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RAP Isn't Just a Style of Music - It's a Key Online CRM Acronym

Online CRM in the Hood

Longterm readers of this blog know that I've been on a business acronym kick lately. Here's one of my more recent posts on a few of them that leaders and managers should learn or get a refresher on to do better in getting employees engaged, as a means to boost their commitment and productivity, and ultimately company profits.

This week has been one of intensive customer service on the part of Winning Workplaces to the finalists of our 2011 Top Small Company Workplaces award with Inc. Magazine. The team at our Chicago area headquarters has been busy interacting with our contacts at these firms – CEOs or others who completed our online application last month – to help administer a short survey to all their employees. My role, from my LA home office, has been to manage their staff lists in the excellent survey tool we're using, Qualtrics (not an affiliate link), and send the survey to them and ensure receipt so we get a high level of responses. Our final panel of judges will rely on this, in part, when they meet next month to determine the winners that will appear in the magazine in June (see our entire 2011 award process here).

My one-on-one interaction over email with our employee survey contacts/coordinators at the finalist companies has brought me back to a point earlier in my career when I helped manage the customer service department of a healthcare association. Putting both experiences together, I realized that there are three qualities I've striven for that have translated to better customer relationship management (CRM) and satisfaction. Together they make for another, easy-to-remember acronym: RAP. Here's what this stands for:

- **Responsive.** I've noticed that one of the ways in which successful small businesses compete in today's tough marketplace on quality rather than price is to simply be faster at responding to customers' and potential customers' questions than their competitors. OK, I know this is not always so "simple," but this is where a workplace culture of frequent, strong communication can make [Buy cheap Cialis Online](#) a big impact. Combine that with purposeful, systemic employee leadership development practices, and there's no reason that small firms can't compete with the biggest brands out there.
- **Articulate.** I've seen quite a few articles that make the case – rightly – that website content which is well written (grammatically sound with no spelling errors), can make for a huge competitive advantage versus competitors' page info. The same is true – maybe even more so – for email responses to customers and prospective purchasers. I have plenty of firsthand experience with employees at vendors (software providers especially) who have littered their replies to my questions with misspellings and typos. Sure, in some cases they might have won the "speed game" and gotten back to me sooner. But because in these cases they didn't seem to take much care with their answer, sometimes I've come away questioning the company's expertise. My point is, while speed certainly matters, you *can* hire folks who can be fast *and* articulate (this is something that can be tested quantitatively in your recruiting process).
- **Polite.** Tone is important in your inter-office emails, and it is even more vital to the capture of repeat business and referrals when dealing with customers and potential customers over email. Hiring for attitude and fit can go a long way toward ensuring your external communications are politely worded, but specifically training for this – especially in your customer service/support, sales, and marketing areas – can seal the deal, as they say. The latter means reinforcing the notion that professional actors live by: personal drama ceases to exist once you step onto the stage.

What are your workplace engagement practices when it comes to delivering great service via email that can't be duplicated by your peers?

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