

# Creating a Theme for SUCCESS



Creating the right theme for your company can help you grow your business and your team — and your bottom line.

BY MARK RICHARDSON

**B**ack in the 1990s, there was a popular television show titled *Ally McBeal*. This show was created around a young attorney who was smart, funny and creative in both her law practice and her everyday life.

One of my memories of her creativeness was that she and some of the other characters on the show had theme songs that they would play in their heads as they were walking down the street or while they were doing other routine tasks.

These were personal songs to motivate themselves and create balance in an otherwise crazy world (sort of like the *Rocky* movie theme song). I remember at the time thinking this was great way to motivate and create a focused clarity and could be a relevant approach to be used in business.

## CREATING AN ANNUAL THEME

So, like many things that we translate from our life experiences into business, we began developing business themes for each year to help create a focal point for our team.

What is the purpose of the theme? What do you need to consider when you are crafting your theme? Here are a few things to consider:

- A theme articulates what's most important.
- A theme gives focus and direction.
- A theme creates alignment.
- A theme is a rallying cry.
- A theme is also a vehicle to measure.

## INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL BENEFITS

Themes can be beneficial both internally and externally. While themes are generally meaningful to the individual employees and team members and companies, they really can communicate to others outside of your

company (i.e., wholesale customers, distributors and even consumers).

Here are just a few examples of annual themes that you might want to have on your radar if you want to start brainstorming for your own theme:

- Exceed expectations
- Listen / Learn / Respond
- 1 + 1 = 3
- People are our greatest assets
- Failure is not an option
- Focus on excellence
- Aggressive but realistic
- Growth creates opportunities for all
- Take it to the next level
- The future is now
- Own it

An annual theme does require some consideration and contemplation, so don't just grab one of the above examples. It needs to be well thought out. How does it apply to your company? How can it be implemented company-wide? How will it impact your employees?

Here are just a few of the elements that make up a good annual business theme:

- An annual theme needs to be relevant to that year.
- An annual theme needs to touch everyone in the business.
- An annual theme is meaningless without buy-in and acceptance.
- An annual theme is important (and maybe critical) as you grow and expand the business.
- An annual theme needs to become a daily mantra for you.
- A good annual theme generally lives well beyond that year.

## STARTING THE PROCESS

For most of you that don't have an annual theme, the development process is important ... and it is relatively simple.

- 1) Ask yourself, "What is most important this year?"
- 2) Ask others in your business what they think is most important this year.
- 3) Begin to brainstorm words (or find quotes or adages) that reflect this priority ... keep it simple.
- 4) Try to unpack the theme to make sure it touches everyone or it is something that everyone should care about.
- 5) Begin to test the water in staff meetings or team talks.
- 6) Communicate and explain it in a way that everyone on the team understands.
- 7) Don't keep it a secret. Sing (not literally) the theme at every opportunity in many creative ways.

In closing, while this may be a little strange and uncomfortable for some, it really helps create a laser focus, the right energy, and the motivation to take your business to the next level and see the success that you yearn for.

So, what is your theme for this year? ■

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