

## AdvanceMe's Tip of the Week: March 19, 2008

### Walk a Different Mile

A wise old saying suggests that you try walking a mile in another's shoes to improve your own perspective.

This advice can be especially pertinent to a small business owner. By trying to see things from another important perspective, you can identify areas of your business that might need improving.

Try these shoes on for size:

- **An Employee.** What should an employee know about the business? The products and services? The warranties and service agreements? Handling customer service issues? By placing yourself in the position of an employee, you can identify common situations and see how you, as a business owner, can provide better direction. Talk to your employees, and see where what you think differs from what they think, and then work to close the gap. Bringing all employees to the same starting point is the first step toward providing better service.
- **A Customer.** What does the average customer know about your business? Its history? Its direction? Its policies? What brings them back or makes them look to other options? What makes them choose your business over a competitor? What else would they like to see? Use a survey or customer poll to get a better feel for the real answers to these questions. Look at what you think the customers believe and compare it to what they tell you in comment cards, seeking to eliminate any gaps. If the customer doesn't see the business as you wish them to, you may have to do some better marketing or look at changing some policies and procedures.
- **A Prospective Customer.** What makes a connection to your ideal new customer? Is it a service or pricing difference? Is it your location or your product selection? Maybe it is the attitude of service. By identifying how you'd like to appear to a prospective new client, you can see where your business might need tightening-up. Similarly, if you imagine what an exiting or disgruntled customer might be thinking, you can see where you might take measures to improve the experiences that encourage repeat business.

As a small business owner, you don't want to live in an ivory tower. While it is important to have a high-level view of what your business is doing and where it is going, the truth of where you actually are is often held in the minute details that surround you every day. By taking a different perspective to see these details more clearly, you will create an ongoing opportunity within your business to learn, to improve, and to grow.

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