

Have you ever thought about...

...the ways you may be feeding your own failure?

•**You have NO goals.** No goals is not a good thing. If you don't know where you're going, how will you know when you get there?

•**You have the WRONG goals.** Goals that are too high or too low are frustrating or unchallenging. Make your goals specific and realistic; high enough to stretch you but low enough to be reachable. As you accomplish, raise the bar on yourself.

•**You take shortcuts.** Shortcuts cost you in the long run. A half-done job is NOT better than no job. Don't sacrifice your standards or quality.

•**You take the LONG road around.** On the other hand, don't wait for all the T's to be crossed and i's dotted before you get going either. If you're too slow, people may lose interest in what you have to offer or you may lose out on a good opportunity.

•**You QUIT too fast.** Giving up too quickly is self-defeating. On any new project, give yourself 6 months before you change, delete, or eliminate. At least you'll know you gave it an honest try.

•**You continually blame OTHERS.** While beating yourself up is counterproductive, taking NO responsibility is not wise either. Own up and move on.

•**You continually blame YOURSELF.** Conversely, you can't change the world single-handedly in one massive swoop. Acknowledge your shortcomings and the influence others had on it and learn from it. Next time, watch out for the landmines.

•**You neglect little things.** Details DO count, particularly if you're competing with many notables. Do the usual unusually well and stand out!

•**You focus on PAST burdens.** Don't get stuck in what could have been. Learn your lessons, change the direction of your sails, and move on.

•**You are in love with the ILLUSION of success.** Success is WORK, plain and simple. While you will benefit from a great reputation or income, becoming enamored with the fluff will cause you to fall quicker than you can say "huh!" ■

SOURCENOTE: Submitted by Carmen Stine.

Words of Wisdom

"A bargain is in its very essence a hostile transaction; do not all men try to abate the price of all they buy? I contend that a bargain, even between brethren, is a declaration of war."

— Lord Byron 1788-1824

BUSINESS

ALERT!

"Practical Advice That Works" Vol 6 No 1

Coaching techniques that will make you look like a pro

Using coaching and feedback techniques can be one of the most successful (and least dangerous) recognition programs for CEOs and managers.

AS COMPANIES CONTINUE to look for ways to cut costs, coaching/recognition is a low-cost but high-impact way to go.

In fact, managers are courting trouble if they fail to make coaching skills a priority and an instrumental part of every supervisor's job description and performance assessment, say Ron Magnus and Nate Allen, writing for leadership training consultants FMI.

Managers who create a learning environment with a focus on developing staff skills and character will set themselves apart from the competition by attracting and retaining valued employees.

Those with reputations for investing in the skills and growth of their people will attract the best and most loyal employees. In other words, the staffers who work well will be more likely to stay on longer. Coaching can also be useful for:

- increasing motivation;
- increasing productivity;
- maintaining profitable growth.

What is coaching?

Essentially, it is a process of providing feedback and collaborative dialogue that deals with the growth of an individual and is usually centered on a particular competency or set of competencies.

What makes a great coach?

There are 9 critical steps, according to FMI's research:

1. Set clear performance standards and expectations. Employees who work for leaders with excellent coaching skills know what they must accomplish. They can say, "My manager set performance objectives and goals up front; I knew what was expected of me from the beginning."

2. Provide regular performance feedback. Managers who are strong at this will initiate the feedback conversation, paying attention to the knowledge, skills, and character traits that are critical for employees' success in their current jobs and prepare them for greater responsibilities. If an employee has to initiate this conversation, the leader isn't focusing on the coaching relationship.

3. Observe on-the-job performance and with customers. Managers who take the time to observe employees' behavior in the context of their daily responsibilities can provide clearer and more relevant feedback. Those who neglect this may be considered out of touch and their feedback resented.

4. Help employees develop self-improvement action plans. An effective coach selects specific areas for improvement and

supports employees in developing their plan—both personal and professional—to reach desired objectives.

5. Recognize and award excellent performance. Coaches must provide public praise and ensure that their employees are recognized or receive a tangible reward for exceptional performance.

6. Provide training, guidance, and support. Effective coaches offer their team members opportunities to grow by providing professional guidance and best-of-class training and supporting them in

Concluded overleaf



YOU ARE MANAGING people, not projects or product development or customer service or any other departmental mission.

People are complicated and messy. They aren't machines any more than you are; they won't be the same every day, no matter how much you'd like them to be. So stay alert to what's going on with them.

For the first couple of days, sit down and get to know your staff. Find out what they do, what their goals are, what they like to do in their free time, etc. Several years ago, I watched a new manager start with a company and for the first month or so, didn't talk to any of his staff. A month later, he wondered why people were handing in their two week notices.

Get to know your staff!

Learn how to deal with problem or resentful employees. I was promoted into my position over a longer-term employee. She was made my assistant. (Before everyone raises the sexism issue, I was the ONLY male manager and was promoted on performance.) She had a great deal of resentment and worked against me at every turn. After floundering around for a while, I finally took her into the office and calmly explained the facts of life to her; that I was the manager and if she couldn't work with me one of us would be leaving and it wouldn't be me. She straightened out after that and we eventually developed a good relationship.

Avoid re-inventing the wheel. Everything doesn't require your unique hand-print. Some things probably work just fine already. Also don't think or act like you know everything, nothing breeds resentment more than arrogance.

You may be smart, but there's always someone smarter. ■

SOURCENOTE: John Reh, About Small Business



Thomas Long

The way I see it...

Thoughts on a difficult subject — listening — from 146 years ago.

There is a grace of kind listening, as well as a grace of kind speaking.

Some people listen with an abstracted air, which shows that their thoughts are elsewhere.

Or they seem to listen, but by vague answers and irrelevant questions show that they have been occupied with their own thoughts, which they found more interesting than what you have been saying.

Some listen with a kind of intensity, which makes you feel that you are being interrogated, and that your listener expects that you are going to lie, or to be inaccurate, or to say something of which he will disapprove, so that you must choose your words with extreme

care.

Some interrupt, and will not hear you out.

Some hear you to the end, and then immediately begin to talk to you about a similar experience they've had, making your case only an illustration of their own.

Some, meaning to be kind, listen with such a determined, lively, violent attention, that you are at once made uncomfortable, and the charm of conversation is at an end.

Many persons, whose manners will stand the test of speaking, break down under the trial of listening.

Kind listening is often an act of humility, and is a great assistance towards kind speaking. ■

SOURCENOTE: F.W. Faber, Spiritual Conferences, 1859

Meetings

Make your meetings work

“ONE EITHER MEETS or one works. One cannot do both at the same time.” This is how Dr. Peter Drucker expresses the attitude of executives and managers towards meetings.

The average manager spends five hours a week in meetings. If we multiply 5 hours times, say, 48 weeks that gives us 240 hours a year spent in meetings. One Fortune 500 firm translated this into a \$71 million dollar loss per year in salary alone. Having said that, meetings are still the most-used communication tool in today's companies.

Before The Meeting

The key ingredient for a good meeting is preparation. The first questions needing answers are: Is this meeting really necessary? Can the information be emailed? If there is still a need for a meeting, the following points provide a blueprint for an effective conference:

- Fix an objective or goal for the meeting;
- Send out a one-page agenda stating the purpose, the issues to be discussed, the time limits for each topic;
- Establish who will participate and inform

each attendee how to prepare;

- In addition, declare a starting time and ending time.

During The Meeting

Whether the meeting is called to exchange information, coordinate action, motivate a team or solve problems—it needs a leader.

Lack of preparation on the part of the chairperson is inexcusable.

His or her main objective is to keep things on track. Here are four easy, common-sense steps to keep in mind:

- Start on time and do not wait for late arrivals. I once knew a boss who locked the door to the meeting room, keeping late comers standing in the hallway;
- Allow interruptions only for genuine emergencies;
- Discuss one issue at a time;
- At the end of each discussion point, summarize and fix a list of 'next steps': who, how, when and where.

These simple hints go a long way towards making meetings much more effective. ■

COACHING —Concluded from overleaf

applying what they've learned to their jobs.

7. Build relationships. Top coaches develop personal relationships with their teams and work at relating with quality interpersonal skills. Less effective managers focus only on the administrative and task aspects of their work at the expense of individual relationships.

8. Determine if an employee has a “skill” or a “will” problem. Skill problems

require patience and training; will problems require motivation. It's not unusual to observe a skill problem and assume it's a will problem, but ignoring that need for better skills will be costly from the productivity point of view.

9. Maintain the big picture. Effective coaches see each situation as only one element of a person's overall performance. They are open-minded and consider all aspects of the individual's performance before making a fair and objective performance assessment. ■

The secret to guaranteeing repeat sales

THERE'S NO SUCH THING as customer loyalty.

People go where they can get the best value for their money, and just because your customer bought from you once, don't be fooled into thinking they will buy from you a second time.

Even though they may have had a good experience with your business, the next time they buy it is likely to be from someone who provides a product that is as good as yours, but which costs a little less or is delivered a little faster.

So how do you keep your customers coming back time and again? You could start by trying the following two practical strategies:

1. Nurture your relationship with previous customers. When a customer has formed a positive relationship with your business, perhaps as a result of a great experience, they develop an emotional bond which needs to be nurtured to prevent it fading away.

You can do this by keeping in regular touch with your previous customers — through a personalised mailing on the anniversary of their first purchase, a birthday or Christmas card, or a follow-up call to check how they felt about the last product or service they bought from you.

2. Give customers an incentive to continue the business relationship. Businesses that reward their customers with details of special offers, discount coupons, loyalty points and bonuses create an incentive-based relationship.

The more personalised and unique your offer is, the less likely it is that your customers will be able to find it elsewhere.

A good starting point for devising some incentives is simply to brainstorm ideas for add-on products or services you could realistically offer to customers.

But make sure your offers are regular, as the desire to return to your business can crumble once the incentive is taken away. ■

SOURCENOTE: Enterquest

Public speaking

Making a successful presentation

Of business tasks which involve speaking or presentation, 80% of company directors find public speaking the most nerve-wracking activity they have to undertake.

GIVING PRESENTATIONS is a daunting prospect for businesses, according to a survey carried out by executive communications consultancy, The Aziz Corporation.

It found that a wide range of business tasks which involve speaking or presentation seem to strike fear, with 80% of company directors finding public speaking the most nerve-wracking activity they have to undertake.

First impressions count

Whether you are presenting a business plan to your bank or to investors to raise money, or whether you are pitching your business to a prospective client, first impressions are all important.

It may seem obvious, but putting your presentation into a smart folder can help. How you look is equally important, as Shilpa Panchmatia, founder of leadership training and coaching services company Human Xpression points out.

“Dress appropriately for the occasion and make sure your appearance is clean and neat. Wear something you feel good in. It will boost your confidence.”

Go for clarity

Above all, aim to be clear — compiling a glossy presentation pack could prove to be a distraction and could give the idea that you are trying to hide something.

If your business revolves around technology and you have to use specialized words, remember to explain these, or to include a glossary.

Be clear in your own mind what is interesting, different or exciting about your business. Ensure that you don't get sidetracked by details — this may stop you from bringing out the important elements of your plan or business.

Similarly, listen carefully to any questions asked and make sure you answer clearly and concisely what you have been asked.

Dealing with nerves

“Whether you are presenting to a large group of people or to an individual, your

Words of Wisdom

“Americans detest all lies except lies spoken in public or printed lies.”

— Ed Howe

success hinges on the way you deliver your message. Feeling some nervousness before giving a speech is natural and healthy. It shows you care about doing well. But too much nervousness can be detrimental,” warns Panchmatia.

She suggests that you get to know your audience. Greet them with a smile and with warmth. It's easier to speak to a group of friends than to a group of strangers, so imagine they are your friends.

Practice can make perfect

Carry out your presentation with someone you feel comfortable with, like a family member or friend.

Use this opportunity to perfect your technique and to highlight any areas for improvement.

You could also approach a source of finance or a client where you don't rate your chances too highly, and use it as a testing ground for those times when you do stand a good chance.

Human Xpression suggests the following tips to help you with your presentation skills.

Know your material. If you're not familiar with your material or are uncomfortable with it, your nervousness will increase. Practice your speech and revise it if necessary.

Visualise yourself giving the presentation. Imagine yourself speaking, your voice loud, clear and assured. It may help to picture someone you know who presents well and imagine yourself presenting in the same way.

Make sure you are well prepared. Make good use of any visual aids, handouts, props, samples or technology. Practice well so your presentation looks slick and then props fit in at the appropriate moment.

Don't apologize. If you mention your nervousness or apologize for any problems you think you have with your presentation, you may be calling the audience's attention to something they hadn't noticed. Keep silent.

Plan ahead. Think about any possible questions that may arise so you can be prepared with an answer.

If you are asked something that you can't answer on the spot, just say that you'll send the information through at a later stage. ■

SOURCENOTE: Lloyds TSB Small Business Guide.

Everybody loves free stuff

...including your employees. So if your clients, customers, or vendors occasionally toss a few product samples, company name-embossed notepads or pens, jars of candy, or other goodies your way, pass some of them on to your staff. Getting gifts—even freebies—will brighten morale. More important, workers will admire you for sharing management perks and feel their efforts are recognized and appreciated inside and outside the organization.

SOURCENOTE: Adapted from FOR LOVE, NOT MONEY.

The Institute for Independent Business

FOUNDED IN 1984 in the UK, the Institute for Independent Business (IIB) is now one of the world's largest international networks of business advice providers.

As of 23 December 2004, 2707 carefully-selected men and women had been accredited as IIB Associates.

Experienced professionals

Experienced senior business people in their own right, who have elected to become independent business advisers, Associates and Fellows of the IIB have received additional training to enable them to focus accurately and cost-effectively on the needs of clients and prospects.

This ensures that Associates' clients receive the "practical advice that works"—the Institute's motto in every country in which the Institute operates. ■

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I wish I'd said that...

"Technology is a way of organizing the universe so that man doesn't have to experience it."

— Max Frisch

Human resources

Improve your leadership skills

by Ronya Banks

Whether you are consciously aware of it or not, on some level you are continually leading yourself and others.

IF YOU DESIRE TO LEAD a passion-filled life wherein you are a positive influence to everyone, you will enjoy incorporating the following practices to assist you in consistently living your life as a conscious and strong leader.

Have a clear vision of yourself, others, and the world. Who are you? What do you stand for? What is your life purpose? How do you want to influence others? How do you want to contribute to yourself, your family, friends, colleagues, and the world? Answer these questions to formulate a concrete vision of yourself and your world. Then, start living your life as the leader who makes your vision a reality!

Know and utilize your strengths and gifts. You have unique gifts that you were born with and personal strengths you've developed over your lifetime. Realizing and utilizing these gifts and strengths will assist you in being a formidable leader.

Live in accordance with your morals and values. Making choices and taking actions out of accordance with your morals and values leaves you with a nagging "Bad" feeling. This feeling seeping in from your subconscious mind hinders your success in your career and your relationships. On the other hand, making choices and taking actions aligned with your morals and values helps you succeed almost effortlessly. People sense integrity and will naturally respect your opinion and leadership.

Lead others with inclusiveness and compassion. The greatest leaders are those who include everyone in their sphere of influence by recognizing each person's greatest value. To be one of these leaders, look beyond the obvious and see others with insight and compassion. Many of history's greatest leaders have admitted that they rose to the top because another leader recognized and harnessed their potential.

Set definitive goals and follow concrete action plans. You have to know where your destination is before you can map out a plan to get there. To improve your leadership skills, first set specific life goals with appropriate timelines. Design your goals by moving backwards from the end of your life to the present week. Then, formulate action plans you can commit to that will get you to where you want to be.

Maintain a positive attitude. No one respects a grumpy or negative person. With a positive attitude you are looking at the bright side of life. People are naturally attracted to you when you have a positive attitude. By being positive, you will lead a happier life, as well as be surrounded by other positive people. You will

also magically attract exciting offers and possibilities.

Improve communication skills. Having great leadership skills includes your being able to clearly and specifically communicate your vision, goals, skills, intentions, and expectations to others. This also includes your ability to listen to what other people are consciously or unconsciously communicating. To become a great communicator, continually strive to improve your verbal, nonverbal, and listening skills.

Motivate others to greatness. A leader is as powerful as his team. As a leader, you will want to surround yourself with a powerful team by assisting others in recognizing and utilizing their strengths, gifts, and potential. Motivating others to their own greatness will improve the group energy, increase the vitality of your projects, and move you forward toward achieving your goals and vision.

Be willing to admit and learn from failures and weaknesses. Face it - No one is perfect, and everyone has made a mistake or two in their lives! The most successful leaders know that the key to success is not in avoiding falling or failing, but to learn from their mistakes. As a strong leader, you will also be able to communicate your weaknesses to your team, so that you and your team can appoint someone who excels at that particular task or activity.

Continue to educate and improve yourself. Great leaders continue to improve themselves in every possible way. The person who thinks he is an expert, has a lot more to learn. Never stop learning. Be receptive to everyone's perceptions and information from around the world and beyond. ■

SOURCENOTE: Ronya Banks has been teaching others how to become leaders and business owners since 1992. Frequently featured in radio, magazine and newspaper articles and interviews, Ronya helps people find the great leaders within by accessing the natural power of their minds.

True Courtroom Stories

Reported in the Massachusetts Bar Association Lawyers Journal, the following are questions actually asked of witnesses by attorneys during trials.

1. "Now Doctor, isn't it true that when a person dies in his sleep, he doesn't know about it until the next morning?"
2. "The youngest son, the twenty-year old, how old is he?"
3. "Were you present when your picture was taken?"
4. "Were you alone or by yourself?"
5. "Was it you or your younger brother who was killed in the war?"
6. "Did he kill you?"
7. "How far apart were the vehicles at the time of the collision?"
8. "You were there until the time you left, is that true?" ■

For more information, please phone Thomas Long at 708 524 0886