

Have you ever thought about...

...Coaching yourself to total success!

**COACHING IS ABOUT BEING AT YOUR BEST.** It's about performance, about 'staying the course' and, in the end, about creating and living the life you really want.

Many people use coaches to make more money, win the gold prize or do something dramatic. That's fun and when it's right it's wonderful!

But most importantly, coaching is about living up to your own standards. It is, in Henry Thoreau's famous words, about "marching to the beat of your own drum, no matter how faint or far away." So, do I recommend you have a personal coach? Well...*duh!*

But if you can't afford one, or aren't ready for one, why not be your own coach? Here are a few suggestions:

**Write down your goals.** Review and re-write them once a week. This is old advice, but there is power and magic in writing your goals on paper! Write them down, then review them, think about them and up-date them every week. It may only take 20 minutes, but it will double your rate of success — I guarantee it!

**Show up!** Many of life's most important achievements simply require that we show up, pay attention, tell the truth, work hard, go the extra mile and do our best! Superior performance is not about the future, or the past. It's about doing a superior job right now, on the work that lies right in front of you.

**Eliminate Distractions.** Keep your eye on the ball. Life is full of frustrations and distractions. Successful people do NOT tolerate the things that drive most of crazy — they take the time to stop, solve the problem and eliminate the distraction once and for all. Stay focused!

**Manage your environment.** Top performers know that space management is more important than time management, and they have neat offices, clean cars, orderly appointment books and they keep an extra suit at the office, just in case. Make your office (and your home) a space where you can do your very best work.

**Read every day.** Read something useful, challenging or fun every day. If you only spend 20 minutes with a book that motivates, excites and educates you, it will make a world of difference. I promise! Aim to read at least one book every month!

**Attend a 'University on Wheels'.** Listen to educational, motivational and fun tapes while you drive. At least listen to soothing, appropriate music, rather than the 'terror of the day'" on talk radio! Fill your mind with the BEST information you can find!

Set up routines and use the best resources you can find to stay on course. Coach yourself to the top!

**Here's to your success!** ■

SOURCENOTE: Resources for Success!™ by Emyr Williams

BUSINESS

ALERT!

Hands-on help that works

Vol 7 No 3

## Corporate fraud — the multi-million dollar problem

by David Price

*Although company fraud is a multi-million dollar problem, the costs of protecting against it are not high.*

### ALL COMPANIES ARE EXPOSED to the business war of fraud and other losses at all levels of their operations.

The most significant are costing billions of dollars, yen, francs, pounds... annually, without being detected because of inadequate monitoring systems.

In spite of companies being faced with hostile take-over bids, cost cutting, cartels and other major disruptions, still the greatest losses are because of fraud, often on a colossal scale, big enough to sink some smaller countries' economies.

Such frauds are not always perpetrated from outside the organization — many successful fraudsters were respected and trusted employees, often at a senior level.

Worldwide, the risks of fraud apply equally to every company imaginable

Everyone has something to lose: a business method, a recipe for success, a product design, an award-winning advertisement, a valued customer, a key employee, a comprehensive database, a bank account.

All can be enticed, stolen, bribed, wheedled, cajoled or mugged away.

And whenever this happens it is, to put it more succinctly and accurately — **fraud.**

One area which is very susceptible to

fraud is the internet.

Many organizations, banks included, have insufficient security to prevent massive fraud.

Knowledgeable thieves can whittle away millions of dollars through clever accounting twists, hackers can access personal banking and payment records, organized criminals can extract details of people without their knowledge and, at a lower level, countless millions of working hours are lost through 'computer-driven time-wasting which has replaced the more traditional skyves for the work-shy. This is also fraud.

**Although it is a popular belief that most people are intrinsically honest, recent research has shown that around 75 per cent of employed people in Europe and the USA have defrauded their employers at some time.**

Some of this fraud may be regarded as minor but it is impractical to define an acceptable level of theft.

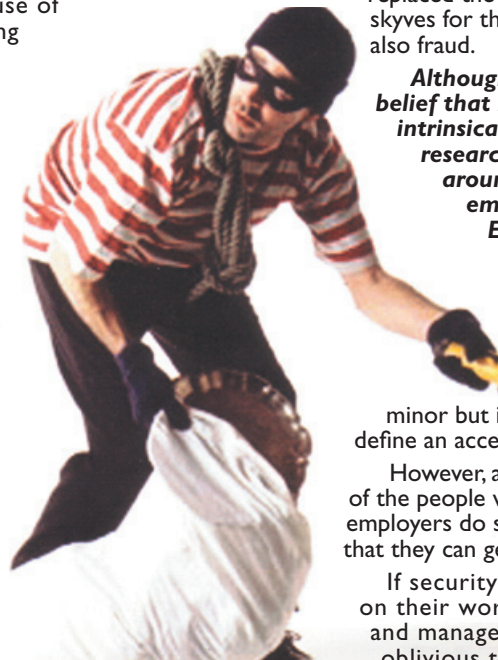
However, a great proportion of the people who defraud their employers do so because they feel that they can get away with it.

If security is lax, checks on their work infrequent, and management apparently oblivious to the dangers of fraud, there can be a feeling

on the part of many employees that their employer deserves what he gets and a consequent willingness to be part of a general free-for-all.

Therefore, any sensible management will put in place as many obvious deterrents as possible, consistent with the principle that work and business should not be hindered.

Employees will then realize that the company policy is one of honesty backed up by intelligent and sensible security measures.



Concluded on page 2

**THE NUMBER OF SUITS filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) by parents claiming their employers have discriminated against them is increasing.**

Like many factors in the struggle to balance productivity against workers' personal responsibilities, this trend will also leave managers in the middle — this time between employers and parents, and parents and nonparents.

**Employers vs. parents.** Both single and married, and male and female, parents have claimed they were denied promotions, assignments, and even their jobs because employers saw them as less productive and less flexible in the hours they could work due to their parental responsibilities.

However, though courts often find for these claimants, a strong debate is in progress over the suits' justifications. On the parents' side, a study by the Families at Work program of American University's Washington College of Law found that both men and women lose status and opportunities at work when they become parents. Female parents, and especially single mothers (who make up about 18 percent of the workforce and earn less than other female workers), suffer most from their employers.

**Parents vs. nonparents.** Yet workers who aren't parents see things differently. Many believe parents get preference in flexible hours, vacations, and health benefits. The Employment Policy Foundation, a nonpartisan research group generally agrees, finding that "there is simply no evidence that parents as a group face labor market discrimination," and in fact have lower unemployment and higher wages than nonparents.

**Possible outcomes.** In the near future, parents may win many of the advantages they seek — but not solely because they're parents. Instead they may win because they fall into the larger category of caregivers. ■

SOURCENOTE: Adapted from the TREND LETTER



Thomas Long

# The way I see it...

## Reality Never Lies

**IN BUSINESS** our sales, productivity, profits and customer satisfaction are **ALWAYS** precisely accurate measures of the service we provide.

From the dawn of history, human beings have searched for bargains. We love great products, at bargain prices. We love getting the goods or services we need, at a fair price, delivered on time and, hopefully, with an extra "bonus". In the words of the old saying, "build a better mousetrap, and the world will beat a path to your door." Because of this, your bank account is an accurate reflection of the value the world places on your products and services. The facts and numbers do not lie. They may contain a message you don't like, or one with which you disagree, but they do

not lie.

To increase your sales and profits, you must increase the value of your services. Cutting costs or raising prices may temporarily increase profits and give the illusion that things are 'better,' but illusions never last.

The key to the growth of your enterprise is providing more value, to more people, and preferably at a lower price. Fortunately, this is not difficult. 'Value' can be many things, from faster delivery, to larger quantities, to more pleasing colors. The opportunity to innovate, add value and increase sales is endless.

Reality does not lie. Study the numbers, notice where you can increase value to your customer, and adjust accordingly. Your financial future depends upon it. ■

SOURCENOTE: With thanks to Dr Philip E Hubert

## Deal making

# The four basic traps of negotiating a deal

**INEXPERIENCED NEGOTIATORS** often lose out when they should win, achieve little when they should achieve a lot or leave the negotiating table with a feeling of defeat rather than a glow of triumph.

Here are four classic negotiating traps they fall into... and ways they can overcome them.

**TRAP ONE: Answering questions wrongly.** Responding to questions calls for knowing what not to say as well as what to say. Correct answers may not be good answers and may even be foolish under the circumstances. Rules for good answers:

- Take time to think.
- Don't answer unless you fully understand the question.
- Stall on the basis of incomplete information.
- Evade by answering a different question (the politicians' favourite dodge).
- Answer only part of the question.

Before negotiations begin, write down the most likely questions you'll be asked or have an associate act as 'devil's advocate' and put you through an interrogation wringer.

**TRAP TWO: The other side reneges**

## CORPORATE FRAUD — concluded from overleaf

Everybody must be vigilant, especially to external intrusions into company-secure areas.

Computer security practices and the protection of information and physical security seem obvious but cracks can appear and infiltrators can get in. The money managers must be constantly alert for irregularities and unexplained movements.

**on the deal.** This often happens right after a deal is made, and usually involves a sudden demand for a higher price or more concessions.

**Best Defense:** Anticipate such a move and plan for it by demanding written assurances against escalation, signed by so many high-level people they can't escalate the terms.

**TRAP THREE: The gap is too large to negotiate.** Even if the difference seems huge, negotiation is always possible if the issue is sufficiently important.

Extensive talks may be needed before the outcome is apparent.

Don't start off in a hostile manner because of the other side's apparently unreasonable or extreme demands.

**TRAP FOUR: Don't misjudge the balance of power.** Most people begin negotiations assuming the other side knows their weaknesses.

**This is wrong.**

They're probably more afraid of your strengths than your weaknesses.

Always begin negotiations under the assumption that you are dealing from strength but be ready to compromise if the other side shows they also know your weaknesses. ■

SOURCENOTE: Business 121

Surveillance and countersurveillance measures can be installed.

It is clear that the environment must be right and conducive to high security, but no matter how hard the company tries to repel boarders, some clever people will get in and get away with it.

**Beware! The fraudsters are about.** ■

SOURCENOTE: David Price is managing director of Network Security Management Ltd and Chairman of Communications Audit UK Ltd. .

Where you can get free software

### THERE ARE alternatives to the ubiquitous software provided by Microsoft.

It's useful to be aware of alternative options — and free or 'open source' software offers a number of advantages for business users:

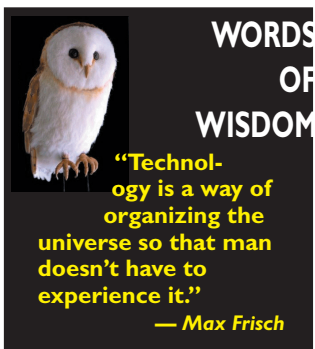
- Most open source applications are completely free of charge, because they're developed by volunteers.
- You can alter the programs, share them with others and basically use them as you want, which makes a change from the endless restrictions and licences many software providers impose.
- You won't have to wait for Microsoft to release security patches to fix flaws — although you will need to keep a close eye on new viruses and download the relevant patches and protection from the antivirus software services.
- Free software is available for almost any application you can think of, from word processing to accounting.

**OpenOffice.org** is the most popular piece of open source software — it's an alternative to Microsoft Office.

Check out the **Free Software Foundation website**, which has a directory of thousands of applications, for more details.

The Freeware Guide is another useful directory of free and shared software available on the web.

Finally, **OSDir.com** is a good site for updates about new open source applications.



## Business strategy

# If you don't focus, innovate and evolve, you die

by Mark Rosenberger

*After 128 years of business, a household word in American retailing, Montgomery Ward, Inc., closed the doors in 1997, and was liquidated in 2000, but lives again today*

### WITH 258 STORES and 37,000 employees in 30 states, Ward fell victim to competition from service-driven retailers like Wal-Mart, Home Depot and Circuit City. Ward claimed a "poor retail environment" for the failure.

Interestingly, Wal-Mart and Home Depot didn't shut down.

Ward is a perfect example of a company that thought it was in the retail business and missed the fact they were in the service business.

Perhaps they rested on their laurels. After all, 128 years in business is rather noteworthy in today's ever-evolving economy. And clearly, size nor name recognition saved this organization from extinction.

The 37,000 employees were soon looking for work. Why? Because the organization missed the mark.

They remained retailers when the competition had evolved to a more personal, service-oriented approach. And I'm willing to bet that most of the employees were 'stunned,' 'surprised,' and 'confused'. They thought the old way of doing business was 'just fine'.

Perhaps this can be a wake-up call for every business. What exactly does your business do? The quick answer is generally, "we make, manufacture, service the best darn 'Gismos' in the universe".

The focus is on the 'stuff'. The focus needs to be on the outcome.

Sure you might "make, manufacture, service the best darn Gismos in the universe" but if the end result isn't happy, satisfied customers who enthusiastically spend more of their money with you while telling friends, family and associates, you're destined for short-term success, at best.

Remember, Wards was in the "retail business". Now their inventory is being liquidated at 40% to 50% savings.

A further wake-up call might be on the horizon.

If the U.S. economy moves towards a slow down, customers are going to be harder to find and still harder to keep.

Following years of rapid growth and stunning sales with record profits, most organizations have felt little need to focus on

customer retention, customer satisfaction, keeping customers, customer loyalty, customer service, customers for life or any of the current 'service' mantras.

In fact, talk to just about any executive and they'll tell you their organization is 'committed' to customer loyalty.

Give them a few more minutes and they're likely to brag about the level of service their organization is currently providing. And just look at the numbers — they must be doing something right.

But just wait. The companies that spent the time to build and grow a powerful workforce with a focus on excellence and service will be light years ahead of the game as competition increases.

### In other words, "Good times can camouflage poor performance".

So what does this mean to you and me?

First, focus, *Re-focus* and continue to **Re-focus**.

What is your company in business to do? What role does your department play in the process? How can each player move performance to the next level?

Keep answering and re-answering these core questions.

Second, evaluate, *re-evaluate* and continue to **re-evaluate**.

Take a hard look at the service offered by your company, your department, your team from the customers' eyes.

Be on the lookout for opportunities to take performance to the next level.

Evaluate opportunities to enhance performance internally with your important 'trapeze buddies' — the people you count on most often to complete a task or function or to provide you with information so you can get your job done.

And never assume that "no news is good news". Your customers are talking — it just might not be to you.

Third, innovate, *re-innovate* and continue **re-innovating**.

Buggy whips sold well in their day but if you're in the buggy whip business today, you're short on customers.

Innovation is essential for continued, long-term growth.

Look for innovation opportunities everywhere and you may be able to resurrect success from failure.

**Montgomery Ward did just this.** The name re-emerged in 2004 and Montgomery Ward is now an on-line and catalog retailer (selling the same lines as the no-longer existing stores) with a reputation for good customer service.

The rules of the game keep changing but one universal truth is this: the job of every business is to attract and keep satisfied customers. **Full stop.** ■

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# 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 31 July 2006, 3,983 carefully-selected men and women had been accredited as IIB Associates worldwide.

## Experienced professionals

Experienced senior business people in their own right, who have elected to become self-employed 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. ■


## BUSINESS ALERT

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**WORDS OF WISDOM**

*"It wasn't until quite late in life that I discovered how easy it is to say 'I don't know'."*

— Somerset Maugham

## Web marketing

# 3 ways to improve website navigation

*Studies show that well-planned navigation can help boost your sales by more than 50%!*

**YOUR NAVIGATION should be structured with only one thought in mind: making it easy for your visitors to find information and buy your product or service.**

The better your site is at helping visitors to find the information they're seeking, the more likely it is that they'll view extra pages and return for another visit.

### 1. Streamline your architecture

Your web site should contain as few pages as possible. Web sites that have a lot of pages can quickly become a tangled mess if they're not well designed.

Believe it or not, studies show that 30% to 60% of visitors drop off with every click they're made to take!

### 2. Standardize your navigation menu

Your navigation HAS to be consistent! Navigation features exist to help your visitors figure out how to get around on your site. You don't want to make this difficult for them.

Make sure your menu is located in the same

place on every page of your site.

Your menu should be instantly recognizable to your visitors, with the same buttons, size and color on every page.

The menu should be placed across the top or along the left side of the page. Those are the first places people look when seeking information.

Keep your navigation menu as simple as possible.

Also make sure you include a direct call to action in your navigation whenever possible. Tell your visitors exactly what you want them to do. For example, if you want them to learn more about your product, include a call to action like this:

**"Learn more about Product X!"**

### 3. Cater to your customers

In order for your web site to turn visitors into buying customers, it has to cater to their needs. Focus on what your potential customers want and make sure they can easily locate it on your site.

Help them find what they're looking for.

Cater to both browsers and searchers.

Online shoppers fall into two general groups: browsers, who like to explore and click on links that take them deeper into a site, and searchers, who would rather focus on the specific item they're looking for. **Do what you can to cater to both types.** ■

SOURCENOTE: Business 121

## Meet the Publisher

**SOLID OAK CONSULTING FOCUSES on Chicago-based small business growth.**

Growing a small- or medium-sized business is a challenge in an environment where 80% of business startups do not last 5 years.

**How To Grow?** Growing a small business successfully not only requires increased sales, but profitable sales. To do this, all elements of a business need to work as a finely tuned system. This requires skill and coordination of management, finances, operations, people, marketing, sales and overall change.

**Why Grow?** Growth should not be an end in itself. After all, aren't you growing your business in order to sell or transition it someday? Chicago has many businesses in transition, should yours be one?

**Business Advisor** Managing this overall approach to business growth for a small business or a medium-sized business often requires an outside perspective. Someone with no agenda or vested

interest in the business: a business advisor.

Small Business Growth through consulting is our business.

Helping your acorn business grow into a solid oaksm.



## Generating goodwill among customers and employees

**IT'S ESSENTIAL to let your customers know if your business is going to be closed over holiday periods.**

Here's a checklist of how to do this, along with some other things you need to think about when looking ahead:

- **Set up an e-mail auto response.** Most e-mail programs have an 'out of office' setting which you can use to state when your business will be closed, so that any customer or contact who gets in touch will get an automatic reply telling them how soon their query will be dealt with. It's worth saying that calls and premises will be monitored to ensure that you don't encourage thieves or vandals to target an empty building.

- **Break the news to customers personally.** If you're going to be unavailable, tell customers that call you or visit you in person that your business will be closed. They will appreciate being kept informed.

- **Update your website.** If you have included festive-themed content or comments on your site in the run-up to Christmas, make sure these sentiments are removed before you close for business so that the site doesn't look stale and out of date.

- **Revise your marketing plan.** Set aside some time to reread your marketing plan and assess the success of the campaigns you carried out during the past year. ■

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