



Management Ideas

FOR STILL BETTER

RESULTS

RELATIONS

REPUTATION

RENEWAL

a monthly newsletter to key executive-leaders on practices, possibilities and ideas generally for stepped up performance
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Published by: MMC School of Management III fl. Court Chambers, Bombay 400 020.
Ph: 200 7911/200 0446 Fax: 208 0404 / 208 0446

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3758 AN ELECTION STORY

Mark Twain once told a story of a man whose big ambition was to get elected to the state legislature. He kept being frustrated, however, because he used such big words when he made a speech that none of the farmers in his district could understand him. Then one day fortune, in the guise of misfortune, smiled on him.

He was milking a cow and practising one of his speeches at the same time, when the cow kicked him in the jaw and caused him to bite off the end of his tongue. After that he could only speak words of one syllable and the farmers like his speeches so much that they elected him.

3759 FROM A CONSULTANT'S DIARY

These are our rules: One company has introduced the practice of explaining the rules, the policies and procedures of the company to the newcomers and the old timers. They have a quarterly session for this.

The personnel are allowed to ask innocent and even irreverent questions.

The Board has issued a directive. If a rule cannot be justified any longer, it should either be suitably modified or just dropped.

The company reports three major benefits:

1. Obsolete and annoying rules are getting dropped.
2. The personnel attend to their job with enthusiasm, since they are convinced of the relevance and currency of the rules.
3. The time sense has improved considerably-many are based on one belief: The more you delay, the better the decision.

I wish the government offices experiment with this idea.

A Breakfast meeting: A high tech company CEO has a once-a-month breakfast meeting. Those who assemble will be those who have their birthdays that month.

It is an hour of food and questions and answers.

The CEO confesses that the session is not always easy. "I get a lot of feedback and information about problems that are perceived as urgent by my people."

A Recommended Book: CYCLE TIME REDUCTION By Jerry L. Harbour, Ph.D. Price \$29.95 (Packing & Forwarding Rs.25.00 extra)

It is no longer enough simply to provide products and services with the greatest value at the lowest cost. Market forces demand that it also be done in the least amount of time. Economies of speed are rapidly reshaping how we work and how we compete, both domestically and globally.

Addressing this new competitive reality, CYCLE TIME REDUCTION offers practical insights into decreasing the cycle time of any work process. Built around five key cycle time reduction strategies, the book details the importance of identifying and eliminating time-consuming process waste, providing the right resources at the right place and time, using technology effectively, creating continuous work flow, and implementing cross-functional work teams.

Cycle time Reduction is a knowhow book. It provides guidelines, checklists, tools, and case studies from a variety of industries.

(Copies can be had from SELECT BOOKS 3E1 Court Chambers, 3rd Flr. 35 New Marine Lines Mumbai 400 020)

3760 OFFICE NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS

"Don't hope for change; vote for one" says a hoarding.

Whether for the country, we do not know. (Status quo still seems the wish of at least the vocal.) For our organization, this is necessary and possible. We can start with some New Year Resolutions for the fiscal year.

*We give below New Year's Resolutions suggested by Ann Chadwell Humphries (in **The Right Moves Volume 2**).*

You've probably already made some personal New Year's Resolutions for 1998 (Lose weight? Exercise more? Spend more time with friends and family?) but how about a few resolutions for the office? Here are several topics to consider.

Write Those Thank-You Notes

All those gifts! All those holiday parties! What to do? Write those thank-you notes! Business priorities may be a bit out of order when

companies spend megabucks on annual reports and then their staff budgets nothing for thank-you notes.

But thank-you notes are such a pain! Well, here is how to make them painless. Turn writing thank-you notes into an event. Okay; it is not a rock concert, but with some funky stationery, pens, stamps, a fire, some of your favourite music, and something good to sip, the chore becomes reasonably enjoyable.

What if you don't have time for this approach? Then get organized. Group like-functions, i.e. affix all postage, stamp your return address, address the envelopes. Then, place the stationery and envelopes in a travel pack, so while you wait in the drive-through, for the meeting to end, or for your children's dance lesson, you can zip out those babies. But don't rush, or you'll sound insincere.

For turbo thank-you notes, consider zany greeting cards. They do the heavy lifting. Just sign your name, but be sure to add a couple of sentences to personalize your message.

What do you send thank-you notes for? Most gifts and gestures deserve some acknowledgement. Send thank-you notes to vendors who sent you a gift, to hosts who included you in a fun party, and to co-workers who baked you something special.

For costly gifts - financially or otherwise - use finer stationery. For smaller, more casual gifts, use less expensive note paper. You can even fax or e-mail thanks for the smaller stuff, but voice mail remains a cheap way-out.

Keep your message focused, acknowledging the giver's thoughtfulness, generosity, or imagination. In a market where businesses spend fortunes to differentiate themselves, a simple thank-you note can make a lasting impression.

Make a Religious Holidays Calendar

You've purchased a new calendar and have begun to enter important dates for 1998 and beyond. As you schedule your time and business events, remember to include religious holidays so you will be aware of days that may be important to the people you work with. Following is a list of the most prominent. The spellings vary, and asterisks indicate the

observance begins the evening of the day before.

Christmas* (Eastern Christianity)

First Night of Ramadan (Islam)

Coming-of-Age-Day (Shintoism)

Chinese/Vietnamese New Year Buddhism)

'id al-Fitr* (Islam)

Ash Wednesday (Western Christianity)

Mahashivaratri* (Hinduism)

Lent (Eastern Christianity)

New Year (Baha'i)

Palm Sunday (Western Christianity)

Holi (Hinduism)

Good Friday* (Western Christianity)

Easter (Western Christianity)

Saka (Buddhism)
(Theravada Buddhists)

Vaisakhi (Hinduism/ Sikhism)

Day of Hajj (Islam)

'id al-Adha* (Islam)

Palm Sunday (Eastern Christianity)

Feast of Ridvan (Baha'i)

Passover* (Orthodox Judaism)

Holy Friday* (Eastern Christianity)

Pascha/Easter (Eastern Christianity)

Pentecost (Western Christianity)

Wesak (Buddhism)

Declaration of the Bab (Baha'i)

Ascension of Baha'u'llah (Baha'i)

Shavuot* (Orthodox Judaism)

Martyrdom of the Bab (Baha'i)

Janmashtami (Hinduism)

Rosh Hashanah* (Orthodox Judaism)

Yom Kippur* (Orthodox Judaism)

Vijayadashami (Hinduism)

Suklot* (Orthodox Judaism)

Birth of the Bab (Baha'i)

Shmini Atzeret* (Orthodox Judaism)

Simchat Torah* (Orthodox Judaism)

Diwali (Hinduism/Buddhism)

Installation of the Holi Scriptures as Guru Granth Sahib (Sikhism)

Birth of Baha 'u'llah (Baha'i)

First Night of Hanukkah* (Orthodox Judaism)

Christmas* (Western Christianity)

Kwanzaa (African American Cultural Observance)

Open Yourself to New Ideas

Beware of dismissing good ideas with "Been there. Done that." We've all chanted, "Mum Hmmm, Don't I know? to someone who's told a story similar to what we've experienced. We've all rolled our eyes and nodded knowingly when someone has suggested something that we, too, have tried but outgrown or found unsuccessful.

Yet, lately, I've caught myself questioning, "Been there. Done that."

"Beware of dismissing ideas with, 'Been there. Done that.'"

Perhaps we'd benefit more by saying, "Been there. Done that. Maybe need to revisit."

Notice the progress made in business by people who succeeded where others had failed. Their success could have been due to timing, yes, or it could have been achieved through a slight tweak or fundamental overhaul of the status quo. Think of the people who have recaptured or expanded accounts using new, perhaps, unconventional ideas. Remember experience with transformed employees or customers who had been dismissed, but with new management became business assets.

Be grateful for scientists, discoverers, artists, and inventors who persisted in endeavors that dissuaded their colleagues. Think of the great performances from people who didn't know they couldn't do it.

Carol Lynn Nute of Retail Results in Columbia, South Carolina, says, "I try to stay current and

fresh in my approach to business. Otherwise, the fun and creativeness is lost. Yes, I steer my clients away from obstacles and dead ends, but I try to remain open to new ways of doing things."

Look at familiar things with freshness. Review policies that were implemented in different times, but which have become stale. Reconsider opinions you've formed over the years which have now isolated you and made you jaded.

Welcome Change

Change can be welcome in the workplace.

In response to people who drone, "People don't like change," I say, "Excuse me, but there's a lot of change people do want and welcome."

Perhaps resistance to change is due to people's inflexibility, fear, lack of imagination, or need to protect. Perhaps it's due to the way change is introduced or managed. While sometimes people do need stability to catch their breath momentarily, don't underestimate the welcome relief and pleasure change can bring.

There can be change to improve things. There can be change to enable one to endure or enjoy seasonal variations. There can be change to enable one to endure or enjoy seasonal variations. There can be change to return to old ways because something new didn't work. There can be change simply for variety or pleasure.

Change can be spontaneous or planned, fast or slow.

Sometimes, change is easy and inexpensive; often, it is very difficult, painful, and achieved only through great sacrifice.

In watching the Olympics in Atlanta last summer, I was struck by change and the courage and craziness to try it. I saw new sports introduced; greater, wonderful coverage of women; and new techniques to help athletes achieve greatness. I saw both the willingness and the reluctance of coaches and athletes to risk something new to gain something greater, all the while protecting what's valuable. I'm beginning to think about the agility change can bring, and the practice and skill and everyday commitment it takes to implement it.

Think about how you perceive change. Where can you break through to richness?

Create an Employee-Friendly Environment

In this age of downsizing and buyouts, what can organizations do to attract or create and keep great employees when everyone is being asked to do more?

- Value people's talents. Let them do their jobs. Don't hover, trap, or second-guess them. Invest in people to enhance and replenish their strengths, but also invest in them to upgrade their job needs without making them feel inadequate. Let great employees take you to new heights.
- Have an ethical mission statement and follow it. Great employees want to work for an organization of integrity. They don't want to be embarrassed by companies that don't give good service or conduct business above board.
- Invest in good training and clarify your expectations. Some business essentially throw people into their jobs, then wonder why productivity or morale isn't high but turnover is. Explain what you expect and provide the tools for people to do their jobs. Then periodically refresh them with professional development. Even cars need tune-ups and oil changes.
- Keep people informed: have regular meetings. Let people know what's going on. Circulate newsletters that are newsworthy and not just junk mail. These regular meetings give people a sense of direction and a sense of belonging.
- Celebrate successes. Coinnie Ginsbert, the Executive Director of Family Connections starts weekly meetings with the good news first, then deals with the difficulties. Chris Hoffman, a teacher in Columbia, South Carolina, begins reviews of student projects with a question to the group, "Now what did this student do well?" In a world that works hard at finding out what's wrong, finding out what's right first is stunning, shocking, and refreshing.
- Acknowledge personal needs. Ginsberg explained, "We all have special needs periodically: a death, an illness, a birth, a divorce. Great employees appreciate an

organization that will allow for special personal circumstances that are within reason.”

Create an organization that is known for employing great people.

(to be concluded)

3761 TRANSFERABLE PARALLELS:

Has it worked? Has it worked in our country? Has it worked in our industry? Has it worked in a company like ours? This is one line of thinking. Another line of thinking is: Has it worked anywhere? Has it significant lessons for us? It is this second line of thinking that is making some firms learn powerful lessons from animals 'at work'. The following item outlines a current story.

Ian Thomas has a seven point strategy for running a successful business: focus, stalk, pounce, kill, hoist, eat, rest. If this sounds a singularly muscular approach to customer service, that's probably because it is. It was devised after 10 years as a game warden at Londolozi in South Africa's Mpumalanga province.

From expertise in big cats, it has been a short step to traveling the world's business lecture circuit talking to rapt audiences about transferable parallels with the corporate jungle. The pounce of the leopard is likened to exceeding the expectations of the customer, the kill, to the closing of a sale. The hoist represents the money from the sale being kept safe like carrion; eating corresponds to reward for a sale and rest symbolizes the need to handle stress. To Thomas, the leopard is the leader in "customer service". Lions win by "continual mentoring".

"Hunting prey, the preserve of lionesses, is the same as a business bringing in income," he says. "Lionesses too take responsibility for raising cubs, a role compared to the introduction and development of a new team member. Security and protection of territory, a role exclusive to the male lion, is keeping a competitor out of the market. Lions are very focused on what they are trying to do. They have a very structured selection process with very few of the cubs making it to adulthood. For businesses who want to put teams together there are few better models than the way lions operate."

Thomas's customers include companies such as Microsoft, International Business Machines, Hewlett-Packard, Mercedes-Benz and management development company TMI. He is part of a developing fringe in management consultancy that believes the way to cope with a rapidly changing business environment is to look at purportedly superior models of organization available in the natural world.

With the bulk of post-re-engineering thinking being based on the concept of teams and teamworking, it is ants, honey bees, termites and wolves that are being hailed as role models. Some pioneers are even arguing that individualism has had its day. It should be teams rather than individuals that are recruited for specific projects, as is the case in the animal kingdom.

"Where an organisation faces high complexity and high risk, it needs well-balanced teams," says management thinker, Meredith Belbin, author of 'The Coming Shape of Organisation'. "Strategic leadership is much safer vested in small strategic teams rather than in a single individual."

He suggests ants are the creatures which human beings should seek to emulate in their attitude to work. "These insects have common principles of organisation," he says.

"They were the first agriculturalists; they invented towns and cities. Ants have an enormous number of specialist trades people and can respond much more quickly than humans to a crisis."

Using observation of animals to influence human action is, of course, nothing new. Niccolo Machiavelli used to proffer his advice on statecraft on the basis of whether rulers exhibited more of the characteristics of the fox or the lion.

But does this more atavistic streak in management theory represent a challenge to the thinkers of the last decade who have tended to emphasise the increasing dominance of technology over the future of work?

Pauline Beldon, a zoologist who has recently been recruited to Performance Through Excellence (PTE), management training specialists, thinks that while comparisons with

socio-biology are not scientifically valid, they do provide insights that can motivate teams.

Animals team up for reasons such as group foraging, group protection, increased vigilance and reproductive co-ordination.

Beldon argues these observations can be applied to business. Group foraging can be co-operative marketing, vigilance can be protectionism, reproductive co-ordination can be joint ventures.

PTE, whose clients include Nike, British Telecommunications, BMW and Wella, holds seminars illustrating multi-skilling through reference to honey-bee colonies. The queen bee lays the eggs while every other worker has a specific job which may change with time. Bees begin their "career" preparing cells to receive eggs, moving on to feed larvae and build combs. But they also spend time patrolling the hive for security and looking for food. Older, "multi-skilled" bees fill in where they are needed.

"People stay within a team because they recognise that their personal interests occasionally have to be sacrificed for the good of the team," says Beldon. "The animal kingdom is crammed with creative business solutions."

Meanwhile, figures from the world of biology have been seeing business relevance in their work. Jane Goodall, the eminent ethologist who has spent 40 years researching chimpanzees at Gombe in Tanzania, will travel to Japan in August to tell business people how perfectly pedestrian chimps can become the dominant "alpha male" through circumventing the normal channels to the top. The leadership lesson is obvious.

Source: Stephen Overell in Financial Times.

3762 WHY EMPLOYEES ACT UP

There is a legal contract and there is a non-legal contract. When a legal contract is broken, we resort to the arms of justice. When a non-legal contract is broken, employees resort to arms of their choice. We all intuitively know this. Here is a research report.

Employees have a "psychological contract" with their employers that, if broken, could turn

some to violence, a U.S. business professor says.

A psychological contract doesn't carry the force of law with the employee, but it is just as binding. It's the employee's belief in a set of reciprocal obligations, said Judi McLean Parks, Professor of organizational behaviour at Washington University's Olin School of Business.

Such a contract exists when a worker feels, for example, "I thought it was for real when you promised me merit pay! I worked weekends!"

However, it may bear no resemblance whatsoever to a legal contract or to what the company is trying to communicate, Prof. McLean Parks said.

In recent years, she has studied hundreds of cases of retribution by employees against their organizations. One of her conclusions is that society has a "predisposition to think that all acts of employee retribution are bad" when this is not necessarily true.

"The small acts of defiance - the receptionist who is rude to a customer, taking five minutes extra on coffee break, bad-mouthing the boss - these can have a cathartic effect for the employee and a signaling effect for the company that it needs to take some action," she said.

Prof. McLean Parks said employees "don't usually behave in a vacuum. There's often a reason for them to behave as they do." Those who retaliate violently may lack self-control and feel they have not been treated with dignity and respect.

Generally, Prof. McLean Parks said, employees who feel they have been wronged at work put the injustice into three categories:

- Distributive: Is my outcome fair? Did I get what I deserve? - such as a raise or whether you're the person selected for a layoff.
- Procedural: Was the process by which the outcome was determined considered fair?
- Interactional: Was I treated with dignity and respect?

"Most employees can deal with distributive injustice," Prof. McLean Parks said, even though "they may not like the fact 'I don't get paid as much as I should.'"

"But the combination of distributive injustice and procedural injustice is hard to take," she said. "When we didn't get the outcome we wanted and decided the process wasn't fair, that's when we get hot under the collar. And to add insult to injury, we may not have been treated with respect.

"You can't really know who is going to flip their wigs but if you've made sure it's a fair and just environment, at least you can minimize violence."

Prof. McLean Parks advised:

- Employers to be alert to any increase in pilferage and absenteeism or "general evidence that people are unhappy" and to conduct employee surveys on a regular basis.
- Employers give more positive feedback to their employees because "when organizations give feedback usually it's negative."
- Employers heed workers' desire for dignity and respect.

Source: *Sherwood Ross in Globe and Mail.*

3763 WORK & FAMILY

Business books generally deal with the workplace. Realising personal life influences the workplace morale and efficiency, researchers-scholars are coming out with books on work and family. Here is one columnist's view on the 1997 crop.

The 1997 Crop of books on balancing work and personal life is bigger and better than ever, reflecting the growing view that job-home conflict is more than a sideline matter. If it's an issue for you or someone on your gift list, here are my annual picks:

"Another Season: A Coach's Story of Raising an Exceptional Son" (Little, Brown, \$22.95): Why is this book about winning football coach Gene Stallings and his Down syndrome son included on a list of work-life picks? Because its story, of how a man in the most macho of professions is enriched by the most humbling of life experiences - the birth of a disabled child, is a moving example of how career and family work together to transform people.

Co-authored by Sally Cook, the story begins as Mr. Stallings nearly slugs the doctor who tells him his baby boy is disabled, and ends when he resigns decades later as head coach at the University of Alabama because he fears the glare of the spotlight is too much for the son he has grown to love so profoundly. My bet: You won't finish this yarn without shedding a tear.

"You Might as Well Laugh" (Bancroft Press, \$19.95): For frazzled working moms, columnist Sandi Kahn Shelton's funny essays on parenting are a fail-safe way to lighten up. Her keen sense of the absurd transforms the fodder of everyday life, from managing business lunches with a newborn to producing a scale-model Sphinx for a "family homework" assignment, into laugh-out-loud reading.

"Defining Moments: When Managers Must Choose Between Right and Right" (Harvard Business School Press, \$19.95): Conflicts between work and personal imperatives aren't usually framed as ethical dilemmas. But that's often exactly what they are - defining moments, as author Joseph Badaracco says, that make us choose the values and commitments that shape our lives.

This book offers wisdom not only for managers, as the title implies, but for anyone facing such tough choices in life. Three workplace dilemmas are the framework, including a manager's deliberations over whether to fire a single mother who is highly competent but falling behind at work because of family duties. Dr. Badaracco, a Harvard Business School ethics professor, offers a four-question framework for finding practical, responsible solutions.

"The Feminine Economy and Economic Man" (Addison-Wesley, \$24): As you may have guessed from the title, this isn't bathtub reading. But it is like a climb to a new mountaintop, offering fresh perspective. Economics professor Shirley Burggraf argues that family in our society plays not only a moral, social and emotional role, but an oft-overlooked economic role as well, creating productive workers and citizens and caring for the young, the sick and the dying.

Yet while we give lip service to the importance to these functions, which she calls "the feminine economy," the wages and economic rewards they command are low or zero.

Unless we invest in the family economically, she writes, we risk losing our ability to compete. Among her ideas: A "parental dividend," in the form of Social Security payments to parents based on the contributions of their adult children and their children's spouses to the economic system - an incentive for parents to raise healthy productive kids.

"The Way We Really Are" (Basic Books, \$23): Stephanie Coontz, author of the best-selling "The Way We Never Were," turns her historian's lens on the strengths and weaknesses of today's diverse families, drawing on her travels and talks with people from families of all kinds. Though she wanders off-course occasionally into government-policy suggestions, Dr. Coontz's unparalleled ability to put our angst over families into a deep and compassionate context make this a worthwhile read.

She tells of one encounter with a sole breadwinner for his family of five, for instance, who blames "irresponsible parents" for causing all society's problems. As they talk, however, he realizes that he, an exemplary family man, actually came from a family badly wounded by multiple divorces and instability, and that a helping hand from outsiders - a kindly teacher and a defunct government scholarship program - gave him the leg up he

needed to launch a successful life. This is rich food for thought.

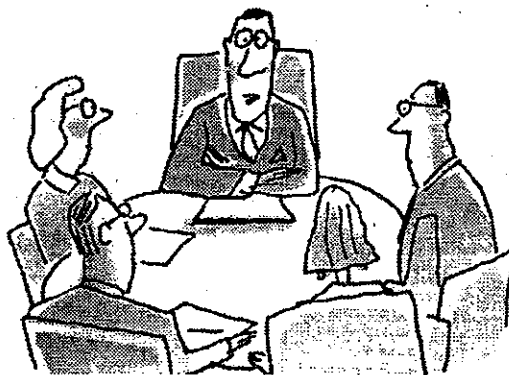
From the Self-Help Shelves: A cut above the average life-balance guide, **"The Balanced Life Achieving Success in Work and Love"** by Alan Lay McGinnis (Augsberg, \$17.99), says it's possible to succeed both at work and at home. "If you find yourself in a work milieu demanding that you sell your soul for the company, then the solution is simple," he advises. "Get out."

"The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families" (Golden Books, \$25), by management guru Stephen Covey, applies his megaselling "seven principles of highly effective people" to home life. This book's abundant anecdotes include many from Dr. Covey's nine kids. Though I'm usually skeptical of attempts to apply business-management rules to family life, Dr. Covey's useful principles leap that divide nicely.

And for professional women seeking better balance, Cindy Tolliver's and Nancy Chamber's **"Going Part-Time: The Insider's Guide for Professional Women Who Want a Career and a Life"** (Avon Books, \$12) is a savvy guide to cutting your hours.

Source: Sue Shellenbarger in *Wall Street Journal*.

3764 LAUGHING MATTER?



"And without your management expertise this bankruptcy wouldn't have been possible."

Edited Printed & Published by N.H. ATTHREYA of MMC SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT
3E1, Court Chambers, 35 New Marine Lines, Mumbai 400 020

Annual Subscription Rs. 240.
