

Have you ever thought about...

... the fundamentals of Success?

IN LIFE AND IN BUSINESS there are only a few fundamentals that make life work out well and they have never changed.

Too often we pretend that technology and education have created "new rules" or that modern systems permit us to cut corners and find short-cuts that didn't exist in the past. While there may be examples where that is true, in general, the fundamentals of living well, achieving our dreams and creating wealth have not changed. The path to success today is remarkably similar to the path walked by generations past.

What are the basics? You might have your own list, but I would suggest at least the following:

1. Personal Integrity. Socrates recommended, "Know thyself" and Shakespeare added, "to thine own self be true." Knowing who we are, what we value and making sure that our words and actions match is fundamental. Doing unfulfilling work or living in an environment that doesn't suit us will surely undermine our long-term success. Too many of us live 'lives of quiet desperation' and that is NOT a foundation on which to build a life!

2. Clear Thinking. Many of us grew up in the 'feel good' generation and we are confused about the role of thought (education, planning, skills and tools) versus emotion. We let our hopes, wishes, fears, or 'hang-ups' run our lives. High achievers take time to think clearly, seek expert advice, plan wisely, and learn from the mistakes of others. The Old Testament says that "wisdom comes from a multitude of advisors."

Some strategies just work better than others. Buildings are always designed and 'blueprinted' in advance. Our lives should be designed just as carefully.

3. Unfailing Optimism. This is not shallow 'positive thinking', but a clear-headed, conscious faith in the future and in your own potential. "Where there is a will, there is a way," or as Hannibal said over 2000 years ago, "We will find a way, or make one." High achievers believe in their skills, in their plans and in their futures. They forge ahead with confidence built on integrity and careful planning.

4. Hard Work. Ben Franklin observed, "Early to bed, early to rise makes a man (or woman) healthy, wealthy and wise." I've heard people say achievement should be 'effortless' and I agree that sometimes enormous amounts of work can flow easily and quickly, but I also know that creating a great life usually requires dedication, personal discipline, attention to detail, and effort.

5. Patience and Persistence. A great life is rarely built in a day. It takes time to develop a life of one's own. There will be mistakes and wrong turns along the way and highly successful people are neither surprised nor disheartened by this.

SOURCENOTE: Dr Philip E. Humbert

BUSINESS

ALERT!

Hands-on help that works Vol 10 No 2

Business travel

When the going gets pricey

How to keep travel costs down within an ever-tightening budget.

by John M Cowan

YOU CAN'T ALWAYS conduct business by long distance. Sometimes you've got to go to where the business is, whether it's an important customer, an industry conference, or a high-level executive meeting.

Getting there is no longer half the fun, thanks to cutbacks in travel

expenditures that the recession has inflicted on so many businesses. One survey of travel managers found that 25 per cent have made emergency spending cutbacks in response to the financial crisis, and 34 per cent have instituted a freeze on travel altogether.

But when nothing will take the place of looking the other person in the eye, some smart planning will keep expenses under control. Follow these tips for trips that won't break your budget:

• **Book early** (if not often). For the most part, you'll get the best airline rates by making reservations at least three weeks ahead of time. That makes long-range planning a necessity. You may be able to get a good deal at the last minute, but don't count on it. Booking early also gives you time to compare prices and search for deals.

• **Flexibility can stretch your money.** Early morning and evening flights tend to be cheaper, so be willing to endure a little inconvenience for the sake of your bottom line.

Look at nearby alternative airports, too. Flying into New Jersey can cost less than a flight straight to NYC.

• **Expand your horizons.** A hotel on the outskirts of a major metropolis will probably be less pricey than one in the centre of town.

Remember: your goal isn't to spend a lot of time in your room.

Look for simplicity. Consider accommodations that have kitchens:

Preparing a simple meal is cheaper than eating out three times a day. If the hotel offers a free breakfast, take advantage.

• **Take the low (cost) road.** If you need to rent a car, try to get away from the airport first. Rates can be cheaper at rental offices that don't have a built-in stream of business.

Don't use your hotel parking lot if they charge for the



'convenience' — the public lot down the street will be usually be more economical. And avoid valet parking — those fees can add up quickly. (And you know that you

don't need the supplemental insurance that the car rental agency will offer, don't you?)

• **Don't 'hack' into your budget.** If you don't need to rent a car, but you need to be downtown — where the airport most certainly isn't — consider mass transit, if available, or a shuttle van. They're a whole lot cheaper than a taxi.

Adopt a similar strategy for getting around town, too, with one exception: if you're a focal point of a presentation, grab a cab. The savings from taking the subway will cost you if you arrive looking like an unmade bed.

• **Don't turn molehills into mountains of money.** Keep the small stuff from sweating your budget down to nothing.

Pack light so you can carry your bag onto the plane instead of paying an additional fee to check your luggage.

Avoid hotel restaurants, gift shops and minibars.

Fill up your car before you return it or you'll pay extra.

Maybe you can't stay home all the time. But if you're going to spend money making money, be sure you spend it

Can you trust your staff?

RESEARCH SUGGESTS companies of all sizes should keep a closer eye on staff and adopt a zero-tolerance approach to employee theft.

Small firms are being warned to keep a closer eye on staff after a survey revealed 72% have stolen from their employer on at least one occasion.

According to a poll of 2,062 office workers in the UK by employment law consultancy Peninsular, this is in spite of 81% believing that stealing is morally wrong.

Peter Done, managing director of Peninsular, is urging companies to adopt a zero-tolerance approach to stealing.

"Employers should make it clear in staff employment contracts that stealing is unacceptable and set out clear punishments for anybody who does so", he said.

"Employees may well believe that because they can get away with stealing smaller items, they may well be tempted to steal larger and more expensive items, which could cost the company even more money," he said.

"Workers need to realise that they simply cannot continually get away with stealing from their employer; it is an illegal act and criminal prosecutions can be brought against them for doing so," he added.

The most common items stolen by staff are stationery such as post-it notes, pens and pencils but also include computer equipment and software.

"It is shocking to see that although 81% of those who stole believe it to be morally wrong, they still went ahead and did it anyway," said Done.

"We appear to be becoming a culture where it is deemed evermore acceptable and commonplace to steal from your employer.

"The ethical boundaries that once existed in our society appear to be becoming ever more watered down and eroded," he added. ■

SOURCENOTE: press release



Ian McFarlane-Toms

The way I see it...

The purpose of your business

PEOPLE OFTEN STUMBLE over the question of their 'purpose' in life, but in business there can be no question. There is absolutely no room for confusion on this issue.

The purpose of any business is precisely this: **to serve a well-satisfied customer.**

Sure, you want to make a profit. Of course, you want to serve your customer in ways that are convenient, satisfying and (obviously) legal and moral. But the bottom line is always the same — to serve a customer.

So the first and primary question for any business is: what exactly do you do FOR your customers?

Some restaurants provide meals that are fast or inexpensive, that have particular ethnic or nutritional styles, or that are conveniently

located. No restaurant can be all things to all people, but every restaurant has one main purpose.

McDonald's provides predictability and speed. The Four Seasons provides elegance and memories. Ruth's Chris provides fancy steaks. Dominoes delivers pizza in 30 minutes or less.

Recently, in North America, we can see this in the cell phone industry. AT&T emphasises 'more bars' and fewer dropped calls. That's how they intend to serve their customers and distinguish themselves from other providers.

Verizon, on the other hand, has emphasized their 'network' and service.

Your business has only one primary purpose. When you are clear about that and clearly communicate it in every message you send, your business is likely to grow. ■

Managing

Engaged but enraged — the surly side of motivation

Your crew has crossed the line from self-sacrificing to surly; they're motivated but murder-minded.

DOES THE FOLLOWING sound familiar?

Your employees are doing their best to help your group and the organisation to survive. There have been layoffs and your group is short-handed, but they're working long hours and giving you all the effort you could wish for.

That gutsy effort is why it's hard to decide what to do about the rumours you're hearing that your people are sometimes quite brusque to the people around them. Co-workers are snarling at each other, employees from other departments in the organisation are having their legitimate requests refused and some customers have complained of rude treatment.

Profanity is heard in greater quantities than before, to put it mildly.

The cause is not hard to find: your crew has hit the wall. They've crossed the line from self-sacrificing to surly; they're motivated but murder-minded.

You get the point. The pressure of being positive in a negative situation has worn down their patience and self-control. Their resentment at having to work this hard, long buried under a sincere effort to help out, is resurfacing in fitful bursts. The only real surprise, perhaps, is that it took so long to happen.

The question is, what should you do about it? You can't have your group's hard-won working relationships ruined, yet your people deserve your sympathy and understanding.

Respond right away, but fit your response to the situation. If you're pretty sure that only a few employees are at the breaking point, talk

to them individually. Your message: "I understand the pressure you're under and I appreciate all your efforts. When it seems like everything is just too much and you're about to vent, get out of the situation asap. Vent to me. I'll understand. We'll work something out to take some of the pressure off you."

If, on the other hand, this condition (call it 'enragement') seems pretty general in your group, hold a brief meeting. Don't itemise incidents or single out individuals as villains. Instead, deliver the same message as in the paragraph above.

Add to it some encouragement to talk to each other as well. Help each other to talk out anger instead of taking it out on the world. **With a sustained collective effort, you can work this out.** ■

SOURCENOTE: Ragan eNewsletters

One-minute tip

It is rarely necessary to take big, dramatic (or risky!) steps, but it is always necessary to begin. Think clearly. Take notes. Talk with loved ones. Admit your dreams out loud, and if there are steps you need to take during the rest of 2009, start walking.

Could your web designer hold you hostage?

IF YOU FALL OUT with your web-designer, you could be in big trouble.

Firstly, he probably owns the copyright to what's on your site. In the absence of an explicit agreement to the contrary, he probably does.

Secondly, he probably has the 'keys' to your site and can charge you a fortune to give them up, or pass them on to his replacement.

Thirdly, what happens to your business (and your sanity) while you are briefing your lawyer to try to get these problems resolved?

With the help of our trusted developers, Redhead Designs Ltd, we have put the following checklist together.

- 1) Always own your own domain. Never allow a third-party to own it, however trustworthy you think they are.
- 2) If your domain needs it, make sure the 'administrative' contact is a member of your staff. If the administrator is not a member of your staff, and you change web designer/hosting, you may encounter problems trying to get changes made to the website.
- Transferring domains to another service provider without control is fraught with danger.
- 3) Always make a copy of your website. OK, this sounds simple, but many web-hosting companies do not back up your site. You pay extra for that service. Make sure you, or your web designer, has a fully working copy of your website ready to hand if there is a problem.

4) Email is not secure, and email delivery is not a certainty. The content of an email is readable by anyone with enough ability. If you are sending sensitive data, get an encryption package. Never send passwords or account information by email.

5) Ensure you have an explicit agreement that you own the copyright to your site. By default, your web-designer probably owns the copyright — even though you have paid him to put it there! **Grrrr!** ■

SOURCENOTE: press release

Transparency

Doing business in the Cellophane Era



by Dr. Saj-nicole Joni

It's almost too easy to predict the big trend for the months ahead. And you're not going to like it much unless you got up this morning, looked in the mirror and said with confidence, "Bring it on!"

IN AN ERA WHEN EVEN THE CIA has agreed to come clean about its latest snafu and Wall Street's latest 'packaging' frenzy has come completely undone, anyone who still doesn't get it will discover that this is the time of total transparency.

What you think is private may well not be, and the speed at which revelations travel is unrelenting. In short, your secrets are not safe anymore, unless by 'safe' you mean 'on a website somewhere on the Net.'

In a Cellophane Era, what happens to the truth? It gets split into a thousand tiny pieces and everyone gets a say. Truth becomes about multiple perspectives, intentions and needs.

As such, if you're not actively engaging in contending with all those other perspectives, the truth about you and your company will be revealed, packaged and spun by someone else.

You need to be fully invested in the truth game in 2009. You need to get your perspective on the issues that affect your leadership out onto the public airwaves. You need to make your claims for relevance, uniqueness and even greatness if you want to be heard at all.

Most of all, perhaps, you need to become clear about your intentions, because when those are revealed later by someone else, they will be revealed unflatteringly.

The one cosmic rule of the Cellophane Era is that intentions matter. So you'd better be clear about yours.

Trust matters

Most people think of trust as something that either exists or not. Do you trust your teenage

son to return the car by the time appointed? Do you trust your direct reports to bring that project in on time? Do you trust the markets to reward innovative products and excellent customer service?

That meaning of trust is really just a way of saying that events should turn out the way you expect them to — or hope them to.

Trust is, in fact, more complicated than that. In organisations and in human relations, there are levels of trust and it is the job of leadership to get those levels right and to deal appropriately with people depending on the kind of trust that exists between you and them.

Some people you trust personally, some you trust for their expertise and some you may trust (or not) because of their position in the organisation. It is inappropriate and indeed foolish to mistake personal trust for that positional trust — what I call structural trust.

For example, you may trust Joe down the hall because he's a great guy, works with Habitat for Humanity and is a pillar of the community, but it would be completely inappropriate (and, indeed, illegal) to reveal the early stage discussions about an impending sale of the company to Joe if his position did not allow for his inclusion.

Leaders need, more than ever, to understand the differences among the kinds of trust in a transparent era.

It's not enough to have good intentions if you mistake personal trust for structural trust when the future is at stake.

And, in 2009, it is near certain that your education will be played out in public. ■

SOURCENOTE: Dr. Saj-nicole Joni is CEO of Cambridge International Group

Announcing redundancies

The Singapore way

There are many ways of breaking the bad news to the staff, but this Singapore company announced redundancies in a truly unique way.

A FIRE ALARM RANG at 4 pm when almost all the approximately 5000 shift workers were in the office.

As usual, the entire office was cleared within 3 minutes and the workers gathered outside the office.

Ten minutes passed...then five more minutes...and then another five minutes.

Then, a security officer started an announcement: "Dear employees, with melting heart I am making this announcement that, for many of you, it will be a last evacuation drill. Due to the recession we are laying off almost 50 per cent of employees. While moving back in, if your ID card does not work, then you are amongst those laid off and your belongings will be

couriered to you tomorrow.

"We have followed this approach as we didn't want to fill the email box with layoff emails and goodbye mails to thousands, and also to avoid any fights inside the office.

"Hope you have nice career ahead. Please move in and try your luck." ■

SOURCENOTE: forwarded email



WORDS OF WISDOM

"The world is full of willing people, some willing to work, the rest willing to let them!"

The Institute for Independent Business

FOUNDED IN 1984 in the UK, the Institute for Independent Business (IIB) is now one of the world's largest international networks of business advice providers.

As of 1 April 2009, 5,530 carefully-selected men and women have been accredited worldwide as IIB Associates.

Experienced professionals

Experienced senior business people in their own right, who have elected to become self-employed business advisers, Associates and Fellows of the IIB have received additional training to enable them to focus accurately and cost-effectively on the needs of clients and prospects.

This ensures that Associates' clients receive the "practical advice that works"—the Institute's motto in every country in which the Institute operates. ■

BUSINESS ALERT

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WORDS OF WISDOM

"One can never consent to creep when one feels the impulse to soar." — Helen Keller

Managing

Debate and desist

Most of your managerial decisions involving your group call for negotiation, multiple viewpoints and lots of discussion.

THIS CERTAINLY HOLDS TRUE for settling arguments, negotiating assignments, leading interdepartmental project teams and so on.

However, at what point should you, as the discussion leader, end the debate and move ahead to a decision?

Use the following three criteria to decide when it's cut-off time:

1. Urgency. When a decision must be made to get an important project started or unstuck, or when the deadline for making a decision approaches, don't hesitate to ask for final opinions.

Summarise the alternatives before the group and proceed to voting or to handing down your decision.

2. Procedure. Once you've followed your established decision-making procedure, don't drag it out any longer.

For example, once the ideas or motions have been stated, clarified, discussed, and summarized, there's no reason to delay the decision.

3. Opposition. Sometimes clarifying and discussing an idea or motion doesn't lead smoothly to a decision. Instead, it leads to a deadlock

between opposing individuals or blocs. Opposition comes in many forms, but two of the most common are principled and obstructionist.

Principled opposition is often based on a strong sense of what will work in the situation at hand, firmly held values, or a belief in tradition.

Obstructionist opposition is most often based on office or organisational politics or career concerns.

Either way, if positions have hardened, it's time to put the issue to a vote or make your decision. At a minimum, you'll see how much further negotiation will be necessary. ■

SOURCENOTE: Ragan eNewsletters



WORDS OF WISDOM

"Don't wait for a light to appear at the end of the tunnel, stride down there and light the bloody thing yourself."

— Sara Henderson

How to get more work done today

LACK OF PRODUCTIVITY has many causes. Here are some of the more common ones that you can easily eliminate:

• **Lack of priorities.** Your to-do list is useless if you don't know what to tackle first. Talk with your supervisor to identify what's really important.

If you're the person in charge, devote some time to deciding which tasks add the most value to your organisation so you don't waste time on non-essentials.

• **Procrastination.** Time disappears quickly when you put off necessary tasks.

Try breaking them down into small segments so they're easier to get started on — especially for large-scale projects, which can intimidate many people into delaying action.

Schedule unpleasant tasks early so you can get them out of the way and focus on other jobs.

• **Interruptions.** You can't shut yourself off completely from co-workers and your boss, but you can minimise time-wasting interruptions.

Close your door if you have one; if not, hang a "Do Not Disturb" sign on your cubicle, or wear some headphones that block noise.

Let people know you sometimes need to concentrate, but that you're available in case of legitimate emergencies. ■

SOURCENOTE: Ragan eNewsletters

Have your say!

Add your voice to those of other business people on important business issues. Each issue of Business Alert will feature a statement on which you can voice an opinion. Simply select the view that reflects your opinion and email it to me. Your opinion will be submitted to the Institute for Independent Business for inclusion in its continuing business research.

The Statement:

"The biggest problem I face is lack of bank support"

Please email me with the letter (A-E) expressing your opinion from the following choices:

- A. Strongly agree
- B. Agree
- C. Unsure
- D. Disagree
- E. Strongly disagree

MY EMAIL ADDRESS IS:

ianmcfarlanetoms@iib.ws

