

Growing Your Business Through Word of Mouth

Press Release

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[Amy's Ice Creams](#) in Austin, Texas, is beloved for two things: **the ice cream and the floor show**. They are the ice cream equivalent of Seattle's "flying fish." Ice cream scoops are thrown from one worker to another and caught in cups balanced on their chins . . . while standing on one foot . . . hopping. You'll see ice cream slingers sliding across the counters on their knees and bellies. It's a carnival ride in there.

Finding people who are fearless and creative enough to come up with stunts like flinging ice cream balls across a room just can't happen in the normal interview process. How exactly do you ask, "**Are you a little bit nuts?**" You can't. So, at Amy's, applicants receive a white paper bag. It must be brought back within a week turned into a creation that tells Amy's about who they are. From this white paper bag, Amy's finds the personalities to fill their shops.

Without the Right People, This Is Just Great Ice Cream

By using a plain white paper bag as its job application, Amy's gets to know the creative soul lurking within the teenaged candidate standing before them. This idea began with an applicant who was given the bag instead of the boilerplate job application because Amy's had run out of the forms. The applicant floated the bag back into the store with helium balloons; inside the bag were items about her life. She got the job. Now for all applicants, this is how Amy's fills their shops with people who make getting ice cream like going to the circus.

Revel in "Being Real"

The Amy's Ice Creams Web site says, "**Amy's looks at 'going out for ice cream' as a total sensory experience that can revitalize a less-than-stellar day.**" Part of the joy of going to their ice cream shops is wondering what kind of floor show you'll be greeted with. Getting the right people to work at Amy's has spurred their growth from a single location in 1984 to over 14 stores today. In 1984, Amy's sold 125,000 servings of ice cream. Now they sell well over 1 million a year, with gross annual sales exceeding \$5 million.

Like many beloved companies, Amy's Ice Creams doesn't advertise. Word of mouth builds the business, and Amy's redirects marketing money to community development, which fuels more word of mouth. Amy's represents the power of the small business owner and how service and exceptional experiences can build a small business. Amy's Ice Creams prospers because it revels in being real. Its employees revel in being their kooky, nutty selves—and people love it. This

translates to Amy's website, where the home page welcomes you with "Life is uncertain, eat dessert first!" Sound advice.

Go Try This

Get "real" in how you hire and bring people into your company

- First, define the core values of the people you want to fill your company.
- Next, determine the personality of your company. Are you serious and deliberate? Are you whimsical? (Have you thought about it?)

Next, examine your current hiring process:

- Are you deliberate about selecting people who will deliver your company's distinct personality to customers?
- How would your customers say you are doing?
- Do customers rave about how unique you are?
- Are you selecting "memory makers" or just filling slots?

Decide to be real:

- What's your version of a white paper bag you can use to select people who will become your company to your customers?

(article courtesy of SmallBizTrends)