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## All Together Now

**For a company to come together, everyone has to play ball. That means you.**

**The Business Journals - by Tim Sanders**

Date: Wednesday, February 16, 2011, 4:15pm EST

I had an insightful speaking assignment last week: give a talk to directors and sales managers from around the world about the value of "coming together as a team." This customer, a multibillion-dollar professional services firm, has six business units operating in 12 countries.

To say the least, the corporate culture is entrepreneurial. The company has a "federation of states," each with its own marketing, training, service and operations resources. A consultancy recently told senior management that there was significant overlap in the company, as well as inconsistency when transacting with customers and partners. As one frustrated client said, "That company has more looks than Lady Gaga!"

My team turned up a few research pieces that documented how much a company could save if all units and offices shared training resources—as much as 25 percent company wide. The same went with marketing or sales operations for that matter— huge savings to either the manager's P&L or the company's balance sheet.

When companies go to market unified, from presentation to vision, they garner quicker buy-in from prospective customers and partners. Shared information alone leads to better references, case studies and guarantees. Unity is convincing to a prospect and takes advantage of the 25/200 rule of sales: Reduce by 25 percent the time it takes for a customer to decide and double sales volume.

In the end, here's what I learned: When all the groups in a company share resources and align themselves, they find synergy with size. Cost savings and closing power are the secrets to sustainable profits. When sales preview coming ad campaigns for clients and advertising previews new products to their agencies, magic happens. This is the power of unity.

But few companies pull this off. It's not in our nature as humans. We create silos, focus on how "it's different around here" and protect information as if we were hoarding nuts. Almost two years of budget and head count reductions pit divisions or functions against each other instead of bringing them together. This might be the case at your company.

In the meeting industry, both suppliers and partners at mid to large companies could use the power of unity these days. It sure beats cutting corners! Unbeknownst to us, we've likely built up services that are duplicative or don't mirror the company's vision or branding. We may not be in-the-know on upcoming product developments, because we've been reactive instead of collaborative (offering field info to improve the result).

For a company to come together, everyone has to play ball. That means you.

To contribute to a unity movement at your company, you need to take advantage of common resources and coordinate market facing tactics for synergy. (By market facing, I mean events, advertisements, promotions, presentations, etc.)

This will require a lot of work on your part, and in some cases, you'll have to negotiate with other people inside your company that you've never dealt with before. It will require tenacity and a desire on your part to win—even if you lose a little independence during the process.

First, do some research to find out what your HR and marketing department have to offer with off-the-shelf training, development or marketing collateral. Make sure all your colors, brand images and narrative themes jive with the current annual report and/or national ad campaign. If you're in sales, coordinate with other sales groups or national offices to make sure you are all consistent from the initial pitch to back-end reporting. In many cases, shared graphics can spice up and align your work immediately without any expense.

Second, leaders, focus discussions and innovation on what all the groups share in common—not what makes them different. I noticed this at Yahoo!, when I started in 1999. We had groups offering ad targeting, promotions, search advertising, rich media, streaming ads, etc. Many of them acted on their own, because they utilized different technology and were measured by their clients in different ways. What they didn't realize is that they were all in the same business: delivering eyeballs to marketers. Google aligned around this unifying concept (selling access to an audience) and came to the market as a solution, albeit with several products to deliver it.

Third, contribute information to the system. Unity first and foremost requires the comparing of notes by all the players. That can be the best way a company can bring its size to bear.

Event managers and meeting planners: Share your theme, messaging and speaker lineup with internal stakeholders, which can include sales, marketing, corporate communications, community affairs, executive management, product or program development and investor relations. Request copies of their latest and greatest presentations— compare it all against the company's vision. You'll make some friends along the way and prepare a highly effective meeting as a result.

Sales and marketing leaders: Spend time using your customer management tools, such as Salesforce.com. A recent study by the Boston Consulting Group found that a company's ability to leverage its size came down to "time spent in CRM [customer relation management] or sales force management tools by its managers." Too often, we are too busy to log in the results of the last sales presentation or trade show—but it's the only way that product can move with the market.

If nothing else, come together for the sake of the entire company. If you are proud to work there, you should put interdependence over independence.

Here's the stinger: What would your competitors say if they knew you were all in the same room, discussing how you can bring everything to bear on opportunities? They would be scared to death! They are just hoping that you remain disjointed, because it keeps you from leveraging your size against them.

Tim Sanders, a speaker on the lecture circuit, is the author of *Saving the World at Work: What Companies and Individuals Can Do to Go Beyond Making a Profit to Making a Difference* (Doubleday, September 2008). Check out his website at [www.timsanders.com](http://www.timsanders.com).