

# SALES AND SERVICE Excellence

THE MAGAZINE OF TEAM LEADERSHIP

JANUARY 2010

**Luck by  
Design**

**Emotional  
Capital**

**Protect the Brand**

**Valarie D. Willis  
Consultant**



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# Sales and Service Excellence

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MANAGEMENT / TALENT

## Protect the Brand

*Implement five talent tips.*



by Valarie D. Willis

AS A BUSINESS, YOU PUT A promise out to the world—you may promise the best service, the best product, or to be the most innovative. As you make changes, cutbacks, and downsizing, can you still deliver on the brand promise? If you do not revisit the promise and look at it through the lens of all these changes, you may miss the opportunity to re-calibrate in order to deliver successfully.

**Pay special attention to the attitude of the talent.** Have the changes impacted their attitudes in a positive or negative way? Surly attitudes will not produce the best product, ideas, or service. After all, business is not just a numbers game—it is the people that make the brand, and brand loyalty adds to the bottom line.

The economy will rebound, and people will remember your business based on how they experience you, whether times are good or bad. So, focus on both the *talent* and the *brand experience*. As the leader, the experience focus should encompass both the experience of the talent and the experience of the external brand.

To ensure that you are protecting and serving the brand, consider and then implement these five tips:

**1. Over communicate with the people who work for you.** Re-state your purpose, mission, and vision. You may have to recast a vision for the next two years, but you need to reconnect people to the vision to sustain the brand.

**2. Review the brand promise.** What



do you stand for—do you know, and does your staff know? Everyone should understand what the brand promise is (what you commit to deliver) and understand how what they do brings the brand promise to life.

**3. Stay branded.** It is easy to skimp on marketing materials and advertis-

ing and go *off-brand*, but that's the last thing that you want to do. It is better to do a few things well than to do many things that are disconnected. Ensure that your talent is aware of and understands the current marketing strategy.

**4. Talk to the front lines.** Some of the best ideas on how to maintain your business reside in the hearts of those on front line, at the checkout counters, in the warehouse, on the phones, or out with the customers. Talk to these people; solicit their ideas—they'll help you discover new ways to add value.

**5. Appreciate people.** When money is tight and holiday bonuses may be out the door, make it a point to appreciate and acknowledge great service and actions that enhance the brand. Find small ways to create a celebratory atmosphere even during these difficult times.

Protect the brand and keep it in mind when making decisions. The brand lives in the talent, so serve the talent well, and they will serve the brand.

SSE

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**ACTION:** Lead talent to protect your brand.

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