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CASE STUDY

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Tech provider focuses clients on needs, not wants

The bright side of being in the business of helping companies handle their technology is that everybody needs your services. The downside is there are lots of folks in your industry, says Cameron Plato.

So he's been on a mission to show how he's different. The key: Not just saying it, but actually going against the grain.

"It is the difference between selling someone something or helping them buy what they need," the president and CEO of Bedroc said. It requires "making that critical and core differentiation at a cultural level."

The Brentwood technology provider — until recently known as ICV Solutions Inc. — strives to challenge assumptions within its own industry, Plato said, starting with whom it hires and following through all the way to the client relationship. The company, which opened in 2009, has seen explosive growth, with 2010 revenue of \$5 million and a projected \$16 million for 2011.

So what basic assumptions does Bedroc challenge? Plato said much of his industry looks to provide the latest and greatest technology, and customers have come to expect that and nothing more. That's not enough to sat-

isfy Plato's vision for Bedroc, which currently has 30 employees and locations in the Nashville and Knoxville areas.

But good products, from data storage to wireless technology, he said, "should be expected." Bedroc sales people will tell clients if they don't need something — at the cost of frustrating a client or having a lower one-time commission — with a focus on measuring return on investment for new technology, Plato said.

Doing that effectively requires focusing on the plan in every manner possible. Plato said he hires people who fit this culture and compensates them differently, steering his employees away from the big-sale mentality that pushes the latest, but not necessarily best, product.

Next is making sure his people understand a client's business. From there it's relationship building, with an ability to be candid and show specific results, he said, on top of all the technological expertise necessary.

"It's very cliché to say people do business with people, but it's the honest to God's truth," he said.

— Brian Reisinger



Cameron Plato is president of Bedroc.

JAMES YATES | NASHVILLE BUSINESS JOURNAL

TOOLBOX

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SOCIAL MEDIA POLICIES VERSUS RIGHT TO PRIVACY

In today's technology-driven world, employers have productivity issues due to the social media distractions that chip away at employees' time. But what about an employee's right to privacy? The challenge is to find balance.

Social media guidelines should be part of the company computer usage policy. The policy, which includes multi-media, social networking websites and personal and professional blogs, should:

- Focus on what employees can do versus what they can't do.
- Reiterate the company's confidentiality provisions so Internet postings do not disclose protected information.
- Require employees to include a disclaimer on social media platforms.
- State that the company reserves the right to request certain subjects and posts be avoided or withdrawn.

However, there is a fine line between a social media policy that is broad enough to cover legitimate issues but does not infringe on



GUEST COLUMNIST
MATT DEVRIES

employee rights. Here are areas of caution:

- Avoid overly broad language and blanket restrictions that may encroach on employees' right to privacy.
- There are limits to off duty conduct that the employer can act upon.
- Carefully implement the policy and investigate computer usage. Train managers to monitor employee activity in an appropriate manner.
- Remember, an employer cannot terminate an employee based on age, religion, race, gender or disability — which may be learned through monitoring Facebook or Twitter.

Matt is a construction and employment lawyer with the Nashville office of Stites & Harbison PLLC.

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Top 5

WAYS TO BE A CHARACTER-DRIVEN COMPANY

The uncertain economy has many business leaders constantly poring over the financials and nixing every unnecessary expense. But have you taken a good hard look at the character of your company?

There are five rules that every employee, from the top of the corporate ladder on down, should follow to ensure that they have a rock-solid character:

- 1. Don't tell white lies.** Instructing your receptionist to tell a caller that you're out of the office when you really aren't is a reflection on your own character. White lies are still lies.
 - 2. Keep your commitments.** Cutting expenses is necessary and understandable, but breaking promises is not — even if it turns out to be more costly or inconvenient than you estimated.
 - 3. Go the second mile.** A common character flaw in leaders and their employees is that they do just enough to get by. Those who give just a little bit more of themselves will stand out.
 - 4. Don't give false impressions.** You have to be upfront and honest with those you work with, or you may lose your credibility.
 - 5. Reconcile and forgive immediately.** Resentment builds up when employees leave organizations, mistakes are made or when co-workers feel slighted. Suggest to your employees that they think about any hard feelings they may be harboring and encourage them to make amends.
- Dave Anderson, Learn to Lead, www.learntolead.com

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LESSONS LEARNED CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

You can spend millions of dollars on advertising and marketing, but if you don't solve your customers' problems, you will suffer bad publicity that will cost you millions more in the loss of potential customers.

No longer do you have the luxury of waiting a few days or a week to handle a customer's

complaint; you must do it within a matter of minutes. That means you must empower your frontline employees to do whatever it takes to satisfy your customers. If you don't, your sales, along with your chances of survival, will plummet.

— John Tschohl, Service Quality Institute, Minneapolis