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KEEPING YOUR MINORS FROM BECOMING MAJORS

I admit it. I am the king of procrastination. I've been racking my brain trying to come up with an article for this quarter's newsletter and, as always, I waited until the last minute. That's how I've been as far back as I can remember and I seem to just keep getting better at it as time goes on. Although, to be fair, I do usually start with a general idea of what I am going to write on and flip some ideas back and forth in my mind until it all seems to gel together in the end. It may be debatable on how well my thoughts gel together - but humor me on this since this is my article.

While I admit to procrastinating on writing these articles, one thing I do not like to see is when people procrastinate on minor items with major consequences. My turning in a late article is a minor item with minor consequences (Curtis bugging me every day). But the items we see over and over again in our department are usually major items that take only a minor amount of time to stay on top of.

Making sure your DBE certification and pre-qualification are current (two different things monitored by two different divisions within TDOT), as well as notifying our office of any changes to your business, doesn't take a

lot of time but can have a big impact if you are not in compliance. I have literally seen DBEs have contracts in the multi hundred thousand dollar range yanked out from under them when this could have been easily avoided. To stay on top of this, check your prequalification status on TDOT's Construction Division website and call us if you are ever unsure of your certification or if your business structure changes.

One minor item that can have a major positive consequence to your business is to register and attend our 2017 DBE Annual Meeting, to be held August 28 -29 at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Cool Springs, Franklin, TN (Note: This is a different location from last year). This event is a day and a half of vital business information that has but one goal - to help your business be a success. The best part is, the entire event is free (if for nothing else, come for some awesome free food). I hope you can all make plans to attend as this will be one of the most important events of the year for you, your staff and your entire company.

David Neese

Director of the Small Business Development Program



It's Time To Increase Your Net Profits



Victor C. Tyler, P.E., M.ASCE, NSPE
Construction Business Management Expert

Industry experts are predicting steady growth for the construction marketplace. If that is the case then now is a great time to increase your profitability. The business owner that desires to increase their profits, must not be afraid to change the way they do business. With so much construction going on, the goal should be to develop a mindset to find higher margin opportunities.

Below are strategic "to-do's" you can implement to begin building a bigger bottom line.

To do list:

1. *Develop a specialty. You must have a competitive advantage.*
2. *Stop bidding on projects with a crowded bidders list.*
3. *Look for better customers and projects with higher margins.*
4. *Know your numbers. Sit down and calculate your real markup percentage. Then increase it to what you deserve for doing a great job of satisfying your customers.*

5. *Stop reducing your price to win work!*

6. *Develop a production timeline and budget with your field superintendent and job foreman.*

7. *Don't do additional work without a written and signed change order with pricing.*

8. *Take time to know and understand construction industry accounting and financial performance ratios.*

Consultants must often share with business owners the reasons why they don't always get the results they desire. The problem is not the competition, economy or employees, it is usually the ego of the business owner or leader who is not willing to try new ideas. Decide now what you are willing to do to increase your profit margin in 2017.

WHY DO YOU NEED A STRATEGIC PLAN?

A Strategic Plan outlines written instructions on how to grow your business. It defines the goals of your company and why they are relevant to your success. A strategy is important



to define the steps required to move your company into the direction you want it to go. Why do I need a written plan? Glad you asked. Here are a few reasons why a plan is so important:

1. To make the decision-making process simple. The leaders in your organization must make decisions daily about what to complete, when, and how. When there is a plan in

place, it helps keep everyone focused on the priorities of the company.

2. To set the tone and the direction of the business. What are the daily priorities going to be? Your plan should detail all activities that will help propel your business forward and provide each team member with their list of activities or responsibilities that will contribute to achieving the goal.

3. To ensure your team is working together effectively. In order to row a boat successfully, every person has to be rowing in the same direction. Once you define your strategy and articulate it to your team, all departments should be working in tandem to achieve the same goal together.

4. To align your efforts with your priorities. If you want to increase profits this year, your team should be focused on operating efficiently, saving time and materials, and remaining on task and on budget. Your plan should provide a

checklist on what everyone can do every day to minimize waste and maximize company profits.

5. To articulate the message to the team. If you want your team to achieve the goals you have envisioned, you must communicate it to them and set the expectations for their participation. Be specific. Give each department their assignments and continuously encourage them throughout the process.

Although planning takes time and effort, it is an essential ingredient for business success. Effective leaders make the decision-making process simple, set the tone for business success, ensure their team is working together effectively, align their efforts with the companies priorities and effectively communicates expectations to their team. If you need assistance with getting started on your Strategic Plan, please contact our Strategic Business Specialist, Ericka Hayes at erickalhayes@gmail.com to set up an appointment.

Ericka L. Hayes, CPA
Accounting - Business Organization & Information Technology



Having The Opportunity To Thrive As A DBE

In many small business communities, there are programs in place that give DBEs an advantage to be awarded opportunities in special local, city and state business projects if you meet the program's guidelines. It's interesting to note, however, that not all DBEs want to be identified as a DBE.

Curtis Webb,
Strategic Marketing & Business Development Specialist

One may wonder why this would be true when there are wonderful opportunities designed for DBEs? Maybe it's because of how some in the majority business community stereotype those who are labeled as such. They see DBEs as those with limited business knowledge, under financed, poorly staffed, and basically just under-equipped to be a viable business.

So how does a DBE thrive?

Create a customer demand for what you offer, not just another service. Offer true customer value that customers appreciate and they will go out of their way to do business with you. So where do you start?

You can start by clearly defining and writing down what you offer to your market and the advantages you bring to your customers. Use this statement to shape your "opportunity pitch," (many call it an "elevator pitch"). An effective opportunity pitch is critical in presenting your business, so be sure you highlight and bring emphasis to advantages and benefits you offer the customer!

Additionally, identify those who can help you tweak your business skills (marketing, accounting, pricing methods, general back-office

support, etc.) and attend workshops, seminars, and one-on-one training sessions. Search for organizations that can assist you in being aware of job opportunities. Understand the guidelines and the potential partnering relationships you must have to achieve longevity in your business success. A key question that's asked is, "where would a DBE find this type of guidance and support?"

TDOT's Small Business Development Program offers one of the best comprehensive small business support programs in the country. The TDOT Supportive Services team is headed by a group of eight specialized business experts who offer DBEs various management and technical assistance. To find out more about what's available, use the following link: <http://tylerengineers.com/supportive-services>

Take advantage of special events like TDOT's upcoming DBE Small Business Annual Meeting, August 28th-29th, 2017. You can use this event to network and pitch your business to people in key decision-making positions. You want to look for supportive relationships where you can offer value, too. Listen for opportunities to network for upcoming projects. The idea is to learn who can benefit from

your services so that you can inform them about your business in an effective way.

For those who qualify to be certified as a DBE but are not excited about being labeled as such, or to the majority businesses who shy away from procuring DBEs, remember at the end-of-the-day it could very well mean opportunities for both to thrive!

Stay tuned, and plan to attend our next workshop so you can learn techniques and strategies to enhance your business and watch your profits grow! —*Provide excellence, stay consistent, and above all ...Be Epic!*



"Let's identify our weaknesses ... and don't look at me when you list them."



People-Systems-Processes

What are your customers thinking and saying about yours?

Marshall Tabb,
Financial Management & Leadership Coaching

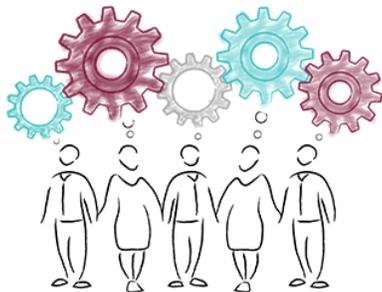
While sitting in the Nashville International Airport (BNA) waiting to board my flight for a much needed vacation, I could not help but notice the many people needed to operate the terminal, the various systems in use and the consistency in which processes were engaged.

My overall experience was pretty good considering the long lines at the security checkpoint. While I'm sure the BNA strives to give each customer an exceptional travel experience, another traveler's experience may have been totally different than mine. I believe it takes three components: people, systems and processes to ensure the efficient and effective operation of a successful company. So how does your company measure up?

People (Intellectual Assets)

I flew on Southwest Airlines. I can honestly proclaim each employee (baggage checkers, gate agents, flight crew) knew their job and performed it with a smile. Talk about company culture!

Do the people you employ to produce products or services have knowledge and skills to exceed customer expecta-



tions? Of greater importance, do employee actions mirror company vision and its mission? What does their performance say about company culture? It's a known fact companies need to "hire the right person to sit in the right seat" to be competitive. Ensuring you have an effective process in place to consistently recruit,

hire, train, evaluate and promote qualified individuals is crucial to servicing your customers well.

Systems (Tools & Technology)

I observed several airport systems in operation, from ticket purchasing to curbside check-in; from TSA checkpoints to baggage loading/unloading; from aircraft refueling to aircraft maintenance checks.



TSA checkpoints used the newest technology designed to detect objects and substances that are restricted or prohibited on board the aircraft. This technology gives value by ensuring the safety of travelers, flight crews and airport personnel.

Are your company systems considered the best in industry, which gives you a competitive advantage over your competitors? Are those systems operated and maintained by employees who have a good working knowledge to maximize production and performance? I encourage you to witness a few TDOT certified DBEs who are using innovative technology which gives their company a competitive advantage within their respective industry. Be sure to attend the DBE Panel Discussion session Tuesday August 29th

during the 2017 TDOT DBE Small Business Annual Meeting.

Processes (Policies & Procedures)

Nashville International Airport serviced approximately 13 million customers in 2016 without any major incidents. I conclude BNA has well documented processes to ensure maximum system performance and to promote

customer safety. Additionally, I believe those processes are regularly reviewed for applicability and communicated to all employees.

Are your company policies and procedures current and accessible to all employees? Is there a process in place for periodic reviews and immediate updates when a system and/or process has changed? Policies and procedures should be designed to promote operational efficiency, accountability, consistency and internal control. Good internal controls can create profitability thru accountability.

As business owners, we must continuously evaluate our company's People-Systems-Processes for they are the Pathway to Success!



TDOT PREQUALIFICATION OF CONTRACTORS



The purpose of prequalification is for TDOT to determine the ability and qualifications of prospective bidders and subcontractors to perform contracts or subcontracts related to the construction, improvement and/or maintenance on TDOT-related projects.

All prospective bidders or proposers (construction contractors and consultant engineers) must be prequalified by, and in good standing with, TDOT prior to the issuance of a proposal form. All prospective subcontractors must be prequalified by, and in good standing with, TDOT prior to being approved as a subcontractor. Additionally, businesses must be registered with the Tennessee Secretary of State, in good standing/active status, and

have a valid Certificate of Existence/ Authorization (Link - www.tn.gov/sos/bus_svc/index.htm)

To apply for prequalification, an applicant must complete and submit a prequalification application.

For Construction Contractors: (www.tn.gov/tdot/topic/construction-contractor-prequalification) Link to the TDOT Prequalification Office.

A state of Tennessee Contractor License is required prior to contracting whenever the total cost of the project is \$25,000 or more. This requirement is for all PRIMES, except mowing and litter removal Contractors. (<http://www.tn.gov/commerce/topic/contractors>)

For Consultant Engineers: (www.tn.gov/tdot/article/consultantinfo-forms) Link to the TDOT Prequalification Office.

The application must be hand delivered or mailed by certified overnight or other mailing whereby the date of receipt can be verified.

For more information on TDOT Prequalification, contact DBE Supportive Services toll free 1.888.385.9022 or email DBE_Supportive_Services@tyler-engineers.com.

Victor C. Tyler, P.E., M.ASCE, NSPE
Construction Business Management Expert



2017 TDOT DBE Small Business Annual Meeting



The Pathway to Success

Sponsored by the
Tennessee Department of Transportation
Civil Rights Division Small Business Development Program

August 28 & 29, 2017
Embassy Suites by HILTON
Franklin/Cool Springs, TN

There is no substitute for live, in-person attendance at small business events. The main reason to attend these small business with events is that they are relevant to your business. Besides, it's a great way to take a break from your business with a welcome change of scenery in Franklin, Tennessee.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND: Attendance is open to anyone, including: DBEs, Small Businesses, Large Businesses, Prime Contractors, Consultants, DOT employees, Local and State Procurement Agencies, Vendors, Small Business Advocates, and other interested small business stakeholders and DOT Supportive Services providers.

Be sure to bring your brochures, business cards, and capability statements.

REGISTER BY AUGUST 18, 2017

Make Plans Now To Attend!

For more information click here: www.tylerengineers.com/meeting



turned up two apps that stand out in a world of information management and note taking. You may have heard of them: Evernote and OneNote.

Evernote is just what the name implies: an application that serves as your notetaker, PDA, pocket notebook, to-do list, etc. (<https://evernote.com/>)

OneNote is a Microsoft computer program used for free-form information gathering and multi-



user collaboration. It gathers users' notes (handwritten or typed), drawings, screen clippings and audio commentaries. (<https://www.onenote.com/>)

The beauty of both apps is they sync automatically across all your devices, and across all your operating systems. So, are you ready for a tech makeover? Just thinking of a tech-makeover can be a frightening thought. Why not let the DBE Supportive Services Consultants do an App assessment of your office technology? E-mail your questions or requests to DBE_Supportive_Services@tyler-engineers.com

There is an App for you too!!

Jay B. Mercer,
QuickBooks Pro-Advisor & Tax Specialist

The technology for Small to Midsize Businesses (SMB) is rapidly changing and expanding. Quite literally with tech innovations and expansions, it is causing an information overload among SMBs. As a business owner how do you manage your information overload?

When considering a solution to manage your information overload or daily task management, consider the following questions:

Where do you currently store all business or personal information (i.e. daily activities, e-mails passwords, business cards)?

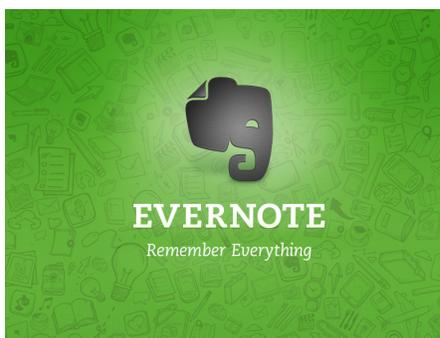
Where is your information located and how quickly can you retrieve and use this information at a later date (is it on paper, digital or in your head)?

How do you share this information with others (family, friends, co-workers)?

So how would you master your information flow while saving time and money? The solution comes when you can create and store your information in one location with easy access. Think of all the emails, word documents, and PDF files,

sitting on your computer. Think of the time you spend searching for that information you know is located in a folder somewhere. If only you could remember the file name or key words. What about that business card you remember getting but can't remember where you put it? There has to be a better way!

Well, there is an app for that. Apps are replacing sticky notes and the paper chase. Apps allow you to create and store your information in one place with the ability to access from anywhere. Searching for your information is almost magic



like. Whether you are in the office or on the go, you can access your information from your computer or mobile device.

Our research "for a better way"



New DBEs *Welcome*

Region 1

Roadway Solutions, LLC
Kristie C. Cavin
Guardrail Construction

Saber Steel, LLC
Keiven Wright
Rolled Steel Shape Manufacturing;
Fabricated Structural Metal Manufacturing

Region 2

N/A

Region 3

N/A

Region 4

N/A

Recently Renewed Firms

Region 1

The Bingham Group, Inc.
Lisa Bingham
Marketing Consulting Services, Graphic
Design and Television Production

ELC & Company, Inc.
Ellen L. Clifton
Hauling

Intuitive Technologies, Inc.
Susan Dakak
Underwater Inspections, Pipeline
Inspections

Siler Excavating, LLC
Tammy Siler
Highway, Street, and Bridge Construction,
Poured Concrete Foundation and Structure
Contractors, Site Preparation Contractors,
General Freight Trucking (Local),
Landscaping Services

Region 2

C.J. Enterprises
Carolyn G. Jones
Records and Information Management,
Administrative Services, Web Services,
Record Management Training, General
Management Consulting Services, Other
Management Consulting Services, And All
Other Business Support Services

Earthworx, LLC
Dixon Brackett
Surveying and Engineering

**Professional Concrete Finishing
Company, Inc.**
Ivan Toney, Jr.
General contracting curb gutter driveways
inlets concrete finishing

TKM, Inc.
Tammie K. Melton
Landscaping, Sodding, Seeding, Traffic
Control and Erosion Control

Region 3

Booker Engineering, Inc.
Brenda Booker
Engineering

GISbiz, Inc.
Babu Krishnasamy
Information Technology Consulting,
Software Application Development and
Geographic Information Services Consulting

**One Erosion Control & Stabilization,
Inc.**
Kelsea D. Friend
Erosion Control-Installation of Sediment
Barriers Including Silt Fence and Various
Other Stabilization Methods Structural Steel

Vorioe Products, LLC
George James
Traffic Control, Sales, and Service, Supplier
of Commercial and Industrial Products

Region 4

Brighter Days and Nites, Inc.
Dorothy Sinclair
Electrical Contractors; Wholesale Electrical
Supplies; Metal Merchant Wholesaler;
Plumbing and Heating Equipment and
Supplies Merchant Wholesaler

Construction Warehouse, Inc.
Bonnie Holmes
Sale of Construction Materials and Supplies

L.S. Sipp Construction Company
Lawson Sipp
Concrete (curb, gutter, driveways,
sidewalks, inlets, catchbasins, manholes,
and concrete paving)

Toles and Associates, Inc.
James Toles
Consultant Engineers: Civil, Structural,
Transportation and Surveying



TDOT
Department of
Transportation

**Scheduled
Letting Dates
2017**

August 18, October 6,
December 8

TDOT DBE Supportive Services

**BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

BUSINESS ASSISTANCE

- Business Planning
- Financial Analysis
- Leadership Development
- Business Coaching

ONE-ON-ONE TRAINING

- Strategic Marketing
- Accounting Software
- Construction Accounting
- Bidding & Estimating
- Project Management
- Contracts & Specifications
- Construction Plan Reading
- Project Controls

“Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved.”

– Helen Keller

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