

Have you ever thought about...

... how to reach your goals more quickly?

WE ALL HAVE DREAMS AND GOALS. Some of them are simply 'wishes', like winning the lottery or sailing to Tahiti. But we also have goals that are vital to our futures and the well-being of our families.

And yet many of us make little or no progress toward achieving our most important goals. We wait and hope, but get no closer to our dreams.

It doesn't have to be that way! We all know people who soar from one project to another, achieving their goals and living the life they want. How do they do it?

Clarity of purpose. For a dream to become a goal, it must be specific. While it's fun to dream about being rich, it takes courage and hard choices to decide exactly how much money you want and how you are going to earn it.

Being "thin" is an image; losing 23 pounds by your birthday is a goal. In life, we probably can't have it all. You can lose 23 pounds, or you can have the cake and ice cream. Your choice. Be clear.

Commitment. There's a story from ancient Greece about a general who landed his troops on the beach, then burned his ships.

He wanted each soldier to know there was no turning back, no retreat, no alternative to victory.

Once your goal is clear, emotionally commit to achieving it. There are no alternatives.

Talk about it. This is called "accountability". Once you've defined your goal and committed yourself to achieve it, start talking about it!

If you want to lose weight, don't blame your spouse for buying ice cream if they don't know and understand your goal!

Talking about your goals makes them emotionally real and powerful. It allows people to help you reach your goal and support you along the way.

Some people will also criticize or undermine you. Don't talk to them.

Write it down. This is basic, and one of the oldest, simplest and most powerful techniques for achieving any goal.

Write it down! Describe precisely what you want, how you will earn it, when you will have it, and the benefits you'll receive from achieving your goal.

Write the details. Write the colours, the shapes and the dates.

Write it every day! Every morning, use a small card or a corner of your appointment book to record a short description of your goal where you will see it all day long.

Don't carry the same card day after day! If your goal is worth anything, it's worth a minute of your time to write a simple sentence describing your dream and focusing on your priorities. Do this every morning. ■

SOURCENOTE: RESOURCES FOR SUCCESS!™

BUSINESS

ALERT!

Hands-on help that works

Vol 8 No 1

Use mental Aikido to diffuse office conflict

by Philip Chard

It's almost certain that where there is more than one employee in a company, there will be conflict. Unmanaged, it can be a huge waste of time and productivity.

BY APPLYING THE RIGHT TOOLS AND STRATEGIES to resolve conflicts you can eliminate a lot of wheel-spinning and teeth-gnashing. A rational approach is effective if both parties are willing to participate in working on an outcome both can embrace.

What if rational doesn't work?

Most conflict has an irrational genesis and does not respond to rational problem-solving techniques.

Resolving workplace conflict rationally is not always possible or successful.

Strategies for dealing with conflict in your department.

1. Shun predictability. When rationality does not work in resolving conflict, focus on observable behaviours instead of thinking about how to psychoanalyze or intellectualize the situation.

Observable behaviour holds the key because everyone has a reactive style that they use with certain people.

If your HR staff members have figured out what yours is, you must work to move beyond it to be effective.

When you become highly predictable, it's over and any conflict resolution effort you make will probably not work effectively.

2. Interrupt the pattern. Almost all behaviour is based on specific patterns, and conflict behaviour has more patterns than most.

Generally, people respond to cues—one party does something that signals the other party that the conflict has begun.

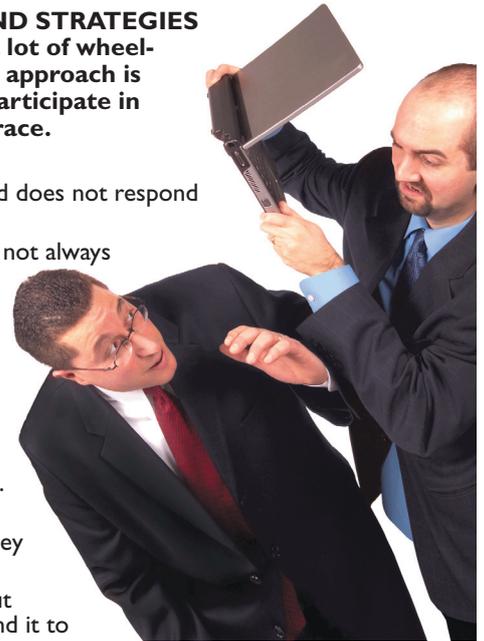
The cue could be a facial expression, a tone of voice, something said or not said, or posture, for example.

The response is a reaction to the cue. You have the capacity to interrupt the pattern by doing something completely unexpected by the other person.

The value of pattern interruption is not that the person has done something clever and theatrical.

It works because it sends a powerful, unspoken message to a person with whom you experience difficult interactions: you don't know what I am going to do next.

That is the most powerful message you can send to a chronic adversary. If



your staff cannot predict your behaviour within a fairly narrow band, they will respect you more.

Example: One of the things that unravels parent/teen relationships is that teens tend to look at their parents as being highly predictable in tone of voice, facial expression, and gestures. When parents shake up the patterns, teen-agers respect them more.

Not one-upmanship

The objective of pattern interruption is not one-upmanship, of course. It's to engender respect. This is critical, because at the personal conflict level, lack of respect is what is eroding the relationship.

Tip: Make a list of your behaviour patterns so you can recognize and interrupt them when conflict begins.

3. Use mental Aikido. Another intuitive technique is mental Aikido.

Aikido is the only entirely defensive martial art. It is never used to attack anyone.

Aikido masters use its techniques to get out of the way when someone throws a punch by removing themselves

Concluded on page 2

YOU CAN AND SHOULD express your concern for integrity by contributing to your organisation's policies, training programs and communications about the need for honesty and a sense of personal responsibility.

Doing so will enlighten and reassure your employees and customers.

But what you do — and what they witness — moment by moment will make the most difference.

In **THE INTEGRITY ADVANTAGE**, authors Adrian Gostick and Dana Telford describe how Greg Smith, a corporate insurance agent in Texas, once confronted one of those moments.

As he filled out a new policy for a client he'd just signed, the client asked him to change the effective date on the policy.

The client wanted the policy to cover a claim that had occurred a few days earlier.

By this small act of dishonesty, Smith could save his new client hundreds of dollars — a lot to the client, but really not much to the huge insurance company that backs the policy.

Smith had long prepared himself for this moment, and simply said, "Well then, when is the next time you want me to lie to you?"

Smith was content that he'd stood up for his principles, but what about the client?

The client didn't receive coverage for the prior claim, but he didn't walk away from Smith, either.

He stayed with him and went on to spend nearly \$1 million with Smith over the next several years on several more policies.

Why not dump someone who wouldn't do even a 'small' favour?

Because the client had proof of Smith's integrity and knew he could trust Smith.

Even at the cost of an embarrassing lesson, that knowledge is worth a lot. ■

SOURCENOTE: Communications solutions



Ian McFarlane-Toms

The way I see it...

Making money is an interesting hobby

THERE IS A LOT of money in the world; the world is awash with it.

There is more money floating around, changing hands and making more people wealthy than ever before.

And yet, most of us work very hard to get rid of it as fast as we can.

Here's a simple rule: Making money is hard; being of service is easy.

And here's the brilliant corollary: If you can serve enough people, they will give you money out of gratitude.

Too many business people go directly for the money and find it awfully hard to attract and keep.

Money does not want to be trapped or tricked or corralled.

Money is a reward for the service we provide to others and in some strange way, it flows to those who serve.

Do you need a good business plan, good people and good products?

Of course! But the primary focus must be on providing value and serving your customer. If you do that, and do it with honesty and with style and enthusiasm, the money will follow. It always has and always will.

We all prefer doing business with people we like and trust. We prefer doing business with people who make things easy, who serve us well, and who stand behind their product or service, and do it with an easy smile and lots of grace.

Only rarely is a deal based primarily on price. I routinely drive past businesses (grocery stores, lawyers, repair shops) who might offer a lower price in order to do business where I feel comfortable and have confidence in the service I'll receive.

I bet you're the same way, and you want to use that to your advantage.—Find a way to provide extraordinary service and the money will follow.

That's been my experience and I trust it. I think it'll work for you, too. ■

USE MENTAL AIKIDO TO DIFFUSE OFFICE CONFLICTS —concluded from overleaf

from the line of attack. At a psychological level, if someone says, "Your idea is stupid," a mental Aikido technique would be a non-linear response — doing or saying something unexpected in response to the attack, such as a comment on the weather-or a "stumble-bumble" — a technique through which the person attacked absorbs the attack through agreement with what is said so fully that attackers are completely disarmed.

A response could be, "You know, I've been having a lot of stupid ideas lately." The principle behind mental Aikido is to not resist and not be a target. That is extremely unnerving and frustrating for those who initiate conflict.

4. Behave your way to resolution. It's important to manage anxiety when you find yourself in conflict with a staff member. People can defeat themselves in conflict situations by tightening up, losing their flexibility, behaviorally and physically.

Tip: Give yourself a pep talk. Even more effective is to "behave your way through it," by controlling stance and breathing.

Try to manage anxiety primarily through physiology, not intellect. Emotions follow physiology; you lead emotionally with your body.

How people change their bodies will alter how they feel, he said. How people use their bodies determines how they manage anxiety, he said.

Tip: Try a stance used in martial arts in which a person bends the knees a bit and becomes more stable. When sitting down, people make a mistake by crossing their legs, leaning back or forward.

Instead, they should assume a pose that's

centered, grounded, and ready for whatever comes their way.

Another intuitive process — pacing — allows you to study the observable behaviour of the person with whom you are in conflict.

Use that as a blueprint to guide your actions in relation to that person.

Tip: Practice pacing techniques by echoing a person's body language, facial expression, or vocal tone. The movements should be approximations, not mimicry. The process helps to put people on the same wavelength without being conscious of why it happened.

When in a chronic conflict situation, provided somebody is not escalating out of control, pacing is the top strategy to set the stage for conflict resolution.

It sends a powerful subconscious message to the other person that says, "I understand you and I am with you".

The result is the development of rapport between the parties, which is critical in the intuitive approach.

Rapport does not mean "I like you; you like me." Rapport means, "I respect you".

Pacing bypasses resistance and gets people to a place where they can have the kind of impact they want to have..

5. When nothing works. When nothing works, however — and that will happen sometimes — go to a posture of detached concern.

That means not running away from conflict, not avoiding it, not walking away from it, but not letting it run your life.

It is not the end of the world. ■

SOURCENOTE: psychotherapist Philip Chard is President and CEO of NEAS Inc., an employee assistance program (EAP) and work/life services firm in Brookfield, Wisconsin, USA

Use this three-step plan to manage multi-department projects

IT'S A COMMON scenario: Everything goes smoothly within your own department — but when you have to work with another department on a project, things fall apart.

Communication breaks down, deadlines are missed and arguments flare up everywhere. Business author Michael C. Thomsett offers managers these guidelines for working with other departments:

1. Sit down with the other managers. And, says Thomsett, do this before you finalise the project schedule. Make sure everyone signs off on the schedule, so that later on, nobody can say the deadlines took them by surprise.

Meeting with the managers of the other departments ensures that responsibility starts at the very top level.

2. Set up weekly status checks. This doesn't have to be anything fancy, but get it onto your calendar every week.

Even if it's a two-minute phone call or a weekly 'project status report' via e-mail, checking in once a week can help eliminate any problems before they derail the project.

3. Be ready to solve unanticipated problems. Very few projects run 100 per cent smoothly. Very few departments can accurately predict their workload one month in advance.

A department that has a manageable workload when the project starts could be swamped with other work midway through the schedule.

Be flexible. Understand that circumstances change and be ready to come up with solutions, not blame.

And, as a final piece of advice, always remember this: you're probably going to have to work with these departments again in the future. You want to build stronger bridges, not burn the ones that are already in place. ■

SOURCENOTE: Adapted from *The Little Black Book of Project Management*, by Michael C. Thomsett (AMACOM)

Business strategy

Are you using a GREAT strategy?

Your 'strategy' is simply the plan or steps, or blueprint, you will use to achieve your goals. The biggest problem is that most people have wonderful goals but match them with a terrible strategy!

RECENTLY, the American talk-show host, Clark Howard, quoted a survey that found almost 20% of Americans feel that the "only way to achieve financial security is by winning a state lottery."

As Clark points out, that is a terrible strategy because it's flawed on so many levels.

First, you can't win the lottery!

Why would anyone play a game that is scientifically designed to make sure that, over the long-run, you CAN'T win?!

And yet gamblers the world over keep right on playing. (Isn't human behaviour fascinating?)

Secondly, there are so many other strategies that actually work!

Saving ten-percent of your income and investing in boring old premium bonds will work.

Improving your skills and increasing your income will work.

Starting a small business often works.

There are literally millions of opportunities to become wealthy and they are all around us.

So, what's your strategy for financial independence? Is it working?

Or, here's another example: Shedding those extra pounds.

The most common strategies are: (1) eating less, (2) eating differently, (3) exercising more, or (4) a combination of the first three.

Any of these strategies will work, although dieting seems to have the lowest long-term success.

The key question is simply, what is YOUR strategy for achieving your goal?

Most people know to write down their most important goals.

There are goal-setting books and seminars (on page one we have written about achieving goals more quickly) and every business focuses on them.

Unfortunately, fewer people follow-up by defining an efficient and effective strategy for success.

For each of your critical goals, ask yourself these questions:

1. How have other people done what I want to do?

2. What beliefs, skills and tools did they use? Do I have (or can I get access to) similar beliefs, skills and tools?

3. Who will help me along the way?

4. Given my current situation, what three steps can I take today? How can I get started?

You may want to think about the most difficult problem you'll face and make plans to overcome it. You may need to acquire capital or other resources. How will you do that?

Let me repeat, many people have wonderful goals but use ineffective strategies to pursue them.

I like the saying that "hope is not a strategy," and similarly, I observe that counting on "making a killing" or waiting for "luck" to come your way is rarely effective.

Take time to develop an elegant strategy. Get a coach or mentor to show you the way. Use a map, or design a blueprint.

Whatever you call it (I sometimes use the term, 'recipe') figure out how you will get from where you are to where you want to be a year from now.

Then, day by day, work your plan. I know of no other reliable way to transform your life. ■

SOURCENOTE: MyWorldClassLife.com

Service

Unconditional service guarantees can be cost-effective

MANY COMPANIES now give service guarantees to assure customers they'll get what they want. Are these assurances fiscally sensible — are they worth what they cost a company?

For example, the Hampton Inn lodging chain several years ago began offering a '100 per cent satisfaction guarantee' that reads:

"We guarantee high-quality accommodations, friendly and efficient service and clean, comfortable surroundings. If you're not completely satisfied, we don't expect you to pay."

One year after introducing this guarantee, Hampton Inns' management examined its results. They discovered that:

- Two per cent of "frequent stayers" (11 times or more during the year) chose the Inn because of the guarantee. This represented an increase of \$7.2 million in annual revenue.

- 45 per cent of the 7,455 dissatisfied guests

who invoked the guarantee during the year came back, and 61 per cent of them indicated that they returned because of the guarantee. This represented another \$1 million in additional annual revenue.

- On the other hand, the cost of refunds to dissatisfied customers during the year was about \$500,000. And the company spent about \$300,000 above the normal amount to advertise the guarantee.

Hampton Inn calculated that the ratio of increased revenue to increased cost for the hotel chain was about 10-1 (\$8 million vs. \$800,000).

The guarantee yielded a 'soft' payout, too: 66 per cent of employees surveyed said their pride had improved; 75 per cent said that Hampton Inn was a better place to work and 85 per cent said they were motivated to do a better job as a result of the guarantee. ■

SOURCENOTE: James Heskett, W. Earl Sasser Jr and Leonard Schlesinger, THE SERVICE PROFIT CHAIN: HOW LEADING COMPANIES LINK PROFIT AND GROWTH TO LOYALTY, SATISFACTION AND VALUE

The Institute for Independent Business

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As of 31 January 2007 4,358 carefully-selected men and women had been accredited worldwide as IIB Associates.

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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. ■

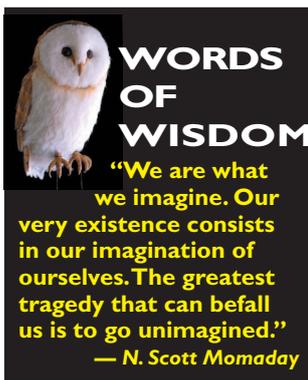
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Morale building

Use 'Guerrilla Recognition Tactics' to recognize superior performance

Employee recognition doesn't have to be a formal process that involves expensive awards and all-company banquets.

IN FACT, some of your best opportunities to build morale through recognition will be last-minute, 'catch-employees-doing-something right' tactics.

Here are some simple things you can do that your employees will appreciate:

• **Create "Freedom Cards" that you give for superior performance.** It's entirely up to you what these cards offer employees.

Basically, they're a way to say, "Thanks for the great work, now get the hell out of here and relax for a while."

But here's the catch: you don't have to give employees a week off or even a day.

Maybe the card is good for only a couple of hours or a half-day.

This tactic works best when the employee has just finished a difficult task or has been putting in extra hours in order to bring a project home in time.

• **Have key leaders sign a "Recognition Memo."** One of the biggest frustrations workers experience is not knowing whether people at the top of the organisation recognize their good work.

That's why these Recognition Memos are so powerful. When an employee is handed an official Memo, signed by key leaders up to and including the CEO, it sends the strong message that their work is *not* being ignored.

• **Pass out "Recognition Business Cards" to employees who do something right.** Do it on the spot to reinforce the positive behaviour immediately.

Again, these don't have to be fancy.—Just a simple business-size card with three elements:

1. A blank space to write the employee's name
2. A blank space where the manager can write down what the employee is being recognized for
3. A written note on the back reminding employees to bring their cards to their next performance review.

Once again, it won't be the card itself that blows the employees away.

It will be the fact that you thought enough of their work to give them the card in the first place. ■

SOURCENOTE: Adapted from "Just-in-time employee motivation," from EMPLOYER-EMPLOYEE.COM

Brief and to the point

Family businesses undergoing change

A greater commercial sense, an increase in business education at university and the growth of the 'shareholding democracy' are three reasons behind a change in attitudes in family businesses, according to research by the London Business School (LBS) and the Institute of Family Business (IFB). Shareholders have become more demanding and tend to want more control over what happens with their money, but it has also become easier for family members to leave a business than it once was.

The Daily Telegraph offers a summary of the LBS research at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/money/main.jhtml?view=DETAILS&grid=M3&xml=/money/2006/01/31/cbbiz31.xml>. Details of how to buy the report itself can be found at <http://www.ifb.org.uk/index.htm>

Small firms in the dark over energy efficiency rules

Small businesses could be left in breach of a new European law unless the Government publishes guidance to help them comply. This is the warning issued by the British Retail Consortium (BRC) with regard to the Energy Performance Buildings Directive (EPBD), which came into force on 4 January and is designed to improve the energy efficiency of commercial premises. The Government is yet to publish guidance about how the Directive, which currently affects premises over 1,000 sq m, will be implemented.

There is more from the BRC at <http://www.brc.org.uk/details04.asp?id=843>

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 customer retention"

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

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