

with columnist Fiona Walsh



What's the personality of your business?

A great business will define culture first and build it into all its processes

When you hear the word culture, do you think of a petri dish? Or yogurt? Or art? Or ... do you think of business? Building a strong culture is key to building a great business. And, you need to start building that culture from Day One – it's not something you wait to do until you get bigger. I see so many small business owners sweat buckets over their logo or tagline, yet they never give a thought to the kind of culture they want to build in their business. The truth is, every business has a personality. Either you decide consciously what kind of personality you want your business to be known for – or it will happen by accident, and you may not end up liking the results.

We all know businesses that have a terrible reputation, where employee attitude is poor and, as a customer, you rarely enjoy the interaction. As a small business owner in this tough economy, you need to build a great culture where employees like to come to work; where customers like to do business. This isn't a luxury. It's a matter of survival. Investing time and thought into deliberately building a strong culture for your business will translate into more sales.

So, how does a small business do this? I decided to talk to one of the coolest, fastest-growing brands out there, to see how they did it. Blo started with one location in 2007 and grew to three in the first year. It's now at 11 locations, with two more shortly opening. Over coffee with Blo co-founder Judy Brooks, I asked for the how-to guide on building a culture of success in a business.

1. How would you describe the culture at Blo?

It's fun, hot pink, vibrant, cool, stylish and accessible. Blo is very community-oriented; we wanted to build a sense of community with the clients, our staff team and the neighbourhoods where our stores are located. We knew this was key to building client loyalty and repeat business.

2. Did you have a definite strategy in mind for building the culture?

From the very beginning of the business plan, we had a clear idea of the personality of the company we wanted to build. Culture is an integral part of any business for me personally, as it was for my partners, Val Litwin and Devon Brooks.

Vibe, environment, a common language (in our case: a Blo-cabulary) are all elements of the Blo culture. We knew that when these components were aligned with clear business values and vision, we had a winning combination! We believed that team and client alike want to be part of something — and culture is the manifestation of that magic something.

3. How did building such a great culture at Blo drive its financial success?

Blo was a viral explosion – we entered the market during a sweet spot where social media and PR drove our brand. Blo clients, our "hair cadets," and the team were Blo; they were the company. Hair cadets came to Blo for the culture, for convenience and for great hair. They wanted the Blo experience, even though they could get their hair done anywhere. Blo was a community of people who enjoyed being part of a shared experience. Customers came in the door, came back repeatedly and told their friends about Blo.

4. What three tips can you share

on how to build a positive culture?

- Have clarity around your business values and vision, and make sure everything you do to build your business resonates with you and your brand, to the core.

- Ensure huge elements of your culture are driven by your staff. Their passion and enthusiasm are the best-selling tool you can ever have!

- Think about how your customers contribute to your culture. Invite feedback and suggestions – think of ways to get them involved, and build a relationship with them.

So there you have it, it just makes sense. If your business has an attractive personality, you will attract more

customers, you will build more loyalty in the market, and you will have a bigger bottom line. Take a few lessons from the founders of Blo – start building culture in your business.

Fiona Walsh started FM Walsh & Associates Inc. when she saw how many business owners struggled to sell effectively. An expert in sales and business development, she has worked with hundreds of businesses throughout North America to double, even triple their revenues. She offers tips for growing your business at www.fmwalsh.com. Our extensive genealogical research has found that Fiona, though blessed with the same name, is not related to Michael Walsh.

Part-Time Career Courses

Make It Business!
August 2010

Upgrade your skills *right now*
Part-time classes are starting soon.

- Certified General Accountant
- Human Resources Professional
- Certified Financial Planner
- Investment Adviser
- Mutual Funds Representative
- Employee Benefits Specialist
- Securities Broker
- Life Insurance Representative
- Health Insurance Consultant
- Licensed Home Inspector

Ashton

Education
with
Purpose

Register Now:

www.ashtoncollege.com/pt

Or contact admissions adviser

Patrick Fowler at 604.899.0803 (ext: 103)