

The Manager's INTELLIGENCE An insider's fast track to better management

Report

Sample Issue

Wisdom of the ages

If you gathered 100 experienced managers together and asked for their advice, they probably wouldn't say much about "competing values models" or "temporal rhythms."

Instead, this is a good idea of what you'd hear:

"Don't be afraid of the phrase, 'I don't know.'" If you don't know the answer, don't try to bluff. If you're at fault, take the blame. If you're wrong, apologize. A wise person once said, "If you always tell the truth, you never have to remember anything."

"Never gossip." And if someone wants to gossip with you, politely say you're not interested. This corporate adage rings true: When someone gossips, two careers are hurt—the person being talked about, and the person doing the talking.

"No task is beneath you." Don't think you are above anything. Be the good example and pitch in—especially if the job is one that nobody wants to do.

"Share the credit whenever possible." Managers who spread credit around look much stronger than those who take all the credit themselves.

"Ask for help." If you think you're in over your head, you are. Before it gets out of hand, ask someone for help—most people enjoy giving a hand. Besides saving yourself from embarrassment, you'll make a friend and an ally.

"Keep your salary to yourself." Discussing salary is a no-win proposition. Either you'll be upset because someone is making more than you, or someone will be upset with you.

"When you don't like someone, don't let it show." Especially if you outrank them. Never burn bridges or offend others as you move ahead.

"Let it go." What shouldn't happen often does: You weren't given the project you wanted, you were passed over for the promotion you deserved. Be gracious and diplomatic...and move on. Harboring a grudge won't advance your career.

"When you're right, don't gloat." The only time you should ever use the phrase "I told you so" is if someone says to you: "You were right. I really could succeed at that project." ❖

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How to manage with questions

The art of management often involves asking questions. Lots of them. Here's a list of ten questions to ask as you travel throughout your organization. If you ask these questions as part of your routine, you'll teach your people that their opinions matter.

- What made you mad today?
- What took too long?
- What caused complaints today?
- What was misunderstood today?
- What cost too much?
- What was wasted?
- What was too complicated?
- What was just plain silly?
- What job involved too many people?
- What job involved too many actions? ❖

—Adapted from *TeleProfessional*



Highlight or underscore the items you or your colleagues can use.

How to eliminate turnover

Do you have a high turnover rate at your company? Consider starting a company newsletter or creating a news-cassette tape—that's what Barr-Nunn Transportation did. Because of the technological revolution, many of Barr-Nunn's employees had little contact with the office. And the results of this were high turnover (55 percent annually) and low morale.

Solution? As soon as Barr-Nunn started a newsletter and distributed to its drivers a four-hour cassette filled with industry news, country music, interviews, and company information, turnover dropped to 35 percent.

—Adapted from *Inc.* magazine

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### Go ahead: 'Argue with success'

When things go right for your group, don't just let them go. Find out why they went right and how you can replicate that. For example, suppose your employees finish a monthly task in half the usual time.

Recognize their efforts—then ask why. Did some equipment or software work better? Were more people available? Did you get better cooperation from other departments? Were your supervisors more involved? Less? In other words, make the most of your success.

—Adapted from *Be the Leader*, by Paul B. Thornton (Griffin Publishing Group)

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Remember to underline

Underlining passages in books and journals can help you locate important information easily when you come back for it, but don't underline while you read. Reason: Most of us underline too many words, and don't understand the key points until we've finished the passage. Wait until you finish an entire section or chapter, then go back and highlight key points.

—Adapted from *360 Most Guarded Secrets of Executive Success* (National Institute of Business Management)

Nine tactics to boost morale

One of a manager's most important jobs is to keep spirits up in the workplace. With stress levels in Corporate America at an all-time high, this isn't always easy to do. However, there are some strategies you can use that will get the job done—without hurting your budget.

1. **Sponsor a "Noon Movie."** Once a week (depending on employee schedules), set up a VCR in the lunchroom and show a funny movie during lunch. If time is limited, show reruns of "Seinfeld," "Frasier," or other situation comedies.
2. **Set up a "Humor Corner."** Designate one section of the office as the place for humor, and encourage employees to post cartoons, jokes, or other funny material.
3. **Get out of the office!** Whenever possible, hold meetings outside the office—at the coffee shop down the street or at a local restaurant. If weather permits, don't be afraid to hold meetings outside from time to time.
4. **Liven up your memos.** Buy a book of one-liners, and include a joke at the bottom of your memos.
5. **Run a "Guess the Baby" contest.** Ask the staff to bring in baby photos and post them on the wall. Award a free lunch to the employee who can guess who's who.
6. **Have "Late Day Mondays."** If possible, once a month allow your employees to arrive an hour late on a Monday morning—or leave an hour early on a Friday.
7. **Take pictures!** Every office has an aspiring photographer. Ask that person to take candid shots of employees, and add them to the "Humor Corner."
8. **Play with the dress code.** If your culture allows it, hold an "Ugly Tie," "Ugly Pants," or "Ugly Sweater" day. Award prizes for the "winners."
9. **Bring your smile to work.** You'll be surprised at the difference it makes. If the manager consistently has an upbeat attitude, the staff will as well. ❖

Effective presentations

When using flip charts, don't interrupt the flow of your presentation by taking time out to flip the pages on the easel. Instead, position each separate page in a different spot around the room. Then, when you're finished with one chart, move to the next one, which will be

waiting for you. *Important:* Gently tape another piece of paper over each of your sheets (or fold up and tape the bottom of the page), so the audience can't read the information before you present it. ❖

Hiring the best job candidates

If you're hiring a new employee, find out whether he or she will like your management style by probing attitudes toward former supervisors. Here are questions that will produce results:

- No. 1: Tell me about the best manager you've worked for. Why was he or she a good manager? What would your ideal boss be like?
- No. 2: What was your least favorite manager like? How did you handle the things

you didn't like about him?

- No. 3: Tell me about a disagreement you and a previous boss had. How did you resolve it?
- No. 4: If I were your boss, what would be the most important thing for me to say or do to support you? ❖

—Adapted from *Getting Commitment at Work*, by Michael C. Thomas and Tempe S. Thomas (Commitment Press)

Confronting harassment charges

How a manager investigates a sexual harassment complaint may determine the outcome of the lawsuit, if there is one. Here are eight key points to remember when one of your employees comes to you with charges of harassment.

1. Take *every* complaint seriously.
2. Contact Human Resources immediately to review company policies.
3. Remember: You're not a judge or jury. The manager's job is to collect the facts.
4. Keep your investigation confidential.
5. As you investigate, document everything: memos, conversations, reports, etc.

6. Evaluate yourself: Do you have any bias about the complaint?
7. Don't take the easy way out. Some managers solve harassment problems by transferring the person who made the complaint. This doesn't serve the accused or the victim, and can lead to serious legal trouble.
8. Do the follow-up: Make sure the harassment has stopped, and that the employee who complained is comfortable in the workplace. ❖

How to nudge that great (but slow) worker

Imagine a worker who does excellent work, but not enough of it. If the worker is trying hard, the same habits that led to accurate work could be unnecessarily compromising speed. Go over the work process step-by-step with the employee and look for unneeded repetition. For example, the employee may fixate on checking data, proofreading, documenting sources, obtaining multiple approvals, copying everyone in, and so on. Repetition does improve accuracy, but it can also kill efficiency.

—Adapted from *The Manager's Troubleshooter*, by Clay Carr and Mary Albright (Prentice Hall)

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# Plan your week in 30 minutes

Experts say that you need only 30 minutes to plan your entire week. How to do it? Follow the OATS formula.

- O: Objectives.** What results do you want to see by the end of the week? Write them down and rank them.
- A: Activities.** What do you have to do to achieve your goals? List the necessary activities, and put them in sequence.
- T: Time.** How much time will each activity require? To plan realistically, allow yourself

more time than you think you will actually need. This gives you flexibility if unexpected problems develop.

- S: Schedule.** Look at your calendar and decide when you can do each activity. Most people underestimate the power of a schedule, but you won't get anything accomplished if you don't schedule time to do it. ❖

—Adapted from *President's Newsletter*

## Praise employees effectively

Praise is a manager's most powerful tool, but like all tools, you have to be sure you're handling it correctly. Here are two suggestions:

**Don't hide your praise behind criticism.** The "sandwich technique," in which you couple a piece of praise with an item of criticism, rarely sounds sincere. The employee is more likely to remember the criticism and assume the praise was included only to soften the blow.

**Be specific.** Vague, global praise, like "You're doing a great job," is less meaningful than precise descriptions, such as "You added five new accounts last week. That's great!"

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Set up your 'power office' to project the right image

Your office furnishings and decorations say a great deal about you. To convey the kind of image you want, pay attention to these particular areas:

Furniture arrangement. Setting your desk in the middle of the floor, with chairs facing it, suggests a formal atmosphere and an occupant who wants to maintain distance from visitors. On the other hand, a desk positioned against a wall conveys an image of confidence.

Messy desks. A small amount of messiness implies comfort and friendliness, but too much clutter may cause a visitor to think that the office occupant doesn't care about making

a good impression on anyone. At the opposite extreme, an immaculate desk conveys coldness and may be perceived as a sign that the person doesn't have enough work to do.

Decorations. Plants, draperies, and artwork will convey a more comfortable, relaxed attitude. Books and artwork express an occupant's sincerity.

Certificates and awards, if they are job-related, reassure visitors that you are experienced and competent. ❖

—Adapted from *First Draft*

Listen for more than the 'squeaky wheel'

When work piles up or tough problems take a lot of your time, you depend on your veteran employees to work on their own. Good—but don't forget to recognize their efforts when the smoke clears. Employees who step up are often proud to help out, but over time not being recognized for extra effort can cause resentment. They may feel taken for granted because they are so dependable. That's not the way you really see them, so don't let things degenerate that far.

When to return phone calls

Time-management experts recommend setting aside an hour a day to make and return your phone calls. *But which hour?* The best times of the day are the first two hours of the morning and the last two hours of the afternoon. That's when most people are in the office and accessible by phone.

—Adapted from *How to Organize Your Work and Your Life*, by Robert Moskowitz (Doubleday)

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### Ask this question before dropping a lot of cash

Before purchasing new software, a good question to ask yourself is: Is it better than a pencil? The answer will help you decide whether the expense is really justified. Keep in mind that a computer is supposed to make your work easier and faster.

—Adapted from *Success* magazine

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Get paid faster!

To increase pay-up rates on invoices, place a brightly colored sticker at the bottom of the invoice that says: "Just a friendly reminder to let you know that you can transfer your balance to VISA, MasterCard, or American Express." Be sure to include your phone number, so customers know where to call.

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### Optimism isn't always the key to success

Many management experts are now saying that pessimists make great managers. Why? Because they're always thinking of what could go wrong and are therefore coming up with solutions to problems—just in case the worst happens. So if you're an optimist, force yourself to write down everything that could go wrong with new projects, ideas, employees, etc. Once you do this, you'll naturally be prepared with solutions if disaster strikes.

—Adapted from *Together*

# Management by delegation

Do these scenarios sound familiar? You're walking to your office and an employee stops you to give you a rundown of what's happening: "I made a phone call to Bill. He says that we can't get the project done until July 7, so I'm going to work on the Smith account, and after lunch turn my attention to the Lion account. The newsletter project will be finished on June 17, and, by the way, the copy machine is broken. Should I call a repairman?"

As you get to your office, another employee stops you to give a rundown of his situation. This lasts another three minutes.

Frustrating? You bet. And you wonder, *why can't these employees take more responsibility and not drop every detail of every project in your lap?*

Maybe it's not them, but you. Maybe you are not delegating effectively. Here are some key points to remember:

**#1. Stress results, not details.** Make it clear to your employees that you're more concerned about the final outcome of all projects, rather than the day-to-day details that accompany them.

**#2. Don't be sucked in by giving solutions to employees' problems.** When employees come to you with problems, they're probably looking for you to solve them. Don't. Teach them how to solve problems themselves. This, too, can be frustrating because it takes time. But in the long run, you'll save yourself time and money.

**#3. Turn the questions around.** If an employee comes to you with a problem, ask him or her for possible solutions. If an employee comes to you with a question, ask for possible answers.

**#4. Establish measurable and concrete objectives.** With all employees, make your objectives clear and specific. Once this is done, employees will feel more comfortable acting on their own. Think of this plan as a road map—and your employees will too.

**#5. Develop reporting systems.** Get your feedback from reporting systems: monthly reports, statistical data, or samplings. Or consider weekly meetings with employees.

**#6. Give strict and realistic deadlines.** If you don't give clear deadlines, employees won't feel accountable for the completion of their tasks.

**#7. Keep a delegation log.** When you delegate an assignment, jot it down. You'll be able to monitor the progress, and discipline employees when necessary.

**#8. Recognize the talents and personalities of your employees.** Being a good delegator is like being a good coach of a baseball team. You have to know what projects each employee can handle, and what projects they can't. ❖

—Adapted from *Methodist Leadership*

# How to get the budget your department needs

Getting a budget approved can be a difficult process, especially as companies try to cut back and reduce expenses. When you begin working on your budget proposal, resist the temptation to take an adversarial approach. Instead, concentrate on what your organization needs and how well your department can provide support for those necessities.

**Step #1: Decide on your needs.** Instead of demanding every cent available, take a good look at what your department really requires in order to function.

**Step #2: Evaluate the company's needs.** Justify each item according to your company's requirements. You'll be able to define your pro-

posal in a meeting by saying, "Our goal this year is to do A, which means my department must do B and C. To do that, we need..."

**Step #3: Consider the consequences.** Describe the consequences to the company if your budget requirements aren't met. This will help you argue persuasively.

**Step #4: Examine last year's budget process.** Compare what you asked for last year to what you received. This will help you tailor your proposal to upper management's viewpoint. Also, take a look at what you could have accomplished if you'd gotten the budget you asked for. ❖

—Adapted from *Supervisory Management*

# For Achievers ONLY

SAMPLE ISSUE

## How to hire creative people

Thomas Edison had a unique way of hiring engineers. He'd give the applicant a lightbulb and ask, "How much water will it hold?"

There were two ways to find the answer. The first choice was to use gauges to measure all the angles of the bulb. Then with the measurements in hand, the engineer would calculate the surface area. This approach could take as long as 20 minutes.

The second choice was to fill the bulb with water and then pour the contents into a measuring cup. Total elapsed time: about a minute.

Engineers who took the first route, and performed their measurements by the book, were thanked politely for their time and sent on their way. If you took the second route, you heard Edison say, "You're hired."

Looking to hire creative people? Develop an "Edison test" of your own.

(David Armstrong, *Managing by Storying Around*, Doubleday, NY, NY, as cited in *The Competitive Advantage*, 1101 King St., Suite 110, Alexandria, VA 22314)

**You are in charge of your own attitude—whatever others do or circumstances you face. The only person you can control is yourself....Worry more about your attitude than your aptitude or lineage.**

—Marian Wright Edelman in *The Measure of Our Success*

## How big is 100 billion?

*Start counting now and you'll be dead before you finish*

At a certain point, numbers can seem unreal. One billion is 1,000 times one million, and 100 billion is 100 times that. Can you visualize it now? Most of us can't.

Scientists estimate that the Milky Way galaxy contains 100 billion stars. How many can you count on a clear night?

To count out loud to 100 billion, you'd spend the next 3,000 years (and then some) speaking nonstop.

**Luck? I don't know anything about luck. I've never banked on it, and I'm afraid of people who do. Luck to me is something else: hard work—and realizing what is opportunity and what isn't.**

—Lucille Ball

## Who's really important in the organization? Everyone!

A sea Captain and his chief engineer got into an argument about which one was more important to the ship. Finally they decided to trade places for a day.

The chief went up to the bridge and the Captain went down to the engine room. After a few hours, the Captain suddenly appeared on deck, covered with oil and soot.

"Chief!" he yelled, wildly waving aloft a monkey wrench. "You'll have to come down here! I can't make her go!"

"Of course not!" replied the chief. "We're aground!"

**The difference between a hero and a coward is one step sideways.**

—Gene Hackman

**The greatest pleasure in life is doing what people say can't be done.**

—from an advertisement by Northern Trust Business Banking

**Discoveries are often made by not following instructions, by going off the main road, by trying the untried.**

—Frank Tyger, in *Forbes*

**Daring ideas are like chessmen moved forward; they may be beaten, but they may start a winning game.**

—Goethe

**I tell them that if you stay committed, your dreams can come true. I'm living proof of it. I left home at 17 and had nothing but rejections for 25 years. I wrote more than 20 screenplays, but I never gave up.**

—Michael Blake, author of *Dances with Wolves*

## 'Don't call us, we'll call you...'

Job interviews sometimes draw the strangest candidates. Here are true tales of the world's most bizarre encounters, as collected by recruiting expert Robert Half:

- "Said if he was hired, he'd teach me ballroom dancing at no charge, and started demonstrating."
- "Left his dry-cleaner tag on his jacket and said he wanted to show he was a clean individual."
- "After a difficult question, she wanted to leave the room momentarily to meditate."
- "Applicant walked in and inquired why was he here."
- "Said that if I hired him, I'd soon learn to regret it."
- "Arrived with a snake around her neck. Said she took her pet everywhere."
- "Woman brought in a large shopping bag of canceled checks and thumbed through them during the interview."
- "When asked about his loyalty, showed a tattoo of his girlfriend's name."
- "Applicant indicated that if he wasn't hired, the future of the company would be jeopardized for confidential reasons."
- "Took three cellular phone calls. Said she has a similar business on the side."
- "She returned that afternoon asking if we could redo the entire interview."

(*Human Resources Management*, Wonderlic Personnel Test, Inc., 1509 N. Milwaukee Ave., Libertyville, IL 60048)

## Never give up

Here are two inspiring examples that prove that persistence, enthusiasm, and planning will help you to succeed.

- Chuck Yeager, on his first flight as a passenger, threw up all over the back seat. He vowed never to go back up again—yet later became the first man to break the sound barrier.
- A woman once said to the great violinist Fritz Kreisler after a recital, "I'd give my life to play as beautifully as you!" "Madam," Kreisler replied, "I have."

(*Think & Grow Rich Newsletter*)

## Follow Groucho's advice: Don't use clichés!

Groucho despised the empty clichés of business correspondence. A letter from a bank manager ended with the standard phrase, "If I can be of any service to you, do not hesitate to call on me." Groucho immediately took pen to paper. "Dear Sir," he wrote. "The best thing you can do to be of service to me is to steal some money from the account of one of your richest clients and credit it to mine."

(*The Little, Brown Book of Anecdotes*)

## Crazy ideas —and good customer service— can make you MONEY!

Phil Romano, the founder of Fuddruckers, the national hamburger chain, once owned a small, out-of-the-way Italian restaurant called Macaroni's. He packed the place on Monday and Tuesday nights—a time when most restaurants struggle to keep their doors open. Here's why. Apart from the obvious fact that Macaroni's served good food, Romano had a gimmick based on the old Psych I principle. Random rewards beget regular behavior. In this case, the behavior was eating at Macaroni's on an off night.

If you happened to be dining there on a randomly chosen Monday or Tuesday night, you and the other 200 or so customers received a letter instead of a bill at the end of the meal. The letter stated that because the Macaroni mission was to make people feel like guests, it seemed awkward to charge guests for having a good time. So, once each month on a Monday or Tuesday—and always unannounced—everyone would eat free.

Here's what the stunt cost Romano. One night 'comped' out of 30 reduces his revenues by 3.3 percent. But he has a full house on eight nights a month when the place would normally be empty. And word-of-mouth testimonials are one of the most effective forms of advertising. In one fell swoop, Romano got a couple hundred tongues wagging, "You won't believe what happened to us last night...!"

(T. Scott Gross, *Positively Outrageous Service: New and Easy Ways to Win Customers for Life*, Warner Books)

## You can make a difference

In Maine they tell of an old man walking along the beach with his grandson, who picked up each starfish they passed and threw it back into the sea. "If I left them up here," the boy said, "they would dry up and die. I'm saving their lives."

"But," protested the old man, "the beach goes on for miles, and there are millions of starfish. What you are doing won't make any difference."

The boy looked at the starfish in his hand, gently threw it into the ocean, and answered: "It makes a difference to this one."

## Open mind

In Japan we have the phrase, "Shoshin," which means "beginner's mind." Our "original mind" includes everything within itself. It is always rich and sufficient within itself. This does not mean a closed mind, but actually an empty mind and a ready mind. If your mind is empty, it is always ready for anything. It is open to everything. In the beginner's mind, there are many possibilities; in the expert's mind, there are few.

—Shunryu Suzuki, Japanese Buddhist scholar

## Work

Whatever your life's work is, do it well. A man should do his job so well that the living, the dead, and the unborn could do it no better.

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

## Bravery

Bravery is the capacity to perform properly even when scared half to death.

—General Omar Bradley

## Risk

If we listened to our intellect, we'd never have a love affair. We'd never have a friendship. We'd never go into business, because we'd be cynical. Well, that's nonsense. You've got to jump off cliffs all the time and build your wings on the way down.

—Ray Bradbury

## Competition

The two common reasons for losing are: not knowing you're competing in the first place, and not knowing with whom you really are competing.

—Philip Simborg, Grubb & Ellis Company

## Instincts

**Trust your instincts. Your mistakes might as well be your own instead of someone else's.**

—Billy Wilder, producer

**No man would listen to you talk if he didn't know his turn was next.**

—Ed Howe, journalist

**What we call evil is simply ignorance bumping its head in the dark.**

—Henry Ford

**Courage is not limited to the battlefield or the Indianapolis 500 or bravely catching a thief in your house. The real tests of courage are much quieter. They are the inner tests, like remaining faithful when nobody's looking, like enduring pain when the room is empty, like standing alone when you're misunderstood.**

—Charles Swindoll, inspirational writer

**It takes a lot of things to prove you are smart, but only one thing to prove you are ignorant.**

—Don Herold, humorist

## Want to give up? Think you're too old to try something new?

Age isn't always a factor in your success or failure. Consider these famous examples:

- Actor George Burns won his first Oscar at age 80.
- Golda Meir was 71 when she became prime minister of Israel.
- At age 96, playwright George Bernard Shaw broke his leg when he fell out of a tree he was trimming in his backyard.
- Painter Grandma Moses didn't start painting until she was 80 years old. She completed more than 1,500 paintings after that; 25 percent of those were produced when she was past 100.
- Michelangelo was 71 when he painted the Sistine Chapel.
- Physician and humanitarian Albert Schweitzer was still performing operations in his African hospital at 89.
- Doc Counsilman, at 58, became the oldest person ever to swim the English Channel.
- S. I. Hayakawa retired as president of San Francisco State University at 70, then was elected to the U.S. Senate.
- Casey Stengel didn't retire from managing the New York Mets until he was 75.

(Glenn Van Ekeren, *The Speaker's Sourcebook*, Prentice Hall, New York, NY)

## Travel Tips

**It's not exactly Star Trek technology, but it's close.** If you travel overseas often, consider registering your handprint with the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service and obtaining an INSPASS card. Then all you have to do is slide your card through a machine, press your hand against a screen, and slip on through, bypassing the lines. For more information, write to: INSPASS, P.O. Box 2010, Newark, NJ 07114-2010.



**Get house seats to Broadway shows and impress your clients.** How? Call the Actor's Fund of America and ask for "Fund Tix." (212-221-7300) The tickets are double the price, but half goes to charity, and the seats are great.

## How to beat your enemies: Stand united!

A farmer who had a quarrelsome family, after trying in vain to reconcile their differences with words, thought he might more readily prevail by an example. So he called his sons and told them to lay a bunch of sticks before him. Then, having tied the sticks into a bundle, he told the lads, one after another, to take it up and break it. They all tried, but tried in vain. Then, untying the bundle, he gave them the sticks to break one by one. This they did with the greatest ease. Then said the father, "Thus, my sons, as long as you remain united, you are a match for all your enemies, but differ and separate, and you are undone."

(Originally written by Aesop, and retold in *Manager's Legal Bulletin*, Alexander Hamilton, 70 Hilltop Road, Ramsey, NJ 07446)

## ‘Every damn thing is your own fault’

When something goes wrong in your department, do you blame others for what may have really been your fault? Everybody does at one time or another. The way to stop shirking blame is to realize that by accepting it, you have control over your life—and your business.

In his novel *Green Hills of Africa*, Ernest Hemingway recalls how he missed an easy shot at a prized sable bull. He could have blamed it on his guide, who surprised the animal, but he doesn't.

“Every damn thing is your own fault,” he concludes, “if you're any good.”

To be successful, managers must accept total responsibility for everything, writes Dan Kennedy, author of *Confessions of an Entrepreneur*. If you don't, you'll always find excuses that keep you from achieving what you want—“It's this depressing building I'm in.”

*For example:* A supervisor watches a salesman try to demonstrate how a sprinkling system works. The salesman bungles the job. He does not know his product well enough and blows a sale. Outraged, the supervisor calls the chief of the sales department on the carpet. The chief blames the “idiot salesman” and protests that “he just can't get it right.” By blaming someone else, the chief lost control. He should have said, “Perhaps I need to train him better.”

(adapted from *Think & Grow Rich Newsletter*)

## Create your own reality, and let your heart do the talking

In college we used to sell coupon books door to door, and we used to have a term—“Create our own reality.” This meant that as soon as someone broke a sales record, it changed our entire outlook on our job.

*For example:* If the record was 20 coupon books in four hours (a typical workday) and one day someone broke the record and sold 25, we were no longer happy if we sold 20. Why? Because we now realized it was possible to sell more.

Every day we were trying to create a new reality. The same story is true of the Russian Olympian Vasili Alexeev. He was trying to break a weight-lifting record of 500 pounds. He had lifted 499 but couldn't, for the life of him, lift 500.

Finally, his trainers put 501.5 pounds on his bar and rigged it so it looked like 499 pounds. Of course, you know the story. He lifted it easily.

Once he created this new reality, other weight lifters went on to break his record. Why? Because they now knew it was possible to lift 500 pounds.

The limits we set for ourselves exist in our minds. Sometimes, if we let our hearts do the talking and believe in our ability to overcome past perceptions, we can create another reality.

(Bob Dedinsky, a “For Achievers Only” reader and laboratory technician for ZymoGenetics)

## Look before you blame

To demonstrate how a poorly managed system—not workers—leads to defects and poor quality, management guru W. Edwards Deming conducts an exercise in his seminars that he calls the “Red Bead Experiment.”

Ten seminar attendees are picked and assigned jobs by Deming. Six are what he calls “willing workers.” Two are inspectors. One is a chief inspector, and one is a recorder.

Deming explains that the company has received orders to make white beads. Unfortunately, the raw materials used in production contain a certain number of defects, or “red beads.”

Both the white and red beads are in a plastic container. The six willing workers are given a paddle with 50 indentations in it, and told to dip it into the container, shake it, and pull it out with each indentation filled with a bead. Then they are instructed to take the paddle to the first inspector, who counts the red beads, or “defects.” The second inspector does the same, and the chief inspector checks their tally, which the recorder then records.

A worker drawing out a paddle with 15 red beads gets a merit raise.

In the next round, the worker who had six red beads now has eight, and the worker with 15 now has 10.

Deming, playing the role of the misguided manager, thinks he understands what's happening. The worker who got the merit raise is getting sloppy—the raise went to his head. Meanwhile, the worker on probation has been frightened into performing better.

And so it continues—a cycle of reward and punishment in which management fails to understand that defects are built into the system, and that workers have very little to do with it.

(*Chicago Tribune*)

## Some folks want their luck buttered.

—Thomas Hardy

## How devious are you?

Published originally in the 15th century, Niccolò Machiavelli's book, *The Prince*, discusses the use of manipulation and power as a technique for controlling other people. The term "Machiavellian" has come to be used to describe devious, manipulative people who are motivated only by their own self-interest.

How Machiavellian are you? This test may help you find out. Respond to each statement below by using the following scale:

- 1 = Disagree strongly
- 2 = Disagree mildly
- 3 = Neutral; no opinion
- 4 = Agree mildly
- 5 = Agree strongly

- 1. The best way to handle people is to tell them what they want to hear.
- 2. When you ask someone to do something, it's better to give the real reasons than reasons that might carry more weight.
- 3. Anyone who trusts anyone else is asking for trouble.
- 4. It's hard to get ahead without cutting corners a little.
- 5. It's safest to assume that everyone has a vicious streak that will come out if given the opportunity.
- 6. You should act only when your action is morally right.
- 7. Most people are basically good and kind.
- 8. There is no excuse for lying.
- 9. Most people get over more easily the death of a parent than the loss of a property.
- 10. Most people won't work hard unless they're forced to.

### Scoring

For items 2, 6, 7, and 8, reverse your score so that 5 becomes 1, 4 becomes 2, and so on. Then add up all ten numbers for your total score. A score of 25 is average. A higher score—38, for example—would classify you as High Mach. A significantly lower score makes you a Low Mach.

(Richard Christie and Florence L. Geis, *Studies in Machiavellianism*, Academic Press, New York, NY)

## Little-known facts about the telephone

The telephone may be the most important communication tool of our time. Here are some interesting, unexpected, and thought-provoking facts about the telephone—its history and its impact on our world:

- When telephones were first introduced into the White House, presidents made their phone calls in a booth outside their office. In 1929, Herbert Hoover was the first U.S. president to have a phone installed in the office.
- Eighty-eight million households in the U.S. have at least one telephone.
- More than one-third of owners of answering machines use them to screen calls.
- The Bahamas has 265 pay phones. Kuwait has 270. Syria has 503. Luxembourg has 640. Iceland has 940. Zimbabwe has 989. The U.S. has approximately 2 million.

(*LCI World*, LCI International, 4650 Lakehurst Court, Dublin, OH 43017)

## One way of getting the truth

There's the story of a man at a pay phone in a restaurant making a call.

"Hello, Mr. Smith? I understand you have been looking for an assistant." He paused to listen to the response.

"Oh, you hired one two months ago and are pleased with your choice? Well, thank you anyway. I hope you continue to be satisfied with your decision."

When he hung up the phone, the restaurant manager commented, "I happened to overhear your conversation. I'm sorry you didn't get a shot at that job."

"Oh, that's all right," the man replied. "That was my boss. I was hired as his assistant two months ago and I was just phoning to find out how I'm doing."

(from a speech by Southwestern Bell Vice President for External Affairs Cassandra Carr)

## The honesty of Ted Williams: Actions to live by

More than 30 years ago, Ted Williams was closing out his career with the Boston Red Sox. He was suffering from a pinched nerve in his neck that season. "The thing was so bad," he later explained, "that I could hardly turn my head to look at the pitcher."

For the first time in his career he batted under .300, hitting just .254 with 10 home runs. He was the highest-salaried player in sports, making \$125,000. The next year, the Red Sox sent him the same contract.

When he got the contract, Williams sent it back with a note saying that he would not sign it until they gave him the full pay cut allowed. "I was always treated fairly by the Red Sox when it came to contracts," Williams said. "Now they were offering me a contract I didn't deserve. And I only wanted what I deserved."

Williams cut his own salary by 25 percent, raised his batting average by 62 points, and closed out a brilliant career by hitting a home run in his final time at bat.

(from a speech by A. Thomas Young, President and CEO of Martin Marietta Corporation)

## Advice from successful people

Many famous people have equated their success with hard work and the ability to immerse themselves in the project of the moment. For example, **Michelangelo** said, “If people know how hard I work to get my mastery, it wouldn’t seem too wonderful after all.”

- And this from **Thomas Carlyle**: “Genius is the capacity for taking infinite pains.”
- **Alexander Hamilton**: “All the genius I may have is merely the fruit of thought and labor.”
- **Thomas Edison**: “Genius is 1 percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration.”

(Sylvia Simmons, *How to Be the Life of the Podium*, AMACOM, New York, NY)

### Value

**Try not to become a success, but rather try to become a man of value.**

—Albert Einstein

## Writing too many memos with too many words? Follow the lead of Honest Abe

Abraham Lincoln delivered his Gettysburg Address just over 130 years ago. Look at how his words compare:

|                                      | <i>Number of words</i> |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Gettysburg Address</b>            | <b>272</b>             |
| Bag of Lay’s Potato Chips            | 401                    |
| IRA Form 1040 EZ                     | 418                    |
| Average <i>USA Today</i> cover story | 1,200                  |

(*USA Today* research)

### Sincerity

**The most exhausting thing in life, I have discovered, is insincerity.**

—Anne Morrow Lindbergh

## How to be successful for a long, long time

Since this is the first week of a new baseball season, I thought it would be fitting to open with a story about a home-run hitting farm boy from my home state of Mississippi. This fellow could hit a baseball a country mile, as they say. So one of the major league teams invited him to spring training.

Each week the young slugger wired his mother. The first week he said, “Dear Mom, leading all batters. These pitchers are not so tough.”

A week later he boasted, “Looks like I will be a starting infielder. Now hitting .500.”

But early in the third week, the young man’s mother got this wire: “Dear Mom,” it said. “They started throwing curves. Will be home Friday.”

I tell this story to illustrate that success, whether it’s baseball or business, is not a one- or two-week hot streak. Real success is long term. (from a speech by Earnie Deavenport, President of Eastman Chemical Company)

### Battle

**You may have to fight a battle more than once to win it.**

—Margaret Thatcher

### Ethics

**I would rather be the man who bought the Brooklyn Bridge than the man who sold it.**

—Will Rogers

## The ‘nice’ customer who never complains—and never comes back

You know me. I’m a nice person. When I get lousy service, I never complain. I never kick. I never criticize and I wouldn’t dream of making a scene.

I’m one of those nice customers. And I’ll tell you what else I am. I’m the customer who doesn’t come back. I take whatever you hand out, because I know I’m not coming back. I could tell you off and feel better, but, in the long run, it’s better just to leave quietly.

You see, a nice customer like me, multiplied by others like me, can bring a business to its knees. There are plenty of us. When we get pushed far enough, we go to one of your competitors.

(*Celin-o-gram*, Celina Group, 1 Insurance Square, Celina, OH 45822)

### Persistence

**Persistence is what makes the impossible possible, the possible likely, and the likely definite.**

—Robert Half, personnel executive

### Vital Statistics:

#### Hotels Strike Pay Dirt Cleaning Your Socks...

The next time you see an extra \$20 on your hotel bill, you might want to check the laundry charges. A survey by *Corporate Travel* magazine found these prices at five hotels called randomly:

|               |                  |
|---------------|------------------|
| Suit—\$12.77  | Socks—\$1.77     |
| Dress—\$10.48 | Underwear—\$2.46 |
| Bra—\$2.81    | Shirt—\$3.80     |

## If you’re scared to fly, read on—you wouldn’t have stepped on a plane in the ’30s

Today, we usually feel secure as we fly, but airline travel was quite different back in the 1930s. The following instructions are from one of the first manuals for flight attendants:

- 1) Keep the clock and the altimeter wound up.
- 2) Carry a railroad timetable in case the plane is grounded.
- 3) Warn the passengers against throwing their cigars and cigarettes out the windows.
- 4) Keep an eye on passengers when they go to the lavatory to be sure they don’t mistakenly go out the emergency exit.

(Eric W. Johnson, *A Treasury of Humor*, Prometheus Books, Buffalo, NY)

### Practice

**If I miss one day’s practice, I notice it. If I miss two days, the critics notice it. If I miss three days, the audience notices it.**

—Ignacy Paderewski, Polish concert pianist

## When you fail, don’t give up. These people didn’t

R. H. Macy failed seven times before his store in New York caught on. Novelist John Creasey got 753 rejection slips before he published the first of his 564 books.

Thomas Edison was thrown out of school in the early grades when the teachers decided he could not do the work.

Harry S Truman failed as a haberdasher.

When Bob Dylan performed at a high school talent show, his classmates booed him off the stage.

W. Clement Stone, successful insurance company executive and founder of *Success* magazine, was a high school dropout.

(Joe Griffith, *Speaker’s Library of Business Stories, Anecdotes & Humor*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ)

# How to keep new hires on board

First impressions are crucial—especially the first impression a new hire gets of your company. Studies show that a negative perception of your company during the first 60–90 days of employment can lead new personnel to look for a new job within the year. Here's how to put your best foot forward:

**Start before the new person does.** Stay in touch after he or she has accepted the position to answer questions or help in other ways. And make sure that the new person's work space is ready for the first day of work.

**Designate a mentor or partner** to show the new person around, make introductions, and begin training.

**Begin with the basics.** People become productive sooner if they are firmly grounded in the

basic knowledge they need to understand their job. Focus on the why, when, where, and how of the position before expecting them to handle assignments. Don't drown them with too much information.

**Give the new person some responsibility** for his or her own orientation. Offer opportunities for self-directed learning, under appropriate supervision.

**Keep the new person's family in mind.** A new job means adjustments for the whole family, especially if they've relocated. Do what you can to ease the transition and help them feel comfortable in the community. ❖

—Adapted from the *Pryor Report*

## Before you promote an employee...

Promoting a staff member prematurely can cause no end of problems—for you, for your organization, and especially for the employee. Ask yourself these questions before making a decision.

*Is the employee:*

**Performing** present duties well enough to justify a promotion?

**Experienced** and qualified to do at least part of the new job?

**Willing** to hand over current responsibilities to a new person?

**Enthusiastic** about taking on a new role?

**Familiar** with the new position's responsibilities and priorities?

**Proficient** in the interpersonal skills necessary to work with others in a new role?

**Adequately trained**, or willing to be?

**Prepared** to bow out gracefully if the promotion doesn't work out as planned?

The more questions you can answer Yes to, the better the chances for the promotion to succeed. Thoroughly investigate and resolve any No answers, however, before making any changes. ❖

—Adapted from *Practical Supervision* (Professional Training Associates)

## Improve your management style with employee surveys

If you want to improve your leadership skills and advance your career, you can't rely only on books and bosses to tell you how to do it. You need honest feedback about how your managing is perceived from those who experience it daily—your staff. Here are some sample questions for a survey (you may want to make it anonymous so no one feels obligated to sugarcoat responses):

1. How well do I communicate to you what I expect from you?
2. Am I too involved with your work, or not involved enough?
3. Do you feel comfortable asking me questions and discussing work-related concerns with me?
4. How do I show you that I'm interested in your success at this company?
5. Do I listen to new ideas?
6. Do I treat everyone fairly?
7. Do I understand our industry and how our company fits into it?
8. What do you wish I would do differently? ❖

—Adapted from *The Only Thing That Matters*, by Karl Albrecht (HarperBusiness)

### Sit for success at your next meeting

Where you sit at a business meeting can enhance your image in the company. Here are two tips from expert management consultants:

**Arrive early** so you can take a position directly across from the person running the meeting. This gives you the chance for lots of eye contact with the leader, which will help when you want to ask a question or make a comment.

**Don't sit next to your boss.** The boss will probably get all the attention. You'll be invisible, which will make participation more difficult.

—Adapted from the *Chicago Tribune*

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Introduce new managers to everyone they need to know

You naturally introduce new managers to the supervisors who report to them and to the senior managers they report to, but there are other managers they need to know as well. They should meet: sources of key information for reports and presentations; keepers of resources such as special software or audio-visual equipment; troubleshooters for mechanical and computer problems; and key people in the departments your group collaborates with. Too often new managers must make these contacts by trial-and-error, and too often the errors prevail.

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### Make good use of even poor audience questions

If this scenario hasn't happened to you, it probably will: You're giving a presentation and you've just asked for questions. Inevitably someone asks a question that shows he or she hasn't been listening. An insulting rejoinder is tempting, but you'd alienate the audience, because there's a good chance others have also missed the point. Instead, use the question as a lead-in to re-emphasize your main points. For example, try something like, "That's a good example of the point I made earlier. It illustrates that . . ."

### To get the credit, share the credit

The ability to toot your own horn without sounding vain can enhance your reputation in any organization you work for. Some sources advise sending a memo to your boss every three months or so, detailing your accomplishments (this can come in handy at salary-review time). *To avoid boasting, try sharing the credit:* Phrase the memo so that you compliment your staff, or coworkers, on the successful completion of an important project.

—Adapted from *Managing Up, Managing Down*, by Mary Ann Allison and Eric Allison (Simon & Schuster)

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Training: A manager's most vital task

Training may be a manager's most important task. Be sure you take the time to train your employees thoroughly. Whether they're new to the company or just learning a new procedure, keep these points in mind:

Be available. Trainees usually require lots of attention. Stay close by to answer questions and check their progress. And be prepared to answer some questions more than once.

Be organized. Break complicated tasks into smaller steps.

Demonstrate each step. Then have the employee demonstrate it for you. If he or she makes a mistake, show the correct procedure and have the employee do it again.

—Adapted from *Front Line Supervisor's Bulletin*

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### Seating for the best meeting

Seating arrangements can make a big difference in achieving your meetings' goals. *Want to encourage cross-talk and idea-sharing?* Hollow squares or a U-shaped arrangement works best. *To focus on a problem presented by a speaker,* put seats in a semicircle. *For a straightforward presentation,* placing chairs in classroom-style rows works best.

—Adapted from *Boardroom Reports*

## When does 'Good-bye' really mean 'Good-bye'?

When an employee shouts "I quit!" and stomps out of your office only to call the next day asking to return to work, what are your options? Here are some ways to approach the situation without burning any bridges behind you:

**Allow a cooling-off period.** Give a day of grace to let everybody calm down and rethink their positions. Don't take any irreversible action, such as removing a time card or issuing a final paycheck, until at least 24 hours have passed.

**Ask a neutral third party** to call the employee at home and confirm the resignation, or find out what happened. A manager from another department, or someone from Human Resources, may be a good person to do this.

**Be open for requests to return.** People sometimes say or do things they don't really mean. Don't let your ego get in the way of a sincere "I'm sorry" and a genuine desire to return to work.

**Find the facts.** Was the employee having a bad day? Are there other factors that might have caused an overly emotional reaction to a specific situation? Ask the employee for his or her side of the story.

**Maintain discipline.** If you do let the employee come back to work, be sure to state firmly that walking out is not an acceptable way to solve problems. ❖

—Adapted from *Manager's Legal Bulletin*

## Get to the bottom of the résumé

No job interview is complete without a review of the candidate's work history, but if you ask a candidate to begin by describing his or her current job responsibilities, you may miss out on some valuable details. Experts recommend that you ask candidates to begin with their first work experience. *Reason:* When candidates must think

about their careers in a chronological sequence, it's natural for them to make associations that reveal to you their work patterns and thought processes. This kind of information may help you "read between the lines" of a résumé. ❖

—Adapted from *The Smart Interviewer*, by Bradford D. Smart (John Wiley & Sons)

## Prepare yourself for seminars

A professional conference or seminar can be well worth the time away from the office if you take the right approach. Here's how to turn your next professional meeting into a valuable experience:

**Prepare yourself ahead of time.** For example, list at least five specific questions you want answered at the conference.

**Use break time to network.** Talk to your peers; make lunch and dinner plans with as many different people as you can.

**Bring lots of business cards to exchange.** When you receive a card, make a note of something distinctive about the person giving it to you.

**Collect handouts from all speakers—** even those whose sessions you don't attend.

**Read your notes.** Review them on your way home and prepare a summary of what you experienced and learned.

**Back at work, conduct a miniseminar** for your coworkers on the key points of what you've learned.

**Keep in touch with the speakers.** Write to them with your questions on specific topics. Ask how you can get additional information on their specialties. ❖

—Adapted from *Employees News*

# Focus on reasonableness—and safety—in considering criminal records

Background checks for criminal records are a key part of investigating job applicants. However, not all crimes are equal. You need some kind of criteria by which to measure the relevance of an ex-convict's history to the job in question. Here are three suggestions:

- **General criteria.** Begin by specifying types of convictions that would compromise security at your workplace in general. Convictions for offenses involving physical violence or for specific types of felonies, such as armed robbery, would be listed in this category.
- **Specific job-related criteria.** Look at each job individually and determine the kinds of criminal convictions that would compromise your workplace. For example, an applicant with a recent conviction for driving under the influence might be acceptable for a job that doesn't require driving a car or operating machinery. However, a job that involves using a cash register or handling payments would probably be inappropriate for an

applicant recently convicted of forgery, theft, or embezzlement. An applicant recently convicted of sexual assault is questionable for a job that requires after-hours work.

- **Temporal criteria.** How recently the offense took place should also play a role in your decisions. For example, a conviction from over 20 years ago should not weigh as heavily as one in the last year. Set up consistent criteria for assessing the crime.

*Note:* After you've checked your state laws and your organization's policy concerning criminal records, make certain you check your own biases. State and federal law agencies will scrutinize any negative hiring decision you make in an effort to protect applicants from discrimination. If it appears that you're using an applicant's criminal history as a scapegoat for your prejudice against his or her race or national origin, then you may find yourself in need of an attorney. ❖

—Adapted from *HR News*

**Increase your vocabulary skills by using a paper clip.** How? When you come across an unknown word, look it up in the dictionary, highlight it, and place a paper clip on that page. The next time you use the dictionary, repeat the process, but this time check to see if you remember the previous word(s). If you do, remove those paper clips.

—Adapted from *Curriculum Review*

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Avoid this common mistake when speaking to a group:

When giving a presentation that includes slides, never look away from the audience to read from your slides. Photocopy each slide on a separate piece of paper, and keep that stack of paper in front of you. That way, you can refer to the "slides" without shifting focus away from your audience.

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**Get through to hard-to-reach people on the telephone** with

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### Hiring: What to ask references

Because of the possibility of a defamation lawsuit, most employers are reluctant to provide negative information about a job applicant. *How can you get a true picture of the job seeker?* Try asking past employers to describe the candidate's strengths. If the list is short or vague, you'll have learned a lot without any risk of litigation.

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How you can add value to your job

Contribute to your organization's bottom line by asking yourself this question regularly: "If this were my money instead of the company's, would I spend it this way?" Apply it to everything from expense accounts to new office equipment.

—Adapted from *Directions*

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### Choose the right spot for evaluations

Where you hold a performance review can make a difference. To relay feedback about past performance and guidelines for the coming year, a focused but relaxed neutral setting is usually best. In other words, your office isn't ideal. Try a conference room or a colleague's comfortable office—or even the employee's own office if private enough. A restaurant or other public location, though neutral, isn't secluded enough for a review—especially one containing bad news.

—Adapted from the seminar "How to Conduct 'Win-Win' Performance Evaluations," by Carol A. Hacker

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Emphasize results with telecommuters, not process

One of your concerns about allowing employees to telecommute may be, "How do I manage when I can't see the process?" Try emphasizing process less and results more. For example, if a telecommuter who produces a weekly report can get good information from the Web and telephone interviews rather than printed sources and in-person interviews, look at the quality and timeliness of the report, not how it's done. And if telecommuters come up with usable innovations, pass them on to the on-site staff.

—Adapted from the *Jakarta Post*

The 7 traits of effective leaders: How many do you share?

Are leaders born or made? Can you learn superior leadership skills? No one is sure, but experts have noticed seven specific actions that successful leaders carry out, regardless of the organization or cause they lead.

Effective leaders...

...Make others feel important. If your goals and decisions are self-centered, followers will lose their enthusiasm quickly. Emphasize their strengths and contributions, not your own.

...Promote a vision. Followers need a clear idea of where you're leading them, and they need to understand why that goal is valuable to them. Your job as a leader is to provide that vision.

...Follow the Golden Rule. Treat your followers the way you enjoy being treated. An abusive leader attracts few loyal followers.

...Admit mistakes. If people suspect that you're covering up your own errors, they'll

hide their mistakes, too, and you'll lack valuable information for making decisions.

...Criticize others only in private. Public praise encourages others to excel, but public criticism only embarrasses and alienates everyone.

...Stay close to the action. You need to be visible to the members of your organization. Talk to people, visit other offices and work sites, ask questions, and observe how business is being handled. Often you will gain new insights into your work and find new opportunities for motivating your followers.

...Make a game of competition. The competitive drive can be a valuable tool if you use it correctly. Set team goals, and reward members who meet or exceed them. Examine your failures, and celebrate your group's successes. ❖

—Adapted from *The Toastmaster*

Beware of employees who take on too much

At first glance, they're your favorite employees—always ready to take on whatever tasks need doing. Yet somehow a lot of those tasks never get done. These folks are the "superagreeables." They genuinely want to help and to win your approval, but they take on more than they can do. In the end, they can put you as far behind schedule as your worst complainers. Once you've recognized these employees who can't say "No," try these techniques for boosting their sense of reality:

1. Ask for truth-tellers, not yes-people.

Tell them that expressing reservations about managers' ideas, pointing out problems, asking for help, and speaking up when they're overloaded are things you'd like to see them do.

2. Get to know them. Find out why they're so afraid of being frank. For example, these folks often use humor to get around saying

"No." If you ask them to meet a difficult deadline, they may laugh and say something like, "Sure, one more task on top of the 100 I've already got will be no problem." The trouble is, they may actually have unfinished tasks, despite that ironic tone. Your challenge is to listen well and know when to follow up.

3. Get beneath the surface. If your superagreeables say "Sure," ask them: "What else have you got pending? How long will those tasks take? What procedures will you use for the new task? How long will that take?" And so on. You appreciate their willingness—but you want it tempered with reality. ❖

—Adapted from the report "Hot employee issues" (M. Lee Smith Publishers)