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UPGRADING YOUR BUSINESS STRATEGY

A strong business strategy and the implementation of best practices create a sense of what is expected in business.

By Erin J. Wolford, Editor-in-Chief

Every successful company has them: A set of expectations to ensure the company is fulfilling its business strategy. Setting goals for the company to meet or exceed its expectations; creating a baseline for business development; setting up guidelines to follow for everyday production. These are considered best practices.

Best practices are widely-accepted processes or methods that help fulfill duties or tasks. These sets of rules are often used where no formal method is present. A desired result can come to fruition when best practices are put into place and followed, which can help reduce problems and complications. Whether industry-specific or company-wide, when accurately followed, best practices can be one of the greatest improvements a company can make.

One company's best practices have propelled it into continued success. Charter Films engineers, extrudes and manufactures plastic films. Charter Films' vice president of sales and marketing, Brian Beuning, offered some of his company's best practices and business strategies, which have helped in the continual success of the company.

Best Placed Practices

So what kinds of best practices has Charter Films implemented? According to Beuning, education and

training is key. "Our primary vehicle for accomplishing this is an interactive, computer-based training program called Charter University. 'Charter U' is designed to provide our employees with the tools they need, so our customers will be afforded the highest level of quality and service."

Additionally, Charter Films sees strength in employee involvement. "We also pride ourselves in a practice we call the Charter Way. This empowers our employees to be part of the decision-making process to achieve customer satisfaction and product innovation."

Key Business Strategies

Positively affecting the bottom line down the road could start today, with

a stronger business strategy. Charter Films recognized this, and has followed its own business strategy.

"Internally, we have focused on continual capital investment to maintain and upgrade our extrusion equipment. This strategy is critical to maintaining what we believe to be a competitive advantage for Charter Films – our quality and operational efficiency. We also remain firmly committed to our internal training programs to assure that we give our extrusion technicians the support they need to continue to improve their skills," says Beuning.

Charter Films also recognizes that the industry needs to see its offerings as well. Beuning explains, "In the marketplace, we have expanded and added to our product



Charter Films, a blown film extruder, shown here, understands that a successful company has a set of best practices behind it.



offerings to make sure we have the films our customers need. A key recent addition to our product offering is EVOH barrier films. This asset and product line extension makes Charter a truly full-service provider in terms of products. We can now make monolayer films, up to 7-layers, and have many co-ex lines to support future innovation.”

Setting Itself Apart from Competition

Charter Films believes it is different in its business offerings for the industry. Beuning explains that its uniqueness lies in its solutions. “Today customers are looking for more than just products to purchase; they’re also looking for solutions that not only help them operate more efficiently, but most importantly help them to fulfill their customer’s needs.

“Charter Films has the technical expertise, state-of-the-art extrusion assets and customer-focused team to do just that. What makes Charter Films unique is our ability to provide these solutions using a personalized approach, geared towards each customer’s specific needs. We believe that our steady growth over the past 13



Brian Beuning
VP of Sales & Marketing, Charter Films

years is a testament to our customer focus and their satisfaction,” says Beuning.

Trending toward Success

Charter Films also recognizes that successful companies should not only follow trends, but also fulfill them.

Beuning expands on this concept: “A major trend in film extrusion is really a continuation of a trend that has been evolving for quite some time in our industry. Simply put, today more than ever before, film needs to be flat and gauge needs to be spot on.

“We have seen many of our converting customers continue to upgrade their assets

in order to operate more efficiently and grow their business. For example, we have seen a significant number of new installs of high speed printing presses, many of which are capable of running at speeds up to 1400 feet-per-minute with phenomenally quick job changeover. These newer, faster, better assets need good film if they are to run optimally. In addition these assets can run wider, thinner films and can handle larger outside diameter (OD) rolls,” says Beuning.

“Making high-quality, consistent film – often at wider widths and thinner gauge and then winding them on large OD rolls, so converters can run these newer assets at high outputs – is a challenge for a film producer. They need to have the right equipment, well-trained employees, and a commitment to quality in order to succeed,” according to Beuning.

Understanding business from inside the company, to the industry, to your customers and responding to each of these groups’ needs will make your company the most successful it has been. Recognize that cross-section, and you’ll go far. **FP**

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER if Your Company Needs to Implement Better Best Practices:

If you are not 100 percent sure how to determine your own company’s best practices, here are a few questions to seriously consider. Being completely honest with the answers could create a better outcome down the road.

— What kinds of recurring problems has your company experienced, and how were those problems corrected?

The answer to this question is one key best practice that could be tightened up to avoid these problems. In turn, if the problems are not being corrected, why not? Are you missing a key piece of equipment, key management, etc.? Start filling those voids to avoid future recurring problems.

— In which areas can your company improve? What specifically would you like to see improved upon? What sorts of realistic improvements can make it better?

The answer to these questions will point to weaknesses. Recognizing your company’s weak points and addressing those head-on will create a better environment, and eventually, a better outcome.

— What’s missing from your company?

Again, recognizing the parts of your business that need improvement will help determine where a set of guidelines might be needed.

— What kinds of realistic success would you like to see from your company within the next year?

Understanding where you’d like your company to be instead of where it currently is could help clarify the set of best practices that might need to be implemented.

If after going through these questions, you are still unsure of the answers, don’t hesitate to ask your upper management, and even other enthusiastic employees, to offer their honest input. Their responses could shed a whole new positive light on the company.

