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Leverage the Transferability of Best Practices

It has recently occurred to me that businesses are missing a huge opportunity to leverage the transferability of best practices. Although as a business consultant, leveraging best practices has been an "assumed" part of the value I provide clients, even I missed the boat and forgot to leverage this value in my marketing process. After realizing this personal miss, I started to think further about the topic in relation to my clients, and I realized that it has been one of my top 3 paths to success in driving bottom line business results. So, what do I mean by transferability of best practices, and how does one go about doing this?

Leveraging the transferability of best practices involves the following: 1) searching for even seemingly unrelated best practices for your top / core business processes; 2) evaluate and trial best practices that seem as though they might have something to offer in your business; 3) modify and change as appropriate for your business (leverage the best and adjust the rest); 4) implement and monitor progress. I've found countless examples where leveraging the transferability of best practices has proven effective. So, what are some of the ways to achieve it?

1. Different sizes of businesses: Most Executives see the value in transferring best practices from large businesses to small businesses; however, I've found it to provide significant value in both directions. From the big to small perspective, I've been able to apply some of the best practices from large companies including Coca-Cola Enterprises to both mid-size and start-up companies, and I was able to provide expertise gained while preparing a mid-sized manufacturer for sale in writing a business plan for a start-up technology company. On the other hand, from the small to big perspective, I was able to apply the concepts applied at a small, entrepreneurial company to a large specialty products and services company. Does this work in all cases? Of course not; however, until you start considering the options of applying best practices within various sized-companies, you'll be missing a significant opportunity.
2. Different Industries: I cannot tell you how often I hear, "that won't work here". My response is always, "Why?" In at least 80% of the cases, it not only can work but it results in significant benefit to the organization. As often as companies search for experts in the industry, I'd suggest instead that they deliberately look for non-industry experts with best practice expertise across a variety of industries. After all, does the automobile industry really need another automobile expert? Absolutely not. However, if an expert in consumer products can offer up a few best practices that could provide value in the automobile industry, it could be worth a fortune!
3. Across countries and continents: It is quite amazing how much you can leverage from an international perspective if you are searching for the bits and pieces that could be applicable and/or modified to work in another environment. In my experience in working in and/or with colleagues from around the world, including Sweden, France, England, Belgium, Japan, Mexico, Canada etc, there are unlimited options to leverage best practices. The key is to invest time to learn the culture and keep your eyes open for opportunities that might be disguised to your typical way of thinking.

- Finally, I'd like to end with a word of caution: Do not become so overzealous in finding best practices that you forget common sense and applicability to your business. In at least 80% of my experiences in leveraging best practices, I modified the best practice to some degree in order to make it the most effective for the size of business, industry, country etc. Unfortunately, I've worked in companies who have become so enamored with best practices that they became singular-focused to the detriment of the business. In my experience, the best way to overcome this potential hurdle is to involve the business experts in the process - run ideas by them, ask for feedback, find ways to tweak the process/ system, etc.

Leveraging best practices, ranging from leadership to business and systems processes can give you a leg up on your competition and give you the opportunity to grow your bottom line - why not give it a try?

Lisa's Tips: Business Tips From Children

It is interesting what can be learned from children. They can be more insightful than Executives at times....perhaps it's a different viewpoint, similar to leveraging the transferability of best practices.

- Can you explain it so that your 5th grader can understand it? It sounds insane but effective and clear communication is a rare quality in today's business environment. I've tried to explain a presentation to a 5th grader, and it was much harder than I expected yet it helped me improve upon my presentation's clarity.
- Don't give up: If your child wants a particular toy, does he/she give up after one, "no"? Most likely not. Instead, they continually come up with new and unique ways of asking for the toy. At times, they can be so creative that you end up purchasing the toy. Perhaps it is because they haven't learned to be afraid of rejection. What can we learn from our children's creative requests?
- Recess: My nephew was talking about recess, and I realized I forgot all about recess, as it was quite a long time ago. But, doesn't it help rejuvenate the mind and spirit to have a short recess?
- Ask big picture questions? 6yr olds typically ask big picture questions such as, "Why does the sun set?". Don't get so bogged down in detail that you forget to ask the big picture questions.
- Don't get overly upset about mistakes: What child doesn't make countless mistakes while learning to walk? If we gave up after each failed attempt, we'd all still be crawling. Why do we get so upset about one-time mistakes that are essential to long-term success in the workplace? My philosophy is, "Mistakes are good; a trend of the same mistake is not."

Recommended Reading

["The 22 Immutable Laws of Marketing"](#) by Al Ries & Jack Trout - a marketing classic. Regardless of your business, there are countless tips that can be utilized to achieve success.

LMA Consulting Group

2058 N. Mills Ave, PMB 532

Claremont, CA 91711

Main: 909-630-3943

Fax: 909-625-5603

www.lma-consultinggroup.com

landerson@lma-consultinggroup.com