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# OnSite

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## MANAGEMENT ISSUES

### Communicating during a crisis

Tiger Woods has learned a few things about crisis communications the hard way. His initial refusal to talk with police or say anything about crashing his car into a fire hydrant merely heightened public interest. In the void, celebrity wags and speculators told what they thought might have happened.

As he has discovered, perception becomes reality if you say nothing. And it is far better to get your own story out than to let others tell it for you. You may never have the public status of Tiger Woods but you could make the same mistakes with disastrous effects on your business.

Suppose a property owner goes public with a complaint about a job you did. Your attorney, predictably and appropriately, advises you to say nothing because of a likely lawsuit. If you follow that advice, your company's reputation could be trashed long before you ever get your day in court.

What should Tiger Woods have done?

If he had talked with police right away and issued a statement with a brief explanation and regret about the incident, the furor would probably have blown over in



a day or two instead of being fodder for network news, celebrity gossip columns and People Magazine for a week. Now that the story is out, the media frenzy will pass.

**The lesson here: don't duck when you have a communications crisis.** If you don't tell your story, others will tell it for you.

NIR has help available if you should find yourself needing the advice of a crisis communications specialist. Check [www.nir-inc.com](http://www.nir-inc.com) call 434-973-4200

### Management tools of CEOs

Business consultant and blogger Steve Tobak advises those in middle management positions who want to move up to act like the CEOs they want to be. How does a competent CEO manage? Tobak lists five characteristics.

**They have laser-like focus** on the critical trouble areas and leave other things alone. He says CEOs must act to solve problems quickly before they become catastrophes. Therefore, they deal with one big issue at a time rather than allow their attention to be diluted by a variety of problems.

**They hire people with management potential who are experts in one area.** CEOs can mentor managers but don't have time to do on-the-job training for particular areas. Making good hiring decisions is critical to a CEO's success.

**Business and customers come first;** office poli-

tics come second. Successful CEOs keep their focus on the mission of the company and the service it provides. While they don't let internal morale problems or processes go haywire, they realize that the main function of business is business.

**They manage up.** They recognize that boards and shareholders have needs so they anticipate problems and share information with those people. They don't let stakeholders be surprised.

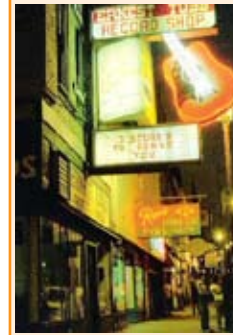
### Keeping data safe from the inside

Did you know that 70 percent of all data theft comes from insiders or former employees who have access to a company's data system? Businesses seem to be much more successful in thwarting external threats. But good business practice dictates that companies also examine internal users of data who might compromise the system.

Carnegie Mellon University's Software Engineering Institute and the U.S. Secret Service have produced a guide outlining steps for protecting data from the inside. The suggestions include

- implementing strict password and account management practices
- logging and monitoring employee online action
- using layered defense against remote attacks
- tracking and securing the physical environment
- using extra caution with those who have privileged access.

## Coming to Nashville April 8-9, 2010



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## MARKETING MATTERS

### New venues for customer contact

Has your company ever come up on the social media radar screen because of something a customer said? With all of the outlets available for people to blab – Facebook, Twitter, comments on blogs and YouTube – it is likely that sooner or later your company's name will surface. That's why it's critical for companies to get into the habit of monitoring these services whether or not you want to be a player.

How do you do such a search? Fortunately the services make it easy. Here are some of the top ways.

**Google Alerts** – We all know that Google is the starting place for finding information on the internet. You can also subscribe to Google Alerts™. From [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) look for the options in the upper left-hand page, click on *more* and then even *more* and you'll find Google Alerts as well as a variety of other tools.

**Blog Search** – Google also offers a blog search in its tools. Do a search for Pella (or any major product) and you will find not only the company's material but also details of experiences good and bad that customers have had with individual installations. Google also offers you the option to subscribe to blog alerts.

**Twitter** – You don't have to have a Twitter account to search the gabby network. Go to [www.Twitter.com](http://www.Twitter.com) and put in the same search for Pella and you'll find a host of comments good and bad that the company has undoubtedly responded to. If you have a Twitter account, you can maintain an ongoing search for your company so that comments will be collected in one place. Otherwise, keeping track of comments is a bit of a mess.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Nuts & bolts
- Working smarter

### NIR helps you boost your business

From networking to education to marketing assistance, the NIR supports restoration specialists. **434.973.4200**

## NUTS AND BOLTS

### Timely small business tax tips



Business-Week-recently listed

some tax tips that might save small businesses money with the IRS. Here's a rundown:

**Pay bonuses and commissions promptly.** The payment benefits both the business owner and staff members. Also be sure that all accrued expenses are paid before March 15<sup>th</sup> for tax purposes.

**Take advantage of Section 179's generous depreciation.** According to CPA Rachel Solomon, businesses should buy any expensive equipment you need now because President Obama extended the capital expenditure break so businesses can

still deduct 100% immediately in 2009. She warns, however, that the depreciation depends on your net income. If you have a loss, you can only take standard depreciation amounts.

**Consider a tax specialist instead of a CPA.**

CPAs are ideal for high-end tax work but could be overkill for small businesses. The need for a pricier CPA instead of a tax specialist depends on a business's number of expenses and revenue streams.

**Combine a business trip and vacation.** If you can afford it, add some vacation days to your next business trip. So long as you play by the rules, the business trip gets you there and covers you for working days and you'll save on travel expenses if you can have your vacation in the same place.

**Go green.** There are a variety of energy tax credits for replacing appliances, HVAC systems or windows and doors with more energy efficient models.



### Dubai debt may affect posh U.S. properties

The world economy is like a bowl of Jello; shaking one side will inevitably cause wobbles elsewhere. Such is the case with Dubai, whose debt woes could have a negative impact

on the U.S. commercial real estate market. When Dubai World announced that it wanted to restructure its \$59 billion in liabilities, economists worried that the corporation would have to unload some prestigious properties at distressed prices, driving down the price of all commercial real estate.

Dubai World has significant interests in such pricy getaways as the MGM Mirage in Las Vegas, the Fontainebleau Miami Beach Resort, and the Mandarin Oriental and W hotels in New York.

U.S. commercial real estate values have already fallen nearly 43 percent from their 2007 peak according to Moody's Investors Service.

### Index rates states' climates for small businesses

North Dakota ranks first and New York, New Jersey, California and Washington D.C. rank at the bottom of an index rating states on their public policy climates for small businesses. Find out where your state ranks in the Small Business & Entrepreneurship Council's index at <http://sbecouncil.org>.

### Frugal managers find innovative ways to spread holiday cheer



2009 will not be a holiday for fat bonus checks but managers are finding frugal ways to spread holiday cheer to employees and clients. According to a survey by American Express, small businesses are giving services, bartering or making gifts in order to avoid spending cash.

At Proforma Worldwide Support Center in Cleveland, executives have promised to scrape snow off all employees' cars and are treating workers to breakfast once a month.

A branding firm in San Francisco has bartered with clients to collect products that would make suitable gifts for the holidays. Alexandra Watkins of Eat My Words said it's a system that works well for cash-poor clients.

The survey reports that *Thank you*s and notes of appreciation are more in vogue this holiday.

## Working Smarter

### Are you getting all types of time?

As we get into the holiday season, time becomes compressed and our to-do lists

expand. Blogger Ali Hale reflects on the notion that we all have several different types of time at our disposal and we need to make sure that we experience all types rather than focusing on one or two. It's a different approach to time-honored adage that you must keep your life in balance.

**Physically energetic and active time** – This time is vital because exercise restores both physical and mental health. This area often gets pushed aside because we think we have too many other things to get done but we do so at our peril. If President Obama can find 60-90 minutes a day to exercise, what excuse do we have?

**Creative and productive time** – This is the time we produce things whether they are company reports or anything that creates value for others. It's easy to focus on this time to the detriment of other areas. Hale says people need to recognize what time of day they are most productive and develop their schedules for all times around giving that productive time a high priority.



**Playful and entertaining time** – Entertainment time is essential for restoration. That can range from watching TV to going out with friends.

**Learning and development time** – Learning never stops. You need time to explore latest developments in your field or pursue a deeper level of expertise in your interests. That time may not be daily but it should be a regular part of your week.

**Reflective and spiritual time** – We all need to nurture our spiritual side. Prayer or meditation gives us a chance to gain perspective on our lives by thinking about what we are doing and why.

**Restful and relaxing time** – Our minds need a break and our body will let us know if we short-change this time of time too severely.

With all the pressures of daily life, it's good to remember that you can't just keep working harder and longer to get more done. You'll be far more effective if you achieve balance in the way you spend your time.

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