

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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3436 SCHOLAR IN RESIDENCE

For several reasons - some understandable and some not so understandable - members of an organization are unable to do the needed reading. It is unsafe to be uninformed, we all know. One way to bridge the gap is to have a scholar in residence - a person who has the habit of reading, a person who has the inclination to read books of many interests, a person who can brief the members of the organization on the essence of what he/she has read. This will be a contract arrangement. The title need not be taken literally. In fact, the 'job' lends itself to maximum flexibility.

3437 MEMORY SKILLS

Dr. Michael McGannon, medical director of the Insead Business Health course recently offered a number of suggestions in a Financial Times (UK) article:

Modern managers are always complaining of memory loss. They say they cannot remember conversations, dates, names and appointments. Help is at hand: in the vast majority of cases, mild memory lapses can be corrected.

Judging by the growing weight of literature on the subject, there is no single memory system, but multiple systems with different functions. Memory functions can be divided into two: declarative (or explicit), in which we learn and remember with awareness, and non-declarative (or implicit) in which we learn without being aware of the process of information storage and retrieval. This process is a delicate one, and can be affected by your life-style.

Memory failures are often due as much to a failure to acquire and store information, as to disruptions in the process of transforming the information into more permanent memories.

There is some evidence that the memory works better if the individual is in the same state of mind at the time of retrieval as at the time of storage.

This could mean that if you are given information after having had a few drinks, you will be better able to retrieve it in the same inebriated state.

Throughout the literature on memory, there is constant reference to attention or awareness. This is one of the keys to better memory. If you are mentally "elsewhere", you have little chance of registering that bit of information. The more you perceive the information to be trivial, the less likely you will be to recall it.

To an extent, this is normal. You are bombarded with facts and faces all day, every day: your brain censors what you should retain and store. Without this function, you would be buried under mountains of useless information.

Memory skills can be developed with practice and with regular use.

* Attend to the present moment. A useful drill to practise at the airport, on planes or in traffic jams is to bring your mind to focus on a single object in front of you (such as a pencil) and concentrate on it for one minute. It may not sound long, but within 20 seconds or so, your active mind will be distracted and will tend to drift.

* Another trick is to make a conscious effort to pay attention to the names of people you are meeting for the first time. This not only helps you to remember the names, it provides good practice for being in the present moment.

* To reinforce the connections between ideas as they are stored, try using mnemonic devices, tools designed to link otherwise isolated ideas. Generations

of music students have used the mnemonic devise "Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge" to learn the notes on the lines on the treble clef. Create your own mnemonics to give you "memory handles".

- * Get plenty of exercise to bathe the brain memory centres in oxygen-rich blood.
- * Get enough rest to let the brain relax after a day of stimulus bombardment. This includes five minute "power naps" and deep breathing during the day. Fatigue will impair your concentration and your ability to remember.
- * Excessive alcohol and uncompensated stress will also compromise your memory skills.

**3438 WORK
PLACE VIOLENCE**

Sin, a thinker pointed out, is what you first hate, then tolerate and then embrace. The same can be said of corruption and violence. The media plays up violence so much that the literate have become conditioned to the second, if not the third stage. If you displease me, the argument goes, you have no business to exist. "I'll fix you or I'll have someone to fix you" is the spoken and unspoken threat.

As the following extract (from Wall Street Journal) will show, this phenomenon is international, we need to know how others elsewhere are facing it.

It was a termination hearing that ended in tragedy.

Immediately following the hearing Robert Earl Mack, 43 years old, shot and wounded his supervisor, then chased and killed another manager. Pandemonium erupted at the General Dynamics Corp. Sirens blared; people ran and hid under desks.

Minutes later Mr. Mack surrendered to police with the 38-caliber revolver.

The killing isn't just noteworthy as a statistic among the 25,000 or so homicides that occur in America each year. It is also an example of what criminologists call the fastest-growing form of murder in America: workplace homicide.

Veiled Threats

Offices, factories and warehouses - once regarded as islands of safety - increasingly are the sites of brutal violence. Frustrated or unstable employees have resorted to veiled threats and intimidation against co-workers or supervisors. And in dozens of instances in the past year alone, the Mack incident has been duplicated: Workers who have lost their jobs have sought vengeance against the individuals who terminated them, often in calculated and cold-blooded fashion.

That violence now extends beyond streets and homes and increasingly has crept into the workplace is not surprising, given the staggering increase in homicide in America. But the statistics on workplace violence are truly startling: Of some 7,000 fatal injuries that occur in the workplace each year, 12% are homicides. In fact, in the nine-Year period from Jan.1, 1980, through Dec.31,1988, a total of 6,956 cases were identified as work-related homicides in one recent study by the federal National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. While statistics don't distinguish between the liquor-store clerk who was murdered by an outside assailant and someone harmed by a fellow employee, experts say the latter increasingly accounts for violence.

Bloody Rampage

In New Jersey, for instance, investigators believe the man who recently pleaded guilty to federal charges in connection with the kidnapping of Exxon Corp. executive Sidney J. Reso may have wanted revenge against Exxon for his 1987 firing. Investigators say former Exxon security official Arthur D. Seale, who still faces state charges of kidnapping and murder, was obsessed with retaliating against Exxon for his firing.

Often, the violence takes the form of a bloody rampage. In Bennington, Vt., last October, a disgruntled female employee at an Eveready Battery plant shot and killed the plant manager and critically wounded two others after trying to set fire to the plant. In the the same month, in Woodlawn, Md., a fired auto mechanic returned to his former workplace with a 9mm semiautomatic handgun, killing two and wounding a third.

Perhaps the most chilling incident took place in San Diego on June 4, 1991. On that day, Larry Hansel returned to his former place of employment, the Elgar Corp. electronics plant where he had been dismissed three months before. The 41-year-old father of two, who investigators say had a fascination with guns but no history of violent behavior, turned Elgar into a madhouse. Wearing a bandoleer of ammunition around his chest and carrying a 12 gauge shotgun and a rifle, the former technician shot out the plant's telephone network, detonated two radio bombs that filled the corridors with smoke and then stalked his prey.

"He looked me straight in the eye and said, 'You can go,'" recalls chief financial officer Chris Kelford, who encountered the the gunman on the first floor." The assailant killed two executives - and later surrendered miles from the scene.

Histories of Violence

Psychologists say the most maliciously disgruntled share common histories of depression, paranoia and violence. They generally have difficulty accepting authority and exhibit a fascination with weaponry. They also may be undergoing a private stress such as a divorce or death in the family that compounds feelings of insecurity at a time of job loss.

"Oftentimes, their life is their job. When their job is in jeopardy, their life is in jeopardy," says psychologist Thomas D. Harpley, founder of National Trauma Services of San Diego. Dr. Harpley's firm intervenes after violent workplace incidents; it also helps to defuse potentially violent situations by teaching employers to be alert to warning signs, such as employees' sudden behavioral changes.

"There usually is some warning signal, though it often goes undetected," Dr. Harpley says. When signals are detected, and where dismissal is involved, Dr. Harpley's firm counsels companies to be as non-confrontational as possible.

3439 TO KEEP OFF KIDNEY STONES

I have noted this problem of kidney stone affecting the career and wellbeing of young professionals and more so when they have a lot of field work to do. This informative extract from the Mayo Clinic Health Letter should help take preventive steps.

Drinking too little fluid during the hot summer months may leave you more than just thirsty. If you're prone to form kidney stones, dehydration makes it easier for these troublemakers to develop.

A kidney stone is a hardened mineral deposit. It begins as a microscopic particle and grows slowly, developing into a stone over a period of months or even years.

Most stones begin in your kidney and move "downstream," through the ureter into your bladder. From the bladder, stones are usually passed out of your body as you urinate.

About one in 10 people is at risk to develop kidney stones. You're either prone to form stones or not. No one knows why. But if you develop one stone, you are prone to have more.

Kidney stones can have many causes, including endocrine disorders, chronic dehydration, urinary tract obstructions, recurrent infections and genetic disorders.

You're more likely to form a stone when you're dehydrated because the amount of your urine decreases. It becomes concentrated with solute, a substance that can be dissolved in liquid.

When this happens, crystals can separate from your urine and become the core of a future kidney stone.

Stones frequently remain undiagnosed until they begin to pass, causing a type of pain doctors call renal colic. Pain may begin in your midback over one of your kidneys. It may extend into your lower abdomen, groin and genitalia. Stones sometimes are discovered during an X-ray examination for another condition.

The amount of liquid you drink is just one factor in the formation of a kidney stone. Chemical imbalance, diet, infection and heredity also play roles in stone formation. Because prevention and treatment vary, depending on the type of kidney stone, knowing the different kinds is important. There are four types:

* **Calcium stones.** Eighty percent of all kidney stones consist mainly of calcium salts - calcium oxalate and calcium phosphate.

Although hard water can cause calcium salts to deposit in your sink, there's no evidence that drinking hard water increase your risk for kidney stones.

Men are four to five times more likely than women to develop calcium stones.

* **Uric acid stones.** Ten percent of stones are composed mostly of uric acid.

Again, men are more prone to have these stones. If you have gout or another condition that makes your urine very acidic (a pH less than 5.5), your chances of developing uric acid stones increase.

* **Struvite stones.** Also called "infection stones," struvite stones account for about 10 percent of all kidney stones.

Struvite stones form because certain bacteria that can grow in urine produce ammonia, making the urine alkaline. This creates ideal conditions for stones to form.

Because these bacteria are present throughout the stone, antibiotics are ineffective inasmuch as they cannot penetrate the stone. Infection stones may grow large. Usually a urologist needs to remove them surgically.

Anyone prone to form kidney stones can develop a struvite stone. If a stone is developing in your kidney, the presence of the ammonia-producing bacteria can transform it into a struvite stone.

* **Cystine stones.** Only about 1 percent of stones are cystine. Cystine is an amino acid that doesn't dissolve well in water.

This is a hereditary disorder in which your kidney fails to reabsorb cystine, putting you at risk for forming cystine stones. They resemble crystallized maple syrup.

* **Increase fluids.** Each hour you're awake, drink an 8-ounce glass of fluid. Make half of what you drink water. If you waken during the night to urinate, drink a glass of water. One glass during the night is enough.

Keep your urine as light in color as possible. At first you may feel you can't process this much liquid, but you'll adjust.

* **Diet.** Usually, the type of kidney stone you have will determine how you'll need to adjust your diet. Your intestines may be overabsorbing whatever it is your kidney stones are made of. For example, if you have calcium oxalate stone, you may have to eat fewer foods high in calcium and oxalate. Or you might have to decrease dietary protein or sodium. Your doctor and registered dietitian can help you tailor your diet.

* **Medication.** If your stones can't be controlled by diet and liquid guidelines, your physician will probably put you on medication to help prevent a recurrence.

Most stones respond to treatment with fluids, diet and medication. For those that don't respond, surgery once was a common option. Surgery requires a seven - to 10-day hospital stay.

Today, for the 20 percent of stones that don't pass or respond to medical treatment, the most widely used treatment is noninvasive lithotripsy.

No surgical incisions are necessary with this type of lithotripsy, and you can usually leave the hospital the next day. Occasionally, removal of a kidney stone still requires traditional surgery.

**3440 THE LAST
MINUTE MANAGER**

is a book modelled in every sense on the popular book, One Minute Manager. The subtitle: **The Complete Guide to Managerial Excellence, Social Success and Personal Fulfilment.** "Wildly amusing". Author: Professor V. Smart. Publisher: Ryburn Publishing, London. Pages: 96. Price: £2.50.

The blurb on the backcover reads: Thousands of dedicated disciples around the world have been practising Last-Minute Management at both work and home for many years. But their worth and contribution have gone largely unrecognised and unrewarded.

In this seminal allegory, the late Professor V. Smart demonstrates the centrality of Last Minute Management to economic prosperity and individual well-being.

And he reveals something of the intellectual framework which supports his challenging views: The Thirteen Mysteries, the Twelve Codes, the Eleven Epigrams, the Ten Truths, the Nine Maxims, the Eight Principles, the Seven Secrets, the Six Laws, the Five Axioms, the Four Rules, the Three Premises, the Two Banalities and the Big Con.

Here are two brief extracts from the book:

"Thousands of dedicated disciples around the world have practised Last-Minute Management down the ages. But our worth and contribution have gone largely unrecognised and unrewarded. Feelings of guilt, inferiority and inadequacy have predominated over self-esteem and confidence. But confidence is the vital element in successful Last-Minute Management, as you can see from The Three Premises."

"The first premise is: Things never go according to plan." "The third premise is: They almost always work out in the end." "And the second premise which unites them is: You have confidence in your ability to pull off the seemingly impossible.".....

"We, however, have a full in-tray. Therefore we return to the question: how do we organise ourselves? First of all, you only tackle what is urgent: there's enough of that to occupy an ordinary mortal for twenty-four hours, so it could be disastrous to even contemplate anything non-urgent. Mavis files it away until it becomes urgent, and if it never becomes urgent, well so much the better; it was clearly only ever fit to be ignored."

"Secondly, you divide the urgent into the important and the trivial. If you start with the important you'll spend the whole day on it and never get round to the trivial, so do the trivial first in the knowledge that the important has got to be done and you'll do it. Well, almost."

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A simpleton once prayed to God: "Lord, give me Rs.5,000.00! Of this amount I will give Rs.1,000.00 to the poor. But if you doubt me, Lord, then give me Rs.4,000.00, and give the balance to the poor Yourself." **3441 LAUGHING MATTER?**

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