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MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Are you an uninspiring boss?

Think about the bad bosses you've had in the past and what they could have done better. Communications Coach Carmine Blogger did just that and came up with a list of qualities that put bosses in the "bad" column. If any of these apply to you, perhaps you should rethink your approach to management.

- You can recite the snack offerings in the vending machine better than the names of your employees' spouses.
- You cannot recall one sentence from your company's mission statement.



- You praise only when handing out bonus checks. Praise should be part of the daily culture in the work environment.
- You arrive late, leave early or make yourself unavailable after hours. Don't forget that all eyes are watching you.
- You are slow to respond to your employees' email or voice mail. It is your job to demonstrate good customer service by treating your employees as well as you would your customers.
- The office bathrooms are dirty. That's a sure sign to employees that you don't care about them.
- You threaten employees by telling them to look elsewhere if they don't like something you are doing. With the current economy, people are going to put up with a lot to keep their jobs. But when the economy turns around, you don't want your talent and experience rushing off to your competitors.

The right way to handle firings

When an employee just isn't working out and you face the task of getting rid of him or her, the process you follow can create or save mountains of trouble later.

Here are some pointers from the human resources website HERO.com to keep in mind.

Get the paperwork in order.

That includes performance evaluations, records of disciplinary actions and attendance sheets. Be sure your documentation supports your intention to fire an employee.

Consistency of documentation is critical. If your documentation does not jive with your story for why the firing took place, you could be in for a long, messy legal battle.

Consider protected classes of employees

When you start the process, consider whether the employee is a member of a protected class. Federal law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age or disability. State and local laws may provide additional protection.

For example, while no federal law protects homosexuals or lesbians against discrimination, many states specifically add that protection for

employees within their borders.

Remember, too, the Fair Labor Standards Act. It requires that compensation for employees be equitable for all classes who perform essentially the same work.

After termination

Firing an employee does not sever all ties with your company. This is the period when documentation supporting your action will be critical. If you cannot justify firing an employee for misconduct, the worker can receive unemployment compensation -- something that will impact your company for years.

COBRA and severance pay are two more issues to consider. By law, an employee has the rights to continue under the company's health insurance program for a defined period so long as the terminated employee pays the premiums.



Severance pay may lessen the likelihood of a lawsuit. But if the employee is leaving on bad terms, even hefty severance packages may not keep him or her from seeking an attorney.

MARKETING MATTERS

Selling in a tough economy

There's an old saying that each crisis brings opportunity. Having that mindset will go a long way toward helping you get past all the negative news and uncertainty that is plaguing our country right now. If you see the opportunity, you will be much more in control of your actions than if you react to the doom and gloom all around you. Ryan Sarti says FEAR is False Emotion Appearing Real -- a good acronym to remember these days. As a sales coach, Sarti says focus is more important than ever to produce results from your marketing.

Here are some of his suggestions:

Be more aware of your activities. You have less time to waste or lose to nonproductive activities. Systematically increase the number of contacts you make each week.

Stop worrying about what you can't control and hone in on developing your business. You are powerless to affect swings in the stock market. Pay attention to tasks under your control.

Reconnect with past clients to find out how they are doing and get into a conversation about the work you did for them. Give them something they can use -- information, offers of special service or other items to make them remember you next time they need work that you can handle. Find out what they remember best and use that as one of your strengths when you approach new prospects.

Watch your language. Are you using positive or negative words? If complaints are creeping into your vocabulary, get rid of them. What you say impacts your attitude and the way you think.

Exercise regularly. When times are tough, it's more important than ever to keep the body moving. You need to release all those feel-good endorphins.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Nuts & bolts
- Working smarter

NIR helps you boost your business

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Working Smarter

Best time of day to read and retain information

If you are going over notes for a presentation or trying to learn names of people you'll encounter later that day, review your mate-

rial first thing in the morning. That's when your immediate recall is highest according to University of Texas professor Michael Smolensky.

He points out that memory depends on nucleic acids that respond to circadian rhythms. That's why the brain has peaks and valleys throughout the day.

If you have to review information that you'll need



to retain for a longer period of time, the best time to tackle that reading is at night before you retire. At that time, the brain is capable of better organizing and holding information.

NUTS AND BOLTS

America's safest drivers live in the Midwest

A study by the National Transportation Safety Administration has concluded that Americans should try to copy the driving habits of Midwest drivers. Those drivers have the fewest accidents of any region in the country.

Residents in Sioux Fall, S.D. have the best driving records with the average driver having a collision once in about every 14 years.

For cities with more than one million residents, Phoenix, Ariz. drivers topped the list with an accident about every 9.8 years.

Not surprisingly, Saturday was the top day for fatal collisions, followed by Sunday as second, and Friday as third.

Google offers free directory service from cell or regular phone

Google is offering free directory assistance from any land line or cell phone. All you have to do is dial the number, say where you are and then

choose from among the selections Google offers.

Check out this website for details: www.google.com/goog411/



If your cell phone has texting or internet, you can receive information or a map to the business.

Best time to book last-minute airline tickets

According to Travel Detective author Peter Greenberg, if you are looking for a last-minute best deal, try calling one minute after midnight on Tuesday – that is Wednesday morning.

Since airlines start sales on Friday afternoons and end them on Mondays, there are likely to be



discount fares available from unused tickets for people who booked but did not purchase tickets. These special fares last only an hour or two so you can't wait until you get up.

Also, remember

to call the minute after midnight on Tuesday in the time zone where your airline is located.

When things are contracting, the best strategy is to expand. If you network, follow-up and reach out, you will be highly visible in a society where businesses are hunkering down.



Press release checklist

Want to see how effective your press release is?

Send it to the press release grader at Hubspot.

Go to

www.pressreleasegrader.com. Then copy and past the text of your release into the form and complete the additional information.

The program will tell you how readable your release is. It uses a formula to help you understand what information you need to add to make your news release more useful to journalists.



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