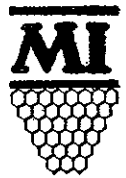


# Management Ideas



FOR STILL BETTER

RESULTS

RELATIONS

REPUTATION

a monthly newsletter to key executive-leaders  
on practices, possibilities and ideas generally  
for stepped up performance  
edited by  
N. H. ATTHREYA MA PhD  
author, educator & consultant  
on problem-solving and creative ideas

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**3403 IN-HOUSE COUNSELORS:** Companies do use part-time or full time counselors even now, but only for assisting employees who have work-related (eg. absenteeism) or person-related (eg. alcoholism) problems. A few companies have started the pro-active practice of counseling to forestall problems. Some companies in the high-tech area have found that counseling of the proactive type is needed at every level. People have problems of many kinds. They want to talk to an understanding and informed person. Whether the counselor is part-time or full-time is secondary.

**3404 A TREASURE MAP:** The biggest problem the professionals face is "not that good books don't exist anymore but that they're surrounded by so many bad ones."

Near 50,000 books are published every year in the English language alone. Which ones are the good ones - good for us?

If a good book can be likened to a treasure, then clearly what we need is a reliable treasure map. But RELIABLE is the key; "there's so much hype out there, books start to look like nothing but fool's gold."

Fortunately, there is great help. The staff of BOOKLIST wades through those 50,000 new books in search of what's good across the gamut of fiction and nonfiction. "In the course of one year, BOOKLIST staff usually reviews about 7000 books, a total that includes children's books, reference books, and many specialised titles designed to fill particular subject needs in libraries. That 7000 has been whittled down to 1000 for inclusion in the annual edition of The Book Buyer's Advisor." The introduction to the 1991 edition says: The titles were selected with the tastes of the book-loving general reader in mind, the kind of person who reads not just to find out how to do something but to be entertained and enlightened - and to feel the sublime rhythm of well-crafted words rolling off the page. Naturally, the attempt has been made to pick the best 1000 books reviewed over a year's time, but in making such a subjective judgement, the radically different tastes of the reading public have been taken into account."

The nonfiction subjects covered are: Art, Biography, Business, Cookery, Crafts, Film & Drama, Health & Medicine, History, Humor, Literature & Language, Music, Occult, Parenting, Philosophy & Psychology, Plants & Gardening, Poetry, Popular Culture, Religion, Science & Nature, Social Issues, Sports & Recreation, Travel, and True Crime.

A sample of the review is given below:

**Weiss, Robert S.** Staying the Course: The Emotional and Social Lives of Men Who Do Well at Work. Free Press, \$24.95 302 p.

There have been plenty of books about aberrant males--alcoholics, child abusers, con men, etc. But here is a study of average middle-class men who go to work happily and return home contentedly. Of course, no one's life is quite that perfect, but Weiss's study demonstrates that it is possible to achieve financial and domestic harmony without being the man in the gray flannel suit. From an admittedly specialized pool (only 80 men were interviewed in suburban and urban New England areas), Weiss draws general conclusions that hit home. He states that work is a man's means of defining himself and demonstrates, through sample remarks and incidents, the degree to which success and/or stress in the workplace influences a man's self-image, his family life, and his role in the community. There is an old-fashioned cast to the responses here and an almost ominous lack of vision about the effects of feminism (generally, if the wives work, their jobs come off as secondary in terms of economics and importance). Weiss' findings indicate a society that either has regressed or has not altered to accommodate working women as peers. It is an intriguing perspective and certainly one that can give both men and women new insight into the way men feel and think. - Denise Perry Donavin.

**3405 A WORKER'S CODE OF ETHICS:** There has been endless national debate lately about exit policy, but nothing much about work values, or the standards of ethics and behavior we should use at work. A columnist in Free Press (Detroit), Lona O'Connor, commends the following:

**Be Proud Of Your Work:** If you go home night after night knowing that you cut corners on the job or didn't go that one extra step to help a customer, you might as well leave a chunk of your self-respect in the dumpster on the way out.

If you think that the way to get back at an employer who mistreats you or pays you poorly is to do a sloppy job, you're wrong. You have an obligation to yourself to do your job well.

**Use It Or Lose It:** Always look for ways to do your job better, more efficiently or quicker. You owe it to your brain to use it well and often.

**Teach Somebody:** How do you know if you're doing a job worth being proud of? You will have some skills and wisdom to pass on to someone else. Teaching is a generous act which can extend from a small commitment of your time (training a new worker or speaking at a high school career day) to becoming a mentor.

**Get A Life:** For generations, the old work ethic said you must give your all to your work. Your family could grow up without knowing you, you could work long hours and weekends, and all for what? So your company's widget would cost one tenth of a cent less than the competition's widget?

It's important to your self-respect to do a good job, but it's also important to your sanity that you spend time with family and friends, in the real world, which is larger than the world of work.

**Stay Healthy:** Among its other faults, the old work ethic suggested that you could smoke and suck down coffee, skip sleep and eat on the run, drink to relax after a hard day; whatever it took to get the job done. Then, when you had your massive heart attack, your company's insurance would cover the costs of your surgery and rehabilitation.

No job is worth damaging your health.

**Turn Your Complaints Into Action:** Most of us have at least one thing at work that really bugs us. If you have been chronically repeating your pet complaint for more than a couple of months, it's fair to assume that nobody else is going to come and fix it for you. So take some action on your own. What can you do to make it better for yourself? With whom can you team up to solve this problem? If you're not willing to commit yourself to solving a problem that bugs you, you can conclude only that you actually prefer complaining.

**Move Up, Move On, But Move:** Staying in the same place, doing the same thing, year after year is as deadening as taking a drug. Maybe you're not the sort of person who wants to run the department, strive for a promotion every six months, get a new job every year or start your own business. But you can - and should - keep your eyes open for opportunities. You'd be surprised how many go floating past you every day. Even if you took advantage of only one opportunity in 10, you would be doing a lot better than you are now.

**Respect Your Coworkers:** I didn't say you had to like them. But you do have to speak politely to them, listen when they speak and give them the benefit of the doubt whenever you can.

**Make Peace:** Most people who have worked in the same place for a long time develop an enemy or two. After a while, they may even forget why

they became enemies, but maintain the bad feelings.

Remove one unpleasant aspect of your work day. End the fight.

**Smile:** You're part of your coworkers' environment on the job, so give them something pleasant to look at. Even if it's only a reflex, many of them will smile back, thereby improving your own environment.

**3406 WHAT IS NEW?** Life is too full of care; there is no time to stand and stare, says a British poet. Much less is there time or inclination to laugh. The story is the same world over. Answers are being sought and found. Here is a related news item:

Wearing pajamas in public. Gluing toilet paper rolls to his feet. Standing backward in elevators.

It's all in a day's work for C.W.A. Metcalf, 47, a humorist whose 10 year old C.W. Metcalf & Company offers humor training programs to clients like A.T.&T., I.B.M., Xerox and General Motors. He teaches executives how to use humor to create a happier work environment that ultimately reduces stress and absenteeism, and increases creativity and productivity.

Mr. Metcalf and his five-member staff in Fort Collins, Colo, annually conduct more than 100 workshops, speaking engagements and consultations on four continents at rates ranging from \$2,500 to \$10,000.

Mr. Metcalf has been working on the script for a one-man autobiographical show based on his business philosophy and his book. "Lighten Up: Survival Skills for People Under Pressure," which he wrote with his wife and company president, Roma Felible.

A former television writer and actor (Drucko the Clown on "Happy Days"), Mr. Metcalf stumbled on his current profession in 1983 when he was asked to help health care workers cope through humor.

As might be expected, humor is pretty serious business in the corporate world. Examples run from group discussions on acceptable topics for office jokes to beating overstuffed chairs with plastic bats to release frustrations. "We're not telling people to go to work in clown noses, but to look at humor as a coping mechanism," Mr. Metcalf said.

One client, the Digital Equipment Corporation, reported that productivity jumped 15 percent and sick days fell by half during nine months of using Mr. Metcalf's techniques. And a division of the Xerox Corporation was so impressed that it is incorporating Mr. Metcalf's training into its long-term strategic planning.

**3407 FINANCIAL MODEL: A MANAGEMENT TOOL:** May be you use this management tool. Our observation is that few use it. The accompanying item is from Robert Geis, a financial expert.

There exists today a powerful management tool that many business owners either don't use at all or use so poorly that they get little benefit. That tool is known generally as a financial model. A financial model presents a complete financial picture of a business over a period of time based on assumptions for that specific business.

The output from such a financial model includes a balance sheet, an income statement and cash flow statement for each month of a 12 month period as well as total figures for the year. This is the minimum output, but as the user becomes more experienced, more information can be provided.

Many business owners will say, "We prepare an annual budget; what's so different about this financial model?" The answer is in two parts: First, a financial model presents a complete model of the business, whereas most budgets include only the income statement.

Second, a modern computer-based financial model is flexible and easy to change. This is a very important feature because as conditions change during the year, as they inevitably will, it is essential that the model be changed to reflect the new conditions. Otherwise, management will lose confidence in the model and will stop using it.

It is fascinating to work with a business owner the first time he or she sets up such a financial model. The business owner furnishes all the assumptions such as how quickly the receivables are collected, what the inventory levels will be, how rapidly inventories will turn over, how fast the company will pay its suppliers, and how much the bank line will be.

Then the opening balance sheet information is input, and the program calculates automatically the complete financial statements for each month and for the year. Frequently, at this point, the owner will say that a mistake must have been made in entering the numbers because some figures in the statements, such as cash or inventories, are much larger or smaller than they could possibly be, based on experience.

At that point, all the data that has been entered is checked and the business owner assured that the numbers are correct and that if the result is impossible, then it must be the assumptions that are wrong.

Here is where the owner often needs some expert help to explain how the assumptions provided could produce such a result. When finally convinced that the assumptions are wrong, the owner will have learned a very important lesson - namely that there are still things to learn about the business.

So many of the decisions that management makes affect not only the income statement, but also the balance sheet and the cash flow statement. With a good financial model, management can see the effect of proposed changes on all three of these statements almost immediately.

Management can then ask the following questions: Should we lease or buy a building to provide more space? Does it make sense to borrow money to take discounts on purchases? What is the real financial benefit of increasing our inventory turns from 4.5 to 5.5. times per year?

The model will quickly calculate the effect of such new assumptions on your computer screen. Then management can refine its assumptions even further or have the changed statements printed out for further study.

The next step in getting the most out of a financial model is to compare the plan created with actual results from the business, on a regular

basis. The easiest way to do this is to print out your projected results alongside your actual results for the current month and the year to date. The software that produces your financial statements probably can print out these projected figures on your income statement but not on your balance sheet or cash flow statements.

If this is the case, it is worth entering the projected balance sheet and cash flow figures by hand. You can combine some of the less important figures and reduce the number of entries by hand. What you are looking for is an overall picture of the things you can control.

Also, with the computer you can always go back if you need more detail. Having such statements which compare actual versus projected results enables the owner to see quickly where problems are occurring so he or she can begin to see the cause of the problems and start to find solutions.

When the owner develops a new plan of action, the model should be revised to reflect this new plan. This is the essence of good management: developing a plan for the future using all the knowledge available and then comparing actual results with projected results on a regular basis and developing a new plan when the original plan is obviously not going to work.

By making the development of the projection the keystone of your management system, you are forced to think constantly about the future. This is much better than always using financial information which shows only what happened in the past, as conventional financial statements do.

#### **3408 RECOMMENDED READING:**

**THE EXERCISE HABIT.** Your personal road map to developing a life long exercise commitment. By James Gavin (Leisure Press, Champaign, Illinois \$14.95)

**Sariramadyam kalu dharma sadanam,** Poet Kalidasa said. If dharma is a goal of life, physical well-being is an essential in life.

Fitness there will be, if exercise is a habit - something that is part of us.

"I am a great lover of exercise," said a comedian. He then added: "Whenever I feel like exercising, I lie down until the feeling passes away!" Wit apart, it is so because he has not cultivated exercise as a habit.

Exercise is more than physiology; it is psychology. It is the fun and flexible way of realizing the exercise habit that is described in clear detail by the sports psychologist - a practising sportsman - James Gavin. The text helps us analyze our motivation; plan our practices and chart our fitness commitment life style.

**3409 LAUGHING MATTER?** A Western bookseller wrote to a Chicago firm for a dozen copies of Dean Farrar's 'SEEKERS AFTER GOD' to be sent to him at once. He got a telegram in reply, which read, "NO SEEKERS AFTER GOD" in Chicago or New York. Suggest you try Philadelphia."

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