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Recruitment Fundamentals

BY LEE FROSCHHEISER

“All Aboard!” Don’t you just wish that hiring new employees was that easy?

Unfortunately, it’s such a challenge today that in a recent national survey, over 30 percent of CEOs said up to half of their employees are a poor fit for the job. What’s more, putting the wrong person in the wrong position just to fill the vacancy can have dire consequences to your organization in terms of poor employee morale, low productivity and lost opportunities.

The good news is that companies can drastically improve their workforce quality by adopting a proactive mindset and consistently using the right hiring procedures. Of course every company is always looking for good people, but the employees who are considered “A” players are usually working elsewhere—and happily—so they’re less likely to be seeking greener pastures. So if your company’s recruiting strategy isn’t well developed, you’re basically hiring other companies’ “B” and “C” players. True, an occasional “A” player will walk through your door, but you’re more likely to find that elusive diamond through the establishment of solid, consistent recruitment processes.

A multi-layered, robust, recruiting process must be rooted in proactive versus reactive recruiting. In today’s world, many companies have the risky tendency of waiting until a job opening occurs to initiate an emergency job search—reactive recruiting at its worst! In a rush to fill the open position and lacking constant, solid recruiting procedures, the company is more likely to take a less qualified candidate or, in some cases, whoever shows up first.

Plan Ahead With Good Job Descriptions

Avoid such dire measures by establishing a very structured and systemized selection process well ahead of when your company actually needs it. This begins with writing a job description before the actual recruiting process.

A good job description includes: the job’s purpose, a detailed breakdown of responsibilities, to whom the new person will report, ways to measure the person’s effectiveness, the job’s vital factors, how the person will spend their time, their authority within

the company, and the required competencies, background and experience. The job description also drives your interviewing process and questions, as well as the employee’s training plan. What’s more, writing a job description before recruiting forces you to think through the position, the competencies of the person you need and becomes the blueprint for the success of the job and that person.

Determine the Interview Game Plan

Once you’ve attracted the top candidates, you need an interview game plan.

Considering what’s required and wanted in the new hire, what are you truly looking for in an ideal employee, and how do these attributes relate to what’s needed for the position? If given the opportunity, what competencies would your customers look for from your employee to serve their needs? Whatever these competencies are, the candidate you choose must have them.

Your interview plan must also include a robust selection process. This enables you to evaluate the potential hire in different ways. For example, you may need to conduct several interviews, and will want to do background check(s) at the very least.

Focus on Professional Development

After successfully hiring an employee, the next step in the recruitment process is to develop this person via ongoing coaching, training and planning that will enable his or her professional growth. Unfortunately, most companies have no structured on-boarding plan for new personnel. By solely focusing on bringing someone aboard, they forget to follow through with important ongoing training and development.

The first 90 days of employment are critical to the long-term success of the new employee. Therefore you should develop and implement a 90-day training plan to secure the employee’s place within the organization and facilitate his or her improvement. You can vary this training based upon the new employee’s level of experience with your existing systems. But it’s important to train this new hire on business practices, how your company functions and how these fit into the organization, too.

Key to the success of this 90-day training plan is using a mentoring team consisting of a peer, manager and support person. The mentoring team should meet at least monthly to give feedback to the new hire, ensure he or she has someone they can go to with questions, and enable their success at adhering to the 90-day training plan.

Establish Expectations Now

Also during this time, it’s critical to set clear, result-oriented goals. Why? Because setting these requirements will communicate company expectations and accountability for results, ensure that the new employee understands the company’s priorities, and, most importantly, measure whether he or she is the right person for the job. Once the employee successfully completes the first 90 days, you’ll need a six-months-to-one-year, personal-development plan to facilitate his or her advancement and growth.

Incorporate the Current Business Plan

Finally, do you have a well-developed, current business plan? From day one, such a plan helps new employees understand the company’s direction and the role they play in it. Based upon the business plan, your recent hire should also grasp the company’s vital factors—the unique set of critical elements that can either hold a company back or propel it to success. Each employee should be assigned personal vital factors that support the company vital factors—an exercise that creates that crucial strategic alignment within your organization.

Following these fundamental strategies is a sure way to onboard those “A” players and, more importantly, keep them aboard the company bus. With the right team in place, you’ll find it’s easier to retain those good workers, maintain strong company morale and meet your business’ goals. **PRO**

Lee Froschheiser, president and CEO of Map Consulting (MAP) and the co-author of “Vital Factors, The Secret to Transforming Your Business—And Your Life.” For more information visit www.MapConsulting.com or call 1-888-834-3040.

Make Your Business Stand Out

BY JAY FORTE

Everything has become a commodity; we find more inexpensive versions of the same things. Even though we know that new, different and distinct is what gets people's attention, most of our services and products look like what people expect or what have already been done. We are stuck in a pattern doing what we've always done. How do you keep your edge? How do you get remembered? How do you develop your Stand Out factor?

In Stand Out thinking, being different is key. The goal is to know what others do and insist on doing something better. We don't try to fit in; we separate ourselves because in a crowded marketplace fitting in is failing. As Tom Peters states, "In a busy marketplace, not standing out is the same as being invisible." If the point of being in business is to develop a loyal customer base—those customers who return and bring their friends, it is not going to happen by doing what others do. Regardless of the case, it is about getting noticed and being remembered. Standing out is about creating something original, exciting and dynamic.

Stand Out thinking starts with the permission to let yourself invent. This happens in an open and accepting environment. It happens when your workplace is diverse in both background and experience and when all employees are required to openly invent, think and participate in decision-making, and say what is on their minds. This is way to invite the new, the different and the great.

As we were herded into similar thinking, much of our ability to Stand Out was challenged, diminished or eliminated. Over time we became great at doing what others did. We learned to be okay with blending and fitting in. The good news is that we can relearn how to Stand Out.

To get back in touch with your Stand Out abilities first, learn to reconnect with your creative side. Over 90% of 5 year olds are creative, but only 5% of 13 year olds (and older) are creative. We have trained ourselves out of being creative. Train yourself back into creative thinking by learning how

to revisit a problem, issue or opportunity in the following ways:

Frame it differently. Make it a product, a hobby, an inanimate object, a cartoon, a food, a superhero, etc.

See it from another perspective: man, woman, child, minority, friend, enemy, teacher, employee, customer, affluent, poor, honest, greedy, etc.

Morph the problem by changing it to the best, worst, an object, a person, a policy, a fruit, a car, a game, etc.

Link it to an unrelated item to see the correlations; identify how it is similar, how it is different. This forces the brain to see connections it would normally ignore.

Use pictures to visualize the problem, issue or opportunity. How does the visual encourage different thinking?

View the problem as a color—what does it make you think of, how does the color offer a new perspective?

Brainstorm using the phrases, "What if?" "How about?" or "Just consider..."

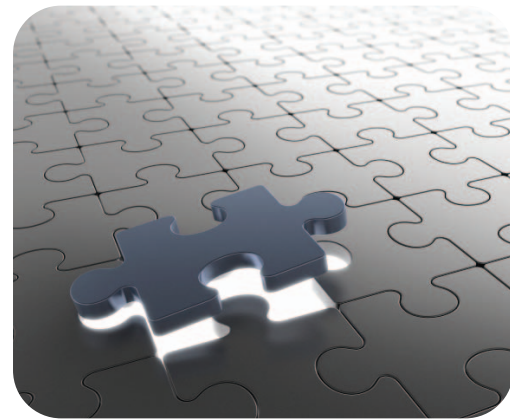
Use word association to generate ideas.

Write a headline, poem, obituary, news report or book title that relates to a business issue, event or other need. This forces a new perspective on the situation.

Build a culture of creative thinkers in your organization by allowing employees to invent and take calculated risks. Reward excellent failures; punish mediocre successes. Encourage greater thinking. If you are not failing every now and then, chances are you are not doing anything innovative. Visibly applaud creative efforts that focus on value, profits and customer service. Applaud employee reach and innovation.

Break a few rules. Identify the rules that do not add value for a customer, business or process. Challenge pattern thinking by constantly questioning everything. Be sure it is the best way to do something, respond or make a difference. If not, suggest a change. Stand out as an employee who focuses more on value than rules.

Invent a Creativity Zone—an area of the workplace that is committed to extraordinary thinking.



Invent the "Creativiteam"—a team assembled to generate ideas to solve an issue, invent something new, create an event, etc.

Require an idea a day from each employee. Create a new theme each week to direct employee thinking. Insure that the only requirement is that the idea must not look like what is already done.

Create an idea journal and add to it each day.

Organizations that openly encourage all employees to think, dream and invent, create the possibility of standing out. Service that stands out encourages customer loyalty. Workplaces that stand out encourage employee loyalty.

Remember the bad B's: bland, boring and blending as a way of going bust. To succeed, Stand Out. Think unique, valuable, exceptional and exclusive. Think success by focusing on what makes you different and distinct. Then help your employees show up to get it done, step up to do it right and Stand Out to be remembered. **PRO**

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Emotion-free Problem Analysis

BY FRANCIE DALTON



When problem solving gets to be as easy as swimming through molasses, it's not likely due to the intricacies of the problem itself, but to the emotions of the parties involved. This article describes five tools to help subordinate emotions to a process that eases and accelerates problem solving.

Identifying Components: Having articulated the problem to be solved, ask all relevant parties to identify what they see as major pieces of the problem. Avoid including causes or results of the problem; instead, list major pieces of the problem. Don't edit the inputs; just capture everything on flip chart paper. Suspend this process after about 15 minutes. No matter how many items are on the list, it's likely that they'll all tuck up under 3 to 5 "umbrella components," so restructure the list, keeping it visible to everyone, highlighting these umbrella components. Now decide which of these umbrella components you want to tackle first, and take it to the next step. (Ultimately, each umbrella component should be taken through the following steps, so you might consider breaking down into teams, with each team being assigned a different umbrella component.)

Causal Analysis: For each umbrella component, the next step is to identify causal factors. You'll need to identify both major causes (factors which directly cause the umbrella component); and minor causes (factors which cause a major cause). A common mistake here is the confusion of causes with examples. Ensure that the major causes you've identified are actually causes rather than examples of the umbrella component; then ensure the minor causes you've identified are actually causes, and not examples of, the major cause.

Now decide which major cause you want to tackle first, and take it to the next step. If you're using the team approach, each team can take a major causal factor to the next step.

Make it Worse: Looking at a single major cause with its attendant minor causes, choose only one minor cause. Write down as many reasonable ways in which this one minor cause could be inflamed or worsened. This produces solutions in disguise. Simply invert each negative statement into its positively stated opposite, and you have a group of solution statements.

Chances are you'll only have to do this with one or two minor causes to eliminate the entire major cause.

Pros and Cons: Select only one solution statement. Assume it's your responsibility to implement this solution, and list all currently existing resources that could facilitate implementation. Be careful not to include projected results of implementation; focus on pre-implementation—not post-implementation—and identify only that which exists right now to help you implement. Next, list all currently existing impediments that could thwart your implementation of this solution. Once again, be careful to stay focused on pre-implementation. This step reveals what can be utilized and what must be neutralized to enable the successful implementation of

your solution. You'll want to do this for each solution statement derived from step 3 above.

Implementation Plan: Having completed steps 1-4, writing an implementation plan is easy. A sound implementation plan has 5 sections: (a) what is to be done; (b) by whom; (c) when; such that (d) helpful resources identified above are utilized; and (e) potential impediments identified above have been neutralized. Do this for each solution statement derived from step 3 above.

Appropriate for really tough business problems, or for badly snarled relationship problems, the structured process suggested here helps keep emotion out of the problem solving initiative. Using these tools will hasten and heighten clarity of analysis, reveal opportunities for growth, and expedite the identification and implementation of sustainable solutions. **PRO**

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Limiting Beliefs that Hinder Success and How to Overcome Them

BY JAY ARTHUR

How many times have you gotten into a tough situation and done something dumb? Perhaps you even said to yourself, “Boy, I’ll never do that again.”

But then the next time you were in a similar situation, you did the same thing again. That’s a limiting belief.

Or how many times have you heard yourself say (to yourself or others), “I’m not good with money,” “I’ll never get the job I want,” “No one will ever want to be in a long-term relationship with me,” “I always screw things up,” or any sort of negative message? Those are limiting beliefs.

Most people have a limiting belief or two that slows or even halts their success. Unfortunately, the majority of people don’t know they have limiting beliefs. As such, they go along day after day doing and saying the same things over and over, all the while wondering why they never reach their goals.

The good news is that you can change your limiting beliefs. Yes, it will take some careful thought and work on your part, but achieving your life’s purpose and dreams is within your reach. You simply have to listen to what you’re telling yourself and recognize the situations you continually find yourself in.

The following strategies will help you identify your limiting beliefs and turn them around for good.

1. Recognize the most common limiting belief phrase. Limiting beliefs almost always begin with “I can’t because.” (Example: “I can’t find a good job because I never went to college.”) As soon as you say the word “because” you invoke a part of your brain that believes, “I have a reason.” That’s when you simply stop trying. So as long as you tell yourself that you can’t do something because, you never will.

2. Be aware of the five common limiting beliefs. It’s hopeless (Example: “I’ll never be able to start my own business because I don’t have the money to do so.”).

When you think something isn’t possible, you won’t even try to do it.

I’m helpless (Example: “I’ll never be rich because no one ever showed me how to manage money.”). When you don’t know how to do something or think a goal is too big, you start to feel helpless to your situation. As such, the weight of the goal or the steps involved seem too difficult, and you give up.

It’s useless (Example: “I shouldn’t even bother going back to school because I won’t make much more money with a degree than I do now.”). If something doesn’t seem desirable, you may view it as useless. But most events have both a short-term and long-term result. Only focusing on short-term results could cause you to miss an opportunity.

I’m blameless (Example: “I can’t get a better job because the economy is so bad.”) Blaming external events or situations is the easy and lazy way out. Interestingly though, once the current external event is over (such as the economy gets better), you quickly find something else to blame for your situation.

I’m worthless (Example: “I don’t deserve the job I really want because I’m not smart enough.”). Feeling worthless and undeserving puts the blinders on you. You fail to notice what you’re good at and consequently think you’re worthless.

3. Question your beliefs. Whatever your belief is or which phrase you’re using, question it. For example:

If you believe “It’s hopeless,” ask “How is it possible?”

If you believe “I’m helpless,” ask “What do I already know about it?”

If you believe “It’s useless,” ask “How is it desirable?”

If you believe “I’m blameless,” ask “How am I responsible?”

If you believe “I’m worthless,” ask “How do I deserve it?”

Since you likely see others living the life you want and achieving the things you

desire, you know that your goals are possible. Analyze what these role models do and copy them so you can make progress in changing your limiting beliefs.

4. Test your new thinking. Finally, take whatever belief you have and completely turn it around and test it. For example, suppose your limiting belief is “I can’t get the job I want because I never went to college.” You would test that by asking yourself, “How would not going to college make it even easier to get the job I want?” or “How would going to college make it difficult to get the job I want?” You may realize that many people never graduated from college but they’re worth millions or even billions of dollars and are passionate about their careers. If they didn’t graduate from college, how is it possible for them to get the job they wanted? Sometimes college makes you too stiff and rigid, and you can’t think broadly enough to get a better job or start your own company. So, in some respects, going to college may be a hindrance.

A New Belief, A New You

The goal of these three steps is to get your brain to notice your limiting beliefs and to see the other side of the beliefs. Often, just knowing your limiting beliefs and acknowledging the possibilities that exist within them is enough to change your thought process. The bottom line is that when you rid yourself of limiting beliefs, anything you want in life becomes possible. So, take the time to complete these steps today. By doing so, you’ll be able to attain all your personal and professional goals. **PRO**

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Build Team Performance One Employee at a Time

BY JOE TAKASH



People are complex. If you've ever taken a personality assessment test, you know well we all have different propensities, values, drivers, and motivations. As managers how can you get the most out people in the workplace? What are ways you create cohesiveness and trust? How can you bring dynamic solutions to problem situations?

One highly controllable component is to have individual meetings. They allow you to connect with your employees and build a stronger team, one person at a time. If you justify not holding individual meetings because of your hectic travel schedule or feel constrained because of a large staff, than you're not the leader you think you are. Test your mettle against the steps below to see if there's a nugget or two of wisdom that might help.

Step One: Designate time on your calendar. As much as I'd like to say have them at the same time every week or two, that is not always realistic. However, the designation of time and commitment to schedules can instantly build morale and loyalty. Designating time to your staff should be as important as a client presentation. By booking it on your calendar regularly, you can learn, teach and mutually benefit in a non-distracted atmosphere.

Step Two: Be mutually prepared. To save time and increase productive outcomes, be certain both parties have submitted their intended discussion points and outcomes prior to individual meetings via an email or quick discussion. This is more than just an agenda—it involves objectives, updates, challenges, solutions, and walk-away duties. Having both parties submit this prior to the meeting keeps everyone in the game and allows both leader and team member to be accountable.

As the meeting begins, be sure both parties have the agreed-upon checklist to follow so your schedule is tight and results-focused. It also makes sense to clarify what

was exchanged at the beginning of each meeting, so you are both aligned with a roadmap. This framing can allow for quick additions or adjustments.

Step Three: Make personal connections every few meetings. All too often, the only issues discussed in group and individual meetings are processes, procedures and quotas. Understandably, it is, in fact, a business meeting. But you're meeting with people who are driven by personal goals, values and passions. What if occasionally you asked questions of a more personal nature such as "What are you motivated by?" "What's the biggest challenge you're facing?" "What can I do to help you bring your performance results to the best level?" "What are your aspirations or goals over the next couple of years?"

In group meetings, these questions can be too personal. One on one time gives a team member a chance to open up, be heard and give you important input.

Step Four: Document and follow up. If a team member asks for support on issues and you don't follow through and get back to them on issues discussed, it can erode trust. It is important to review and clarify what was discussed at the end of each meeting to provide for an accurate understanding. In addition, create joint accountabilities for

follow up so each party understands what is expected, and when.

Bonus Step: Get feedback on your leadership. Individual meetings provide you an opportunity to create a safe atmosphere, one team member at a time, and get input on your effectiveness as a manager. Obtaining truthful and accurate input may be all in your approach. For example a good approach might be to speak in a friendly tone and simply say, "John, I was hoping you could provide me with some feedback on how I can be a more effective team leader" or "John, I'd really appreciate your suggestions."

Individual meetings provide excellent opportunities for team building. Even if they have to occasionally be done by phone, it is important to make time for team members one on one. You will see positive outcomes in the areas of greater rapport, sincere communication, loyalty, and inspired performance. **PRO**

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Selling the Intangible

BY SHERYL BATCHELDER

In some respects, selling a product is easy. You have an item you can show and demonstrate to people when in person, and something you can take photos of for your marketing pieces. Selling services, however, is a completely different animal. You don't have an item to show people, and there's nothing to photograph for your marketing pieces. As such, it's often more difficult to sell a service. But difficult does not mean impossible. You simply have to be clear and extremely creative in your marketing packages so your prospects take notice and understand what they're buying. That's why so many service-based companies are now going the extra mile with such things as leather presentation binders, gold embossed and natural fiber proposal folders, and other touches that help create marketing materials that truly stand out.

The more high-end your services are, the more that people expect your marketing materials to be unique and ornate. In such cases, it's all about the presentation materials, whether it's a pre-sale proposal package (such as an RFP) or a post-sale document folder (such as closing documents for a vacation ownership program). In these cases, your materials are not just marketing pieces; they're who you are. When you're selling a service, you're really branding your company or the experience the service will give your prospect.

The fact is that with the right marketing package, you can have your prospects saying "yes" to your service at the first hello. In other words, you want your clients to be so impressed with your marketing materials that they say, "As soon as I received your package I knew I would do business with you." Following are the keys to making that happen.

1. Decide on the look or feel you want to convey to your prospects. Every company has an image it wants to portray, including yours. Before you can design any marketing piece, you need to be clear on that image. Many companies have a rough idea of the look or feel they want their marketing pieces to convey, but they're not confident that their image is correct or even marketable. If you are unsure what your company's image is or how strong it is, then hire the services of

marketing professional who truly understands your vision and who can help you articulate it.

Why is pinpointing an image often so difficult? Because the world is changing so fast. Every business is constantly evolving. As such, it's difficult to figure out where you are currently, especially when you're so close to it. And since companies are always trying to reinvent themselves, defining an image isn't something you do only once. Chances are your company is always changing, and that means you'll have to change your marketing pieces and the feeling they convey every two to three years, if not sooner.

2. Do your research. Be sure you find a manufacturing or printing partner that is willing to work outside of the box. Since you're selling a service, you can't have run of the mill marketing pieces or packaging. But many manufacturers will only do "standard" things. So even if you design a wonderful and creative package, your manufacturer may not be able to create it. They may ask you to compromise material, size, or quality. That's why you need to find a company that's willing to take chances and try something different and creative.

In the process, also look for a marketing piece manufacturer who will educate you on what will and will not work. Many times a company will go to a manufacturer with a beautifully designed marketing package that is simply not functional. For example, a fine-dining restaurant wanted their menus printed on wallpaper rather than standard paper. While using wallpaper instead of paper is a growing trend, this restaurant chose wallpaper that was a natural material, which meant it would show oil and grease—not a good choice for a restaurant. The restaurant spent \$300,000 printing their menus. Two weeks into the restaurant's operations, the menus did not hold up and had to be redone. It was a costly mistake that they could have easily avoided had they done their research.

Whenever possible, work with a manufacturer during the design phase and listen carefully to their creative and practical advice. Many service-based companies are creating marketing pieces out of materials

that have never been used before, such as wallpaper, copper, aluminum, and hand-stitched leather, just to name a few. Some materials work and some don't. It all depends on the material and the intended use. You certainly don't want to find out your idea won't work after it's created.

3. Spend the money on a prototype. When you have a marketing piece that is complex or using a unique material, you definitely want a prototype. If you don't spend the money on a prototype, you may end up with a final product that is not exactly what you wanted. Depending on your marketing piece's complexity and design time involved, your prototype can cost anywhere from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars, but it's money well spent. You want to eliminate all surprises and know what your final product will look and feel like. After all, your marketing piece is your company's image and your prospect's first experience with you—make it a good one.

Creativity = Profits

In today's marketplace, competition is fierce. Many companies offer similar services for similar pricing, which is why you need an immediate edge over the competition. Your marketing pieces and packaging are the perfect way to set your company above the crowd. In fact, if everything else is equal, your prospects will go with the company who has the best image—and they'll make that decision based on the marketing items you send them. So break the mold and get creative. Use the new materials and packaging options available. Do what you must to set your services ahead of the pack. When it comes to selling services, a little creativity goes a long way to positively impacting your company's bottom line. **PRO**

Sheryl Batchelder is an expert who specializes in bringing branding ideas to life. Her company, NIS Print, offers a wide range of prototyping, print and production services to match each client's needs. To find out how Sheryl can help your company, call 407-423-7575 or visit www.NISprint.com.



Fire Up Your Employees

BY JAY FORTE

Your employees' performance is just average; they do just enough to get by. Customers don't excite them. Their work doesn't excite them. They have to be constantly watched, even to do the basics. You catch them playing on the computer and hear talk of what other jobs are paying. Achieving performance and financial targets is a constant struggle. Sound the alarm ... you are suffering from smoldering employees; they have the embers of performance, but no fire.

When our workplace changed from the industrial age of making things to today's intellectual age of providing service, it significantly changed what we want and need from our employees. In the past, we needed manpower and horsepower to run machinery and manufacture products. But as manufacturing moved offshore, we moved from horsepower to brainpower. Thinking and knowledge now drive results. "One-size-fits-all" jobs no longer exist; thinking is personal and not all employees think the same way. We must start to align the way employees think with the thinking needed in their jobs to activate their passion, interest, emotion, and performance. When we do, employees become more engaged and passionate about what they do and perform at exceptional levels; boredom and discontentment in the workplace disappear.

We must inspire and engage employees to ignite their passions and emotions; command-and-control is out. It is important to connect with employees to know and understand them, in order to help them perform at their best level. Management must relearn how to engage employees or be prepared for high turnover and a daily struggle for performance. Consider these five steps to fire up employees and smoke your competition:

1. Create an employee-focused workplace culture. This workplace culture openly appreciates, values and develops employees, attracts and retains the best

candidates. A workplace culture that is employee-focused includes: sharing a powerful mission, vision and goals; implementing rich training and employee retention programs; providing recurring skill and career development and creating a culture of open participation and contribution. Employees get fired up working for an organization that is publicly focused on their value and their success.

2. Match employee talents and training to job position. Talents manifest themselves differently in each employee; any employee is not a good fit for any job. Employees are fired up about jobs whose thinking and performance requirements match their talents and passions. The closer they are matched, the more passionate performance happens. Start with Tom Rath's Strengthsfinder 2.0 to learn the language of talents. Then summarize talent by employee and talent by each role in the organization. Match talents needed with the talents of the employees for the best performance. Only those that are excited about their work (because it matches their talents and passions) will be fired up to perform.

3. With the right employees in the right roles, define performance expectations. Studies show employees are more excited about performance when they know what is expected and create the plan to achieve them. This personalizes each role, takes advantage of their talents and encourages employees to own their performance. Employees are fired up when they have a voice, are made to feel competent, and can control their performance.

4. Build a strong personal connection though recurring performance feedback and training. Act as a coach and educator; encourage employees to continually improve their skills to achieve their performance expectations. The more contact you have with employees in a positive and supportive way, the stronger the personal connection.



This connection is the core of millennial management; employees are loyal to those who know them, care about them and spend time helping them improve.

5. Host recurring "Career Conversations." Employees respond to a compelling personal vision of the future. To keep employees excited about performance, host "Career Conversations" or development discussions several times a year. Discuss the employee's talents and interests in conjunction with the needs and direction of the organization. This insures a viable plan as it blends the needs of the organization with the talents, interests and goals of the employees. Allowing employees a voice in the development process is one of the most significant ways to fire up an employee.

The world has changed; it is time to write a new story. This one has to be bolder, more engaging and feature the employee. Employees are the brains and heart, the knowledge and emotions, the actions and passion of the organization. This powerful new organizational asset must be well understood to be well managed. Engage and inspire employees. Listen to and care about them. Fire them up! And in return, they will smoke your competition. **PRO**

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Keep Your Edge at Any Age

BY DR. NANCY D. O'REILLY

Is your workplace starting to leave you behind? The truth is, whether you've been working for two years or 52 years, it is easy to get into a rut, and stay there. Humans are creatures of habit, and the habits that we develop over the years can be difficult to break. It's easier to stay in the same routines, activities and responsibilities that we've always done. Unfortunately, that kind of attitude in business will get you nowhere. The people who rise to the top of their careers are motivated, innovative and ready to take on new challenges.

If you are starting to experience a mental or physical slowdown in the workplace, here are some tips to get your edge back. These strategies will help you find the energy and drive to succeed, whether you are 29 or 99 years old.

1. Get healthy. Your number one way to age-proof your career is by taking a closer look at your physical and mental condition. Make it a priority to have regular physical examinations, and check for the diseases that may affect you more as you age, such as heart disease, prostate and breast cancer.

2. Get moving. Are you feeling more sluggish and less energetic? It could be because you aren't getting enough exercise. Many Americans have more sedentary lifestyles, not just at home but also at work, typing away at the computer or checking emails regularly. To keep that edge, you should be spending at least a few days each week doing some sort of physical activity. Incorporate cardio exercise (at least 30 minutes), weight training (use free or stationary weights at least three times a week) and most importantly, cross train to do different cardio exercises that challenge your body and build a healthy heart.

3. Check your skills. Are you staying up-to-date with the skills in your industry? What about all the technology tools out there? Remember, it is fun to learn. Even if you don't have time for long classes or weeks of training, you can still subscribe to your industry magazine, read up on the latest trends via e-mail, or network at industry events in your city. There are usually

even weekend events or retreats that will help you stay up-to-date on your job skills.

4. Keep balanced. Are you spending too many lunch breaks trying to catch up on paperwork? If so, you're not alone. Many workers have a hard time separating their private lives from their work lives. We live in a 24-hour society, with easy access to the office via e-mails, Blackberries and cell phones. But that doesn't mean we should be doing things that way. Staying balanced means spending quality time with family and friends, enjoying vacation time and knowing when to un-plug the Blackberry.

5. Learn to take a break. Taking a vacation these days can seem like a pipe dream, but it's important to take a break every once in awhile. Some people blame the rising cost of fuel and airfare, while others simply can't find the time. Stop with the excuses! Working non-stop and even forgoing a vacation may make you feel like Superman or Superwoman in the office, but soon enough your body will protest and get burned out.

6. Take even a small break. If a weeklong vacation isn't in the cards for you, opt to take a personal day (or two) away from the office. Use that time to relax at the spa, visit family or friends, take the kids to the beach or even just get some housework done. If a week in Europe is out of the picture, set up a vacation at home, known as a "staycation," where you purposely stay in your own home, or at least home city, doing personal errands or just kicking up your heels on the sofa.

7. Try something new. When you are young, it seems so easy to pick up a new sport or hobby, without even thinking twice about whether you will be good or not. Take that same attitude and become fearless again! It's important to have that attitude in the office, too. Strive to try something new and you may surprise yourself - in a good way! For example, if you've always wanted to start golfing, why not join that group of golfers in your office during their next outing at the driving range? You could be making new connections and helping your brain stay

young. Or, if your boss asks you to take on a new responsibility or task in the office, develop a positive attitude and jump right in. Sure, you can always ask for help if you need it, but you may also learn that you have natural talents in other areas.

8. Stay connected. Are you good at keeping in touch with your friends, co-workers and relatives? Not only is it important to stay social in business because of the contacts you make and the opportunities that you create, but socializing also keeps your energy levels up. Without that social interaction, you can start to feel deflated and unmotivated. People want to work with and be with people who are fun, outgoing, happy and energized. These days, you can even re-connect or build relationships over the Internet with social networking sites.

9. Develop an attitude of gratitude. In other words, pass it on. You might be higher up on the pecking order at work, so wouldn't it be nice to help someone at the lower end? You can mentor someone new at the office or volunteer at a local charity or non-profit organization. Every bit of positive energy you put out will come back to you in a BIG, positive way!

10. Think it and it will be. The laws of attraction really do work! Your mind and your thoughts attract the people you want, the career you want, the money you want, the love you want, and life you want. So, start thinking about the things you've always wanted and start moving toward these goals with a positive attitude . your brighter future awaits.

You can jump-start your life with these simple steps. It's never too late to re-ignite your energy and drive, and feel great about you! **PRO**

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Why Successful Business Leaders Love History

BY REBECCA STATON-REINSTEIN, PH.D.

Thomas Jefferson remarked on his rationale for being a voracious reader of history saying, “A nation that expects to be ignorant and free in a state of civilization... expects what never was and never will be.”

As modern businesspeople read about the leaders of the past, they want to learn what they can do today when their companies are at stake. Current leaders in business and nonprofits face a faltering economy, an unstable international situation, a credit crunch, fierce competition, and shifting demographics. These situations are remarkably similar to the challenges faced by the U.S. leaders who gathered in Philadelphia in 1787 to draft a new constitution and form a government to tackle the issues. Some modern business owners are learning and applying success secrets from these founders.

What are the historical secrets today’s successful and savvy business leaders know that less successful ones don’t?

History matters: Smart businesspeople know the importance of learning from the past. They’re interested not only in avoiding mistakes, but also understanding how important leaders faced monumental challenges and succeeded. The U.S. founders were all history buffs. As the framers debated the details of the Constitution, they pointed to specific lessons from the rise and fall of the Roman Republic to make our own republic more robust.

Downtime matters: Successful people know the importance of relaxation, including reading. They are clear about their priorities. These folks spend time resting and enjoying their families and friends. Their historical counterparts enjoyed rich social and family lives, were physically active and never stopped reading and thinking.

Learning matters: Strategic businesspeople read, watch or listen to history and biographies because they enjoy learning. They are always looking for ways to improve their performances by absorbing the lessons of the past. George Washington, John Adams and Benjamin Franklin left a rich legacy of their ongoing self-improvement efforts. When the framers wrote in the Constitution they wanted “to establish a

more perfect union,” they were reflecting their personal journeys seeking to become more perfect leaders.

Citizenship matters: Admired business leaders admire their country and its history and want to learn from it. They look for ways to practice their citizenship whether on the local, national or global level. They not only served on nonprofit boards, they mentor students, build homes and dish up dinner in soup kitchens. Ben Franklin founded dozens of civic organizations, while Alexander Hamilton and John Jay helped found one of the early societies for the abolition of slavery.

Government matters: It’s easy to complain about government. But unless a businessperson understands the origins and current functioning of our government, he or she will find it difficult to interact with it effectively or be a good citizen. Our “Founding Parents” never turned down the call of their country to serve it. They believed it was their duty to be in public service at some point, even when it would interfere with their business and personal affairs.

Leadership matters: Real leaders are committed to becoming better leaders. What better role models to learn from than the towering successes and all too human shortcomings of the nation’s founders? We can all learn from the U.S. founders precisely because they are so like us, so human. They struggled with the same shortcomings modern leaders must overcome. They provide a practical guide to leading under the most difficult circumstances.

Survival matters: The founders staked “our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor,” believing liberty required an informed public. Modern and historic leaders know national survival requires more than an extravaganza of politics every four years. Many of the key political debates today hinge on what was going on in the minds and lives of U.S. leaders in the late 18th and early 19th century. Modern business leaders know these continuing debates will have a direct effect on whether their companies will survive and thrive in a tough economic climate. They stay informed, learn from history and encourage their employees,

friends and family to stay up-to-date and involved.

Today, learning from the past is easier than ever with information and media readily available to every leader. Over the last decade, the publication of an unprecedented number of enthralling histories and biographies means there is no excuse for ignorance of American history and its implications for today.

American culture has always had an anti-intellectual strain, the price we pay perhaps for trying to establish a society where all people “are created equal.” But look at the country’s admired founders. They were certainly not anti-intellectuals. George Washington, Benjamin Franklin and Abigail Adams, all of whom were self-educated, were admired by their contemporaries for their keen minds. Alexander Hamilton, often acknowledged as one of the most brilliant minds of his generation, was a self-made man with who dropped out of college to join the Revolution. Of course, the formally educated Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and John Adams are also seen as formidable intellects. Successful modern leaders never stop learning and are not ashamed to bring their insights from their learning into making decisions and leading their organizations.

Smart managers, savvy entrepreneurs, successful owners, strategic businesspeople know a lot about history and they apply it every day. So flip on that TV, slip in that DVD, surf the web, download an MP3, crank up that CD or grab a book and start your leadership learning journey today. The founding fathers and mothers are waiting to coach you to brilliance. **PRO**

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