

Management Ideas



FOR STILL BETTER

RESULTS

RELATIONS

REPUTATION

a monthly newsletter to key executive-leaders
on practices, possibilities and ideas generally
for stepped up performance

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on problem-solving and creative ideas

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**3442
FOR THE NEW
YEAR:**

Happily we are in India where we have more than one New Year day. We get many chances to take a New resolution. Here are suggestions from Dr. Michael McGannon.

MANY of us soon find that the **new year's resolutions** we made with much enthusiasm only a few days ago quickly fall victim to the demands of business life. But it need not be that way if you derive real pleasure from the resolutions you make. My suggestion is to replace the stoic flavour of traditional resolutions with new priorities on improving your quality of life. The following should all be considered:

* Rekindle close relationships. A stress-filled business life can damage personal relationships. But remember that they are the key to your health and happiness.

* Respect your body and mind and listen to the signals they send you. Sleep when you are tired and eat when you are hungry instead of out of habit.

* Stay active. You may not like swimming and jogging. That's OK. There are alternative exercises ranging from chopping wood to going for long walks. Remember, diseases hate moving targets.

* Manage stress. Reading, yoga, music, walking and meditation are constructive ways to relax.

* Quit smoking. There is no easy way out of this one. But if you do smoke, limit yourself to those cigarettes you really "enjoy". And smokers should avoid alcohol - it lowers their resistance.

* Develop hobbies that are totally absorbing, different from your job, fun and satisfying. If they involve your family, so much the better.

* There is mounting scientific evidence that the age-old axiom "laughter is the best medicine" contains more than a kernel of truth. Humour is the easiest way to reduce stress.

* Make enjoyment of life a priority. Keep in mind that life is your real career, not business or a profession.

More and more companies are going in for ISO 9000 certification. ISO 9000 certification certainly has value. However, if we apply it without reference to our environmental reality, we may get into big trouble as the extract from Wall Street journal explains. "The popularity of ISO 9000 training programmes shows that the Indian business is gunning for Europe. Because of language and similar constraints, this can be a new ball game for many. We have now a welcome publication, **Cracking The New European Markets** by Timothy Harper (John Wiley - \$24.95). The following is from a review in Chicago Tribune by William Swislow:

3443
EXPORTING TO
EUROPE:

Doing business in Europe can be a daunting prospect for the American neophyte. Whether it's the tangle of export-import rules, the mysteries of European unification, the uncertainties of currency translation or just the language barrier, it's not a territory to explore by yourself.

The assistance you are likely to need ranges from technical information on trade rules to advice on how to cash a cheque. A high-priced consultant may be able to shepherd you along, but what you really want, for starters, is a friend who has a feel for the place and some expertise you can trust.

That's where Timothy Harper comes in. An American lawyer and journalist who lives and works in Europe, Harper can't actually be at your side as you take the plunge, but he has collected enough case studies, illuminating anecdotes and informal wisdom to get you on your feet.

He begins by deconstructing the idea of European unity. Not that significant changes--political and economic--and new layers of bureaucracy aren't afoot. But the oneness that was supposed to have been achieved this year is a long way off.

Indeed, Harper points out, "the single market has underscored the local, regional and national differences in consumer tastes and preferences."

Understanding that diversity is a first key step, and understanding Europe's differences from us is the next.

"You have to have a willingness to accept that the way we do things in America is not necessarily the right way or the best way," Harper quotes an American lawyer as saying.

The differences can be mundane. Ocean Spray bottles turn out to be too big for most European refrigerators. Tennis balls are a much-appreciated gift from America because they are so expensive in Europe. More personally, Harper points out, it is considered rude to keep your hands in your pockets in many European countries. And, he says, Europeans tend to view Americans' teeth as remarkably healthy, though many also find us hygiene-obsessed.

The variations that divide America and Europe can be more significant, of course.

Harper notes, for example, that "Europeans are more likely to accept things as they are, with a resigned shrug."

Americans are more likely to insist on change and work to make things better.

Similarly, Europeans often see us as decisive and efficient, but also prone to being obnoxiously aggressive. And though many Europeans consider Americans enviably successful, we're also thought to be overly materialistic.

Conducting business across these cultural gaps can be complicated. But "no matter what else (Europeans) may think of Americans," Harper says, "they want to do business with us."

His book touches on many of the technical and business issues that involves, including conducting negotiations, using interpreters, dealing with potential middlemen and partners, and working out marketing strategies (Europe's diversity usually requires more than one, he notes).

Harper also provides a country-by-country survey of business etiquette and bravely takes on exchange rates, explaining how a novice can hedge currency transactions or even speculate a little on fluctuations.

Most importantly, he discusses in detail how Americans have established themselves in business on the Atlantic's other side, profiling successes that range from chocolate-chip cookies to TGI Friday's to a Brooklyn microbrewery's beer. (He also includes examples of businesses that found breaking into Europe tougher than expected, including Bonanza restaurants, Anheuser-Busch and a shopping-mall design firm.).

One of Harper's conclusions: "Typically, cultural transfers that have made the successful jump in recent years are based on one or more of the three things that seem ultimately American to most Europeans. Those three things are quality, service and fun."

Harper also takes the reader on a quick business tour of the other Europe, the countries to the east, where those American virtues are likely to still seem foreign.

"The biggest disadvantage" with Eastern Europeans, he points out, "is that they are poor."

Not only that, they are not used to Western marketing. One example he cites: "How do I know which one to buy?" a befuddled Polish housewife asked when several new brands of household detergent appeared on the shelves."

If Eastern Europe represents a vast potential market, it is one that will require lots of cultivation. In countries without a well-established market, determining values (and ownership) can be difficult, not to mention dealing with soft currencies, an inadequate supply infrastructure, old-fashioned bureaucrats and lousy communications.

Harper, a consultant to a number of American and British companies, doesn't minimize the difficulties of doing business East or West. He quotes one American executive who succeeded in Europe and has become a consultant: "I take an hour or so to explain to (clients) everything that's involved. They freak out."

But Harper gives plenty of examples of how to cope with complications, offering extensive quotations and anecdotes from Americans who have made the leap to Europe, and from Europeans.

You are still going to need a killer idea to make a killing in Europe, ofcourse, plus plenty of capital and lots of patience. But you could do a lot worse at the start than to consult Tim Harper.

3444
NCOYD DAY

If a Mother's Day and a Father's Day, why not a NCOYD Day -- NCOYD standing for National Clean Off Your Desk Day!

Here is a half humorous, half serious item for all to consider.

When Bill Clinton takes over in January, you don't think he'll find paper clips, stale gum and tiny pieces of paper in the presidential desk, do you? No way. Someone, and it won't be him or George Bush, will clean out that desk from top to bottom.

The rest of us, meanwhile, have to contend with sloppy desks. That's why Kathy Donoghue at Another Alternative, a Buffalo professional organizer, and her colleagues in the National Association of Professional Organizers have declared January 11 as "National Clean Off Your Desk Day."

Here are a few pointers:

* Sort mail by the wastebasket so you can throw away the junk immediately.

* Keep only the things you use every day on top of your desk. (Good luck)

* Use a daily planner to carefully plan your time and keep track of projects. Then you can file the project until it's time to work on it.

* Improve your filing system by keeping a list of the file names within easy reach.

Give it a try. It just might work, at least for a while.

3445
OUR CHILDREN
AND T.V
VIEWING

Television has invaded our country too. It has become a built-in baby sitter in a number of homes. Today's convenience should not blind us to tomorrow's problems of over-viewing of television by children.

What is over-viewing? According to one authority (Dr. Richard Sarkin), "preschool children should watch no television at all."

The American Academy of Pediatrics has identified the following problems:

1. Obesity.
2. Poor physical fitness.
3. Loss in self esteem
4. Sleep problems.
5. Learning unhealthy behavior.
6. Brain changes.....

and here are a few tips:

* Avoid the television altar effect in the living room. Children assume TV is important if it is a huge device given prominent position, with the best chairs arrayed in front of it.

* Watch television with your child. Good television sinks in deeper this way. A study showed that children who watched with their parents a "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood" episode on sharing had a greater tendency to share afterward than did children who watched it alone.

* Don't have the television on all the time as background distraction. Watch television only for specific programs, even a targeted 10 minute segment of a nature program, and then teach children to watch with their full attention. Never condone changing schedules or routines just to fit in television.

* "Demystify" television. Count up the commercial minutes per hour with your child. Tape a toy commercial, then go to the store to see what the toy really does. Use a camcorder to "make" television with your child. During commercial breaks, ask your child to predict what will happen next in the program.

* Always have alternative activities to suggest when your child wants to watch television.

* Don't set a bad example by watching too much television yourself, at least until after the children go to bed.

Little things are little only so long as they are not ignored. Dust is one such item. Dust and efficient computer working do not go together. The corrective ways are costly. The following item from Free Press (U.S.A) gives some specific tips.

**3446
SPRING
CLEANING FOR
COMPUTERS**

It's time for spring cleaning -- that covers your PC as well as your cupboards or garage.

Everything gets turned upside down ... you clean under beds and carpets, inside cabinets, even the top of door sills. When I was a kid, it got so wild our bird dog would hide out until cleaning was over.

Well, it's spring cleaning time. But don't hide like a dog. We'll clean up your PC today -- inside and out. May be you already know it, but dirt and dust can turn a computer into the fanciest boat anchor in town.

Let's start with your floppy disk drives. Think of the disk drive as a tape recorder and the floppy disk as the recording tape.

It has an iron coating and spins around inside the drive. A magnet in the drive records and plays back data.

The disk's iron coating, along with any dirt your floppy disk picks up, gradually rubs off inside the drive. That can gum things up so badly the drive will stop working. So about twice a year, I clean the drives. You can buy a cleaning kit for about \$7.

They all work about the same. You'll get what looks like a floppy disk and a plastic bottle of cleaning solution. You moisten the cleaning disk and insert it into the drive. The solution -- which is mostly alcohol -- cleans off the gunk as the drive runs.

Now take a look at the back of your PC. You'll see a mesh grille. That's to prevent your fingers from poking into the blades of the cooling fan. Let me make you a bet -- the mesh on your PC is coated with dust.

It makes sense -- the fan pulls in air and the mesh filters out the dirt. You won't hurt a thing if you use a vacuum to clean off the dirt. Once it's gone, your PC will run a lot cooler. That's important because heat shortens the life of most electronic components.

Now pretend you're an Army drill sergeant and rub your finger across the screen of your computer monitor. Pretty ugly, right? The high voltage in a monitor charges your screen with static electricity. That makes the glass act like a magnet, holding tiny dust particles on the screen.

Cleaning it can make a big difference -- sometimes you'll see more of a change than you would if you bought an expensive new monitor. Try it.

There are commercial "screen wipes" made to keep a monitor clean. You can pick up a package at the computer store. Meantime, you can take the low-tech approach.

Use a clean cotton cloth that's been moistened with a glass cleaner -- but don't use anything with ammonia or harsh chemicals. If you're not sure about your cleaner, try a mild vinegar and water solution instead.

I also clean the plastic cabinet of my PC and monitor with a product called Allsop Case and Cabinet Cleaner. Suit yourself. It won't make the PC work better, but this is -- after all -- spring cleaning. There is a certain amount of ceremonial cleaning to be done.

One last thing, do a little house cleaning with your hard disk. You'll probably find programmes you haven't used in a year or more. When I find these programs, I copy them off to floppy disks and then delete them from the hard disk.

OK, you should feel pretty virtuous by now. That's how spring cleaning is supposed to work. Now you can go find your dog.

STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKBOOK by Joseph C. Krallinger and Karsten G. Hellebust. John Wiley \$75.00

3447
BOOK NOTES:

This is the second, revised edition of this popular book on how to systematically plan a company's future.

This is a skill development workbook. Each chapter of theory is followed by a practice chapter that, step by step, shows you how to prepare, sell, and accomplish your plans.

The second edition includes discussions of performance evaluation, debt financing, and the importance of cash flow and working capital in budgeting and strategic planning.

On the promise of a car from his father, the teenager agreed to earn "A" grades, keep his bedroom in order, and get his hair cut.

3448
LAUGHING
MATTER?

When the teen honored every promise but the haircut, his father said the car was still out of the question.

The agitated youngster protested:

"Plato, Aristotle, and Leonardo da Vinci were great mean, and they all had long hair!"

"... and they walked everywhere as well," answered his father.

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