments.

When constructing a new building or making alterations or renovations to an existing building, businesses are generally required to comply with the ADA Standards for Accessible Design adopted by the Department of Justice in 2010. However, even if a business is not engaged in construction or renovation, they still have an obligation to make alterations to their premises to provide access if it is “reasonably achievable.” The term “reasonably achievable” has not been precisely defined, but courts consider factors such as the nature and cost of barrier removal, the business’ financial resources, technical difficulties, the number of employees and visitors, safety requirements, and the impact on

business operations.

The ADA guidance recommends that businesses develop a long-term plan to address barriers to accessibility, as it is not expected that all barriers can be removed simultaneously due to resource constraints. ADA regulations identify four priority areas for barrier removal: (1) getting employees and customers through the door (e.g., appropriate parking spaces and ramps) (2) providing access to goods and services, (3) accessible restrooms (some businesses may not be required to provide public restrooms), and (4) any remaining barriers.

Title III of the ADA also addresses the issue of ADA compliance for websites. While the specific guidelines and requirements for website accessibility are not explicitly outlined in the ADA itself, the Department of Justice has indicated that websites may be considered places of public accommodation under Title III (see *Clicking Towards Disaster: The Cost of ADA Non-Compliant Websites*).

It is important for small businesses to take ADA compliance seriously, as there has been an increase in threats and lawsuits against businesses in the St. Louis area for non-compliance. All small businesses should develop an ADA compliance plan and implement it as soon as possible. Consult with your legal advisor about your accessibility plans and to respond to lawsuits or threats of suit. ■
David R. Bohm litigation attorney with Danna McKitrick, P.C. (www.dannamckitrick.com), works with health care, government, and business clientele. He handles matters involving employment, trademark, copyright, trade secret, cybersecurity and data protection, and complex contracts. He represents clients before various administrative agencies and is skilled in mediation and arbitration techniques as an alternative to litigation. David can be reached at 314.889.7135, dbohmd@dmfirm.com, or by visiting www.dannamckitrick.com.



Wake Up And Smell The Barley: What We Can Learn From Bud Light’s Fall

You’ve doubtless read the headlines Bud Light has been making — not the kind of headlines any business wants to make. For the first time since cavemen began fermenting hops and barley in stone cauldrons, the brewing giant has lost its lofty position as the top-ranked-selling beer in America.

In the wake of the PR disaster, Anheuser-Busch InBev’s global chief marketing officer Marcel Marcondes now admits that the public response has been “a wake-up call.”

Well, maybe it has and maybe it hasn’t. Perhaps deconstructing Mr. Marcondes’ boiler-plate apology will shed some light on what’s bubbling below the surface:

“In times like this, when things get divisive and controversial so easily, I think it’s an important wake-up call to all of us marketers first of all to be very humble.”

Things certainly have gotten divisive. But why? For the most part, traditionally minded people are not homophobic, transphobic or any-other-phobic. That’s why Douglas Murray is celebrated by the political right, despite being openly gay. He speaks articulately and compellingly about the cultural conflagrations reflected in the titles of his recent books, “The Madness of Crowds” and “The War on the West.” He doesn’t deny his sexual leanings, but neither does he discuss them at length. After all, they are nobody else’s business.

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

Traditionalists base their values on Scripture, and most of them have no intention of backing away from what they believe to be the divinely mandated definition of morality. Few of them, however, are interested in embarking on a holy war. They don’t want the police going into anyone’s bedroom. They also don’t want anti-traditionalist ideology streaming into their living rooms through their cell phones, laptops and flat-screen TVs. Nor do they want to be bombarded by it everywhere they go.

The commitment to humility in Marcel Marcondes’ mea culpa makes a nice soundbite. Indeed, the Torah testifies that Moses was the humblest person who ever lived. But that may not be the critical element facing AB InBev:

“That’s what we’re doing, being very humble, and really reminding ourselves of what we should do best every day, which is to really understand our consumers.

Which is to really celebrate and appreciate every consumer that loves our brands — but in a way that can make them be together, not apart.”

Strip away the self-effacing rhetoric, and what this really sounds like is an apology for pandering to the wrong customer base: We thought we could expand our market by endorsing the latest ideological flavor of the month. Turns out it was a bad business decision.

That’s true, of course. But it misses the larger point: What has made our society so contentious in recent years is Peter trying to force his agenda down Paul’s throat. Traditionalists don’t want to see an anti-traditionalist agenda crowbarred into every product, every ad, every department store, every movie, every song, and every TV series. They don’t like it that modern society continues to drift away from the core values they were raised with, but they can come to terms with reality. What they can’t abide is being relentlessly bludgeoned with the message that they need to embrace this brave new world.

WHAT SHOULD I STAND FOR?

Anheuser-Busch (AB) has indeed careened off message. Until recently, its commercials projected quiet dignity and reassurance: the Budweiser jingle, the Clydesdales and, for those old enough to remember, the comforting voice of spokesman Ed McMahon. Its real men of genius campaign two decades ago cleverly poked fun at our collective culture quirkiness without wading into the muck of agenda-driven politics.

Every successful business must stand for something more than making money. AB’s branding used to evoke a sense of national vision and freedom: head for the mountains of Busch; weekends were made for Michelob; when you say Budweiser, you’ve said it all. It was a message that made you smile without forcing you to choose which side you’re on.

What leaders do is lead by example, bringing people together and guiding them in pursuit of universal values. What they don’t do is try to exploit trends to make a quick buck. ■

Rabbi Yonason Goldson works with business leaders to build a culture of ethics that earns trust, sparks loyalty, and limits liability. He’s host of the podcast “Grappling with the Gray,” and his column “The Ethical Lexicon” appears weekly in Fast Company. Visit him at ethicalimperatives.com.



Why Your WHY Matters More Than Ever!

“The more people you inspire the more people will inspire you.”
“The primary ingredient for progress is optimism. The unwavering belief that something can be better drives the human race forward.”
“When people are financially invested, they want a return. When people are emotionally invested, they want to contribute.”
— **Simon Sinek, American author and inspirational speaker**

Simon Sinek has said and written many important things about purpose, leadership, and motivation that require our critical thinking because they push us beyond the current status quo in our life and work. Too often, many operate from fear and scarcity thinking and behaving. When my company brings forward defining an organizational AND a personal, individual WHY or purpose, there is often resistance, fear, and a lack of understanding about why WHY matters more than ever. They tend to want to avoid WHY because they have not been taught to believe in their power, or know how to trust and guide it. There is nothing that matters more than WHY, collectively and individually. WHY is the internal motivation and inspiration for realizing meaning, choices, competence, and progress.

The reason your WHY and that of any organization in which you affiliate (including churches, schools, political parties, sports teams, etc.) is so important, is that your WHY is what drives you, inspires you and helps you to be and remain emotionally invested so you want to contribute. Your WHY is the highest priority because it shifts you from being reactive to being proactive and reminds you that YOU are in charge of your thoughts, feelings, and actions, no matter what. Your WHY is what you choose to cause in and for yourself and others, connecting you to what matters most about your life. Your WHY is representative of who you are at your best and nurtures what Sinek says is your “primary ingredient for progress: optimism”.

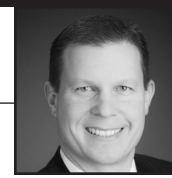
All authentic WHY’s are complementary, collaborative, optimistic, and cooperative. WHY keeps us looking UP to strength and courage rather than DOWN to fear, limiting ideas, and internal and external struggles. Your business WHY and your personal WHY are key to your competitive advantage, your relationships, and all your best experiences and those of people around you

(including your family and community). This is why your WHY matters so much.

Now more than ever, we are in a time in our history, work, and life, in which there is much fear. Our climate, politics, economics, health, wealth, global and local conflict, and even the future of work in relationship to AI and more, alarm and frighten many. In the face of upheaval and change, a crucial question is: how do we foster optimism, that most important ingredient for progress? Without finding a WHY to look up to instead of fear and limiting ideas, people become discouraged, feel ineffective, and struggle.

What helps my organization get through every day is our WHY: creating a world in which all people love their lives. Because this is such a conscious thought, we notice when our words, thoughts, feelings, and actions align (or do NOT) with this optimistic way of choosing. This informs all we focus on and do. We choose to adjust to that which inspires us and all we meet, so we stop struggling, and instead contribute avidly to support progress and holistic success.

Focusing on an optimistic WHY helps everyone move forward with courage. Are you ready to strengthen your culture and people so they are focused on an optimistic WHY and learn to leverage core values (behaviors and ways of being) to sustain it? Are you ready for visions (expressions of your WHY) that bring about unexpected achievements? Call us if you are. WHY matters more than ever and we help all you lead to define and actualize it in word and deed. YOU and your WHY matter more than ever! ■ *Judy Ryan (judy@LifeworkSystems.com), human systems specialist, is owner of LifeWork Systems. Join her in her mission to create a world in which all people love their lives. She can also be reached at 314-239-4727. People hire LifeWork Systems because we help businesses become agile and manage their priority system: their human system. I hope this article helps you make sense of what’s most crucial to your evolving organization!*



Cash Management Strategies To Navigate Rising Costs, Economic Uncertainty

With the market in an ongoing state of financial flux, business owners may need to take new approaches when it comes to managing money. Just as budgeting can support business goals under typical circumstances, establishing plans for challenging periods can help ensure successful outcomes. Financial decisions require thorough consideration before acting, but applying best practices and creative solutions can help businesses stay on track during the process.

By reviewing options for cash management and identifying which can better position a business to meet its needs, owners and leaders can navigate unusual economic circumstances in a number of effective ways. For example, strategically paying expenses to even out cash flow and knowing when and where to invest are key components to a successful cash management plan. Making sure enough cash is invested, savings are set aside and cash is kept on hand to keep business running smoothly is a learned practice — and requires balance.

Protect the Business When Investing

Many business owners have strategically cut back on expenses and hit pause on hiring. When costs are on the rise, strengthening cash reserves may seem like the obvious choice — but liquidizing investments comes with risk. This is a gamble with the chance of selling prematurely and could end up with the business losing out on money when the market fluctuates again.

Rather than selling, consider a strategic shift into defensive investments that can hold up during economic instability. Work with a team of financial advisors to ensure a balanced profile that allows the current investment plan to hold up during fluctuations. With proper planning and collaboration, businesses can stay the course during market instability and remain a long-term investor instead of trying to time the market. Mitigating risk in cash reserves can occur without taking on unnecessary risk in an investment strategy.

Take Advantage of Credit Card Programs

While organizational spending can be quickly addressed in shorter term re-

sponses to economic challenges, payment accounts themselves can provide more specialized controls designed for ongoing management. Credit card features are a helpful tool that can help strategically manage money when costs are high. Here are a few potentially beneficial resources:

- **Cash Control:** A business credit card feature that can increase cash flow as credit card transactions are deferred to an account that offers credit terms and a grace period to make payments.
- **Efficiency:** Some financial institutions allow issuance of several card numbers under one account, with transactions posted to a central billing source. This time-saving feature allows business owners to easily pay off multiple employee credit card bills from a single account.
- **Easy Account Management:** Online tools can simplify business card account transactions. Manage employee cards, and easily issue and block cards to efficiently monitor business credit card transactions.

Even Out Your Cash Flow

Managing a business’s cash flow and planning for expenses is critical to sustaining a positive flow of income. Identifying opportunities to cut back on expenses can give a business flexibility during periods of higher prices and interest rates. Consider the following strategies for handling payments:

- Be sure to evaluate supply and production costs to make sure there is enough return on investments.
- Avoid paying all bills at the same time and spread out expenses as much as possible to avoid running out of funds.
- Prioritize expenses to get an idea of what bills can be postponed or rescheduled in order to stagger payments.
- Consult with suppliers. When possible, work with suppliers who are flexible and willing to provide a payment plan that syncs with specific cash flow needs.
- Consider opening a business line of credit through a bank. By establishing a funding relationship before stresses arrive, businesses can mitigate their operational and financing challenges. ■

Steve Albart serves as Regional President, St. Louis for Enterprise Bank & Trust. He can be reached at salbart@enterprisebank.com



Putting The Fun In Our Dysfunctional World!



Saturdays at 5PM, Beginning July 29th!

Small Business Monthly Readers!
Save Up To 50% On Right Mind Advertising Packages
That Include Week Long Commercials! Limited Time.
sales@rightmindshow.com



TIME WITH THE BOSS

Vincent Reese

Mickes O'Toole, LLC

Website: www.mickesotoole.com

Industry: Legal



Title: Managing Partner

What's the smartest thing your company did in the past year?

Targeted growth through intentional new hires. With the job market tightening and as an increasing number of attorneys started to explore their job options, our firm sought out and recruited new hires to help bolster our existing practices and expand our reach.

How do you differentiate your business from others in your industry?

Driving creativity to improve client satisfaction. We proactively work with our clients to better understand their needs and to develop individualized plans for our team to meet those needs. Given our size and experience, we can offer better rates and more nimble responses than other firms.

What have been the keys to success for the business?

Patience and balance. Our firm has found success by recognizing the life cycle of change. By accepting the reality that a business does not grow or improve in a linear manner, our firm strives to find balance in our practice areas and patience in our long-term outlook.

What is your best advice for other business owners to find success in business?

Don't fear failure. Failure is an inevitable consequence of innovation and should not be feared. As Thomas Edison once said, "I have not failed 1,000 times. I have just found 1,000 ways that won't work." Failure serves as a useful instrument for development and learning. We have benefited from approaching innovation without fear and viewing it as an opportunity to grow and improve. ■

St. Louis Business Exam, Question #11

Why advertise in *St. Louis Small Business Monthly*?

Because you:

- A. understand the importance of thriving local businesses
- B. can't wait until the Spring and Fall St. Louis Business Expos
- C. want to leverage the buying power of 70,000 business owners
- D. are smart with your marketing dollars
- E. ALL OF THE ABOVE



A+ Great Job!

sbmon.com • 314.569.0076

Since January of 2002, Winning Technologies has been proud to be a **Woman Owned Veteran Business**. We take great pride in our military history, and our efforts to support veterans initiatives locally here in O'Fallon, St. Louis and around the country.



LYNETTE LEWIS:

Chairman of the Board & Chief Operating Officer of Winning Technologies

Since the day Winning Technologies opened its doors, Lynette Lewis has been at the helm of Winning Technologies and taken the lead in our Strategy Development, Product Development, Operations and Business Development. Lynette has lead our market focus and most of all the quality of people and products we deliver to our customers.

Lynette has taken a personal role in working tirelessly for the betterment of Veterans in our community. Lynette has taken on many fundraising initiatives with the VFW 5077 in O'Fallon, along with State and District initiatives. Lynette has also taken a personal role in fund raising for Veterans with the American Spirit Mustang which has traveled around the country fundraising for veteran needs.

Lynette is very proud of the success Winning Technologies has had in the 21 years of existence, and as we continue to grow our business under her leadership we want to have the opportunity to discuss your technology needs.



Lynette was elected the first female VFW Post Commander in 75 years at the VFW 5077, and is currently going to be the first female District Commander in more than a decade.



VFW POST
5077
AN ALL STATE POST

Winning Technologies Products & Services include:

- Cyber Security
- Arctic Wolf
- Cloud Services
- CIO Level Consulting
- VOIP Services
- Darktrace
- Microsoft 365
- and more
- 24x7 Helpdesk
- Mantix4
- Technology Auditing & Strategic Planning

WinningTech.com | 877-379-8279