

## **What's In A Job Title? Self-Esteem & Sky-Rocketing Sales - That's What!**

**By Barb Blashki**

Employees care about their job titles.

The job titles that you give your employees will greatly affect how they see themselves – and how others see and treat them too. Get their titles right and what follows is increased self-esteem, job satisfaction and productivity. Getting them wrong can have a dire effect - on your employees and on your business.

Recently I read an article, in The Age newspaper here in Melbourne, entitled “Job title inflation”. It wasn’t a particularly good article but it did get me thinking about how most small business employers and managers continue to underestimate the importance that we place on our job titles.

Think about it. When you meet someone for the first time it’s highly likely that one of the very first questions they will ask you is “What do you do for a job?” It will probably be one of the first questions you ask them too.

In today’s society we tend to unfairly judge people more by what they are than who they are. Knowing what someone does for a living helps us to somehow ‘categorize’ that person.

On more than one occasion, I have excitedly called a candidate in my database to tell them about a new opportunity that suited them perfectly, only to have them say – “yes, it sounds great but I hate the title, people might think I'd taken a step down.”

Even though the job suited them better than the one they had, and paid them more than they were currently being paid, they were prepared to miss it because of the title. That’s how important some people think their job titles is.

This has led to many companies giving their employees 'inflated' titles. The result? Titles have become meaningless. Can you tell the difference between a Sales Executive, an Account Executive, and an Account Manager? Or who is more senior out of a Principal Account Executive, a Senior Account Manager, a Major Accounts Director or a Vice-President Major Accounts?

It's time we all stepped back and took a fresh look at our job titles.

I think a job title should serve two purposes. It should help to convey what the employee does in the company, and it should boost the self-esteem of the employee.

**Really, they serve absolutely no other purpose.**

Once you look at them in that way, you can see that there is actually no need for them to be boring, formal or highly structured.

So, if you want a quick and easy way to boost morale and show your employees that you care about them – ask them what they would like their title to be – and then change it to whatever they want.

I once read about a brilliant example of this where a small grocery store adopted this philosophy and their 'Deli Manager' became their 'Deli Lama'.

The results of this exercise proved to be quite amazing. Their employees absolutely loved it, they became more motivated (and even came up with more ideas to improve morale), absenteeism rates dropped, employee turnover rates plummeted, word spread quickly throughout the local area (excellent word-of-mouth marketing), customers loved it – and sales sky-rocketed.

Now, I'm not suggesting for a moment that this exercise will sky-rocket sales for every business – but it can, and will, have an incredibly positive impact on your employees - and that can only ever be good for your business.

And, yes, you should re-think your title too. Consider this:

Lindsay Fox employs over 17,000 people in his privately owned Australian transport company LinFox. His business card (bright red and shaped like a truck) reads simply Lindsay E. Fox, truck driver.

Yahoo founders Jerry Yang and David Filo have the title of Chief Yahoos.

If you really want to show your employees that you see them as equals, as valued contributors to your business - dispensing with **your** superior sounding title would be a good place to start.

Be creative and let your employees be creative. Your 'Receptionist' may indeed become your 'Master of First Impressions' – and isn't that what they really are? Your 'Book-Keeper' or 'Accounts Clerk' may choose to become your 'Manager – Money In, Money Out' or 'Holder of The Purse Strings'. Which would you rather be?

Quirky titles can be particularly refreshing if you are in an industry where innovation and exuberance are rare – or difficult to communicate (think Accounting). By allowing your employees to have quirky job titles you are demonstrating to your customers, potential customers (and potential employees) that you are genuinely different – and offer a fresh approach.

A quick visit to [Brains on Fire](#) should inspire you - their motto suggests that you should take your corporate identity from tired to inspired and it might just re-ignite your passion for what you do for a living. I agree - and I think your title is a great place to start.

Be brave enough to be different if it helps your employees and your business.

And if every person who reads your business card smiles and asks about your 'unusual' job title – what an ice-breaker!

Quirky or not quirky, it matters not. What matters is that you give your employees the opportunity to have control over something that they usually have no control over.

You prove to them that you value their opinions and care about their self-esteem.

We all want to be proud of what we do – want to be proud of our job title – but few of us have the luxury of deciding what our job title will be – will you let your employees have the opportunity?

Bio – Online Leadership and Management Coach **Barb Blashki** devotes her working life to sharing her expertise in people management with small business owners and managers just like you. She publishes her [Keeping Good Company](#) e-newsletter fortnightly – full of free tips and advice. She is the author of various [books](#), [training programs](#), [home study courses](#) and [free leadership and management articles](#). Visit [www.barbblashki.com](http://www.barbblashki.com) for further details, a FREE subscription to [Keeping Good Company](#), a FREE [special report](#) and more [FREE reprint articles](#).