

# The Leave No Employee Behind Act

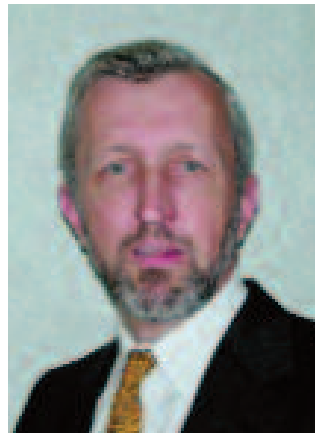
**T**he hardest part of making any business run successfully is finding and retaining the right people. It's a common refrain in business journals, how-to books, newspapers, and magazines. Based on the volume of calls we receive in our offices from people looking to hire great salespeople, superlative managers, and inspired marketing types, it's also a major issue in this industry.

As they review the results of their sales staff, it's not uncommon for a retailer to point to a star performer and exclaim, "If I could clone him or her, I could fire everyone else, do twice as much business, and make twice as much money." The industry's suppliers have similar reactions when they survey the performance of their dealer network. Citing a single outstanding performer, they frequently declare, "Ten more like him and I wouldn't need anybody else."

Are these exceptional performers born or made? We would suggest that it's a combination of both factors. Some are born with innate skills and talents that no amount of training can duplicate. Think of Tiger Woods and Michael Phelps. But for the vast range of people who fall closer to the middle of the bell curve, some strategic training can be the difference between adequate and excellent performance.

The current administration has proposed spending a few \$100 billion to enhance America's educational system. Maybe at some point these efforts will achieve tangible results in the form of a more skilled and intellectually facile workforce. The economist John Maynard Keynes famously remarked, "In the long run we are all dead." For those looking for a more timely (and less costly) program for ratcheting up the expertise of their staff, we offer the following suggestion: make reading trade magazines, especially this one, which contains a numeric snapshot of industry sales volume and corporate performance, a mandatory part of the job.

As a publisher of a trade magazine, we can hardly profess a lack of self interest in offering up this prescription. However, we seized on this idea after encountering it in *The Six Fundamentals of Success*, a *Wall Street Journal* best-seller penned by Stuart Levine, retired CEO of Dale Carnegie Associates. In a tightly written treatise on how to advance your career, Levine observes, "Adding value to an organization means you increase its worth and its capacity to serve its customers. And if you add value, you'll be more valuable to the company"—and earn greater respect, compensation, and job security along the way. Top among



Levine's suggestions for how to add more value to your company is "Know your industry." He writes, "Know your industry and your company's position in it. Read your industry's trade publications even if you have to borrow your boss's copy."

If you want to better understand the larger trends shaping the industry, as well as the rankings of the top sup-

pliers, there is no single resource that compares with this magazine's Music Industry Census issue. Want to know what segments of the guitar business are growing or shrinking? Or how shifting technology is remaking the product mix in the recording market? Or why certain segments of the band instrument industry are almost recession-resistant? The answers begin on page 70.

For salespeople in particular, knowledge inspires customer confidence, and customer confidence leads to more sales. The common trait linking the best salespeople in every segment of the industry is a thorough knowledge of the industry. With a comprehensive analysis of market trends and consumer tastes, this single issue contains the information that will enable anyone to speak with authority about the state of the industry. (Company brokers and private equity firms have used this data to persuade investors and bankers to part with millions, so it's a cinch that it can help the average retail salesperson to close a few more sales.) It's particularly important in the music business, given the fact that salespeople are continually called on to debunk all sorts of crazy misinformation that gets tossed around.

Sharpening your industry understanding by reading *The Music Trades* won't turn everyone into the next superstar. But it will provide a measurable performance improvement that, given the current economic climate, is more important than ever.

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