

Growth Tools

Technology can't replace the basics

Today's technology gives you too much data and not enough common sense. Get away from those computers, and go where the action is, and that is where your customers are.

The following are areas to watch each and every day:

- Track sales calls. The



SALES

Hal Becker

more calls you make to existing customers to check their "real" level of satisfaction with your company, the more customers you will retain. Next, the more new business calls

you make to find additional sales, the more revenue you will generate. You do not need a bunch of graphs for this, just a few raw numbers to follow.

• Track true decision-makers. Too many companies selling business to business have really poor customer lists. You need to have the right person or decision-maker to sell to and, more important, to stay in touch with after the sale to check his or her satisfaction of doing business with you.

• Track prospects. The prospect list is just as important. If you want a salesperson to make new business calls, give him or her solid information first.

• Inspect the numbers weekly. Too many companies have meetings at the end of the month when stuff already happened. Inspect the numbers each week to see the progress of your salespeople.

• Train your people. Train them how to sell, not just what to sell. Too many companies spend too much time training product knowledge and very little time on sales skills.

HAL BECKER is an author and trainer in sales and customer service. Reach him at halbecker.com.

| ENTREPRENEUR |

Changes on the menu

Omni Career Search



W. MARC BERNSAU | BUSINESS JOURNAL

Michael Minichello, Mike White and Tab Glass say Omni Career Search's expansion provided the impetus to revamp the firm's structure.

Staffing firm finds a complementary addition to its service lines in restaurant division

BY SEAN MCFADDEN
JOURNAL STAFF

It's a classic case of an entrepreneur recognizing a market opportunity and running with it.

When **Tab Glass** brought on **Mike White** as a business partner at Norwell-based staffing firm **Omni Career Search** in 2002, it was with the intent to roll out a new division of the firm — one that was focused on high-touch permanent placement services for the restaurant industry.

Mike White presented the impetus. A veteran of the industry, whose professional experience had included operational roles with **T.G.I. Friday's** and **The Ground Round**, White said he had often dealt with recruiting firms he felt didn't really take the time to properly screen the candidates they were placing or to understand a restaurant's concept.

"I knew there was a niche market for this," said White, 44, who was officially appointed

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Growth chart

Name: Omni Career Search
Business: Staffing services
Location: Norwell
Founded: 1981
Revenue: \$1.3 million
Principals: Mike White, Tab Glass, Michael Minichello

| LESSONS LEARNED |

What have you had to 'unlearn' in order to grow your business?



Julie Sherman
J. Sherman Studio

My habit of saying yes to everyone. In order to build J Sherman Studio's brand, develop long-term client relationships and do excellent work, I had to learn how to say no, selectively.



Jill Cartwright
Go GaGa

Bootstrapping. Although important when I started the business, it prevented us from growing. By investing in people and product development instead of doing everything as cheaply as possible, we've tripled sales in the past year.



Brian Murphy
Unicorn Realty

That merely offering good space at a good price is enough; I realize that we are also a stakeholder in our tenants' success, and so we have boosted our "value add" to tenants by offering partnership-focused initiatives including a series of business-related educational seminars.

* **Next week's Lesson Learned:** Who has been absolutely essential in getting your business where it is today? Send your answer in 25-30 words to cmahoney@bizjournals.com. Be sure to include a high-resolution headshot.

The family business: It doesn't have to be 'just' a job

One of the strangest ideas that sometimes develop within and around families in business is the notion that working in the family company is a job, even a life-long job, but never a career. It's a faulty distinction that keeps some very capable young people from pursuing what could be rich, rewarding careers in their families' businesses, where they would bring new talent and energy to carrying forward the business and the family legacy.

Where does the notion come from? Some people think of family businesses as soft on incoming family members, little more than safe havens for the unmotivated or the incompetent. "John went to work for his father, so I guess he couldn't cut it in the real world." It's understandable that John doesn't want to be characterized as a no-career flop by his peers — especially if he chose to join his family's company over a lot of other attractive options.

In addition to those benighted ones who have the idea that getting into your family's business is a breeze are those who imagine that succeeding there is a bed of roses. The truth is that there can be as many thorns as blossoms in dealing with family relationships — even positive ones — while you're running a business. Doing both things well is as good a measure of career success as we're likely to find.

In his book "The Art of Leadership, The Science of Management," John Aluisse identifies four distinct career stages: apprentice, independent contributor,



FAMILY BUSINESS

James
Lea

mentor and director. His four stages remind me of the process that young people go through in developing into executives and leaders of their family-owned companies.

Apprenticeship is an important part of getting prepared to lead the family business. A real apprenticeship is not the old "start at the end of a broom and work your way up to the CEO's office" formula for getting to know the business. It's a thoughtfully structured and supervised education in all the important aspects of how the industry in general — and this family company in particular — operates. As in any career field, the apprentice in his or her family's company learns the basic skills and knowledge needed to work toward leadership.

Aluisse's next career stage is the independent contributor, the rising star who has passed through apprenticeship and is now a valuable member of the company team. This is the capable and committed prospective family executive who has legitimately earned a slot as division head or other middle-to-upper-level manager. In a well-managed company, the young family member at the independent contributor career stage is being groomed for bigger things.

At the mentor stage, the rising family executive is able to understand, define and convey to others the philosophy, mission, values and other elements of character that make his or her family's company unique in the industry. The family business mentor is a repository of the family's business heritage and many times is responsible for keeping that heritage alive and passing it along.

Finally, says Aluisse, career achievement brings the business professional to the stage of director, the most influential position in the company. In the family business, this is an acknowledged and respected role, often in both the business and the family, although not necessarily as the chief executive. There is a director in every family-owned company, and the family member who occupies the position has reached a career pinnacle.

Webster suggests (although not in so many words, of course) that one way to define "career" is by the specialized preparation and exacting performance requirements of any vocational field. It's hard to think of a vocational endeavor with greater or more diverse performance requirements or more need for specialized preparation than working into, and upward toward the top of, your family's business. Now that's a career.

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OMNI: Business expansion prompts needed structural changes

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CEO of Omni in 2005.

Omni's core business since its inception as South Shore Personnel in 1981 has been the temporary and permanent placement of staff in office support, light industrial, manufacturing and warehouse positions for a variety of industries. The expansion of its business model with the restaurant division had the added benefit of bringing some much-needed structure to the organization, according to the principals.

"The company wouldn't be what it is today without it," said Glass, 39.

White added that launching the new division prompted the company to create a Web site and a more organized electronic database of candidates, improve its marketing strategies, provide support for sales, outsource its payroll, and upgrade its billing system and the office in general.

A couple of years ago, the principals estimated all facets of the restaurant division contributed about 40 percent of Omni's total revenue. Last year, that dipped to 30 percent, with the other 70 percent coming from their traditional office support/light industrial temporary division.

"Some years, the business probably would have gone belly up if it weren't for the restaurant division. But, right now, the temp division is definitely driving the bus," said Glass. "They really do complement each other from a cash flow standpoint."

Total revenue for the company, which has five full-time staff members, was \$1.3 million in 2009, up from \$900,000 in 2008. For this year, the principals are projecting \$1.4 million.

The office support/light industrial temporary division, whose clients include **Zildjian Co.**, **Grossman's Bargain Outlet** and **Brady Enterprises Inc.**, supplies anywhere from 50 to 90 temps daily in Massachusetts, said Glass, who heads up that division.

On the restaurant side, Omni filled 39 permanent positions last year, including executive chefs, general managers and CFOs. So far this year, it's already filled nine positions, as compared with five last year at this time.

Based on what he's observed recently, **Peter Christie**, president of the **Massachusetts Restaurant Association**, said the industry has most likely turned a corner.

"I think the industry had really gotten down to bare bones with its staffing over the last few years. And now, we are starting to gear up again — but we're doing it with great caution," he said.

Omni's restaurant clients include both chains and independent operations, such as **Bertucci's**, **Au Bon Pain** and **Barrett Restaurant Group**, which owns **The Charlie Horse** and **Abington Ale House & Grille**.

Client **Richard Vellante**, executive chef and executive vice president of restaurants for Boston-based **Legal Sea Foods**, said, "They've been very quick and responsive to find the right individuals,

based on our needs. They'll spend the time to perform the necessary due diligence."

As part of its strategy to grow this segment, Omni's restaurant division is now providing temporary placement services.

A key driver of that growth will be **Michael Minichello**, who was brought on as a third partner last November and serves as the restaurant division's president. Minichello, who was formerly a client of Omni's, previously served as director of human resources for **Not Your Average Joe's** and director of recruitment at **Legal Seafoods**.

"To get somebody with the type of experience Michael has is a huge home-run for us," White said.

Equally key is that the division has diversified its services over the years.

It offers financial and sales strategy consulting services. It also offers a loss prevention, or "integrity shop," program, as it's known, in which an Omni staff member will monitor the activity within a restaurant to ensure that there aren't any loopholes in the operation. Additionally, there is the "mystery shop," which evaluates how a restaurant serves a patron throughout the entire dining experience. The business engages 63 outside "shoppers," who have a minimum of three years of restaurant industry experience.

For the shop programs, Omni has invested in a Web-based program that, White said, enables any Microsoft Windows-based phone to operate the

software. It also enables reports to be distributed in real time, so that the recipient will receive immediate feedback on a staff member. Version 3 of the program, which will allow clients to see how they're performing against their competition, will be rolled out in the second quarter.

Omni next plans to launch a management company for restaurants. The principals said they are currently in negotiations with a "prominent local restaurateur" for that service.

Said Minichello, 42, "The potential is to create an entirely new line of business for us and an entirely new revenue source."

Reinvention has, in fact, been a consistent characteristic of the company.

Glass' mother, **Linda**, purchased the business, then known as South Shore Personnel, from original owner **Paul Verrochi** in 1987. Glass took over ownership from his mother 10 years later and changed the name to Omni Personnel. After White came on as a partner in 2002, the company was incorporated as **Omni Restaurant Search Inc.**, doing business as **Omni Career Search**.

In a competitive marketplace for its services, the partners said they've strived for constant attention to detail and follow-through with their customers. "We're looking to build long-term relationships, not just supply bodies," White said.

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