

# Top Ten Strategies for Boosting Small Biz Profits

By Bea Fields

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The art of leadership is best learned by doing and by observing real-life situations. These ten creative excursions will provide you and your team with practical insights essential for success both today and the future.

### 1. A Day Trip to The Sharper Image

The Sharper Image is a specialty retailer that is nationally and internationally renowned as a leading source of new, innovative, high-quality products that make life better and more enjoyable. Founder, Chairman, and CEO, Richard Thalheimer started this business 25 years ago with one goal in mind: to have fun! The Sharper Image is a company that thrives on special conveniences and innovative products that sit on the cutting edge of technology. This day trip is fantastic for stimulating creativity and becoming a forward thinker!

### 2. A Day Trip to the Gettysburg Battlefield

A visit to this historical Civil War battlefield in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, can be an empowering lesson in leadership. This day trip can be devoted to walking the historic site while evaluating the leadership decisions and structures that General Robert E. Lee struggled with over 140 years ago. Prior to this day trip, I recommend that those attending the trip read the book, "Leadership Lessons from the Civil War" by Tom Wheeler. It is an extraordinary book that takes a close look at the parallels between business and military strategy.

### 3. A Day Trip to ING Direct

With locations in New York City, NY, and Philadelphia, PA, ING Direct takes the "dull" out of banking. The facade is made of glass. On the inside are café tables and biscotti, Internet stations and mochas, and clients hanging out just for the fun of it. This innovative company invests the majority of its time, energy, and money in technology, marketing, and in making people feel proud about saving their money...and to make them feel that saving is a cool and hip thing to do. The website itself ([www.ingdirect.com](http://www.ingdirect.com)) is a wild and fun excursion, breaking away from the traditional and stepping way out on the edge. This day trip can create a lightning bolt effect for motivating your company to move to new levels of creativity and innovation.

#### 4. Carnegie Hall and the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra

The Orpheus Chamber Orchestra was conceived by cellist Julian Fifer and a group of fellow musicians in the 1970s. The Orpheus process is highly unique, for this is an orchestra with no conductor. In the absence of a conductor, the individual musicians of Orpheus must rely on one another for innovation and team building. The self-governing and leadership abilities have not only made Orpheus a group of highly gifted musicians, but has built a world which teaches those who observe them to understand that a CEO never has or should have all of the answers. Central to the collaborative process of Orpheus is the sharing and rotating of leadership roles. This unique approach unleashes the talent, vision, creativity, and the leadership of each and every member of the group. Observe this group carefully, and ask your team “What is it about this group that is so compelling? How can we use their system for our success?”

#### 5. A Week-End at Universal Studios (Orlando, FL; Hollywood, CA; Japan and Spain)

Are you having fun? I mean: ARE YOU REALLY HAVING FUN? If you are or are not, consider a journey through a week-end filled with fun, adventure, wonder, and WILD TIMES! Spend a few great days being a kid again with E.T. (the Extra-Terrestrial,) Men in Black, Jaws, Barney, and Nickelodeon. Why? In times when innovation is so crucial to success, we must challenge our teams to do the things we think we cannot do, are off-beat, or are seemingly crazy and wild to the rest of the world. Outdoor challenges involving fun, laughter and raw adventure can spark problem solving and teamwork and can be a fantastic approach for reducing stress and incorporating fun and laughter into the corporate setting.

#### 6. A Day Trip to NASA: The Kennedy Space Center

Want a little inspiration and motivation for building effective teams? By visiting the Kennedy Space Center, your team can witness how history and the future, nature and technology, young and old meet for an unforgettable and highly creative journey through space and time. The Kennedy Space Center tells a compelling story of how the United States built a space program that launched men to the moon and have orbited satellites that have improved our life on earth.

#### 7. A Day Trip to The Metropolitan Museum of Art

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, New York, has brought together thousands of works of art that display a full and extraordinary range of creativity which can enhance your team building efforts. See and hear a story of human deceit from “The Kitano Tnjn Engi Emaki,” a thirteenth century picture scroll. Open a discussion around the historic moment when General George Washington led the American revolutionary troops across the Delaware in “George Washington Crossing the Delaware.” Explore Korea’s distinctive cultural identity and the ways in which the arts of Korea have been affected by trade and diplomacy, by war and peace, and by religion and philosophy. This day trip is one that is filled with curiosity, creativity, and of seeing the perspective of people and cultures from around the world.

## 8. A Day Trip to NORDSTROM

Outstanding customer service and Nordstrom go hand in hand. Their innovative approach has allowed them to find out exactly what the customer wants and then gives this with grace and style. A family-owned business, Nordstrom considers their customers a part of their extended family, and the corporate culture supports and encourages salespeople to engage in intimate business dialogue and relationships with key vendors in each department. A visit to Nordstrom will teach you how to better respond to customer's needs so that they will come back to you again and again and will teach you the lessons of : valuing outstanding customer service, bonding with each and every customer, and giving people on the frontline the freedom to make decisions.

## 9. A Four-Day Hike on the Appalachian Trail

From Katahdin in Maine to Springer Mountain in Georgia, the Appalachian National Scenic Trail wanders the ridges and valleys of the Appalachian range for more than 2,168 miles. Those who have traveled this trek return feeling much more light- hearted, saying that they no longer sweat the small stuff in life. One of the biggest benefits of walking the Appalachian trail is that you and your team will learn adaptability, and you will begin to appreciate the people and things in life that you often take for granted. Many people report that even one week of hiking is a life changing experience. They realize that a fast pace of living and that money, prestige, and power are only surface deep...that the true beauty of life lies in the secrets of nature.

## 10. A Day of Brainstorming

A Super S.W.O.T. Session with a communications company is a great way to offer your company a highly creative day of brainstorming. This session should be a fast-paced, deeply probing session highly designed for your organization's best thinkers. Using easels, drawing pads, and other audio visuals, a great facilitator will keep the ideas flowing by asking you first to boil down your mission statement to ten words or less. From here, they focus on your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. These critical factors are listed, considered, and ranked to show you the three most significant factors in each S.W.O.T. category. The results are always revealing and often quite surprising. A session can require as little as three hours—on up to a full day.

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