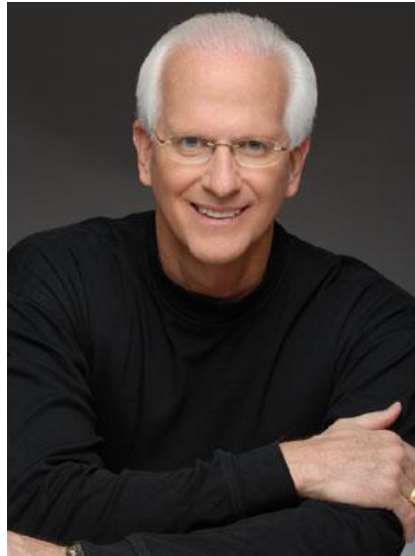


CONSIDER THIS

By Robert Stevenson

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**Collection of 45 of My Favorite
Business-Related Articles**

Table of Contents

- 1. Why, Why Not, Why Don't We Try**
- 2. Subtraction is the Exercise of Genius**
- 3. The Destructive Effects of Arrogance**
- 4. I Just Need One Person**
- 5. Corporate Culture Counts**
- 6. The Power of Appreciation**
- 7. The Contrarian**
- 8. Laughter is a Positive Stimulant to Profits**
- 9. Realistic Optimist**
- 10. A Culture of Ownership**
- 11. The Power of the Question ... Why?**
- 12. Is There a Place for Fairness in Business?**
- 13. The Most Effective Tool for Success is the "MORE" Tool**
- 14. Get Over It and Move On**
- 15. Some Good Ideas ... at First ... Failed Miserably**
- 16. Leader ... an Earned Title – Not Given**
- 17. Looking for Credit, Accolades, Praise, or Honor**
- 18. One Chance**
- 19. It's Okay to Change Your Mind**
- 20. The Power of "Re"**
- 21. Bad Decisions – Mistakes – Good Judgment**
- 22. Prepared, Equipped, and Armed with the Right Habits**
- 23. Words Customers Don't Want to Hear**
- 24. The Ripple Effect Principle**
- 25. Calamity, Mishap, Error, or Accident**

26. **There is No Success Without Ex's**
27. **The Safe, Secure, Smart Choice of Silence**
28. **Missteps, Mistakes and Blunders**
29. **The Power of Delightful**
30. **Don't Be a Domino Pusher**
31. **B. O. S. S.**
32. **Mistaken for the Maître d'**
33. **B.O.U.N.C.E.**
34. **There is NO Immunity to Having Problems**
35. **Success Challenge**
36. **"I Quit!"**
37. **The Carpet People**
38. **What are You Promising Them?**
39. **Anyone Can Have a Great Idea**
40. **I'm Tired of Excuses**
41. **Barn Movers**
42. **How Will They Remember You?**
43. **Sometimes Quitting is Smart**
44. **How Many Times is Enough?**
45. **Only 21% - That's Awful**

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1 - Why, Why Not, Why Don't We Try

Nobel Laureate and physicist Richard Feynman said that it was no coincidence that **virtually all major discoveries in physics were made by those under the age of 25**. When he was asked why he concluded, ... *"you don't know what you don't know."* I guess another way you could put it is, when you are unaware of something that supposedly can't be done ... you go at it with a blind determination to see if it CAN be done.

Any time I do a strategic planning session for a company, I always ask them to make sure they have some of their younger talents in the room. If you want fresh, new ideas, I think it is only appropriate to have fresh, new, young employees in the room sharing their ideas. You won't hear statements from them like, *"that's the way we've always done it,"* because they've never done it. What you will hear are challenging statements like, *"Why,"* ... or ... *"Why not,"* ... or ... *"Why don't we try ..."*

I am not saying that the veterans in a company should be "put out to pasture" when it comes to coming up with ideas that will improve it. I think experience is an incredibly powerful resource. Intellectual capital is one of the most valuable assets of any company. What I am saying is don't discount an idea from a young associate by saying ... *"What could they know ... they are too young to know anything ... they haven't been here long enough to know how we do it at our company."*

In the mid 1800's the head of the Patent Office in Washington recommended that the Patent Office be closed, because everything that could have been invented had already been invented. That same Patent Office rejected the patent applied for by the Wright Brothers for their flying machine ... stating they believed machines that were heavier than air could not fly. Someone forgot to tell the Wright Brothers. They just kept asking themselves ... *"Why"* ... *"Why not,"* ... *"Why don't we try ..."*, and aren't we glad they did.

Our young ones have **grown up in a world of speed, multi-tasking, constantly changing technology where virtually anything is accessible through the Internet**. I don't care what they don't know ... I want to hear what they want to change, don't like, think is stupid or is a waste of time. **If you want to say young ... then stay curious and keep asking WHY, WHY NOT, WHY DON'T WE TRY.**

2 - Subtraction is the Exercise of Genius

I was in my garage this weekend wondering where all the "stuff" came from. It is amazing how much "stuff" we can collect over the years that we really don't need to keep. The same is true in business. Companies collect "stuff," add programs, create policies and procedures, layering new things on top of old things. Our government has done the same thing with our tax code; the total number of pages of our tax code, including all tax regulations and IRS rulings, is now over 70,000. **The Department of Energy was created during the Carter administration to lessen our dependence on foreign oil.**

Thirty-two years later it has a budget of \$24.2 billion per year with over 16,000 federal employees, 100,000 contract employees, and we are still dependent on foreign oil.

I think we all need to take a lesson from Wal-Mart when it comes to running a business, our government and our own personal lives. Years ago, they introduced a contest, complete with awards and prizes of all sorts, trying to get everyone in the company to **identify the "Stupidest Thing" they do** at Wal-Mart. The contest was designed to help eliminate all unnecessary, wasteful and/or costly policies, procedures, rules, regulations, products, supplies, (etc.) which were not helping the overall profitability of the company. The idea was to focus on subtraction. Wal-Mart feels that ...

Addition is the exercise of fools ... Subtraction is the exercise of genius.

I agree with Wal-Mart. In this time of economic turmoil and uncertainty, it will be the companies who focus on their core business, eliminating all "unnecessary stuff", who will survive. I am currently doing the same thing in my business. It is good to always be looking ahead, creating new ideas, products, policies and procedures that will help your company prosper. Just don't forget to get rid of the unnecessary stuff along the way. I made several trips to the Goodwill Recycling Drop-off Truck this weekend taking lots of "unnecessary stuff." Goodwill is happy, the garage looks better and now I have room to collect more "stuff."

3 -The Destructive Effects of Arrogance

I think we would all be hard pressed to find anything good about being arrogant. I do not like dealing with arrogant people or companies who have the pretensions of superior importance. I don't want an arrogant boss, friend, or associate and I sure don't want to deal with an arrogant company. You know the type; *we're so big and wonderful ... you are lucky we are even talking to you.*

Motorola grew from \$5 billion to \$27 billion in annual revenues in just one decade. In the early 90's they were seen as one of the most visionary companies in the world. They were known for their willingness to experiment and especially for their methods of self-improvement. They are the folks who pioneered "Six Sigma" quality programs and anticipated future opportunities a decade away.

Somewhere in all this enormous growth and incredible success their culture shifted from that of "humility" their founder had instilled in the organization into "arrogance." They had the arrogance to dismiss the threat of "Digital Cellular Technology" believing that since they had a 50% market share, they could control the consumer. They had the arrogance to start dictating to their distributors/retailers that 75% of all phones they offered to the public "must" be Motorola. In 2001 Motorola had 147,000 employees, by the end of 2003 they had laid off over 60,000 of them and their stock price had plummeted.

In 1995 Circuit City was touted as one of the best companies in the world having grown more than 20% per year for a decade. In November of 2008 they filed for bankruptcy. The stories go on and on; Rubbermaid, Citigroup, Scott Paper and Zenith all let success and their arrogance get the best of them. There is an ancient saying; *"One benefits when being humble with fellows and loses when being superior."*

Don't assume because you have been in business for 40 years or you have a 60% market share that you will keep it, because just when you start thinking you are good, someone will come along better. Never forget what the great Sam Walton said: *"There is only one boss, the customer, and they can fire everybody in the company ... from the Chairman on down ... simply by spending their money somewhere else."*

All great companies once started from humble beginnings, and if they are not careful, they can end up there. Arrogance is not a virtue, humility is. Treat everyone special ... because the "not-so-important-folks of today may someday become important ... and they will remember how you treated them.

**Create a culture of humble respect for your success
and be forever mindful that each day you must prove yourself again.**

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By Robert Stevenson*

4 - I Just Need One Person

You may have ... a big company ... an incredibly sophisticated website ... hundreds of locations ... a huge advertising budget ... thousands of employees ... a phenomenal IT department ... an impressive Board of Directors ...

But do you have ... one person I can talk to on the phone, one person who can help me, one person who speaks my language fluently, one person who has some authority, one person who listens well, one person who follows up after my call, one person who can help me?

Or do you have a system that ... puts me on hold for an extended length of time, has 2, 3, 4 verbal menus to navigate, never has a human answer the phone, makes it difficult to call your company, takes days or weeks to respond, frustrates, disappoints, exasperates customers?

I called Prudential Life Insurance yesterday to get some information on a few annuities I have with them. Within minutes I was speaking to a highly competent person, who seemed happy to help me, who spoke excellent English, who listened attentively, never interrupted me, and answered "ALL" my questions. They even made a suggestion that would help me out later and instantly sent the form I needed. Let's just say I was extremely impressed and they didn't ask me to take a survey after the call. **Just one person made it all happen.**

I called my bank yesterday on an issue with one of my accounts. The person I wanted to talk to was out, so I was sent to another person who was on the phone. I had to leave a message on their voice mail system. Two hours passed with no response. I called again and still couldn't get anyone to help. I called a third time hoping I would reach them, but they were still busy. I called another location and did reach someone who figured out what had happened to my account but told me it had to be resolved at the branch where I had my accounts. I called a fourth time and asked for the branch manager, but they were busy too, so I left another message. I even went on-line on their very fancy website and left a very unflattering e-mail. I started this yesterday at 9:30 am and twenty-eight hours later I have heard nothing. **All I wanted was to speak to just one person who could help me.**

By the way, within 100 yards of their location are three other major banks.

If you want to find out how good your company is, call it with a problem. See how long it takes to get it resolved, how many messages you have to leave, how many menus you have to navigate to get to the one person who can help. Have your senior management team do it every week. Get them living the real experiences your customers are living and let your Customer Service People know that they are being called all the time by people who are checking up on them. In today's poor economy, with cut-throat competition, you can't afford to push your customers away because they can't reach just one person.

Prudential gets it ... does your company GET IT?

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By Robert Stevenson*

5 - Corporate Culture Counts

The dictionary defines “Corporate Culture” as the distinctive ethos (the fundamental character or spirit) of an organization that influences the level of formality, loyalty, and general behavior of its employees. It includes the philosophy, shared values, traditions, customs, and behavior of a corporation, that together constitute the unique style and policies of a company.

Wow! That was a mouthful to swallow all at once. *A simple way to determine your company's corporate culture is to select a random sampling of people within your organization and ask them to explain what they believe to be your corporate culture.*

Get ready; you may want to take a seat when you hear what they have to say. In most cases their words will astound you. If by chance you hear similar responses from most everyone that mirror the culture you were hoping to create, then get excited, because you have just hit a home run. Your training is working, your leadership is working, and your communication channels are working. BUT, if your people have a glazed look in their eyes, wondering what answer you are looking for or if their responses are extremely dissimilar, then you have a problem.

A Gallup poll of the American workplace showed that 72 percent of American workers aren't engaged in their jobs.

The J.M. Smucker Company has everyone who is hired memorize their printed corporate culture creed entitled, “**Why We Are – Who We Are.**” Smucker's wants their people engaged. The company started in 1897 making apple butter. They are now a \$4.7 billion company who believes their “culture” is the cornerstone to their success and must be proactively protected by instilling the creed in each and every employee.

Now fast forward to Zappo's, a company started a 1998, who, in just ten years grew to over \$1 billion in sales, also requires their new hires to memorize their company's **10 Core Values**. They require everyone they hire, regardless of position, (from customer service reps, accountants, lawyers, to software developers) to go through *the same 4-week training program* in which they study company history, the importance of customer service, the long-term vision of the company, company philosophy and corporate culture. *At the end of each week of training, they offer anyone \$2,000 to quit ...* which is a standing offer until the end of the fourth week. They are looking for people who want careers not jobs. Less than 1% of the people take them up on the offer.

Two companies starting 100 years apart are living by the same values.

Both companies believe the best way to build a brand is long-term.

Both companies believe in fantastic customer service.

Both companies believe in having passionate employees.

Both companies believe that if you get the culture right, most everything else will fall in place.

How is your “Corporate Culture” doing?

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6 - The Power of Appreciation

The pioneering psychologist and philosopher William James once said,
“The deepest human need is the need to be appreciated.”

The U.S. Department of Labor stated that 46% of the employees who voluntarily quit their jobs
do so because they didn't feel appreciated.

We all want to feel appreciated not for just a job well done, but for showing up every day, for being on time, for being proactive, for lending a helping hand, for having a smile on our face. It seems most managers today get so caught up in the day-to-day pressures of meeting quotas, goals and objectives, that they forget to compliment, thank, and appreciate all the folks around them who make it possible for them to meet all those quotas, goals and objectives.

It doesn't cost a dime to appreciate an employee - but it costs a great deal of money not to. If a qualified employee leaves, you now have separation processing costs, hiring costs, training costs, lost productivity and possibly lost revenue. *Keep Employees, Inc.* (a leading employee retention consultancy) puts a dollar amount on the costs of losing a productive employee:

For hourly employees	0.25 to 0.50	times their annual wages plus benefits
For middle managers	1.00 to 1.50	times their annual salary plus benefits
For top management	3.00 to 5.00	times their annual salary plus benefits

A recent Gallup poll of more than 1 million employed U.S. workers concluded that the number one reason people quit their jobs is a “bad boss” or immediate supervisor. Common “bad boss” behaviors (in case you need a reminder) are bullying, harassment, discrimination, and lack of respect. I would assert that a boss who made an effort to appreciate and compliment their employees would seldom, if ever, be ascribed with any of those oppressive behaviors. To me it is just plain bad business to lose an employee who is qualified, doing their job, and contributing to the company's success, because you neglected to go out of your way to tell them they are doing a good job.

If you want to increase productivity, morale, efficiency, effectiveness, resourcefulness, competency, and teamwork *then start making the effort of appreciating all those around you.* If corporate and personal success interests you, then start showing some interest and appreciation to your employees and associates.

When you start showing people you care about them and appreciate their efforts,
you will be amazed at the benefits it will bring.
But understand one important point.

This is no one time affair. Done properly... it is a way of life!

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7 - The Contrarian

A *contrarian* is a person who takes an opposing view, especially one who rejects the majority opinion. A contrarian can also serve as a very useful tool when it comes to making decisions. At every management meeting, I would suggest you assign at least one person to be *The Contrarian*; even if they agree with your idea, make them try to shoot holes in it, find fault, or consider alternatives. Challenges keep companies healthy. At the next meeting, pick someone else to serve in that post because people have a tendency to start disliking a person if they are always the one trying to shoot down ideas.

Some managers / bosses / CEOs have instilled such an environment of fear that they seldom, if ever, have anyone question their ideas, policies, procedures, or methods. If no one is disagreeing, adding their two cents, or giving any “real” input at your meetings, you don’t need to have a meeting. You probably won’t be in business long either, if that’s the way you run a company.

Here are two examples of things *that should have been* challenged:

(Source: *Great Government Goofs* by Leland Gregory)

- One year, efficiency experts saved the Department of Defense \$27 million. The efficiency experts charged the DOD \$150 million for their work.
- The El Paso, Texas, City Council approved \$112,000 to retain a private security firm – to guard the city’s police station.

Someone should have stood up in those meetings and said – “*Wait a minute*” ...

“*We have better things to do with our money.*”

“*This makes no sense.*”

“*This is ridiculous.*”

“*You’ve got to be kidding.*”

“*Why?*”

But, always remember, when it’s not *their own money*, attitudes are more accepting of *stupid ideas*.

Personally, I will take one **Contrarian** over a room full of “Yes” people; at least the **Contrarian** will force me to think. Never take offense from someone who is challenging your idea. Simple words like *Why*, *What if* can save a company if asked at the right time. Great leaders see challenges as an invitation for the group to test, justify, explain, and prove the idea. They welcome vigorous dialogue and debate. They see argument and disagreement as catalysts to better solutions.

Once a decision is made, do everything you can to make it work, because only through a unified commitment can success be obtained.

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8 - Laughter is a POSITIVE STIMULANT to Profits

I recently did a speaking engagement for a company and in my research interviewing process several people shared with me some very disturbing comments about their working environment. I simply asked the question, *“What do you do for fun at your company?”* I received comments like ...

“We don’t have time for fun.”

“I can’t remember the last time we did anything fun.”

“Fun – we don’t do anything fun.”

“I think we had a picnic last year.”

Due to the pressures to produce more in less hours and the ever-increasing pressure of competition, in too many companies today, humor and laughter have virtually disappeared. **If you want to boost productivity**, then figure out ways to create a fun, happy work environment and most importantly, make people laugh. One study conducted by Canadian financial institutions discovered that managers who used humor often, also **had the highest level of employee performance**. If you are still not convinced that laughter is something that you should strive to create in your workplace, then here are a few more facts that might help.

- ▶ Laughter can defuse anger and anxiety as well as keep you focused and alert
- ▶ Laughter is contagious and irresistible and therefore, spreads within your organization
- ▶ Laughter boosts your energy, diminishes pain
- ▶ Laughter protects you from the damaging effects of stress
- ▶ Laughter adds joy and zest to life, eases fear, and improves your mood
- ▶ Laughter enhances resilience, strengthens relationships, and enhances teamwork
- ▶ Laughter helps you keep a positive, optimistic outlook through difficult situations

It is important to make time for fun activities at work: e.g. bowling night, miniature golfing, karaoke, watch clips from a funny movie or TV show, share a good joke or a funny story, check out your bookstore’s humor section and bring some books to a meeting to share, host a game show night or lunch break with associates, ask people, *“What’s the funniest thing that ever happened to you”*, include humorous quotes or pictures in communications, use improv games as icebreakers and stress busters, organize group activities outside of work that are fun, have impromptu theme days as well as caption contests, and/or have a dress-up day or different theme costume dress-up days and give out awards for best costumes. **Have a meeting strictly devoted to figuring out ways to have FUN at your company and then do them. Never forget that laughter is a POSITIVE STIMULANT to profits.**

Laughter can help people thrive during change, remain creative under pressure, work more effectively and stay healthier in the process. Make sure laughter is part of your everyday work environment and watch your productivity SOAR!

*Consider This Collection
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9 - REALISTIC OPTIMIST

I am the eternal optimist; just ask my wife Ann. She will tell you I can watch a movie that is *really bad* and the whole time I am thinking it will get better, the plot will improve, the actors will become better actors, and the ending will be great. As a motivational business speaker it would be a very bad thing if I didn't look at things that way. But, I am also a businessperson who has owned several companies, worked with over 2,500 other companies and interviewed over 10,000 employees, managers and senior executives, so I understand where optimism needs to stop and realities must be addressed.

Former President John Kennedy would assign a person at each cabinet meeting **to take the opposite view** of what was being proposed, even if they agreed with it. Their job was to try and shoot holes in the plan, find the weak points or destroy it altogether, if they could. He felt if a plan, idea, or suggestion couldn't stand up to their tough questions, the plan sure wouldn't stand up to the real world when they tried to implement it. He knew because he was the President that many times people would publicly agree with him, even when they really didn't agree. He understood that the only way to get real answers was to take the fear of reprisal out of the picture.

If you are having meetings and everyone is agreeing with you, then you don't need to have any more meetings. Disagreements are healthy; President Kennedy insisted on them. Zappo's, the internet shoe selling company who went from zero to \$1 billion in sales in 10 years, changed its business plan four times. A&P, who had over 16,000 stores, didn't pay attention to their customers' ever-changing demands, didn't adjust their business plan, and now they have about 300 stores.

It is great to be optimistic. I want to be surrounded by people who know we can get it done. But, I also want to be around people who will face reality and change when necessary; then get it done. *That's the way we've always done it*, works for delivering great service, having great attitudes, being timely and efficient. Those are all critical to your success. But, when your market changes, when customer demands change ... you have got to be realistic. Take a look at all the different menu offerings at McDonald's today compared to what they offered 10 years ago ... oh, how things have changed.

I have said it before, but it is worth repeating; *if you don't like change, you are going to hate extinction*. If you are going to stay ahead of your competition, then address **the real issues and ask the tough questions**. To survive in this ever-changing marketplace, I suggest you become a **REALISTIC OPTIMIST**.

10 - A Culture of Ownership

I have a client who is an extremely large freight company with an amazing delivery-on-time ratio of over 99%. But, it is not just getting the merchandise there on time that makes them so good, it's getting it there on time and undamaged. They concentrate on getting their people to **think like an owner**, to try and recognize problems and take ownership of the problem rather than leave the problem for someone else to fix. (*In most cases, fixing a problem after-the-fact, costs more and results in a seriously upset customer.*)

So, they have instilled a **Culture of Ownership** throughout their organization by showing their people how and when ownership of a problem should take place and the costs associated with no one doing so. They put together a short film for a training conference as a case study, using an actual client event. This "event" could have been corrected countless times had anyone taken ownership; but no one did. Here is a quick look at what the film identified.

The freight company's salesperson finally convinced the client, who manufactured golf carts, to give them a try at shipping their carts around the country; an order for three truck loads. Did the salesperson go check how the golf carts were packaged? **No**. He just turned in the order to operations and moved on to the next customer.

Operations sent over three trucks to pick up the golf carts. Did those three drivers check to make sure the golf carts were packaged correctly so they wouldn't get damaged in transit? **No**. They just loaded up the golf carts and took them back to the main terminal. Then they proceeded to off-load the golf carts, so they could be placed on individual trucks to be shipped out the next day.

Did anyone in the terminal (over a hundred people), who walked by the golf carts while they were sitting on the terminal floor, recognize that they were packaged incorrectly and would easily be damaged in transit? **No**.

Not one person took ownership of the problem. No one was looking out for the company or for that matter the customer. Did the golf carts arrive safely? **No**. Every one of them was damaged. Did the freight company pay the claim? **YES!** If one person had taken ownership, thousands of dollars would have been saved, along with keeping a **HAPPY** customer.

If your company is going to be successful you need to get your people thinking like an owner; taking ownership of any issue that could negatively affect your company or the customer. The short film by the freight company said it all ...

Create a **Culture of Ownership** and watch your profits SOAR!

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11 - The Power of the Question ... Why?

In many companies there are policies, procedures, manuals and rules that people don't have a clue why they are still doing them. There are so many things we do because ... *That's the way we always done it.* We could learn a lot from a three-year-old when it comes to how to cull out unnecessary "stuff" in running a business. If you tell a three-year-old to do something, before you get the words out of your mouth, you will hear, "Why?"

Is the three-year-old asking that question to annoy you or are they just trying to drive you crazy? In most cases, they don't know why, but it's our job to have the answer. Now, you can be the big, bad parent and just say, "Because I said so," and make them follow your request blindly with no explanation ... but, that technique doesn't work very effectively in the business world.

Your people need to have the answer to the "Why" questions. But, if you can't answer their challenge with good responses; if you are not really certain why that rule is in place or that procedure is being followed, then it's time to **GET the answer or CHANGE what you are doing.** Here is an example of not having a good response to "Why."

A delegation of artillery officers from NATO were visiting their British allies. The foreign officers were treated to an incredible display of motorized artillery in action by the Brits. After all the explosions and recoiling of the guns had died down, a rather confused NATO officer approached one of the British officers and asked **why** one of the soldiers in each of the artillery teams stood at attention throughout the entire demonstration doing absolutely nothing.

"Why" the British officer responded, "That is team member number 6. He always stands at attention when the gun is in action." The NATO officer then responded. "If that is the case, **why** do you need six men on each of the gun teams? Wouldn't five be enough?"

There was no immediate answer from the Brits. Later on, curiosity getting the best of them, they decided to find out. After hours and hours of research looking through volumes of military field manuals dating back decades, they finally came upon their answer. It seems the **original job** of gun team member 6 was to hold the horses' reins that had pulled the gun into position. Just how many years (decades) had passed since they no longer used horses to pull the large artillery guns around?

Accept "Why" questions as opportunities to streamline operations, improve efficiencies and increase profitability.

12 - Is There a Place for Fairness in Business?

Spirit Airlines made the decision to deny a dying Vietnam War veteran a refund for a ticket he purchased prior to finding out that he would be unable to fly because of his medical condition. The episode went viral on the internet and turned into a glorified PR mess for Spirit Airlines. I heard an attorney explain that the decision was made for legal reasons because Spirit Airlines did not want to set a precedent that they would refund airfares, for any reason. Wow, if that is the best they can do to explain why they did what they did, what a shame. Only after an enormous uprising of upset people *Tweeting* and *Facebooking* and the news media jumping in, did the CEO finally give in and do the right thing.

Are gestures of compassion, caring, concern, charity, grace, empathy, generosity, mercy, kindheartedness, and fairness inappropriate for companies? Have they lost their place in the business world? I think not. I think companies like Southwest Airlines, Zappos, Nordstrom, Starbucks, Amazon, LL Bean, Apple and USAA (*all listed as top companies in customer service*) would have handled it differently. **I wouldn't want to work for a company that chose "Precedent" over "What's Right," and I sure don't want to do business with them.**

I think we as consumers respond to companies who do the right thing, go the extra mile, work hard at helping, pleasing, assisting, understanding and searching for better ways to make the customer experience special. It is really sad it took an uprising to get Spirit Airlines to finally do the right thing. It shouldn't have to be that way. Going above and beyond to help the customer should be engrained in all employees; it should be your corporate culture. A Ritz Carlton employee can spend up to \$2,000 without getting corporate approval to help satisfy an upset customer. Now, that is a perfect example of putting the customer first, empowering your employees and also creating the right corporate culture all rolled up into one policy.

Is there a place for fairness in business? You bet there is. Great leaders and great companies understand this principle. For companies to be able to withstand all the trials of a bad economy, all the difficulties of fighting off competitors, and everything else thrown at them, they need to have a strong foundation of character; they need to be known for doing what is fair and honorable for their customers as well as their employees. Talented, upstanding people want to work for those types of companies and consumers like to do business with them. It should never take an uprising to make a company do what is right.

Customer service is just a ...day in, day out, ongoing, never ending, unremitting, persevering, compassionate, type of activity.

Leon Gorman, CEO L.L.Bean

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13 - The Most Effective Tool for Success is the “MORE” Tool

I find companies and people achieve **MORE** when they give **MORE**. Sometimes the simplest gesture can make a great impact on your customer. Try to figure out what might really impress your customer that is above and beyond what you (and your competition) normally do. Here are some examples:

- You take your car in for an oil change - they also vacuum your car and clean your windshield
- Your glass is never empty ... the waiter is always there to fill it up
- You get a free dessert because they took too long on your order
- Service personnel put on shoe “booties” before entering your home
- They offer to carry your bags to your car
- They shipped your merchandise free
- They honor the sale price from yesterday’s ad
- They know more about their merchandise than their competitors
- They seem genuinely happy to service your every need

When you create a culture where everyone in your company is striving to do **MORE** than expected you will be amazed at the results. Your greatest form of advertising is word-of-mouth. *Angie’s List* has become a huge success by being a great word-of-mouth network that helps over 1 million members find the best service. U.S. News & World Report wrote: “*Angie’s List is an invaluable repository of informed judgments on an increasing deep inventory of service providers.*” A great way for you to see how consumers define what “**MORE**” really is would be to check out Angie’s List.

The same is true for you personally. The most effective tool for success is the “**MORE**” tool.

*Do more than you should
Study more than is necessary
Practice more than is expected
Prepare more than you have to
Deliver more than they imagined
Be more cheerful, courteous and compassionate than others*

**AND YOUR SUCCESS WILL BE FAR
“MORE”
THAN YOU EVER EXPECTED.**

*Consider This Collection
By Robert Stevenson*

14 - GET OVER IT and MOVE ON

**To me a mistake/failure is due to a lack of knowledge or skill.
I will not let it define who I am or stop me. I will learn from it and MOVE ON.**

So you blew it, you messed up, you lost, you missed, you made a mistake, blunder, gaffe, got it wrong, or slipped-up ... well welcome to the human race. I am so tired of people saying, “*I woulda, I shoulda, I coulda,*” or talking about regrets and old mistakes. If you plan on being successful, you will need to learn how to GET OVER IT and MOVE ON when things don’t go as planned.

To me, a road block is just a detour, a defeat is only a set-back, and a “*so-called*” failure is a learning experience. While researching for his book **Think and Grow Rich**, the great writer Napoleon Hill discovered that in most cases for over 500 millionaires he interviewed, *success came “after” their greatest failure*. Albert Einstein said, “*anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new.*” Regardless of the strategy we employ in our quest to succeed, we will have both successes and failures; usually a whole lot more failures than success.

Abraham Lincoln went to war a captain and returned a private. He failed as a businessman and a lawyer, had a nervous breakdown, turned to politics and was defeated 7 times before being elected President. He once wrote in a letter to a friend saying, “*I am now the most miserable man living.*” Phil Mickelson played golf for 12 years as a professional before ever winning a major tournament. He came in second place in the U.S. Open 5 times (a record); a tournament he has never won.

Tom Watson, Sr., the founder of IBM, was being interviewed by a young man who asked the following question. “*Mr. Watson, how can I be great like you?*” Without any hesitation Mr. Watson responded, “**Double your failures.**” As long as you are learning from your mistakes and applying that knowledge, so you can proceed more intelligently the next time, you win. Just think how British fiction writer John Creasey must have felt getting 774 rejection notices before selling his first story; now that is a persistent, tenacious, determined, committed man. He went on to write over 600 novels using 28 different pseudonyms. The first book that started the **Chicken Soup for the Soul** franchise was rejected 134 times before selling over 1 million copies. Remember, **failure is only failure when you quit trying.**

There are so many ways I have heard it stated: *Fail Forward Fast, Failures are Stepping Stones to Success, Failure is the Ultimate Teacher, and Fail Intelligently*, are just a few of the words of wisdom for us to follow. Here are a few more ways to look at failure from some rather reputable people.

- *Failure is only the opportunity to begin again more intelligently.* - **Henry Ford**
- *Success is going from failure to failure without losing your enthusiasm.* - **Abraham Lincoln**
- *Failure doesn't mean you are a failure... it just means you haven't succeeded yet.* - **Robert Schuller**
- *Never confuse a single defeat with a final defeat.* - **F. Scott Fitzgerald**

**Life isn't easy, learning isn't simple, errors, mistakes, and losing aren't fun
Never forget that failure is a major component of the learning process, so ...
GET OVER IT and MOVE ON.**

*Consider This Collection
By Robert Stevenson*

15 - Some Good Ideas ... at First ... Failed Miserably

John Joseph Merlin was a very successful maker of clocks and precision instruments. He also designed weighing machines and wheelchairs, improved musical instruments and even spent much of his time trying to develop a perpetual motion machine. This highly intelligent man was also a talented musician who enjoyed playing both the harpsichord and violin. With this background, you might find it surprising that he is remembered for the man who invented the “Roller-Skate.”

In 1760, this brilliant man convinced himself that he could travel faster by foot if he would just strap wheels to his shoes. **When is the last time you sat in a meeting and someone came up with an idea and your first thought was, that will never work?** But, let’s say you are an opened minded person, and give them the latitude to prove their ridiculous idea. Would you still think the idea had potential if it failed miserably when they first demonstrated it?

Let’s go back to 1760 where John Merlin had been working on *increasing the speed and efficiency of walking*. He attached two wheels to a metal plate and then strapped them to his shoes (*the first in-line skates*) and after countless attempts to stand and skate ... IT WORKED! Having been invited to a huge social event, a masked ball at the Carlisle House in the upscale Soho Square district of London, Mr. Merlin decided to unveil his new invention there. He didn’t play it safe. John decided to enter the grand ballroom on his roller skates while playing his violin; this was going to be a glorious moment for him. In front of the elite socialites of London, John skated in and lost his balance, crashed into a massive expensive mirror, destroying the mirror, his violin and his pride.

Had you been a witness of this enormous failure, would you immediately discount the idea as stupid, silly, ridiculous ... or would you look at the concept and think there might be some potential? Did Mr. Merlin fail because it was a stupid idea or did he fail because he was not a very skilled skater who increased his chances for failure by playing his violin while skating? Had he not been playing a violin, could he have used his hands to possibly correct his balance as he headed for the mirror, thus making his grand entrance a success?

Mr. Merlin’s “SPECTACULAR” failure set back the use of roller-skates for several decades. It takes a special person to see past failure and look for potential. It takes a special person to keep working at an idea to finally make it succeed. It takes a very special person to see every failure as a learning experience ... as what not to do ... and keep trying to find what you should do.

**Never forget that success comes to those who see past failure,
look for potential and realize not all great ideas worked the first time.**

16 - “Leader” ... an Earned Title – Not Given

Many people profess to have it, that *Leadership Ability*, but few people truly possess it. They read the books, listen to the tapes or DVD's, go to the seminars, and then pronounce themselves **Leaders**. They use words like *empowerment, total quality management, excellence, vision, commitment*, and in the same breath, want to take the credit. As James O'Toole, a professor and leadership expert puts it, "**Ninety-five percent of American managers today say the right thing. Five percent actually do it.**"

I recently worked with an old friend who had chosen to go with a new company. Having worked with him several times before in other organizations, I had seen his management style in action. It was a sheer delight to watch him operate in a new company and see that he had already been awarded the title of LEADER by his staff. He is a man who respects, understands, directs, motivates, and helps everyone around him ... a man who can be given a difficult task and accomplish it while at the same time CARING for all employees and customers. Lao-Tzu, a revered philosopher of ancient China, left us with an excellent explanation of leadership.

The superior leader gets things done with little motion.

*He imparts instructions not through many words
but through a few deeds.*

He keeps informed about everything but interferes hardly at all.

*He is a catalyst, and though things would not get done as well
if he weren't there, when they succeed he takes no credit.*

And because he takes no credit, credit never leaves him.

Managers who think they must make people feel stupid, insecure or scared to get things done will never become great leaders. It is not just how good employees perform when you are there, it is also that they perform well when you are not there; that is the true benchmark of a great leader. Great leaders see the potential in people and cultivate it; they build confidence ... not destroy it. Leadership is about helping others, teaching others, supporting others, giving credit to others – **It's about OTHERS – It's not about YOU!** Great leaders never look for fame, accolades or awards – they dwell on accomplishments and the rest follows.

**You will know you are a leader
when you start making the people around you BETTER.**

17 - Looking for Credit, Accolades, Praise, or Honor

There is a word in the English language that can have an immediate and negative effect on many people when used. It is a simple, little, one-letter word, but boy can it turn people off when they hear it. That damaging word is “I”. *I did this ... I did that ... I was the one who thought of that ... I made it happen ... I decided.*

By using the word “I” you are really congratulating yourself. You are making a public statement explaining just how pleased you are with yourself and what “YOU” accomplished. Before making a self-congratulatory statement, you might want to consider just how many other people were involved; people who had something to do with what was accomplished. By taking sole credit for the accomplishment, you just upset everyone involved in the task.

There is an old Chinese proverb which states, ***“You cannot propel yourself forward by patting yourself on the back.”*** Credit, Accolades, Praise, or Honor should be given ... not taken. They are only meaningful, deemed special, when extolled by others. You can’t prove your superiority by personally telling the world how great you are, but you can prove your lack of confidence.

Many people confuse confidence with egotism. Egotism is a tremendous weakness. If you ask someone if they can do something and they say ... *“Absolutely”* ... *“Yes”* ... *“Not a problem”*, those are not egotistical responses, they are responses of confidence. But, if they go around boasting they did it, that is where egotism kicks in.

My suggestion is when something has been accomplished and you want to announce it to the world, using words like “they” or “them” are far more powerful and endearing to all those listening to what is being said. **The moment YOU put the word “I” into the accomplishment is the moment YOU hurt YOUR reputation and stature.**

Anatomically speaking, it is quite difficult to take your hand and pat yourself on the back, but it is simple to point to others, give them credit, and pat them on the back; ***remember that*** the next time you start to use the word “I”. **You can never go wrong in singing the praises of others but singing your own praises will never become a top hit song.**

**Credit, Accolades, Praise, or Honor
only have VALUE when GIVEN by others.**

18 - ONE CHANCE

You spend lots of money on advertising for customers, training employees how to politely deal with customers, delivering the best product or service possible and then somewhere along the process of dealing with the customer “SOMEONE” drops the ball. Someone has a bad day, or gets frustrated, or is too busy, or thinks that’s not their job, or they treat the customer rudely, impolitely, disrespectfully or just have a PERSNICKETY attitude and you LOSE a customer.

But hey, it was only one customer; no big deal. REALLY? In today’s social media world, it is never just one customer. Customers now have the opportunity to spread the word with just one click on a computer or phone and BAM ... the story of bad, terrible, awful service is out. (*Bad news travels fast*)

Henry Ford said, ***“It is not the employer who pays the wages. Employers only handle the money. It is the customer who pays the wages.”*** That statement needs to be pervasive throughout your organization; every employee needs to understand where their paycheck comes from. The moment an employee has any form of interaction with a customer a BELL needs to go off in their head, reminding them of the critical importance of what is about to take place. The customer has made a decision to do business with you at this moment ... **how “they/you” do, will determine if the customer will do business with your firm again.**

It has been said that ***opportunity never knocks twice at any person’s door.*** So, you must always take advantage of your **first opportunity** and deliver. It is not just in customer service that *Persnickety, Rude, Impolite, or Disrespectful* attitudes can hurt you. Many a career/relationship has been delayed, altered or destroyed by a bad attitude.

I try and look at every opportunity in business from a ONE CHANCE perspective. I have ONE CHANCE to do it right – ONE CHANCE to impress - ONE CHANCE to win them over – ONE CHANCE to deliver. May I suggest you make it a theme in your company to approach every opportunity, task, job, interaction or request from a ONE CHANCE perspective.

**A good ending starts with a good beginning
so make your first impression count.
You have only ONE CHANCE to do that.**

19 - It's Okay to Change Your Mind

What is so wrong with changing your mind? Nothing! If you made a decision that didn't work out ... then *change your mind*. If your life or business isn't going the way you want it to go ... then *change your mind* and go a different direction. No matter what is going on in your life or what has gone on in your life, in every situation, regardless of the circumstances, you have the ability to alter the way you feel about it by *allowing yourself to change your mind*.

So many people worry, fret, cry, or stress-out over things they shouldn't. You have an incredible power available to you ... anytime you want it ... that can make you feel better and put you on track to a better day; *the ability (power) of changing your mind*.

When you *change your mind* about anything it transforms how you now perceive it. It puts you in a better frame of mind and you now start seeing how you can make things work rather than dwell in the debilitating mood of self-defeat; *changing your mind becomes and energizing force*. Making a decision to alter your course becomes a catalyst for emerging ideas. Your mind wants a direction, a course, a decision and when you give it that clarity it rewards you with new hope, inspiration and energy; *you quit floundering in your indecision and flourish in your new direction*.

The billion-dollar company Zappos, who grew from \$0 in sales to \$1 billion in just ten years, changed their business plan four times. **They learned from what was going on and then changed their mind, changed their direction and changed their outcome.** In management, you might make a decision that didn't work out so well or was poorly received. You can use that bad decision to your benefit by simply saying you have reconsidered your decision because of the input you have heard from everyone, *changed your mind*, and have decided to go in a new direction.

Not every decision you make will be right. Realize that and understand *smart people and effective managers are the ones who are willing to CHANGE THEIR MIND and move on*. Stubbornness and inflexibility can kill a company and a career.

Change Your Mind
Hit the Reset Button
Start Over from a More Informed Position
New Beginnings Bring on New Energy, New Ideas, and New Results

Consider This Collection
By Robert Stevenson

20 - The Power of "Re"

I received so many comments on the piece I wrote about "Changing Your Mind" that I decided to write a follow-up to it. The major point I was making about changing your mind was that *it's okay to do it*. As I stated in the article, "You must realize and understand that smart people and effective managers are the ones who are willing to CHANGE THEIR MIND and move on. Stubbornness and inflexibility can kill a company and a career."

Changing your mind is like a "do over" ... a "start again" ... a "second chance" ... a "REDO". I then started thinking about the word **REDO**. The prefix "RE" means *to do again*. So, you have the power of the word "DO", which is the core of all accomplishments, combined with the added safety net of "RE" ... *do it again*.

If people would get in the habit of using "RE" more often, things would work out a lot better for them. If things aren't going the way you want, then RE-flect, RE-think, Re-establish, Re-build, Re-view, Re-visit, Re-new, RE-structure, RE-generate, RE-organize, RE-direct, RE-capture, RE-work, RE-cover, RE-fine, RE-arrange, RE-evaluate, RE-form, RE-tract, Re-create, Re-start, and/or Re-do.

Now, there are some people out there who will immediately take the opposite point of view on "RE". They will RE-fuse any advice. They will RE-frain from changing anything. They will RE-sist and RE-sent any suggestions you give. So, they will keep RE-peating their past mistakes and RE-linquish any chance they have for future success. Their choice of how they look at "RE" will RE-veal who they really are.

Quit being so RE-luctant in RE-doing something. Admit it didn't work out, RE-lax and move on. Quit living with RE-morse or RE-gret and RE-claim a positive outlook. RE-energize yourself, RE-coup your self-esteem and RE-ject any notion that you can't RE-gain what has been lost ... and make it even better.

***Welcome to the POWER of "RE"
When you RE-fuse to be defeated ... you RE-lease the power to WIN***

21 - Bad Decisions – Mistakes – Good Judgment

I think sometimes we lose the perspective of where good judgment comes from. We aren't born with good judgment. Some good judgment slowly evolves from the knowledge our parents, teachers, coaches, bosses and mentors try to share with us. Some good judgment evolves from doing something so many times that we figure out what works best. But often, we unfortunately have to live through a bad experience to gain the knowledge/wisdom.

I read one time that *“Good judgment comes from experience and a lotta that comes from bad judgment.”* Mistakes are a wonderful source of insight, so I think it is important to **never let a mistake go to waste**. You can't get the mistake back but you sure can learn from it, so you don't do it again. I tell companies that they should keep a list of their mistakes, write down every detail, and then share them with the new employees; this is a great way to reduce the possibility of having the same mistake occur again. You don't want new employees making old mistakes ... any mistakes they make should be new ones.

When a mistake is made it is also important to understand that the person didn't mean to do it; *people don't set out to mess-up*. Now, they could have been lazy, not followed the instructions, been in a hurry to meet a deadline or done something foolish ... but doing it **INTENTIONALLY** is seldom ever the case. Another way to reduce mistakes is to pass along *words-of-wisdom* by sharing tricks, short-cuts, experiences or stories that have helped you become a more qualified, skilled and knowledgeable person. Sometimes those *wise words* sink in and help to eliminate mistakes from occurring. Here are a few *words-of-wisdom* I think you might find helpful. *(the author of each quote is unknown)*

- *Do not corner something that you know is meaner than you*
- *Words that soak into your ears are whispered ... not yelled*
- *You cannot unsay a cruel word*
- *Meanness doesn't just happen overnight*
- *Remember that silence is sometimes the best answer*
- *Letting the cat outta the bag is a whole lot easier than putting it back in*

I don't care where I get the knowledge from ... just as long as it helps me. You need to understand that **mistakes are not final, nor is failure**. If learning is good and making mistakes is all a part of learning ... then I think it is fair to surmise that making mistakes is simply a part of the learning process. Albert Einstein once said ... *“Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new.”*

**Look at every first-time mistake as a part of the WISDOM process
... get over it and learn from it ...**

YOUR JUDGMENT JUST IMPROVED

22 - PREPARED, EQUIPPED, and ARMED with the RIGHT HABITS

At the peak of their expansion, Starbucks was opening 7 new stores every day and adding 15,000 employees every week. How did a small coffee shop in Seattle end up with over 17,000 stores and revenues of more than \$10 billion, selling \$4 coffee in a fancy cup? How did Starbucks build such an incredible organization that has over 135,000 employees? How do they get their new employees to show up on time and excel at delivering exceptional customer service, especially when many of them are young, unskilled, and lacking little if any experience in business? If you knew the answers to those questions, do you think it might help you expand your business or on a personal level ... help you to become more successful? Let me give you just a little insight to their formula for success.

Howard Behar, the former president of Starbucks once said, *“We’re not in the coffee business serving people. We’re in the people business serving coffee.”* When your entire business model is built around delivering exceptional customer service, you have got to figure out a way to instill the necessary SELF-DISCIPLINE in your people, so they can correctly handle almost any situation. Long lines, complicated orders ... and dealing with sometimes angry, mean, and in-a-hurry customers can be a daily routine for an employee at Starbucks. But, the customer and situation I just described can be the norm in a lot of businesses, so why are employees at Starbucks so good at dealing with it?

It all starts with training. Each *first-year employee* will spend **over 50 hours** in the classroom and more time at home studying workbooks or conversing with mentors. Starbucks spends hours upon hours **developing powerful habits** to prepare their people for the onslaught of customers. They have found **that following disciplined habits will enable their people to DEAL with almost any challenge they may face.** They focus on life skills and helping them to handle their emotions and show them how to deliver a **BURST of energy, pep, and enthusiasm when dealing with every customer.** They role play with them, interact with them, help, guide, nurture and **SHOW** them how to handle many different SITUATIONS.

Starbucks has spent millions of dollars creating courses that TRAIN their people on not just the steps of the process, but more importantly, on how to **maintain the self-discipline** to **“do it”** every time. One acronym Starbucks uses to help their people is **LATTE**. It stands for **Listen** to the customer, **Acknowledge** their complaint, **Take Action** by solving the problem, **Thank** them, and then **Explain** why the problem occurred. Starbucks has developed numerous routines for their employees to follow to help them during stressful situations. By developing these routines, they are helping their people create the RIGHT HABITS to serve their customers. **When an employee is PREPARED, EQUIPPED, and ARMED with the RIGHT HABITS to address almost any situation, delivering exceptional customer service becomes easy.**

**A BURST of energy, pep, and enthusiasm
will enhance anything you do.**

23 - Words Customers Don't Want to Hear

Companies spend millions of dollars in advertising trying to attract a customer only to run them off by saying the wrong words. It seems that on a daily basis I will reach some company on the phone and hear the words, *"All agents are busy right now helping other customers. Please hold."* If I were their competitor I would see that as a huge opportunity to take business away from them. **How companies handle their Personal-Point-of-Contact with their clients or potential clients will determine if they succeed or fail in this highly competitive business environment.**

In my opinion, customers don't want to hear all agents are busy right now. Customers don't want to go to your website and search for answers. Customers don't want you to send them a tutorial on how to do whatever they are calling to ask you about. Customers don't want to have to answer 10 questions to help better direct their call to the right department. We want to TALK to a human. We want to TALK to a nice, friendly and pleasant human. We want to TALK to a highly knowledgeable human. We want to TALK to someone who can give us answers. We want to talk to someone who can help us. **You might want to sit down with your associates and talk about all the phrases, statements, and/or words customers hate to hear.** Post those words so everyone in your company knows what not to say to a client. Here are a few examples of things customers don't want to hear:

- *"You will have to take that up with my supervisor"*
- *"There is nothing I can do for you"*
- *"I don't know - I just work here"*
- *"All lines are busy now ... please hold"*
- *"I will have to transfer you to another department"*
- *"We are experiencing a high volume of calls ... please call back"*
- *"I know the policy is silly, but I didn't set the policy - management did"*
- *"We take calls in the order received - you have 17 people ahead of you"*
- *"Our company policy doesn't allow us to do that - I don't know why - it just doesn't"*
- *"There is no one in who can help you right now"*
- *"Please go to our website"*
- *"That's not my job"*
- *"Please e-mail us your complaint"*

I recently quit doing business with a company who said it would take 72 hours to get me an answer to a problem they had caused. I soon learned that was their standard answer for any problems they caused. Their response caused me to look for another company to work with and within 24 hours I was up and running. I will never forget one of the statements said to me by the new company I had found. *"Mr. Stevenson, don't you worry about a thing. I will personally walk you through every step and show you how to do it and even do it myself on my end if it gets confusing. Our job is to get you up and running and make things simple for you."* Needless to say ... I was very impressed. She said ALL THE RIGHT WORDS and then delivered.

If you want to find out how good your company is ... call it ... and see how long it takes you to reach a pleasant person who can help you. Many times, the words your employees or your answering systems say will do nothing but drive business to your competitor. **My suggestion is to spend less money on advertising and more money on educating everyone on what " to say" and " not to say" to customers.** Your advertising might be driving them to your company, but what is said next ... may be driving them away, forever.

Your top business strategy should be a satisfied customer.

*Consider This Collection
By Robert Stevenson*

24 - The *Ripple Effect* Principle

If you drop a pebble into a pond where the water is still, you will see a beautiful circular "*Ripple*" motion take place where the stone entered the water. That one pebble sets in motion ripples that will affect the entire body of water. The same thing can happen in life, business, or organizations. One idea, thought, policy, gesture, example, statement or extra effort can set forth a *Ripple Effect* that can forever change you, your company or organization for the better.

Several years ago Alcoa Aluminum, the world's leading producer of primary and fabricated aluminum, brought in a new plant manager at one of its many facilities. When driving up to the plant he had been assigned to on his first day in his new position, this new plant manager noticed that all the good parking spots by the front entrance had the names and titles of the so-called "important people" painted on them. **The FIRST thing he did was contact the maintenance department and told them to paint over all the names and titles, his included.** This one decision sent "*Ripples*" throughout the entire plant. This new manager instantly sent a message that **everyone is important, every person matters**, and extra effort deserved extra benefits; if you got to work early, then you got a great parking space.

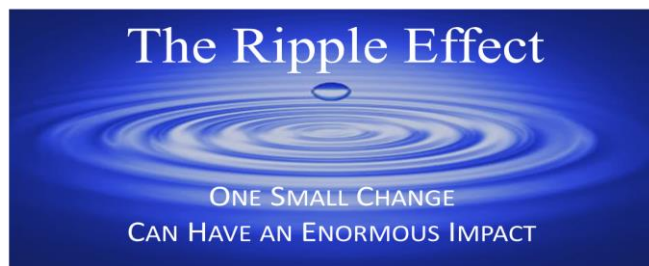
This one decision electrified the plant and had an amazing *Ripple Effect*. People started showing up early and feeling they really mattered. Attitudes changed, better lines of communication opened up. The new manager wanted everyone to realize that management was there to support employees, increase efficiencies, mentor, advise, and assist ... not demean or scare people. When you are manufacturing a product that involves handling 1220°F molten aluminum, every person is critical to the process. They were all in this together and one gesture by the new manager had just set the tone.

Today, identify one thing you should concentrate on that will have a positive *Ripple Effect* on you or your company. The *Ripple Effect Principle* can work for anyone out there.

(Example) ... Leaving 15 minutes earlier than you intended will ...

1. reduce your stress
2. keep you from rushing and possibly making bad decisions
3. impress people that you showed up early
4. allow you to network a little before a meeting
5. shows that you are organized and ready

These are just a few of the ripples that occur when you decide to be early.



*Consider This Collection
By Robert Stevenson*

25 - Calamity, Mishap, Error, or ACCIDENT

I want you to get a visual of the actual event. Imagine a desk piled high with files, papers and receipts. It is tax time and I am getting everything in order to hand over to my accountant. I had spent the weekend preparing everything and I was coming close to finishing, then the first thing Monday morning ... what did I do ... **I knocked over a “full” mug of coffee on my desk.** Oh yes, a full mug that seemed to go everywhere. Papers and receipts were absorbing the liquid mess just as fast as I was running to get paper towels to try and stop the disaster. My wife heard all the commotion and came into my office and started moving files while I was running for the towels. When I got back I saw that she had ripped open a box of Kleenex and stopped the onslaught of coffee; a greater disaster was averted by her quick thinking.

The top of my desk was a mess, but it could have been much worse. I survived, and the damaged receipts and paperwork were still legible (though changed to a subtle mocha color). The reason why I share the story with you is because I think there are several things we can learn from my mishap. It seems when “WE” accidentally do something wrong, screw-up, forget something, etc., it's okay, but when a subordinate, child, or someone else makes a mistake, it is a far different story. Imagine if an assistant had come into my office (or your office) and had not seen the coffee mug on the desk hidden behind the files and, by accident, put something on the desk and knocked over the coffee. Then, in our angered state of mind, descriptive words like stupid, idiot, incompetent, imbecile, unqualified, or inept may pounce into our brain to describe this person. Yes, when it is someone else “doing the unwanted and unfortunate deed” we tend to be a great deal less forgiving.

I don't know of anyone who ever wanted to miss a shot, strike out, lose the game, mess-up, break something, or knock over the coffee. Before you criticize someone for causing an “unwanted event,” take a moment (maybe several) to reflect on what really just happened. **There is a considerable difference between incompetence and an unfortunate error, mistake or accident.**

Did I mean to spill my coffee? NO!

Was I incompetent? NO!

Was I improperly trained and not prepared? NO!

Was I unqualified and should not have been doing what I was doing? NO!

Was I at the wrong place at the wrong time? NO!

BUT ...

Was I tired? YES!

Was I in a hurry? YES!

Was I frustrated? I was doing my taxes - what do you think!

Should I have put my coffee mug in a safer place? YES!

Should I make it a rule to never place any drink on my desk unless it is in a non-spill-able container? Not a bad idea!

In your haste to judge someone else for an “unwanted event” put yourself in their place first before making any judgment ... BE THEM and then judge the event. After that, learn from the mishap and try to figure out a way to never let it happen again.

**Judge every “unwanted event” as if you caused it.
Remember, every error, mistake, mishap, or calamity is an opportunity to learn so,
never let one happen without everyone gaining from the experience.**

*Consider This Collection
By Robert Stevenson*

26 - There is No Success Without Ex's

I was invited to speak at FedEx World Headquarters where I delivered two programs. I also had the wonderful opportunity to take a tour of their **Memphis Hub Operations** and see how they are able to process over 600,000 packages per night while it was actually happening. It was an amazing sight to behold.

I wanted to talk to them on a personal level, so they could advance their own careers while at the same time helping their company. I also wanted to create something special for those who attended my sessions that would be memorable and have a direct correlation with FedEx. Then it hit me ... the "**Ex**" in their corporate name ... stands for so much more than "**Express**." Just as FedEx has added, evolved, changed, tweaked and greatly improved on everything they do, I told my audience they too, needed to do the same.

I then gave them a list of "**Ex's**" to follow that would ensure not only their success in business but also in life. I told them they needed to ask themselves ...

- Do I **Excel** at my job
- Do I always give **Extra**
- Do I avoid making **Excuses**
- Do I **Exert** maximum effort
- Do I set the right **Examples**
- Do I **Exceed** what is required
- Do I **Exhibit** the best judgment
- Do I always strive for **Excellence**
- Do I **Exhaust** all possible solutions
- Do I always **Extend** a helping hand
- Do I **Exemplify** the best standards
- Do I strive to be **Exceptional** at my job
- Do I **Experiment** at new ways to do things
- Do I **Execute** according to proper procedures
- Do my peers considered me an **Expert** at what I do
- Do I **Examine** all mistakes to fully understand their cause

Regardless what company, association, or organization you work for, if you follow this list of "**Ex's**", everyone will want you. You will be known as the person they can always count on because you always deliver ... **you will be Exceptional.**

To establish and maintain a position of supremacy in anything you do requires that you start incorporating the "**Ex's**" in all aspects of your life and business. It's your choice ... you can either do it or you will simply be "**Excluded**" from that list of people who succeed in life and that is the one "**Ex**" I surely want to stay away from. So, remember...

**Let the "Ex's" mark your path
on your journey towards success.**

*Consider This Collection
By Robert Stevenson*

27 - The Safe, Secure, Smart Choice of Silence

The phrase *"to stick one's foot in one's mouth"* is a simple way of saying someone has said something that was stupid, possibly offending another person or was inappropriate and probably embarrassing. The shorten version today would be, *"open mouth, insert foot"*. I find one of the biggest mistakes people make is opening their mouth when they shouldn't. Keeping your mouth shut is an excellent way to keep out of trouble. People don't know what you are thinking, but when you make it known through your spoken words ... words that you can never take back... you may have a big problem.

Thomas Edison stated ... *"You will have many opportunities in life to keep your mouth shut: You should take advantage of every one of them."* It was Abraham Lincoln who said ... *"It is better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak out and remove all doubt."* By taking those two statements into consideration, I think you have an excellent argument for choosing your words carefully or saying nothing at all. There isn't anything wrong with being a great listener. It should be noted, you learn nothing while "you" are talking. I find that the smart, successful people are the ones who are listening and only speaking when they have something to say that is well thought out. Let me put it to you another way; **the more you talk the greater the possibility for error, so when in doubt ... REMAIN SILENT!** There are countless examples of humorous blunders made by famous people, such as:

"Smoking kills. If you're killed, you've lost a very important part of your life." Brooke Shields
"So, where's the Cannes Film Festival being held this year?" Christina Aguilera
"You guys, line up alphabetically by height." Bill Peterson, Former Florida State football coach
"I owe a lot to my parents, especially my mother and father." Greg Norman, Golfer
"Predictions are difficult, especially about the future." Yogi Berra, Hall of Fame Baseball player
"Food is an important part of a balanced diet." Fran Lebowitz, US writer
"I smoked marijuana a time or two, but I never inhaled." Former President Bill Clinton
"I love California, I practically grew up in Phoenix." Former Vice President Dan Quayle

Other great examples of people who should have given a little more thought to what questions they asked comes from the legal profession. These are actual questions asked by lawyers in a court of law:

"How far apart were the vehicles at the time of the collision?"
"So, you were gone until you returned?"
"The youngest son, the 20-year-old, how old is he?"
"Do you have any children or anything of that kind?"
"Were you present when your picture was taken?"
"Was it you or your brother that was killed in the war?"
"Were you alone or by yourself?"

All of these rather humorous examples plainly show that "silence" would have been a more appropriate choice than what was said. So, my advice for us all today is ... to practice talking less, listening more and remembering these words:

**Be careful of the words you say and keep them soft and sweet.
You'll never know from day to day, which ones you'll have to eat.** Author Unknown

*Consider This Collection
By Robert Stevenson*

28 - Missteps, Mistakes and Blunders

Sometimes it's good to reflect from whence we came to appreciate how good we have it now. If you are new at what you are doing, you might ask some folks who have been at your company for a long time to share some of their growing pain stories. Yes, reflection is good and sometimes leads to some incredible stories and a whole lot of laughter. So, to get things started, I thought you might enjoy one of my reflections.

I had just gotten into the speaking business when I received a call from a friend of a friend who had heard about me and the next thing you know ... I'm booked to speak to about 500 people in a convention hall in central Florida. I was fired up. It was mid-July, but the AC was working in both my car and in the convention center, so heat and humidity shouldn't be an issue. I had inquired when I arrived where the restrooms were, because I always make a "pit-stop" before I speak. They had a dinner first and I was sitting at the head table at the far-left end.

About 10 minutes before I was to speak, I slipped out from the table unnoticed and went to a double door that you push open with a big bar in the middle and entered a dark hall. (***This, I found out later, was not the door they had been pointing to when I received my directions to the restrooms***) I kept walking for a ways and had to go through another door, with more additional walking, until I found a restroom. Little did I know that the second door I went through locked behind me. There was no way to get back the way I came, and no one could hear my banging or yelling ... nor had they seen me slip out.

In my mind, I had one alternative and that was to climb out the bathroom window and walk around the building. It was a long drop out the window, so there was no getting back in ... but at least I was outside. I didn't realize I was dropping into an 8-foot-high chain-linked fenced-in area behind the convention center. I now had to climb the fence to be able to walk around the building. You have got to picture this ... here I was in a great looking suit, perfectly manicured to present my program before going to the restroom ... now, I was sweating bullets, destroying my suit, getting filthy, and to top it off, I was wearing a blue shirt that is showing just how bad I was sweating. (***never wear a blue shirt in the summer***)

I throw my suit coat over the fence, climb the fence and I'm finally free. I walk all the way around the convention center and up to the front door and enter the hall. The man who had hired me was at the podium making small talk ... wondering where in the world I had gone, when he looked up and said ... "Well, here he is now, Mr. Robert Stevenson." **He pointed towards the back of the convention hall and there I stood in all my glory.** The gasps and whispers were abundant as I made my way to the front.

There is an old Chinese saying, "***When the tiger enters the temple, make it part of the ceremony,***" and that is exactly what I did. I couldn't hide what had happened, so I made it part of my program. I told the audience the complete story and they were howling with laughter. Somebody handed me several cloth napkins to wipe off and then I started. The audience was with me from the get-go and, I hope to this day, they still are. **It has been 22 years and over 2,500 speeches later but one of my proudest moments of my career was making it to the front of that hall and facing that audience.**

Sometimes things aren't going to go as planned. Sometimes you are going to stumble, bumble or fall and that's okay; it happens to the best. But what makes them the best is they got up and carried on. Do yourself a favor and reflect on life's lessons and smile; you made it, you survived, and you will survive the next time.

**Intelligence is realizing mistakes will happen,
learning from them and moving on.
Wisdom is understanding those missteps, mistakes and blunders
are the foundation for your success.**

*Consider This Collection
By Robert Stevenson*

29 - The Power of DELIGHTFUL

Norma Seymour is the Senior Vice President of Service Delivery for Cayman National, in the Cayman Islands. I love how descriptive her title is ... Service Delivery. Ms. Seymour takes her job and title very seriously and does everything she can to help everyone in her organization deliver ... as she puts it ... **“DELIGHTFUL”** customer service. I have had the opportunity to work for Cayman National twice, and in my research preparing for my programs, I have witnessed first-hand, just how hard they work at delivering the best customer service in their industry. **They know that great, exceptional, amazing, DELIGHTFUL customer service all starts and finishes with their people.**

The financial services market is highly competitive and just as soon as a competitor comes up with a new product or service, everyone else will have it in short order. **One out of five bank customers move their money every year because of poor customer service;** not products, not location, not interest rates ... just simply ... poor customer service. To lose 20% of your business because of the way you treat customers is appalling. In some industries, that number is even higher. One study I read said 15% of customers left because of quality, 15% because of price, 20% because of lack of attention and 50% because “Contact” from personnel was poor. **So, those numbers equate to 70% of the customers who left ... did so because of the human side of doing business. OUCH!**

Ms. Seymour asked me to address (via phone) Cayman National at a “Pep Rally” she was having for her staff and I was happy to oblige. I decided to weave my remarks around their goal of delivering DELIGHTFUL customer service. **If you do a synonym check on the word DELIGHTFUL you will get words like agreeable, alluring, cheery, congenial, engaging, enjoyable, gratifying, pleasing, pleasurable, refreshing, and satisfying.** Those are some pretty descriptive and admirable words to live up to in doing business with anyone. I challenged them at their “Pep Rally” with the following list of words ... relating them with their DE-LIGHTFUL goal.

De liver.....	every time in everything you do
De monstrate...	great service along with a great attitude
De termined....	to be the best at what you do
De mand.....	the very best of yourself
De velop.....	great habits
De sire.....	to be the best
De feat.....	the competition with all of the above

Norma is a big fan of Tina Turner (me, too) and uses the song “You’re The Best” as her theme song to get everyone pumped up at all her meetings. Some of the lyrics in the song are incredibly powerful. **“You’re simply the best, better than all the rest, better than anyone, anyone I’ve ever met.”** Cayman National creates a culture that strives to be better than all the rest and it shows in everything they do.

**Delight Your Customers in All That You Do
and Success Will Surely Follow You**

30 - Don't Be a Domino Pusher

You can line up DOMINOS in a beautiful pattern and spend hours doing it ... but all you have to do to knock them all down is PUSH over the first one (*the lead domino*) and the rest will follow. The same is true about a business. You can spend years and years building up a great business with a super reputation and one employee can cause a customer to never do business with you again. One employee can PUSH a customer the wrong way and run them off ... **in other words ... they knocked down one DOMINO.** But, could that one upset customer cause other customers to follow them?

In today's society of instant global communication, one upset customer can put the story out over the internet of your **RIP-OFF ... AWFUL SERVICE ... UNFAIR TREATMENT ...** and seriously hurt your business. PUSHING the one DOMINO can sometimes cause a whole lot of DOMINOS to fall ... maybe all of them.

We found out today the appliance repairman who works for the company that has done ALL of our warranty work, tried to pull a fast one on us; a \$2,964.00 fast one. Before I spend that kind of money, I think a second opinion is in order. So, we got the name of a really talented repair man who had done work for our neighbor and had him diagnose the problem. He said it would only cost \$74.96 to fix the problem. He had it fixed in less than one hour.

We had purchased ALL our appliances for our home from the first repairman's company and they had done ALL the previous small repairs for warranty work ... but out of warranty ... **BANG! ... time to soak the stupid consumer who has no idea what is wrong.** That repairman is right. I don't know about appliances, but I do know how to dial a phone. I do know how to go on line and get other opinions. I do have neighbors who may have had similar problems.

Now, what damage has been done by the first repairman? TRUST has been destroyed. CONFIDENCE in what the first repairman (and his company) say is now a thing of the past. **Will I ever do business with them again? No!** There are a lot of other companies who sell and service appliances. **Will I tell my friends about what happened? You bet I will. Will they believe me? They sure will.** More customers will be lost because of what happened to just one customer.

Every single day companies PUSH over Dominos (customers) not realizing the potential damage that might be caused. I would suggest you start handling every customer like they are that *Lead Domino* who can possibly knock them all down. If you handle your customers with the care and honesty they deserve, then you won't have to worry about other dominos falling (customers leaving).

Your customers aren't obligated to do business with you. **You need to assume your customers are always teetering, swaying, wavering ... getting ready to fall over (go somewhere else) if you push them the wrong way ...** and on their way down they might just knock over some other dominos (customers) as well.

**Are there any DOMINO PUSHERS in your company?
You better hope not.**


31 - B. O. S. S.

Are you the type **BOSS** who brightens the meeting when ... **you leave**? Are you the type **BOSS** when people see you coming ... **they hide**? Are you the type **BOSS** when you call, text or e-mail an employee they ... **get scared**? I sent out a "Tweet" the other day about being a boss and a lot of folks "Retweeted" it. Evidently, my "Tweet" struck a nerve, so I decided to expand upon my short message. This is what I sent out ...

*Being a **BOSS** should stand for Be-Open-Sensible-Supportive ...
it should not stand for Be-Oppressive-Stubborn-Superior.*

The simple definition of a "**BOSS**" is a person of authority over employees. The problem is that many employees would describe their boss with one or more of the following terms:

B	O	S	S
Belligerent Belittling Beast Bias Blameful Brutal Bully	Obtrusive Obstinate Obstructionist Offensive Opinionated Oppressive Overbearing	Scoundrel Screamer Selfish Shameless Short-tempered Sinister Slacker	Sleazy Sourpuss Spiteful Stressor Stubborn Sullen Swearing



So many **BOSSSES** have the attitude ... I am the Sheriff in town and it's my way or the highway. Well, *Yep-ee-ki-yah* sheriff ... that attitude won't endear you to your employees. If you profess to be a **BOSS** or someday want to be ... let me give you some scary statistics to think about. A Gallup poll of more than 1 million employed U.S. workers concluded that **the #1 reason people quit their jobs is a BAD BOSS or immediate supervisor**. Another researcher discovered that no matter what the occupation, roughly 75% of the workforce listed their immediate supervisor/boss as the most stressful part of their job (Sutton, 2010).

According to Gallup, people leave BOSSSES not companies ... so in the end, turnover is mostly a **BOSS** issue. The **BOSSSES** from hell are creating active disengagement costing U.S. companies an estimated \$450 billion to \$550 billion annually, stated Jim Clifton, the C.E.O. and chairman of Gallup. It seems crazy to spend so much money properly training employees only to run them off with a **BAD BOSS**. Excellent rewards, stimulating work environments, health insurance, and other perks will not make a difference to the people stuck with **BAD BOSSSES**. Common complaints about **BAD BOSSSES** are they fail to keep promises, fail to give credit when credit is due, make negative comments about subordinates to other employees or managers, invade privacy, they are uncaring and arrogant, they use fear tactics, and they blame others to cover up their own personal mistakes. It should also be noted, there is **NO EXCUSE** for sexual harassment or discrimination of any kind. **I learned a long time ago it is better to create an environment where people WANT to deliver for you rather than HAVE to deliver**. So, for you **BOSSSES** out there ... or those hoping to become a **BOSS** ... strive to make **BOSS** stand for:

BOSS..... Believe in your people... Open-minded... Sensible... Sincere

BOSS..... Big-hearted... Objective... Savvy... Spirited

BOSS..... Bold... Observant... Scrappy... Supportive

BOSS..... Brave... Optimistic... Self-controlled... Sympathetic

And if you strive to be all of those traits ... those who work for you WILL be SUCCESSFUL.

*Consider This Collection
By Robert Stevenson*

32 - Mistaken for the Maître d'

A couple of years ago I had the opportunity to be the after-dinner keynote speaker for a major insurance company. It was an awards dinner honoring their top producers both nationally and internationally. It was quite a fancy affair with beautiful table arrangements, dim lighting, and everyone all dressed up.

All the foreign award winners were in the back of the room where headsets had been provided along with interpreters, so they could listen to my program in their native language. I always like to stand at the back of the room before I speak to get a full view of what my audience sees, mapping out where I should and shouldn't stand during my presentation. So, there I was about 15 minutes before going on, standing against the back wall in the dimly lit room, deep in thought. My thoughts were interrupted abruptly with the loud snapping of fingers by a Japanese gentleman waving at me. I walked over to him, and in broken English, he said, ***"We need more chairs here for ladies."*** I guess he thought I was the Maître d' because I was standing there overlooking what was going on.

So, I said, ***"No problem,"*** and went and got some chairs. I took my position back up against the wall waiting to be introduced, when the finger snapping, and waving happened again by the same man. I walked over and said, ***"Do you need more chairs?"*** ... to which he responded, ***"Yes."*** I gathered up a few more chairs while keeping an eye on the podium, because I was now being introduced, and needed to start inconspicuously easing up to the front of the room. I delivered the chairs and told the gentleman I had to go now. There was a puzzled look on his face, as if he wasn't through with me yet ... but I didn't have time to explain. I made a respectful bow to the gentleman and proceeded to the front of the room.

After my program was over a group of Japanese people were following "my finger snapper" all heading my way. He stopped in front of me and gave a deep bow while at the same time apologizing for his actions. Words like ***"please forgive"*** ... ***"I had no idea you speaker"*** ... ***"I so sorry"*** ... were flowing out of his mouth. I guess he thought he had insulted me by asking me to get the chairs. (*The way I was raised – if ladies need chairs you go get them chairs – there was no insult*) I bowed politely and with a big grin on my face said, ***"You have nothing to apologize for - the ladies needed chairs and I was happy to oblige."***

After several more moments of conversation I was able to get him to relax and even smile; there was no harm, no foul, or disgrace. The only disgrace that could have occurred is if I didn't get the chairs. I was taught to treat all people with respect. Position, status or lack-there-of should have nothing to do with the way we treat anyone. But, I see people disrespecting peers, associates, or subordinates all the time. I see managers talking down to those reporting to them as if they are some big "Muckity Muck" who should be feared and revered. **If your attitude is perceived that a certain task is beneath you, management is not the place for you.**

Respect is an earned title ... not a given one. I find it very unappealing and unnecessary to talk down to anyone. A better-than-thou attitude can hurt you far more than it can, if ever, help you. Those who revere STATUS more than RESPECT will NEVER excel as true LEADERS.

**The more you show respect to others
the more respect will be shown to you.**

33 - B.O.U.N.C.E.

Nothing is worse than that moment you realize you have been fooled, or been taken advantage of, used, abused, betrayed, misled, or lied to. I have always found that you need to have an alternative, a back-up plan, a second approach ... just in case the unexpected happens ... so you can regroup, **BOUNCE** back and move on.

There is an old poem (1785) by Robert Burns, which John Steinbeck used to name his highly acclaimed book "Of Mice and Men" (1937) that addressed *things not going the way we had planned*. Bringing the poem and book up to current times, what both men were addressing is ... **the best-laid plans often go awry. The most carefully prepared plans may go wrong.** No matter how much thought, time and effort you put into it something can still go wrong. **Everything you do is subject to outside forces that can alter, change or disrupt** your planned outcome.

"Things Happen" ... "Stuff Happens" ... "It Happens"

My son, Tyler (age 22), had recently been promised some things that we had no reason to doubt would happen. Then, out of the blue, things changed. Promises were altered, facts became variables, and the variables now affected outcomes. When he told me what had happened, I told him not to worry ... we had never counted on those promises and we had a back-up plan. It was interesting watching the evolution of maturity taking place in his mind as this situation unfolded. He now had seen how critical having a back-up plan was. He had also witnessed how ... **not everything had been disclosed to him.** He learned a great lesson, but more importantly, he was able to **BOUNCE** back and move on in another direction.

Bruce Jenner tore his medial collateral ligament in his knee playing college football. His football days were over. He **BOUNCED** back with a new plan and eight years later he won a Gold Medal in the 1976 Olympics in the *Decathlon*. Walt Disney was laid off and told he had no drawing ability and also went bankrupt before **BOUNCING** back and creating his vast empire. Abraham Lincoln, Henry Ford, Donald Trump and ketchup magnate, H.J. Heinz, also went bankrupt and **BOUNCED** back. The legendary actor and comedian of the golden age of Hollywood, George Burns, made fourteen films and then hit a rough spot ... a thirty-seven-year rough spot. Then he received an offer to appear in the movie *The Sunshine Boys*. He **BOUNCED** back and won an Oscar for his role at the age of 80. He kept working until he was 98 years old.

No one is exempt from having bad things happen to them. **"Bad" has no boundaries;** bankruptcy, failure, mistakes, wrong decisions, setbacks, illness, poor choices, gaffes, errors, slip-ups, disappointments, and blunders can happen to anyone. The difference between those who succeed from those who don't has a great deal to do with ***if and how*** they **BOUNCE** back when things go wrong. Make the following acronym for B.O.U.N.C.E. part of your strategy for success:

B.O.U.N.C.E.

BEGIN OVER UNDERSTANDING NEW CHOICES EXIST

34 - There is NO Immunity to Having Problems

Successful people have problems, issues, complications, difficulties, set-backs, and make mistakes. They aren't immune to any of these things and having a great attitude doesn't protect them from having bad things happen to them, either; that "myth" is a total misnomer. Having a great attitude ... **HELPS YOU GET OVER** ... the bad things that can happen to you. Success is all about being able to deal with whatever is thrown at you. Here are a few more things successful people understand:

- The wiser a person gets the more they listen.
- Want to become great ... copy what the great ones do.
- For you whiners - 80% who hear you whine don't care. 19% are glad you are joining them. 1% will listen ... but wish they didn't have to ... so quit whining.
- Those who complain a lot – succeed very little.
- The sooner you admit you messed up - the sooner you can get on with fixing it.
- Most people are able to do a lot more ... they just aren't willing to.
Failure, Mediocrity and Success are in DIRECT relation to your effort.
- Most people fail due to lack of effort - not lack of knowledge.
- If you want to get better - get out of your comfort zone.
- Do more than you are paid to do ... EVERY TIME.
- Never listen to those who have not done "IT" ... tell you ... how to do "IT".
- Discipline is a MUST. There is NO SUBSTITUTE for it. NONE!
Those without discipline NEVER EXCEL.
- Take note of what others do that annoy you. Maybe you're doing things that annoy them.
If you think not ... think again.
- Do what you said you would do. Deliver EVERY TIME.
- Your actions PROVE the type person you are. Results are everything.
You will be graded by what you do ... not what you said you would do.

As my title states ... **There is NO Immunity to Having Problems** ... but some problems can be avoided with just a little insight. According to the *American Booksellers Association* ... eighty percent of Americans did not buy or read a book this past year and seventy percent of American adults have not bought a book in the past 5 years. You can learn SO MUCH and gain experience, insight, and knowledge through the experiences of others.

SHORTEN YOUR LEARNING CURVE AND READ FOR KNOWLEDGE EVERY DAY.

35 - Success Challenge

While others complain	look for alternatives and solutions
While others make excuses	accept responsibility, correct and move on
While others show up late	always be early and prepared
While others find fault	look for advantages and strengths
While others blame someone else	strive to exonerate and help
While others gossip	stay silent
While others lie	always be truthful
While others fail to study	read, research and review
While others have no purpose	establish a plan and do it
While others doubt their ability	have confidence you will succeed
While others procrastinate	move forward and persist
While others are inflexible	be tolerant, reasonable and cooperative
While others shirk responsibility	be accountable for your actions and duties
While others ridicule	compliment, respect and praise
While others do the bare minimum	always do more than expected
While others never volunteer	try to always lend a helping hand
While others waste time	be focused, efficient and organized
While others are negative	be positive
While others are fearful	have courage
While others compromise their integrity	guard it at all cost
While others give up	try again

**Challenges are what make
a life interesting.**

**Overcoming them is
what makes it
meaningful.**



36 - "I Quit!"

THE BOSS: *"Don't think of me as your boss, think of me as a friend who is never wrong!" ... "When I want your opinion, I'll ask for it." ... "We don't pay you to think. We pay you to work." ... "You want recognition? We recognize you every time you get a paycheck." ... "Your job is what I say it is." ... "You're lucky to even have a job." ... "I don't know what it is that you need to improve, but something is definitely wrong, and you should work on fixing it."*

THE EMPLOYEE: *"The only way I would ever work here again is if the world was coming to an end ... because every day working here feels like an eternity." ... "You can't pay me enough to ever want to work here again." ... "You treat us all the same – AWFUL." ... "I QUIT."*

I was recently talking to *staffing industry expert*, Daniel Abramson, about why people leave companies. I met him when he was the President of an international staffing firm with 120 offices. He now has his own firm (www.staffdynamics.biz) and is helping companies in their hiring and retention practices. I wanted his input on the troublesome problem of **WHY "Qualified, Talented, and Needed" employees leave companies**, especially when it costs so much money to find, hire and train them. The last three words of his first statement to me were very disconcerting. He first stated the obvious, *"there are several reasons why good people quit"* ... but then added ... **"MOST ARE PREVENTABLE."** **OUCH!**

Here are his **5 Top Reasons why employees leave firms:**

- 1) Lack of corporate compatibility and fit
- 2) Lack of appreciation by management
- 3) Lack of support from inside staff
- 4) Limited advancement & personal growth opportunities
- 5) Money & Compensation issues

He also mentioned that ... *People don't quit their company, they generally quit their boss ... and too much emphasis is placed on the technical aspects of the job and not the soft people skills.* I suggest if you are having a problem with a particular employee, you might want to move them to a different department, reporting to a different boss before firing someone that you have invested so much money in; *some people just aren't meant to work with each other.* And while you are doing your reassignments, make sure you give both the manager and employee some help with their soft skills. Refining everyone's soft skills can cause a huge boost in productivity for any company.

It costs a lot of money to replace an employee; some experts say it can cost up to 20% of a worker's salary to replace them. With that amount of money at stake ... what can a company do to reduce those expenses and use that money in a more beneficial way? Where should a company start if they want to **keep** their top employees?

According to the *U.S. Department of Labor*, **46% of employees leave their job because they did not feel appreciated.** I would be starting there. It doesn't cost a dime to tell people ... *they are doing a great job, you really appreciate their contribution, this company is a better place because of them, I don't know what I would do without you, you made it happen – thanks for all your effort;* it's free, effective and smart!

Compliments Cost Nothing - Unspoken Praise is Costly

37 - The Carpet People

The other day I had the opportunity to hear four managers from large companies give 15-minute presentations about things their companies were doing to improve productivity, morale and communication. The first speaker got my attention instantly when he said his people were always complaining about the “**CARPET PEOPLE.**” He had just been promoted as the new boss of one of the largest manufacturing facilities his company operated in the United States. A couple of days after his arrival he heard the term “CARPET PEOPLE.” He said that he didn’t want to look like an idiot not knowing what the term “Carpet People” stood for ... so he kept his mouth shut for a while, hoping he would eventually figure it out; but to no avail. He finally pulled one of his employees aside and asked what the term meant.

That employee said the term “CARPET PEOPLE” was directed at management. The only place in their enormous manufacturing facility that had carpet on the floor was in the offices where management worked. If a question had to be answered, they had to go talk to the “CARPET PEOPLE.” No supervisors had offices on the main manufacturing floor ... so production employees would always have to waste time and go find the “CARPET PEOPLE” to get an answer. It was not meant as an endearing term ... I can assure you. It was an **US vs. THEM mentality.**

He said that once he understood the term and why it was being used, he immediately changed things. He didn’t want production stopping on the factory floor because his people had to go find a “CARPET PERSON” ... so he had those offices moved ... to front and center on the factory floor ... where production managers could be quickly located; it should also be noted ... they had NO CARPET in their offices on the factory floor.

The next three speakers played right off of this story and used other non-endearing terms for their management people ... such as the “**Shiny Shoes**”, the “**White Coats**”, and the “**Suits**”. In a lot of companies, the moment employees see “THESE PEOPLE” heading their way... they want to run, hide, look busy, and they know whatever they do ... don’t get in their way, don’t strike up a conversation, don’t make a suggestion and don’t ask them a question. Speak only when spoken to and refer anything they ask to your direct supervisor if at all possible.

There are some managers out there who love being the boss, being seen as the Carpet Person, wielding a mighty “whip” of authority ... with a “my way or the highway” mentality. Some even believe the best way to deal with morale problems is just fire anyone who complains. **I learned years ago that effective managers help people get better** and should be looked on as a “knowledge base” for employees to call on anytime to help evaluate, correct, adjust, or address any tough situation they can’t handle. If employees fear their supervisors, managers, or bosses ... productivity and morale is sure to suffer. It has also been proven through countless studies, that employee turn-over will also become a problem.

If management is asking for *teamwork, collaboration, synergy, unity, cooperation, looking for camaraderie, wanting employee input, seeking suggestions and new ideas* ... then management needs to pay attention to how they are being perceived. A hierarchy, top down, status based, authority riddle, pecking order ... doesn’t seem to be very conducive to creating any of the things I just mentioned. One of the managers who spoke, said they decided that if management was to walk on the factory floor, then they needed to wear the same thing all employees wear wearing ... so they came up with a corporate polo style shirt (all the same color) that everyone wore. Take note of the things you are doing that separates management from everyone else and **try to minimize it as much as possible**. There is a big gap of dissension between the “Carpet People” and having true teamwork.

You Don’t Mandate Unity – You Cultivate It

*Consider This Collection
By Robert Stevenson*

38 - What are You Promising Them ?

I am finishing up writing my new book and in the meeting with the publishing company I encountered a rather profound question from their senior editor. We were discussing the book title, chapter arrangement and final content when she asked, ***“Rob, what are you promising the reader your book will do for them?”*** She went on to say that, ***“every page you write should deliver on that promise, therefore, everything should be predicated around what you are promising the reader.”***

I believe her question is not only smart, powerful and insightful for writing a business book, but is also extremely applicable to trying to figure out how to be successful in business. ***Ask*** and ***Answer*** that question yourself about your company: ***“What are you promising the customer you will do for them?”*** Some corporate leaders might tell you they have “their promise” written in their vision, mission or values statement. Some companies may even carry it as far as trying to convey “their promise” in their advertising slogan. Examples:

- Way back in 1952 KFC said their chicken was ***“Finger lickin’ good!”*** and they followed that slogan with ***“We do chicken right.”*** But, just having great tasting chicken will not keep the customer coming back if the service is slow, attitudes are poor, and the place looks dirty.
- United Airlines wants us to believe that when you fly them all their people are going to be friendly because their slogan is: ***“Fly the friendly skies of United.”*** Trust me when I tell you, having flown millions of miles over the last 23 years traveling to speaking engagements, there are times that the word “friendly” never enters my mind when I fly United or numerous other airline carriers for that matter.
- Disneyland says they are ***“The happiest place on earth.”*** Not only do I agree with that, I would add they are also an amazingly clean amusement park.
- In 1962 Avis said, ***“We try harder,”*** trying to convince potential customers that they are working harder than Hertz, so they can take over for Hertz as the #1 car rental company. I get what they are trying to do, but they also just drew attention to the fact they aren’t #1 and lots of folks like to deal with the best.
- FedEx gets it: They have a slogan ... ***“When it Absolutely, Positively has to be there overnight,”*** and having worked for them numerous times, I can truly attest they are doing everything humanly possible to make sure that they live-up to that slogan.

A “Generation Y” (Millennial) might put it a different way: ***“What’s your deal, man?”*** Well, that’s my question to you: *What is your deal? What is your promise?* More importantly, does everyone in your company know that? You should consider what it is you really do and how you want to deliver that product or service. What is it that you value most? How do you want to be perceived by your customers? ***This “Promise” is the driving force behind all goals and the glue that unites your employees, keeping them focused on the performance they need to DELIVER EVERY TIME.***

My flight attendant better be friendly, my truck better be built like a ROCK, my coffee better be good to the last drop, my sub sandwich better be fresh, you better let me have it my way, my soup better be M’m M’m good, that candy better melt in my mouth and not in my hand, that battery better keep going and going and going, and my watch better take a licking and keep on ticking. They said it on TV ... they wrote it in ads ... I heard it on the radio ... THEY PROMISED! Remember what the senior editor told me, ***“every page needs to deliver on that promise.”*** In business, success comes to those companies who get their people to understand what they are PROMISING their customers and then deliver on that promise, so, ***“What’s your deal?”*** ... ***“What’s your promise?”***

**Success Doesn’t Come from Good Intentions
Success Comes from Keeping Promises**

*Consider This Collection
By Robert Stevenson*

39 - Anyone Can Have a Great Idea

Unfortunately, for some companies, for an idea to have any clout or gain any traction or acceptance it has to come from someone high up in management. Let me set the record straight on ideas:

There is no rule saying GREAT IDEAS can “only” come from senior management.

Most printer manufacturers such as Dell, Hewlett Packard, Canon, Lexmark and Epson use what is referred to as the “razor and blade” business model. They would be happy just breaking even on manufacturing printers because they know the real money is in selling ink. This business model got its name from the manufacturers of double-edged safety razors that had just one blade; the real money was in selling you the “replacement” razor blades, not in selling the safety razor. (*Chanel No. 5 perfume costs approximately \$38 per ounce, while the equivalent amount of printer ink can cost up to \$75*)

The U.S. General Services Administration estimated a few years ago that their annual cost of ink for computer printers was \$467 million. Could it be possible to save up to 30% of that expenditure (\$136 million)? The answer is a resounding, “YES.” Research has scientifically proven that by simply changing the “font” we use to Garamond ...from Times New Roman, Century Gothic or Comic Sans, we can reduce the amount of ink we use by up to 30%. If we applied this finding to state governments an additional \$234 million could be saved annually.

I guess the study was done by some brilliant scientist or university professor with the letters Ph.D. after their name? An idea like this would never come from a sixth grader – but it did! It all started as a science fair project, where fourteen-year-old, Suvir Mirchandani, was trying to think of ways to cut waste and save money at his middle school. His project was so impressive that his teacher had Suvir submit his finding to the Journal for Emerging Investigators, a publication founded by a group of Harvard grad students. Sarah Fankhauser, one of JEI’s founders said, *“We were so impressed. We could really see the real-world application.”* Gary Somerset, media and public relations manager at the Government Printing Office, described Suvir’s study as truly *“remarkable.”*

There are no boundaries on great ideas. There are no age limits on business brilliance. Michael Dell founded Dell computers in his college dorm room and now he is worth about \$15 billion. Bill Gates had already grossed \$2.5 million in sales when he was 23, and now he is one of the wealthiest men in the world. Mark Zuckerberg, 28, launched Facebook from his college dorm room and grew it into one of the world’s most successful businesses; he is now worth billions.

When you are trying to figure out ways to make your company better, don’t LIMIT your ideas by only looking at the ones from senior management. Many times, the people out there on the front-line have a much better perspective as to what is really going on and can be far more insightful with ideas, than those who are sitting behind a desk. I suggest you use the concept from the popular TV show, “The Voice.” The judges have their chairs facing away from the stage and cannot see the person who is singing. They don’t know if they are old or young, attractive or plain looking ... they can only choose if they like the VOICE; **nothing else can influence their vote.** The “Voice” is what is important.

The same is true in business. The “Idea” is what is important. The next time you have a meeting and want folks to share their ideas, have them submit their ideas anonymously, with each idea identified by a specific number assigned to each person. (don’t identify whose idea it was until the end of the meeting) Jack Welch, the former CEO of General Electric once said, *“The hero is the one with ideas.”* Don’t let age, tenure, gender or personalities influence if an idea is good or bad. Some people will shoot down an idea because they don’t like someone, they haven’t been with the company long enough or they are too young to know what they are talking about. Remember, good ideas have no boundaries.

If you limit the amount of ideas you consider - you limit your potential for success.

40 - I'm TIRED of EXCUSES

Benjamin Franklin once said: *“He that is good for making excuses is seldom good for anything else.”* Syndicated cartoon columnist, writer and artist Don Wilder had a wonderful description of excuses. He said, *“Excuses are the nails used to build a house of failure.”* What a profound description of the value and outcome of an excuse. I find people who are good at making excuses, are seldom good at reaching goals, solving problems, and leading people. I am tired of people who say ...

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| ▶ I can't | ▶ That's the way we've always done it |
| ▶ I won't | ▶ I just don't have the willpower |
| ▶ I should have | ▶ I knew I shouldn't have |
| ▶ I meant to | ▶ I was thinking about doing it |
| ▶ I wanted to | ▶ I wish I could |
| ▶ That's impossible | ▶ I need more respect |
| ▶ That'll never work | ▶ I'm not good enough |
| ▶ That's not my job | ▶ I'm scared of failing |
| ▶ Life isn't fair | ▶ It's too hard |
| ▶ I'm too tired | ▶ I'll never be able to learn that |
| ▶ I didn't know | ▶ No one told me not to do it |

What stands between most people and their goals are a bunch of excuses. Now, some people get real fancy and rationalize the situation ... thinking they are not giving an excuse. American novelist and philosopher, Ayn Rand, destroyed that notion when she said, *“Rationalization is a process of not perceiving reality, but of attempting to make reality fit one's emotions.”*

To me, an excuse is a form of weakness or inability to take responsibility for your own mistakes. Excuses usually show a weakness in your plan, or your attitude, your conviction, ability, knowledge, judgment, talent, or organizational skills. But, I also think making an excuse is a sign of cowardice. By making an excuse for your actions, you are showing a lack of courage in accepting the consequences for those actions. Please understand, excuses may make you feel better, but they change nothing and usually annoy the people you are telling them to.

I have found that successful managers/bosses/leaders ... *when something bad happens, a mistake is made, a goal isn't reached* ... would rather you tell them what happen, what you learned and what you are going to do about it, than give them an excuse. **If you are always on the lookout for a great excuse, you better also be on the lookout for a new job.**

Helen Keller was the first blind and deaf person to EVER earn a Bachelor of Arts degree. If there was ever a person who had a great excuse for not being able to graduate from college, I think she should be right at the top of that list. Florence Nightingale, who is known as the founder of modern nursing stated, *“I attribute my success to this - I never gave or took any excuse.”* So, the next time you are thinking about giving an excuse – DON'T.

**If you quit looking for an excuse –
you will have more time to find a solution.**

41 - Barn Movers

In 1981 Donna and Herman Ostry bought a farm in the small town of Bruno, Nebraska, about 60 miles outside of Omaha. The farm came with a big barn that had been built back in the 1920's and also had a nice little creek that flowed through their property. The creek was both a blessing and a problem for the Ostrys. It was great to have readily available water for their farm animals, but it also flooded a lot during heavy rains. The barn floor seemed to always be wet and muddy and then in 1988 they had a huge flood where the water rose about 30 inches up the side of the barn walls.

The Ostrys desperately needed to move the barn to higher ground but the cost to contract with a company that has both the capability and equipment to move a barn of this size was prohibitive. One night sitting around the dinner table, Herman Ostry commented that if he had enough people he could pick the barn up and move it to higher ground. Everyone laughed off the comment as silly ... everyone except his son Mike.

I wonder if "young" Mike knew that people scoffed at the idea of traveling 30 miles per hour on a railroad car. People actually thought that traveling that fast would stop the circulation of the blood. I wonder if "young" Mike knew that Eli Whitney was laughed at when he showed his first cotton gin, that Thomas Edison had to install his electric light free of charge in an office building before anyone would look at it, that Westinghouse was considered a fool for suggesting you could stop a train with wind, or that Samuel Morse had to plead before 10 Congresses before they would even look at his telegraph (*which revolutionized communication*). Maybe "young" Mike just thought ... **WHY NOT** ... and then he set out to figure out a way to make his Dad's statement a reality.

Young, inexperienced, doesn't-know-any-better Mike did some calculations and figured out that the barn weighed about 17,000 pounds. He then figured out that he could design a steel grid system that he could place under the barn that would weigh another 3,000 pounds. So, the total weight that would need to be lifted was 10 tons. When you think of that amount of weight to be moved, you usually think of a giant crane ... not a whole bunch of people. But "young" Mike figured if he could gather up about 350 people, they would all need to only be able to lift approximately 50 pounds each.

Mike presented his calculations to his Dad and they both thought it would work. Mike and his Dad got a little lucky on the timing to present their idea to their small town. Nebraska was getting ready to celebrate its centennial and the town of Bruno had put together a committee of townspeople to decide on different things to do for the celebration. Mike and his Dad convinced the town to make the barn moving a part of the celebration. The word got out and over 4,000 people from 11 states witnessed the event. Here is the YouTube link to the actual event. http://youtu.be/o83W0gj_CRE

A little before 11 a.m. on July 30th, 1988 ... in front of the local television cameras, 344 people moved the barn 143 feet up a gentle slope to its new foundation. ***All in all***, it took 3 minutes to move the barn. So, the next time somebody hits you with an idea that you think is silly or maybe even impossible ... think again, and **never discount the POWER of TEAMWORK.**

Re-live this idea again in your head. Someone in a meeting says, ***"Let's move a 17,000-pound barn, 143 feet, up a slope, and do it in less than 3 minutes, using no machinery."*** Now that idea sounds pretty nuts, ridiculous, stupid, impossible, and far-fetched to me. But a need, a desire, a creative mind, a well-designed plan and a giant team, **ALL WORKING TOGETHER**, made it happen.

Teamwork Really Makes the Dream Work
(anonymous)

Consider This Collection
By Robert Stevenson

42 - How Will They Remember You?

“Why are you calling this department?” “I didn’t call your department. I was transferred to you by someone else in your company who said you could help me.” “Well they were wrong. You shouldn’t have called me.” “I didn’t call you.” “You will need to call back and ask for the small group administrator for Florida.” “Do you have their direct line?” “No.”

And, so it went for the next 75 minutes. I had what I thought was a simple question and I was transferred 7 times, discounted twice, and placed on hold several times where no one ever picked up again. I dialed and redialed several times and navigated through countless voice-activated voice answering systems, along with having to listen over and over again to ... *“press 1 for this department, press 2 for that department, press 3 for another department”*, etc. One time they had 7 choices, none of which were what I was looking for.

I wasn’t a mad, complaining, out of control customer who no one would want to talk to. No, I was just a confused customer who had received my corporate health insurance cards for my company, **before** I ever received notice that my company health insurance policy had been renewed for the next year. I had not received the renewal policy, I didn’t know what changes had been made to my coverage, and I sure didn’t know what my premium was going to be for the next year ... but I had my insurance cards. *(That seems a little bit backwards to me)* If it was that hard to find out the answer to one simple question, I wonder how hard it will be if I ever have a question about a claim? **How will I remember my current health insurance company ... not favorably.**

This week I was at a really nice hotel and called down to room service to order dinner. It was 7:15 p.m. and the operator told me they were on break. I was actually confused when the operator told me that. **I had no idea what she meant ... it just didn’t compute.** *“What do you mean they are on break? It’s dinner time. Why would they be on break?” “I am sorry sir, but they will be on break until 7:30, so you can call back then to order dinner.”*

In my mind I was thinking ... *You’ve got to be kidding me, right? A hotel of this size and status would never take a break at dinner time and not be available to take my order. People fly in here from all over the country from different time-zones and would want to eat on their “time clock”.* Then I asked one more time, **“Room service is really on break?”** *“They sure are. That is the way we do it at our hotel.”* So, at 7:30 I called back and placed my order. It then took 1 hour and 10 minutes to receive my order, which also happened to be wrong. **How will I remember the hotel ... not favorably.**

In this time of heavy competition and global communication that instantly allows people to share their opinions world-wide with the click of a button ... **I would suggest it be PRIORITY #1 in any company to figure out what your customers want, need, desire and expect.** If your competition is offering it and you aren’t, then you might want to rethink that. **Define** how you want your company to be remembered through the *“Eyes of Your Customer.”* Make sure everyone in your company knows what that **“definition is”** and strives to do everything they can to make it happen. **How customers remember you has everything to do with what they are going to be saying about you.**

**The day you forget you are in business for the customer,
is the day you start going out of business.
*How will your customers remember you?***

43 - Sometimes Quitting is Smart

The great football coach Vince Lombardi once made the now famous quote: "*Winners never quit and quitters never win.*" I totally agree with his statement, when it is in regard to putting forth the effort to be successful and having the determination to hang in there when the going gets tough ... yes, I think his quote works perfectly for that criteria.

BUT, in the world of business, **WINNERS QUIT** a lot. Winning companies have a keen eye for what is not working ... what is not helping them reach their goal. Once they identify the thing that is sucking energy, money and resources from their business, they cut it out fast; they QUIT doing it and move on. I just completed a new training series where I address 10 critical business issues, and one of the topics I chose was, Strategic Planning. I walk companies through the way to identify what they should and shouldn't be doing, if they want to remain successful. One of the most important points I make is how to determine the things you need to QUIT doing.

Companies (and people) make mistakes; no one is perfect. But, the smart companies know how to determine "quickly" if something isn't working ... and they QUIT doing it. May I suggest you start discussing with your employees and associates things you need to QUIT doing right now. The sooner you QUIT doing the wrong, stupid, silly, unnecessary, unprofitable things ... the sooner you can become more successful. While I am on the subject of QUITTING, (on a personal basis) here are a few things I think we should all QUIT doing.

Quit thinking you're not ready. Get in the game. You will find what you need to improve only from playing the game. No one wins from the sidelines.

Quit saying, "I can't". As Henry Ford once explained:
"Whether you think you can or you think you can't, you are right."

Quit trying to do everything all by yourself. Successful people understand how to create synergy with those around them to produce far more than they ever could have alone.

Quit trying to control everything. You can't. Things change, circumstances evolve, and surprises are inevitable. So, do the best you can in the moment and stay flexible.

Quit dwelling on past mistakes. What is done is done. Learn from it and move on.

Quit trying to please everyone. Be true to yourself and fair to others.

Quit blaming others for your troubles. The day you understand that you are where you are because of the choices you have made is the day you start heading in the right direction.

Quit making a big deal out of a little one. Ask yourself, is this really that important in the grand scheme of things ... will it really matter 1,3,5 years from now?

Quit waiting until the last moment. I have never met a successful procrastinator.

Quit thinking you are unlucky. Luck comes to those who study, prepare, practice and do, not those who wish.

Yes ... Sometimes Quitting is Smart

44 - How Many Times is Enough?

Napoleon Hill is widely considered to be one of the greatest writers on success. He once stated: *“Patience, persistence and perspiration make an unbeatable combination for success.”* He went on to say, *“Persistence is to the character of man as carbon is to steel.”* Those words give a new meaning to the true power of PERSISTENCE.

I have sold in over 20 countries and been told **“NO”** in many different languages ... and for your information ... it feels just as bad when they say **“NO”** in any language. The great salespeople of the world have heard the word **“No”** countless times ... but that one word didn't stop them. They kept going until someone finally said **“Yes.”** In the sales arena, victory comes to the persistent. If you don't think so ... take a look at these numbers from the National Sales Executive Association.

- 48% of salespeople never follow up with a prospect
- 25% of salespeople make a 2nd contact and stop
- 12% of salespeople only make 3 contacts and stop
- 10% of salespeople make more than 3 contacts

BUT “when” are sales made ?

- 2% of sales are made on the 1st contact
- 3% of sales are made on the 2nd contact
- 5% of sales are made on the 3rd contact
- 10% of sales are made on the 4th contact
- 80% of sales are made on the 5th to 12th contact

These numbers SHOUT OUT the importance of persistence. If there is one character trait you MUST possess if you intend to be successful in sales or any profession ... that trait is PERSISTENCE. Without it, you are done, toast, finished, kaput ... resigned to mediocrity.

Stephen King was a *“want-to-be”* novelist working as a teacher in rural Maine. He had made some money on a few short stories he had written, but it was certainly no career for him. His first novel, *“Carrie”*, was rejected 30 times; he actually gave up and threw the novel away. However, his wife retrieved it and asked him to submit it one more time. His 31st attempt was a success; Doubleday publishing took it on and paid him a \$2,500 advance. He ended up making over \$400,000 on that one book. He is now a world-renowned author who has written 57 novels.

There is a great misconception to many people, that successful people never fail – oh, yes, they do. It is what they do after they have failed, **“THAT”** makes the difference.

**How many times do you pick yourself up after a failure?
Every Time!**

45 - Only 21% - That's Awful

It seems one of the new phrases being used a lot in corporate America today, is having employees who are ***“fully engaged”*** in their job. Why is it important to have ***“fully engaged”*** employees? According to a recent Towers Watson Global Workplace Study, companies with ***“fully engaged”*** employees ***“had operating margins almost three times those of organizations with a largely disengaged workforce.”*** That is an impressive number. But, an alarming statistic the study uncovered is that only 21% of employees are ***“fully engaged.”*** OUCH!

If an employee is ***“fully engaged”*** they understand and appreciate what is important to their company and customers and want to help any way they can to enhance productivity, performance and financial results. Employees will give their all (be ***“fully engaged”***) when they feel their company, and especially their boss, appreciates their efforts, loyalty, ideas and contributions. That comes from creating the right culture, properly communicating objectives and how success is measured, and then showing appreciation (***in many different ways***) for a job well done.

Understand this ... the more ***“fully engaged”*** your employees are with their job the greater your company's financial returns will be. BUT ... according to the study, most organizations have a 79% area for improvement: THAT'S BIG! Here is a list of statements that will identify if your company is doing a good or bad job in making their employees ***“WANT TO”*** deliver the best they can. If you are in management, the more statements that are true ... the bigger the problem you have. If you are an employee ... the more statements that are true ... the more you may want to consider looking for employment somewhere else, if you aren't already. (***Life is too short to be miserable at work***)

- **Your corporate culture is that of management vs. employees**
- **Finger-pointing, back-stabbing, blame-passing is everywhere**
- **There is little pride for doing a good job**
- **Recognition for going above & beyond the “norm” is seldom given**
- **Small successes are seldom celebrated**
- **Customer complaints are ignored**
- **Management seldom looks for the cause why customers are upset**
- **Managers, leaders, bosses aren't focused on challenges**
- **Too much emphasis is placed on short-term results**
- **Plans for growth are seldom discussed with everyone**
- **Bosses or associates are always stealing ideas and taking credit**
- **You don't feel your boss cares about you nor do you trust them**
- **There is little if any feeling of camaraderie among peers**
- **No one is ever held accountable for their mistakes**
- **Different departments/divisions/silos seldom help each other**
- **You see no urgency to improve**
- **Challenges to current methods is frowned upon**
- **That's the way we've always done it, seems to be the rule**
- **There is no forum for sharing new ideas**
- **Everyone avoids making suggestions to management**
- **Most employees have no idea how the company is doing**
- **Everyone avoids having to make tough decisions**
- **Management has a my-way-or-the-highway mentality**
- **Laughter is seldom heard**

If five or more of these statements are true ... you have a BIG problem. How do you go about fixing a dysfunctional, disengaged company? You fix it by making ALL the above statements FALSE!!!

You Don't Demand Employee Engagement - You Create It!