

SOAR to SUCCESS

October 2015

MAGAZINE

THE MERIT GROUP

Building Businesses,
Innovating Brands

Creating Your
Marketing
Budget in
Easy Steps **3**

PLUS:

- + The Deadly Mistake Most Entrepreneurs Make Every Day
- + Cloud vs. On-premise Security Myths
- + Creating Your Life Vision Statement
- + The Most Dangerous Thing to Do in Business
- + And much more...

Being the “Alpha” is Exhausting



PAT ALVATER



Have you seen the Sea Lions that hang out around Newport, Oregon? It's fascinating. There are platforms right off a pier in a fishing marina where the male sea lions roam looking for food. There were over 100 there the day we visited.

The front raft had one sea lion on it - the Alpha. The others had loads of them mounded on top of each other sleeping. However, there was no rest for the alpha. He spent his time fighting off the others that attempted to join him on his platform.

Not one was successful in the twenty minutes that we were observing this entertaining example of alpha behavior.



It made me think about a small business owner mistake that The Merit Group, in the feature article this month, call "self-sufficiency."

Trying to do it all on your own without getting assistance. That is also exhausting, just like being the alpha sea lion. Don't be a lone sea lion. Don't attempt to be self-sufficient. Put a team in place to assist you so you can avoid exhaustion and perform at your best. I've made that one of my goals for this month, how about you?

Enjoy the articles in this issue and don't forget to take advantage of the links provided.

Pat Alvater

Soar to Success
AFP Marketing
BizTV Shows

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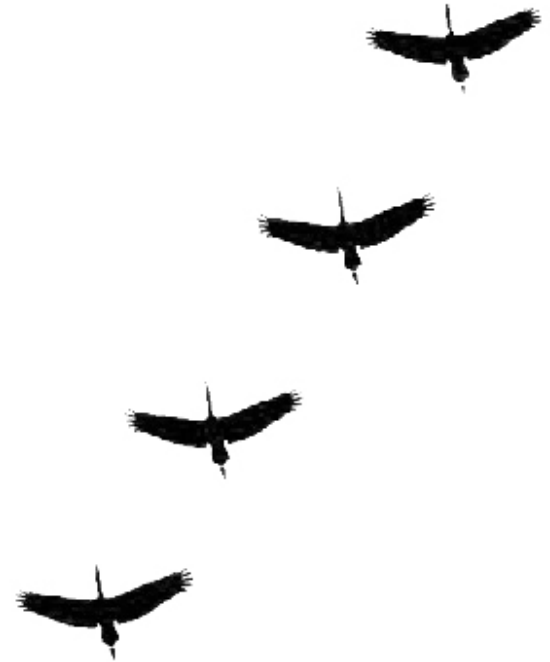
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Building Businesses,

Innovating Brands



Soar to Success is excited for you to learn more about the savvy, smart and talented co-founders and managing partners of The Merit Group, Shamara Cox and Terry Dove Pittman. The Merit Group is a strategic planning, business development and brand communications firm based in Indianapolis, Indiana.

One specialty of theirs is building businesses by helping new entrepreneurs turn their vision into a working enterprise. They also focus on innovating existing brands. That is perfect for clients and companies that have been in business, but need help with new program development, creating breakthrough strategies, or even process management.

Shamara Cox and Terry Dove Pittman complement each other perfectly in practice as well as in conversation; you'll find one or the other saying to their co-founder, "Great idea!" What makes them so special is that they bring their unique backgrounds and experience to The Merit Group to provide a well-rounded wealth of knowledge for their clients.

Shamara began her journey into entrepreneurship while working full-time in Arizona. She started her business with a passion to help women flourish through business ownership.



Strategic Planning | Business Development | Brand Communication

“

“I feel like
we are
business
doulas.”

”

Shamara Cox

In 14 years she turned her program into the only accredited Life Coaching Institute in southern Arizona and graduated over 300 women as life coaches. The significant difference that her institute brought to the marketplace was that she included a business development program with a spin on marketing. She not only taught life coaching skills, but how to build a business.

When Shamara and her husband moved to Indianapolis, she started a life coaching program for teens called BLING Sorority. Bling is an acronym that stands for; Brave, Legendary, Influential, Necessary and Gorgeous.

That program eventually led her to Terry Dove Pittman.



Terry Dove Pittman was the Authenticating Deputy for the Indiana Secretary of State. She worked with foreign embassies, ambassadors and the World Court and was the state’s representative for foreign trade and international affairs. Exporting procedure and documentation flowed through her office. She also became interested in nonprofits and found a passion related to helping them get started with the proper documentation and filings.

Terry is a person who loves paper and documents. She started a company that dealt with business services, mainly document preparation and paralegal services. They met because Shamara needed information about nonprofit paperwork and filing and Terry’s business provided that service. In their first meeting they talked for four hours and haven’t stopped talking since.



The Merit group has evolved over time. The market led them to the Strategic Planning and Consulting Industry. Their combined skills fit perfectly to help their clients reach their business goals.

“Nobody starts out being a Steve Jobs or Oprah.” They have to work to that point. It’s great when a person comes in with an idea and that spark in their eye that says ‘I want to do this.’ We help them from that ideation phase to their sustainable business, which is operational and has a defined brand. It’s just awesome to be a part of that process.

We are like the midwives in birthing companies, because we are helping them through all the hard, ugly parts to get to their ultimate goal.”

Shamara says, “I feel like we are business doulas.”

“Nobody starts out being a Steve Jobs or Oprah.”

The vision for their business is to be the citadel of hope and strategy for people, all over the world, that are thinking about starting a business, growing a current business or getting their business back on track when they are stuck.

Shamara and Terry have some big plans for the future of The Merit Group. In order to take their business to the global entity they want to be, they will be launching the ‘Merit School of Entrepreneurship’ in early 2016. The Merit Group typically sees five to six clients per day, but with the new school curriculum and training program, they will be providing guidance directly or indirectly to 15-20 people for a 16-week period.

Terry and Shamara will be teaching some of the courses plus they have several trained affiliate teachers to help. The students will learn from their proprietary program, the Business Engineering System. A student will come in with an idea and at the end of the program walk out with a workable business model.

Students will strategically plan a business, apply business development techniques, learn how to communicate and take that brand to market, all the while being trained by entrepreneurs that have first-hand experience as business owners.



Soar to Success asked Shamara and Terry what the two biggest errors they have found that prospective business owners make when starting a new endeavor.

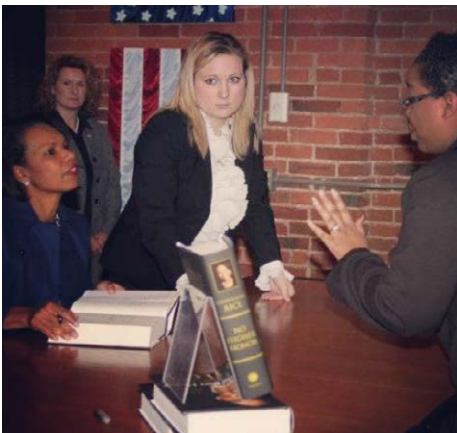
They believe the first mistake is not taking the crucial planning step to adequately and strategically plan their business development process.

A new business owner must plan each step to assure the success of the business. They must know their income streams, what value each stream brings to the target market, what the distribution channel is and the manufacturing structure. These are just a few of the many items that must be built into each start-up plan.

Every entrepreneur must know their strengths and weaknesses and understand the opportunities and threats to their business as well as understand what makes them unique in the market place.

The second big misstep happens once the business is up and running; it's self-sufficiency.

The solo entrepreneur always thinks they can do everything on their own. That is just not true. Every business owner needs to understand their skill set and what produces the most income. They need to analyze the various segments of their business and hire others to do the non-income or lower-income producing segments, that are not worthy of their time. The Merit Group shares that this is where they see many small business owners fail.



Both Shamara and Terry are excited with where their business is right now. They have created a life that they are proud of and a business that is changing people's lives for the better. It's pure joy to them, when they help someone that, for example, has had a business idea for 15 years and within six months of working with The Merit Group, has put their idea into action.

Shamara Cox and Terry Dove Pittman have a true passion for helping budding entrepreneurs turn their ideas into working business models as well as helping experienced entrepreneurs stepping up to the next level of success.

They really are business doulas building businesses and innovating brands.

For more information about the Merit Group visit:

www.themeritgroupindy.com

Once there, click on the tab at the top of the screen for a free strategy session with Shamara and Terry to help you turn your ideas into a viable, productive and profitable business enterprise.

Also, be sure to go to our Soar to Success website to listen to the full interview with The Merit Group.



We always ask each of our featured experts what three traits they think entrepreneurs need in order to Soar to Success. Here's what The Merit Group co-founders shared:

If you want to keep learning from Shamara and Terry don't forget to click below to watch their

video series



THE FIRST IS THEIR PASSION FOR THEIR PURPOSE.

Terry responded that people who go into business just to make money probably won't be able to handle the ups and downs of being an entrepreneur. However, with a passion for serving someone's need, the money will come.

1.

THE SECOND IS HAVING A GO GETTER WILLINGNESS.

This means being able to go after what you want, getting out of your comfort zone and prospecting. Then, also doing the follow up and work to convert prospects into clients.

2.

3 traits you need to succeed

TERRY ADDED A FOURTH ITEM, FAITH AND HOPE.

She feels that everyone has been put on the earth for a purpose and that purpose has blessing and possibility connected to it. Without that you are running in the field without any hope. You must always have faith that a particular endeavor is going to work out because it was meant for you.

3.

THE THIRD IS RESILIENCE.

"It's not all peaches and cream in the entrepreneur world." Someone that can soar to success needs to be able to say to themselves, maybe today it's not so great, but tomorrow is another day. With resilience the entrepreneur won't be stopped by the obstacles that sometimes crop up.

4.

fresh // creative // stylish // fun



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The **Deadly** **Mistake** most Entrepreneurs make **Every Day**

By Joan Washburn

Every entrepreneur I have ever known by their very nature, sees opportunities all around them. They notice ways to make things better, meet a need, or fix a problem.

However, this acute awareness can become their greatest weakness if not kept in check. Often it's not a lack of ideas that keeps them from achieving things, but having TOO MANY ideas to choose from! There are just so many shiny things to distract us!

But not all that glitters is gold.

Shiny Object Syndrome is the tendency to get distracted by new thoughts and ideas, and never focus on or complete anything. It's a state of constant distraction where we continually lose ourselves in imagination and dreaming, instead of seeing the bigger picture and accomplishing our goals.

You've experienced it, I am sure. It looks like this:

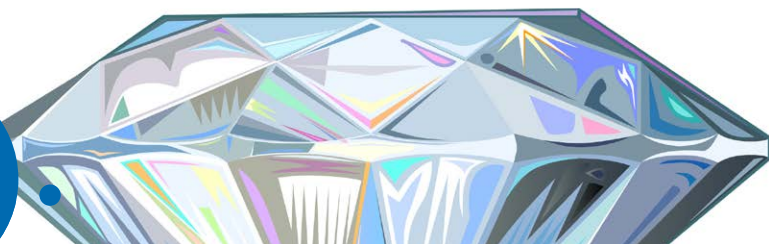
- In the middle of a challenging project, you decide to check your email, peruse a favorite newsfeed, Facebook, Twitter or check your text messages. An hour later you go back to the project and have to reorient yourself as to where you were before you can continue.
- You are always ready to take on a new project, even if your workload is heavy, because the allure of a new challenge is just more than you can resist. There's such great energy and excitement in starting something new!
- You are constantly starting new ideas only to move on to the next one as soon as implementing the first idea gets difficult. For example, you start a new workout program, then drop it for the latest craze, never reaching your original fitness goal.

Basically, you constantly start things, but often don't finish them before you are off on the next Shiny Object.

Sound Familiar?

Don't worry, it's not fatal, but it can cause you to fill up your day with busyness, not focused on or accomplishing anything that moves you toward an important goal. You waste countless hours and dollars in pursuit of a new shiny object when you haven't thought through whether this new item, technique, service or product is "right" for your business or your life.

When we are chasing after shiny objects instead of taking focused action toward what's important to us, we become frustrated, disappointed in ourselves, and downright weary. At the end of the day we begin to question our commitment and even the goal or dream we started out for in the beginning. Again, don't worry - it's not fatal! Here are some very effective steps you can take to avoid being distracted by Shiny Objects once and for all. I call them the 3 C's.



First **CHOOSE 1** – do your homework, form a focus group, get professional advice - then Choose 1 idea! Stop procrastinating, making excuses and wasting precious time and energy chasing every shiny object that comes along. Focus!

Second, **COMMIT** to the time, money, energy, resources – whatever it's going to take to accomplish it.

When things get tough, as they always do, just take the next small step in front of you. Keep your eyes on the prize! Be committed to see it through to the finish! Stay focused!

Third, **CELEBRATE** your results! -Too often we forget to celebrate before moving on to the next idea. When you celebrate your results it renews your spirit. It gives you the energy to choose the next idea wisely and make it a reality.

If you think you might have a chronic case of Shiny Object Syndrome, [CLICK HERE](#) to schedule a complimentary Strategy Session with me – NOW - before you get distracted!

Till then remember...

Whatever your goal or dream ...
WE Can Make it Happen!

Joan Washburn, ACC, is a master at coaching busy, professionals as they zero in on their top priorities, stop wasting their precious time and energy on things that don't matter and produce the results they're aiming for. Her on-line programs are guaranteed to deliver practical tools and build essential skills.

She works with leaders of large companies as well as small business owners to deliver professional development trainings designed to produce resilient and productive employees, happy customers and increased profitability!

Joan is credentialed by the International Coach Federation, a Licensed Trainer by the Academy for Coaching Excellence and a graduate of the Wharton Business School AMP.



WashburnEndeavours.com and on



Or learn more from her **Video series**



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"Joan is an excellent coach, oozing with a fabulous mixture of compassion, wisdom and good humor. I highly recommend her coaching, workshops and trainings to anyone who is looking for new tools to use to deal with the challenges of life. You will learn new skills by using coaching tools and begin to take action in your life in lots of new ways!"

-Penny Kowal PhD

Click Here to schedule a Complimentary Strategy Session
jw@washburnendeavours.com

CREATING YOUR MARKETING BUDGET IN THREE EASY STEPS



By Holly Kile

Does your business have a budget? How about a specific marketing budget?

I've met more than my fair share of business owners who have a regular budget that covers things like equipment or office supplies. They may even go so far as to have a line item that says "advertising" but that's not enough. You need to have a full marketing budget every year if you intend to continue growing your business. Here's how to create one in three easy steps.

Step one is to figure out what you're working with by gathering all of your financial data. After all, it will be difficult to figure out how much you have to spend on marketing if you don't know what your overall financial picture even looks like. Pull together your data based on actual income that you can count on rather than "I hope I get it" dollars. As a general rule of thumb, in the startup phases of your business, you can plan on spending around 5% of your total revenue. Older businesses can run a bit leaner only needing around 2 or 3%.

Now that you have your budget squared away, you need to determine where you want to spend those marketing dollars. Think about all marketing avenues and give consideration to where your dollars are most well spent. Many people operate on a shoestring budget which means that you likely won't have much to work with in the marketing department so be sure to maximize free opportunities for marketing whenever possible if it makes sense given your target market. Ensure that you don't just think about it all in your head but rather write it down so that you have something to refer back to as you go along.

This leads us into the final step which is to watch the numbers. You want to gauge how your marketing dollars are doing so that means you need to track your spending. I recommend that you track your spending as well as note what your return on investment was so that you can use that information to determine your following year budgets.

Your marketing budget doesn't have to be complicated but it does need to be included in your overall business strategy. Without it, you will likely end up not spending enough or spending too much money that doesn't give you the right returns. Follow these three easy steps and your marketing money should go much further for you.

Visit my website for more information and check out my **video series** on **Indy BizTV Shows®**.

Holly Kile is President and Chief Business Strategist of HJK Global Solutions, parent company of A2I Business Consulting and Pixie Dust University. Using her extensive background in operations management, systems analysis/implementation and strategic business marketing, Holly works with business owners and entrepreneurs who struggle with figuring out how to effectively achieve their vision for their business. As a result of working with Holly individually or participating in one of her many specialized training programs, her clients are able to access multiple opportunities for growth in their organizations and realize potential they didn't previously know existed.

Holly's passion for small business owners, solo-entrepreneurs and heart-centered organizations drives her to create holistic business programs and products they can use to support them in creating long-term, sustainable success for their businesses. In 2013, in response to the needs of her community, Holly launched A2I Business Consulting-her elite business coaching program wherein she works with entrepreneurs one on one to co-create comprehensive growth strategies to move them from "accidental" business owners to intentional" industry experts who enjoy profitable and thriving businesses!!

Contact her at:

www.hjkglobal.biz and on



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HOW THIS COULD Save YOU Money NOW!

IN TAX AMNESTY '15 *Act Now · Get Right · Move Forward*

By Tina Moe, CPA

Do you owe back taxes to the state of Indiana? If so, you may have an opportunity to settle up at a reduced amount, depending on your situation.

If you have past due taxes for tax years up to December 31, 2012, you could pay the balance due free of penalty, interest and collection fees! In order to participate, you'll need to contact the Indiana Department of Revenue between now and November 16, 2015 to set up a payment plan or pay your base tax due in full.

Taxpayers who pay all of their outstanding tax liabilities in full, including Tax Amnesty 2015 liabilities, may be eligible for tax warrant expungement! This means the negative impact on your credit report caused by a tax warrant is removed from your credit report.

The last Tax Amnesty was in 2005 - 2006 so this isn't a common occurrence for the Indiana Department of Revenue. The program was originally targeted to generate \$65 million in proceeds but generated a whopping \$244 million! Fast forward to May 2015 and another tax amnesty is authorized by the biennial budget in House Enrolled Act 1001 and signed into law by Governor Mike Pence.

This is a narrow window of opportunity for taxpayers who qualify; both businesses and individuals alike. The program began on September 15th and will end on November 16th, 2015 and 40 different tax types are covered in the program. Participants in the program who fully pay the base tax will do so without penalty, interest and collection fees as well as receive the tax lien release, potential tax warrant expungement and avoid civil or criminal prosecution.

This is huge!

Who's not eligible to participate?

Taxpayers who participated in Indiana's 2005 tax amnesty program are not eligible for Tax Amnesty 2015 nor are balances due for tax periods after January 1, 2013. Also, taxpayers who participated in Indiana's horse claiming tax amnesty program are not eligible to participate.

And here's an important note, taxpayers with eligible tax liabilities who do not participate will be subject to a double penalty at the end of the Tax

Amnesty 2015 period, **November 16, 2015.**

What should you do if you wish to participate?

You can visit www.TaxAmnesty.IN.gov or call **1-844-TAXESIN (1-844-829-3746)**. You may also visit any of the twelve (12) Indiana Department of Revenue locations. If you received a payment coupon in the mail, you can return it along with your payment in full.

1Information taken from the Indiana Department of Revenue website, <http://in.gov/dor/files/tax-amnesty-2015-fact-sheet.pdf>

Tina L. Moe, C.P.A., CGMA, formed A.C.T. Services in 2002, and began building her business. Her practice has grown to a clientele more than 1,200 clients and a team of more than a dozen staff members.

Tina attributes her business growth to being proactive with her clients, maintaining affordability and accessibility of the business owner herself.

Tina is a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) and the Indiana CPA Society. Contact her at:

www.actservices-inc.com and on



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SOCIAL MEDIA BASICS 101

By Lynne Wilson

It has been said that people buy from those who they know, like and trust. Social media is an excellent way to use this to your advantage. Especially when you are a coach or consultant and people are really buying you as part of the package.

When I am talking about social media, I always think of it as a part of the big picture. Social media can:

1.

Help them know you by making them aware that you're out there

2.

It can give them reasons to like you (friendly, upbeat, interesting, helpful, involved)

3.

It allows them to trust you by letting you give them help and education. They can see that you know what you're talking about.

Social media doesn't replace marketing- it's a tool you use in your marketing. The ultimate goal of your social media should be the same as any marketing. Get more leads that you can then convert into more clients that generate revenue. The bonus is that in addition to doing that- it can shape your reputation and allow you to build relationships with your customers and offer a two-way connection to your audience.

This means you need to have your social media included as part of your overall sales strategy and have all your marketing working together towards the common goal. How you fit it in can be based on many things- consider



How you get clients now



What is working and what isn't



Who your target audience is



The bottom line is social media should be used to feed your website/blog/email list, whatever you have as a tool in place to collect prospects. Something that you own and control. You can control your website or email list, you cannot control the social media channels. You are playing on their turf, according to their rules (which change all the time) and if they disappeared tomorrow, you would need to be able to move on. So you want to use social media to drive traffic to your site, but not just any traffic. You want the traffic to be made up of your target audience. The more on target you are with content that appeals to your target market, the more likely your web traffic will be made up of potential clients.

And of course that type of traffic will convert better than the general population.

For your action item, look at your marketing and make sure that you are first driving social media traffic to your website and make sure you are capturing those leads on an email list.

Look for me on social media, I'd love to connect with you.

As a social media consultant, Lynne Wilson helps businesses of all sizes develop and grow an online presence through social media.

Lynne's experience includes marketing/advertising on the client side, design work and social media content creation and account management. She specializes in social media because she feels it allows her to be part marketer, part writer and part designer. These skills are all used to create great social content.

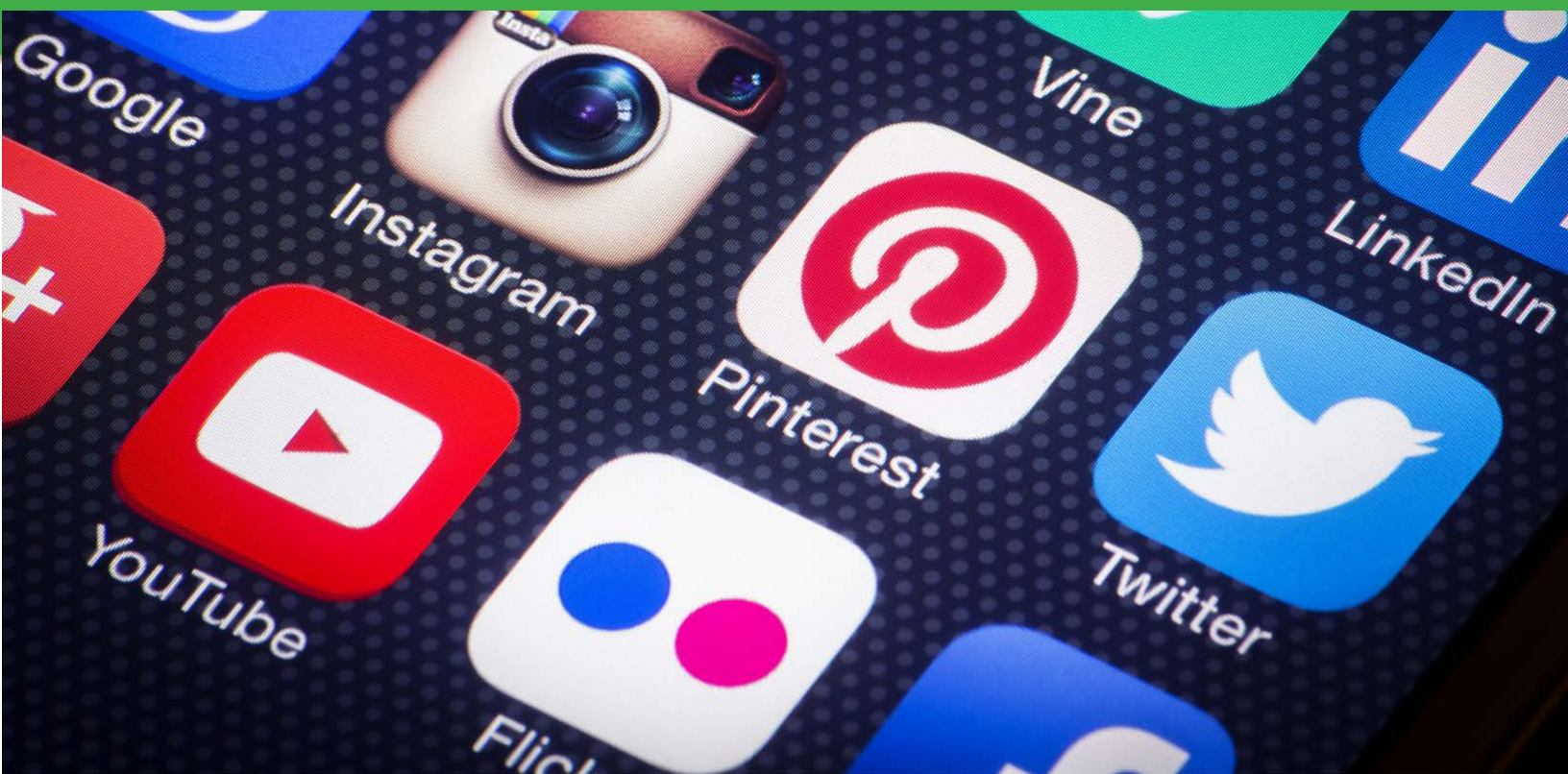
Lynne uses her experience and knowledge to assess where you are now and what steps are needed to get you to the next level. Each client has a different situation and every strategy will have some differences. This is not an off-the-shelf product. Lynne works with each client to learn what their specific strengths and weaknesses and build a strategy that can actually be implemented. She can also take this one step further by providing ongoing support and providing all content and posting services. This is perfect for business owners who need to spend their time running the business. Lynne can both maintain AND GROW your presence on Facebook, Google+, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Instagram and more.



Or learn more from her **Video series**



Contact Lynne at www.mixstrategy.com and also on



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Cloud vs. On-premise

Security Myths



By Jeanne DeWitt.

One of the most frequent questions I'm asked by companies is whether or not they should move their data to the cloud or keep it on-premise. There are many misperceptions about cloud security and bad assumptions about how a company or organization can truly protect its own information with on-premise equipment. I'm asked all the time, what's safer? What's more secure? Here are 4 common myths you need to know to make an informed decision:

Myth #1. The closer you hold your data, the easier it is to protect.

Many still believe that keeping their servers, switches and routers in-house will make it easier to control and protect their data. But the truth is that the average business can't keep up with all of the security controls necessary to protect data in-house. In contrast security is a core business function for a cloud provider. We invest in the strongest forms of physical and network security to detect malicious attacks, and configuration and vulnerability management to maintain the least amount of risk possible for the data we protect.

Myth #2. Cloud environments make compliance difficult.

Worries about IT compliance, like PCI or HIPAA, can be a big perceived impediment for cloud adoption. But the truth is that cloud providers actually make compliance audits easier. We deal with audit conditions day in and day out and have environments that are usually certified for compliance.

Myth #3. On-premise physical security is superior.

The truth is that most businesses lack the resources to build and maintain up-to-date physical security. Most depend on old and outdated technologies that are easily hacked. Cloud providers rely on modern and multiple forms of authentication for physical access, like biometrics.

Myth #4. When you put your data in the cloud, you'll never know where it's being stored.

The truth is that can be true for some cloud providers, but for others like us, where your data resides is something we share with you up front.

The real truth about cloud security is that keeping data on-premise is more risky than in the cloud. Cloud providers, like us, provide higher levels of security because it's our core competency and we have teams that work on security and compliance as their full-time responsibility. The average business doesn't have the time or resources to make sure that all the security best practices that are needed are in place. Now that said, not all Cloud Providers are the same. Make sure you know and trust your provider before moving your valuable data.



Jeanne DeWitt and David Hood, started Computer Programming Unlimited, Inc. in 1986 to solve computer problems for small and mid-sized businesses in Northwest Ohio and Southeast Michigan.

Over the years, they have developed a unique company model making IT Hassle-Free and Budget Friendly, deviating from the typical "Break Fix" type computer company where it is standard to wait for something to break and then send out a technician to fix it, basically profiting from your IT failure. Instead, they have made their success on preventing computer problems from ever happening, virtually eliminating downtime and lost productivity. To do this they have invested in a myriad of tools, processes and certifications that allow them to provide you with affordable solutions and the type of care that Fortune 500 companies have internally.

Computer Programming Unlimited has expertise in many areas including Cloud Services, Backup and Disaster Recovery, Email and SPAM protection, Managed Firewalls, VoIP, Application and Database Development and Website Design.

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Or learn more from her **Video series**



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WINNING

Ugly



By Eric J. Watts

Have you ever watched a sporting event or stage play and the participants work was ummm, less than stellar? For some reason, your normally reliable player or actress was off their game. When that happens, it can be hard to watch. It can be frustrating for you as an observer. Imagine how they feel. They're doing their best, but for some reason, on that day they just don't have it. But they pressed on anyway and finished the game or their performance.

WE

CAN

I wonder if you've ever had an off day like that? I have. Whether it was sending out the wrong email to the wrong audience multiple times or saying the wrong thing, I've been there. When things like this happen to you, you've got a few options on how to handle them. You can choose:

- Door Number 1: Beat yourself up about it.

I used to be great at this! I've even got the scars to prove it. Here's a newsflash for you: It serves no purpose. Don't do it.

- Door Number 2: Allow others to beat you up about it. Don't let this happen to you. Own your mistakes, yes. Let someone beat you down about them, NO. Here's what you do...
You choose...

- Door Number 3: Fix it,

learn from it, apply what you've learned, and move on. This is your best option. It's the only option that helps everyone and truly resolves the issue in its entirety.

Give me door number 3!

Because sometimes, it's just about finishing. And that's a win. Because it's going to take everything you've got just to finish. That is, it's going to take everything you've got just to close the deal. It's going to be an ugly win, but a win's a win. Just like with your favorite player or actress. Like you, they're glad to escape with the win.

Depending on how ugly it was, there may not be much to salvage from your ugly win. You might just need to burn the tape and tell your team, family and friends, "We shall speak of this day no more forever." Forever ever. Forever ever.

As time passes, you'll be able to use the experience to help someone else and if you look close enough, you'll find something in your ugly win that will help you too. Either way, what you need to do to get there is simple: Keep on pushin'. Keep movin' forward. And...

I'd love to help you win! Contact me today via email or visit my website and together, let's create a winning coaching strategy for you! Coaching and training is available in person, conference call, and Skype and other real-time connections.

JUST WIN, BABY!

Mr. Eric J Watts is an Inspirational Speaker and Transformational Coach who lives to speak life into your existence! For nearly two decades prior to founding WordTalk Productions, LLC, he worked for two Top 25 Fortune 500 companies.

In his business, Eric coaches and helps equip people to become more effective and confident leaders. His experience as an adult education college instructor and Certified Coach, Speaker, and Teacher with The John Maxwell Team have uniquely prepared him to help people transform their personal and professional lives.

Eric holds a master's degree in business management. As an oft called upon speaker, Eric provides his audiences with challenging-encouragement through the use of real-world, down-to-earth messages that produce amazing results!

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Live it by Letting Go!

By Jamie Sue Johnson

It is that time of year when we start thinking about next year; ready or not, 2016 is right around the corner. We want to start the New Year or even just a new project off right. Yet some of us are still clinging to the past of what we did not get done and/or beating ourselves up about this year. When you do that, it is hard to move forward powerfully, isn't it?

In coaching, we say there might be barriers that are hidden that may be depleting our energy and taking away our brain power. When you work with me as your Coach or in my seminars, we take a look at what we are holding onto that is keeping us from our future.

As a leader in your organization your ability to support your team in **"Letting Go"** is a vital tool to have in your toolkit.

The first step to letting go is to distinguish what you are holding on to. What is it that is weighing you down? So take a moment, grab a sheet of paper or fire up your tablet and create a spreadsheet with three columns. In the first write the questions:

What am I holding onto?

What is weighing me down?

In the second step we need to know: What do you get to believe about yourself because of the statements in Column 1. In column 2, write the question,

What am I making this mean about me?

In Step 3 we need to figure out if this is really true? Is this really true or are we just making something up that is negative and not real? In Column 3 write -

True or false?

If true, what can you do to shift it? If false, let it go and don't give yourself permission to use this as an excuse any longer.



Do it! – Letting Go		
Do it! – Letting Go – Free up Energy for your Future		
Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
What am I holding onto? What is weighing me down?	What am I making this mean?	Is this True or False?

Step 4 is to take the print out of your list into the bathroom, yes into the bath room and tear it up into little pieces then Flush it down the toilet.

YES, JUST FLUSH.

Let it go. This list does not serve you any longer. It is time to focus on what you do want.

You flushed that list and it is gone. You are ready for Step 5, which is shifting your belief

Use your imagination!

Create the positive instead of the negative; create the empowering thoughts about what you do want versus allowing the disempowering thoughts.

To get the most out of this be sure to spend some time reflecting on each step of this exercise.

If you are in an organization and would like to learn how to use this process, contact me. If your team or a project is stuck, I will help you get your project moving.



Jamie Sue is a certified professional coach and certified professional coach trainer. So you know you are getting not only a coach but someone who has nationally trained people to become professional coaches for an ICF accredited school.

She is also a single mom, who has raised a daughter and who experienced the loss of her second daughter to SIDS in 1998. So life has been her greatest teacher.

Jamie Sue's philosophy of the 5 L's, Live, Love, Laugh, Listen and Learn are her foundation for causing shift in the world. She delivers engaging and entertaining keynotes, seminars and business coaching sessions that provide energy, creativity, inspiration and most importantly accountability so you get the results you want.

Visit knockemalive.net or connect with her on



To learn more from Jamie watch her **Video series**



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CREATING YOUR LIFE VISION STATEMENT



By
Rochelle Forrest

Do you have a vision statement that wakes you up in the morning? Does it guide your life? Do you dream about it at night?

Have you thought about creating a vision statement for yourself? It is a very powerful step to help you to fulfill your purpose and achieve your goals.

When you create your own vision statement, you will define your WHY, WHAT, and HOW. For example, for my foundation, Tummies Minds Spirits, the vision of "love the bug" is a global symbol of enough!

Here are three steps to create a vision statement that you can implement now:

1.

Discover your purpose. You can't have a vision without a purpose. So you don't know yours yet? All you need to do is take some time figure it out. Why are you here on this earth? Dig deep and identify what is easy for you. What are your strengths? Spend time in nature or quiet solitude to meditate on these questions.

2.

Write down your vision. Once you uncover and discover your purpose, you need to identify what you're going to do in service of it. That's your vision. Committing your vision to paper or a vision board is an essential action. It gives life to your vision and a responsibility for you to take action to bring it into fruition. If not now... when? When is now a good time?!

3.

Spread your news. When you own your vision statement and share it with others, it helps you to get clear on your Why! Then the How starts showing up.

Before you know it you will be living your dreams!

Be sure to download my free eBook at my website and check out my videos on [Indy BizTV Shows®](#).

Holistic Transformation Coach, Author, and Motivational Speaker, Rochelle Forrest, R.N., has over 30 years of service in the primary and aligned Health Professions. After many years in the public sector, Rochelle founded her company to encourage individuals to step fully into their soul purpose and live their full potential. She brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to her coaching practice and her audiences.

Wouldn't you like to wake up each morning feeling as though it was Christmas? Rochelle Forrest has that much joy and enthusiasm for life. Her mission is to teach you to find it too. She combines steps to maximize your physical health with heartfelt spiritual and emotional guidance to address the real issues behind the drains on your energy. Re-Ignite Your Inner Light and the companion workbook are Rochelle's action oriented tools with practical suggestions and no nonsense advice that can light your path.

Learn more at her website and the website of her philanthropic endeavor, Tummies, Minds, Spirits. Connect with Rochelle on



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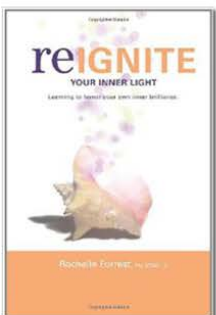
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and grab your **FREE** copy of the eBook version of her book, **Re-Ignite Your Inner Light!**





The Power of Because

By Lillian Zarzar

This is a simple, yet important tool. When you make a request of someone there is value in identifying the “why” you are asking...which comes in the form of “because.”

The word “because” originates from Middle English from the phrase “by cause that” and the first known use of this word was in the 14th century!

When individuals can make sense of something, they are more apt to cooperate. There is a greater likelihood of compliance because the reason is clarified up front!

“Because” is considered a conjunction; therefore, to use it properly, you connect two thoughts – one independent and one dependent – to get your point across. For example: You are the perfect person to lead this project because of your excellent leadership skills.

The independent sentence that can stand alone is “You are the perfect person to lead this project,” and the dependent phrase is “your leadership skills.” The word “because” connects the two and creates the understanding of why, which increases the likelihood of agreement.

Here are a few examples you can use that can be tweaked within the context of what you desire (notice the use of the word “you” as opposed to the “I” wanting something):

Because

- you are enthusiastic
- you are thorough
- you can be counted on
- of the talent you bring to the table
- you communicate effectively
- you take initiative
- you are a team player
- you make things happen
- you have a balanced approach
- of your credibility
- you exhibit integrity
- your values are in alignment with ours
- your input is important and valued
- you stay on budget
- your work is consistently on time
- you have leadership qualities
- your approach is convincing
- of your continued success
- of your sales record
- you inspire others
- you are being promoted
- you get results
- of your expertise
- you have experience in this area of
- your position
- of your attention to detail

When you indicate either a benefit or a trait that is of value to the person being asked, and you connect it to your request for action, the other person feels appreciated. As a result, the contribution to the team, family, group, organization, or community is enhanced.

Since “because” is a conjunction, it typically is used in the middle of the sentence to connect the thoughts. It can, however be used to begin a sentence when you have two independent thoughts that can stand alone – and the “because” in the beginning is used for emphasis:

Because the more practice you have in asking for what you want, the more likely you will get what you ask for!

I can assist in helping you script your statements so you can observe how the responses to you change by using the power of “because.”

Lillian Zarzar is a Certified Speaking Professional (CSP) the highest earned designation conferred by the National Speakers Association (NSA) and the International Federation of Professional Speakers (fewer than 300 women in the world hold this designation). She is past president of the NSA-Ohio chapter and current member of the association.

She is also a Trained Demartini Method® Facilitator with the Demartini Institute in Texas, a private research, education and service institution dedicated to the development of human awareness and potential.

Zarzar’s insights and understanding of human behavior contribute to the success individuals and teams have achieved through participation in her highly interactive and thought-provoking approach. Participants are inspired to achieve their highest potential with a plan, a renewed focus and an appreciation for their lives.

Lillian Zarzar has been quoted in Self Magazine, highlighted in Columbus Business First and appeared on Fox 8 Good Day Columbus. She is the author of Apple-osophy: Slices of Apple-Inspired-Wisdom., and co-author of 5 books, the latest being Conversations on Success.



Learn more from Lillian with her **Video series**



Connect on lillianzarzar.com and



Lillian Zarzar, CSP *Your Personal Wordsmith!*



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The One Page Plan: Crafting Your Vision

By Megan Patton

As a business strategist, one of the first things I ask a company about is their business planning process. I usually ask if they have a plan, and if they do, I ask when they last took a look at it.

See, here is the surprising thing! So many business owners and company managers do not have a business plan that they use for day to day roadmapping. Many companies have a plan that they developed in an often intense and painful process, possibly at an off-site retreat, likely under pressure from bankers or investors. What happens to those plans once they are complete? Too often, these beautifully crafted, several hundred page pieces of work sit untouched on the shelf after their publication.

Let me ask you a question... how does a business plan sitting on a shelf help you run your business? Think about that for a second.

It shouldn't have to be that difficult! Luckily for us, a guy by the name of Jim Horan created the One Page Business Plan, and is passionate about sharing how simple and effective using a One Page Plan can be! Imagine for a second – being able to get a workable draft of your business

plan complete in about an hour and a half! If that were the case, would you be able to find the time to write a business plan? And, if I told you that these plans really help guide the day to day running of your business...?

Today, I am going to share with you how to do the first step of the One Page Business Plan: the Vision Statement. Depending on where you went to school and where you work now, everyone has a different version of what they believe a vision statement is. Let's keep it super simple. The vision statement answers the question: What are we building? What will this company look like in 3 years? What capacity and capabilities are we building? Who are our customers, and what is our geographic reach? What other items are important to who we are fundamentally? New technologies? Cutting edge product or service? These important descriptors will go into the vision statement.

It might sound something like this: By 2018, grow ABC Window Company into a \$40 million national home products company specializing in manufacturing and distributing custom and replacement windows and skylights to baby boomers and home remodelers.

We are building a \$40 company. We manufacture and distribute custom and replacement windows and skylights, and our target customer is the baby boomer and home remodeler.

It answers the key questions.

Go ahead and brainstorm what your vision statement might look like by answering the question

“What am I building?”

For more information on the [ONE PAGE BUSINESS Plan](#), check out my web site at www.odastrategy.com under Business Planning. I'd be happy to talk with you about getting **YOUR** business plan completed and ready to serve as your roadmap to focus and thrive!

Megan Patton is a business strategist who has been a management consultant, trainer and executive coach for most of her career. She spends her time working with individuals, companies and non-profits to help define and implement strategies that enable peak performance and growth. She looks at the way something is done (process); who is doing the work (people); and whether something should be done at all (strategy). Megan approaches client situations from a perspective of what is working well, measured against company goals, and works hand in hand with her clients to develop workable and positive solutions to improving performance.

Megan worked in a “Big Four” consulting firm for many years and focused on business process reengineering, change management and learning system development. Her clients ranged from large multinational companies to internal constituents.

Megan is also a licensed affiliate of The One Page Business Plan Company. Megan is a strong believer in lifelong learning, and continues to take classes on a variety of subjects.

Connect with Megan at ODA Strategy and on



Learn more from Megan with her **Video series**



Megan Patton, Managing Partner

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Make Lemonade Knowing that The Lemons Exist!

The Power of the Positive Perspective

By The Merit Group

The job you were destined to perform was awarded to someone else; you finally secured a meeting with an elite prospect and your computer crashes; you come down with the flu on the day of a premier presentation; or a publisher rejects the book you finally finished. Are you thinking right now, how can any positive results transpire from these negative circumstances? The Positive Perspective is not only making lemonade out of lemons, rather intentionally creating the lemonade knowing lemons exist.

We often ask ourselves, why do bad things happen to good people? There are always circumstances out of our control and sometimes it seems as though either we've been burdened with an excessive amount of bad luck or we know someone that has carried that burden. The manner in which we respond to those

circumstances will in fact determine the amount of success we achieve. Think about a time when business or life handed you lemons and you were ready to give in to the unfortunate circumstance you found yourself in—now consider how utilizing one of the following positive perspectives could have made a difference in your management of the circumstance.

- Focus on rising to the occasion in spite of the circumstance
- Establish opportunities from the circumstance.
- Find something positive in a negative situation.
- Realize that you are not alone in this challenge; someone somewhere has overcome the same challenge.
- Concentrate on lifting yourself and others up instead of putting down.
- Recognize the obstacles as opening the door to new possibilities.

- Envision making the wrong turn and the GPS tell you it's rerouting; reroute your dilemma.
- Document the successes you've had so you can duplicate the process and revisit them in times of distress
- REFLECT – Learning from our mistakes is a powerful message we learn when we reflect, but also through reflection we can learn about our actions that were effective. Minimally, reflection should occur daily.
- Embrace the fact that no one or no circumstance is perfect.

If you approach everyday, every client, every life event, and every circumstance you encounter with a pitcher full of your personalized gourmet lemonade those opportunities where the lemons appear will be met head on with an action plan in the making. If your recipe for your individualized gourmet lemonade includes consulting

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As a consultant, Shamara Cox has worked with businesses partnering in strategy, technique and implementation. Her creativity redefines their potential and adds immeasurable value. Shamara is the proprietor of Shamara Cox LLC, her personal motivational speaking brand, Partner at The Merit Group LLC, CEO of BLING Sorority and Founder of Pressed Oil Life Ministries, Inc.

Terry Dove Pittman attended the Business Finance Magnet program at Northwest High School, where she graduated with honors and later attended Indiana University-Purdue University-Indianapolis completing her Paralegal certification. Professionally, Terry was Authentication Deputy for former Indiana Secretary of State Todd for a period. Not surprisingly, her "go-getter" attitude, willingness to work hard and desire to excel in service to others led her to join many community organizations. She is a graduate of the Indiana Leadership Forum (2004), Hoosier Congressional Policy Leadership Series graduate (2009).

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Learn more from Megan with her **Video series**



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Leaders: Develop Empathy to Understand Other People

By Cindy Allen Stuckey

Have you known someone like this? An employee has great technical skills (accounting, engineering, IT), but somehow doesn't get along with team members.

Sometimes people reach a certain point in their career because of excellent technical abilities; however, they don't get along well with others. Maybe that employee makes insensitive remarks, doesn't listen to what other say, or isn't tolerant of change. **MAYBE** you're a bit like that also.

This can be improved by developing the ability to show empathy to others.

Empathy is the ability to step into the shoes of another person (your employee) aiming to understand his or her feelings and perspective and to use that understanding to guide your actions. It's asking yourself:

"I wonder what is making this person behave this way?" Then imagining yourself in his or her position and asking:

"What would I be feeling, saying, or doing?"

This is important for you as a leader because it enables you to pick up on what's going on and then know what to say to inspire and motivate others. This builds a sense of trust which leads to better collaboration and improved productivity.

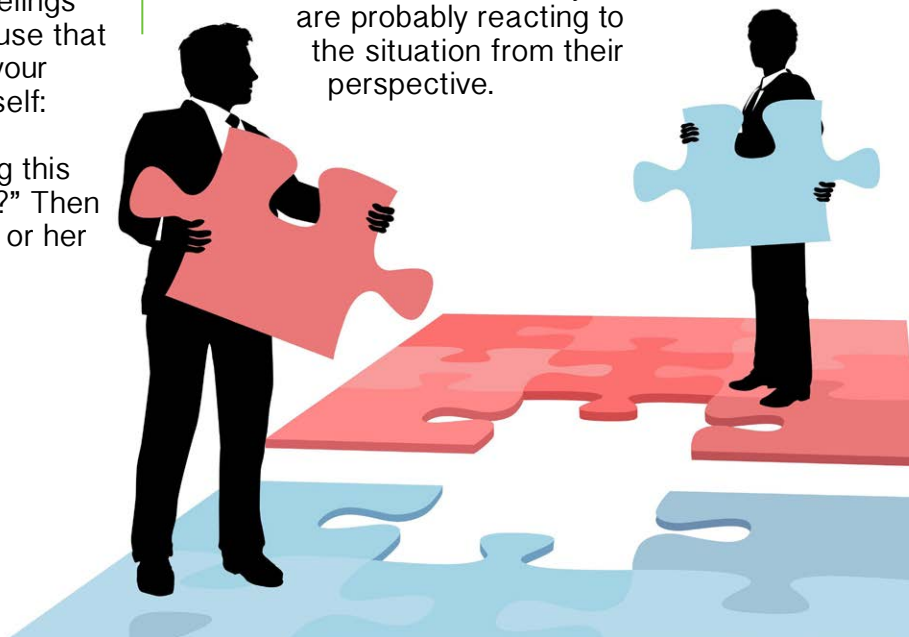
Here are 5 strategies to help you increase your ability to show empathy.

1. Put aside your viewpoint and try to see things from the other person's point of view. Don't assume evil intent—most people aren't being evil, unkind, stubborn or unreasonable. They are probably reacting to the situation from their perspective.

2. Validate the other person's perspective. Once you understand "why" they believe what they do, acknowledge it. This doesn't mean you agree—it means you accept that people have different opinions.

3. Examine your own attitude. What do you want? To get your own way? To find a solution and build relationships?

4. Listen. Words convey one level of information, but someone's body language tells the real story. Notice the eyes, posture, arms, and shoulders to determine if he's relaxed or tense. This helps you get a sense of how open and sincere the person is being.



5. Ask what the other person would do. Ask the other person to explain where he's coming from and what suggestions he has for resolving the situation.

Using a few of these strategies will improve your ability to empathize which will lead to better collaboration and improve the productivity in your organization.

For more information on leadership, please go to my website.



After many years in the business world, Cindy Allen-Stuckey founded Making Performance Matter (MPM) with the purpose of empowering organizations to reach their fullest potential. She does this by collaborating with owners, leaders, and teams of small to medium-sized organizations to achieve high-performance.

Cindy gained her expertise in three global manufacturing organizations, where she developed and implemented solid people-strategies that grew their businesses to the next level. She provides strategy planning and execution; workshop facilitation; and one-on-one and small business group coaching. Cindy holds masters' degrees in both management and education, is certified in Human Performance Improvement from ATD (Association for Talent Development), and is active in various professional organizations. Making Performance Matter is a certified Women's Business Enterprise.

Learn more from Cindy with her **Video series**



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Making Performance Matter works with organizations to close the gap between their business strategy and execution by focusing on their only real competitive advantage -- **their people.**

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THE MOST **DANGEROUS** THING TO DO IN **BUSINESS**

By: Jack Klemeyer

There is an interesting dichotomy in business that makes you both successful and keeps you from being successful and that is the act of making assumptions.

We all modify our world in order for it to make sense by doing three basic things, we generalize, we delete and we distort things so we can comprehend, explain and survive. From that comes the phrase made famous by the late Stephen R. Covey, "The map is not the territory." This phrase was not a Covey original. It was originally coined in the 1930s by Polish-American scientist and philosopher, Alfred Korzybski.

In a positive sense, we learn how a key goes in a lock one time and then we know how to do that simple task evermore. Those generalizations work for us in all types of ways: In our sales process, the way we meet people, the way we navigate socially at chamber meetings or other business functions.

Another useful way to use assumptions is to, as my friend and author Shelle Rose Charvet says, "guess and test." That is the appropriate way (strategy) to employ the assumption or the generalization. The test component is critical. If you assume something make sure in some way besides the guess that you are correct. Otherwise, the strategy changes from a positive to a negative.

Korzybski came up with the catchy phrase noted above when he noticed that some people confuse their reality with reality itself. That is the dangerous strategy of using assumptions or generalizations in business (in life for that matter) when we assume something and then react to it as if it were real without testing it. I have seen many talented people use this most ineffective strategy to their demise.

You hear it when someone says, "He is not interested in buying..." or perhaps you have heard someone say, "If they want it, they will ask me for it without me having to sell it..." Using assumptions and generalizations can be powerful tools, if used properly. To do so, you must remember two things. First, making assumptions (without testing them) is making an ass out of u (you) and me.

Second, jumping to conclusions and reacting as if your belief is reality has caused wars, deaths, bigotry and discrimination. Those two reasons are why it can be a very, very, very dangerous thing.

Be aware of this and be wise in your use of assumptions to find success.

Jack Klemeyer, founder of GYB Coaching, which stands for Grow Your Business, specializes in bringing high-impact, result-focused group and individual coaching to business owners. Known for his warmth, originality, humor and insight, Jack uses those attributes and every resource available to teach others skills to build relationships and create marketing strategies for products and services to increase sales and profitability, while enjoying the process.

In 2014, Jack released two books, available at Amazon.com: Building to Success; A Guide to Building Authentic Success, with Tommy B. Richardson, 2014 Best Practices for Networking Success, No. 1 in the Jack it Up Leverage Your Way to Greater Profits series.

Connect with him at gybcoaching.com



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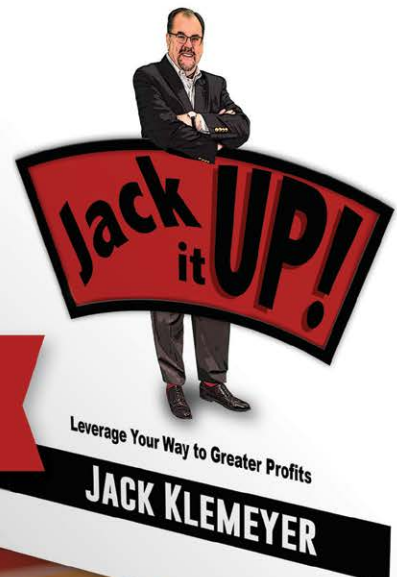
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