

frank talk

Now is the time for housewares industry leaders to step forward with big ideas to help guide our industry down new, exciting and profitable paths to tomorrow.

Overall, our industry has fared well through the latest business downturn. Certainly, we had our share of store closures and manufacturers who went out of business or had significant layoffs. But, as soon as any good news has surfaced, the consumer has come back to the stores buying cookware, cutlery and kitchen electrics.

“Leadership: the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it.”

—Dwight D. Eisenhower

While we may not be happy with the speed and scope of the rebound, overall, we have been getting through it with the support of the American consumer who has gone through a major ideological transformation in how they perceive the housewares products we create, market and sell.

Who would have ever believed that the consumer would embrace so many of our industry's products, not just as helpers to make daily chores easier, but as a “hobby.” Cooking has become a form of entertainment for consumers who invest time and money shopping for the perfect knife or pan to help them become better home chefs and to raise their cooking game to a higher level.

“Leadership is not magnetic personality— that can just as well be a glib tongue. Leadership is lifting a person's vision to higher sights, the raising of a person's performance to a higher standard.”

—Peter F. Drucker

“Our industry today needs great leaders to seize these opportunities and create fresh ideas, innovative products, new merchandising strategies and creative marketing.”

by Frank Brady



Lessons In Leadership

now is the time to seize opportunities

Our industry is helping to make tomorrow's chefs confident today.

We have also been beneficiaries of a whole new level of technology that most could not have imagined a few short years ago. Today consumers are being brought to our doorstep through television cooking channels, Twitter, Facebook, culinary websites or mail order catalogs, all filled with recipes and great food shots. All of which help make our products the star, showing them in use, demonstrating key benefits and building a demand that entices the consumer to seek out the best product to make them happy. We have gone from functional to fashionable in the blink of a marketer's eye.

With this kind of wind in our sails, our industry today needs great leaders to seize these opportunities and create fresh ideas, innovative products, new merchandising strategies and creative marketing programs. I meet with top people in manufacturing and retail almost every day. Many have

the title president or CEO but few can really be called leaders because too many remain focused on just numbers while leaving their team building skills at the front door.

We need leaders today who understand that the old adversarial way of managing the retailer-supplier relationship is a dead end and that listening, working together and challenging each other to do our best is the only strategy for future growth.

“Good leaders make people feel that they're at the very heart of things, not at the periphery. Everyone feels that he or she makes a difference to the success of the organization. When that happens people feel centered and that gives their work meaning.”

—Warren Bennis

In my experience, a boss provides the specifics on how to do a job. A leader provides vision and shows that great things can be done. As a leader and manager today, it is your responsibility to make sure each employee understands the company's goals and has clear objectives to achieve these goals. Good leaders keep employees informed and engaged while challenging them to achieve both tactical and strategic results. A leader has to be honest, clear and able sell their vision to others constantly.

Great leaders should:

- Know and understand their job and be clear on the objective of each employee that can help them get to where they want their business to go. Inspire a shared vision.
- Make clear, fast decisions based on the best intelligence available.
- Make sure their team is fully informed. Communication with their staff is crucial to building a team.
- Teach their entire staff how to work as a team. Emphasize team spirit and engage in activities that create team spirit.
- Empower others to act and support individual team player's decisions when individuals step out to help them lead.
- Give credit to others when business goes up. Take responsibility when business goes down.
- Set a great example with the highest integrity that includes respect for employees and customers.

Frank Brady has more than 30 years of experience in the gourmet housewares business as founder and CEO of Brady Marketing, a San Francisco-based sales and marketing company.