

ACT NOW FOR A GREAT 2019

“An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest.” Benjamin Franklin

Here’s a few statistics to ponder. Fifty percent of Fortune 500 companies from 2006 no longer exist per AEIdeas. And 44% of leaders consider their companies more sluggish than agile per DDI. Those numbers may seem staggering, but they also reflect opportunities for proactive organizations.

Leadership is all about your people achieving their maximum potential even if many of them don’t know what their real potential is – yet.

If you’re selecting the right talent, you must remember that over 80% of them want the opportunity to learn and grow. That responsibility lies with you; not Human Resources. And you, and your next layer down, should learn of everyone’s goals and aspirations so that your mentoring is targeted.

Having the right talent also means hiring people that bring different strengths – not just “my kind of people.” If they know you embrace change, they will bring improvement suggestions to you regularly and you want changes not from just the top rungs of the ladder, but from the ones at the bottom too. And when ideas are brought up, don’t forget celebrations. If the idea came from the shipping dock, go visit that person at the dock – or in your office.

And, everyone needs to be accountable for mentoring the next layer of personnel. Very simply, such leaders are even providing education so that someone takes your place as you move up. When you provide mentoring and education you are then entitled to raise expectations. Did you know that dolphins are so smart that within

a few weeks of captivity, they can train people to stand on the edge of the pool and throw them fish? That's targeted training!

Culture is talked about abundantly, but only a small percentage of firms are serious about it. Even if a company has a Mission Statement, very few (if any) can tell me what it says. So, it's a tool to gather snickers from the troops.

It's the CEO's responsibility to serve others and help them grow. Weekly – not just when you can fit it in. William Craig wrote in Forbes (May, 2018) that "Culture reflects the leadership. Leaders need to honestly assess how they are perceived and not many are prepared to face it." He warns, without great care and professionalism, leaders can easily become the destroyers rather than champions of an organization."

On the other hand, a toxic culture brings frustration, stress, anxiety, fatigue, turnover, and even health problems. A leader who truly cares must never let anyone in the corporation be subject to these abuses. Not even the janitor. You really want your janitor to be #1 in the #2 business.

Communication is often ranked at, or near, the top of employee's frustration. The top 3 most stressful areas are tight deadlines, waiting for information and nonproductive meetings. See how these are all related?

More than anything, leaders need to understand that their personal style of communication must be adapted to other's needs of communication. For example, you can't communicate with a Salesperson as you would with a technical employee. It can be taught, but it takes a lot of reinforcement as everyone has been speaking the same way for decades. I speak with energy and commitment which is great...in most cases. If I did such

with a slowly-moving group or person, they could feel threatened as I would be invading their safety zone too fast.

One of the top reasons for one's success or failure is communication. Whether applying for a position, dating, selling or leading, communication is usually the #1 differentiator.

Even words matter. The word "deplorables" back-fired and helped Donald Trump win an election. Just one word.

Creativity brings a spark to both employers and corporations.

Then, why don't we see more of it? Only a small percentage of individuals are blessed with it. Most people do the same things by habit and most are afraid of trying new things. This is especially true with creative ideas as most people think, "it's too far out for me." But let me go out there a bit with a few creative ideas.

- When I suggest that Salespeople get postage stamps with their photo on them, eyes go crossed. I have my own stamps.
- When I suggest that Salespeople write their own newsletters, I hear, "I'm not an author; I'm a Salesperson" to which I reply "Are you really?"
- When I read that an executive has been promoted, I send a congratulation note on a post card I picked up from France (or wherever) and just sign it "Bill". When I call Mr. John and the Assistant asks, "Who may I say is calling?" I reply, "It's Bill. I sent him a post card from France." I then hear, "Who are you? It's been driving us nuts!" Uhm, I know.
- When the client says, "You can come anytime between 8:00 am and 10:00 am" reply, "I'll take 8:03 am."

- If you have a single parent in your employ and you know her little Johnny's birthday is today, advise her to take off an hour early – with pay – celebrate Johnny's big day.

All of the ideas above are simple and easy to act on. None of them takes extra time to be different. But, I can share that it's challenging to teach creativity and tough to get people to do creative things. Most business people haven't acted on a single, creative idea in years. They get up, go to work, go home and repeat that scenario the next day, the next week, the....

So, get ready for long-haul mentoring on creativity. A small percentage, on your team, will act faster than others. Keep working on those few as, at least, they're showing they are not afraid to try new things. As they try another and another, the foot draggers will eventually follow. It's a tough path for many to take, but it pays dividends inside the organization and with clients. Fun is all around us. I read that 4,153,437 people got married last year. I don't want to cause any trouble, but shouldn't that be an even number? A fun question (to me at least).

Sales challenges are really the easiest ones for us to tackle because if there is a *need* for your product, we can turn that into a *want* proposition.

An association recently called and asked that I provide an 8-hour sales seminar for a very handsome check. I naturally said, "No". Why? I would easily provide 50 ideas that the 30 attendees would find interesting, 25 may take notes, but only 1 or 2 would take action when they got home. Well, maybe 1.

Those that took notes put them on the corner of their desk at work, then move them to the credenza, then move them again to a desk drawer when they clean out their office at the end of the year. So, that's why I said, "No".

I prefer just speaking for corporations for just 90 minutes and holding everyone accountable for acting on e.g. 6 new skills/ideas in the next 30 days and then e.g. another 6 after that. No implementation and no follow-up equals no new sales. After 30 years at teaching sales and leadership, I do know what works – and what doesn't. Please note that my therapist just told me my narcissism causes me to misread social situations. I'm pretty sure she was hitting on me.

What's going on with training and education? Ave Rio, Chief Learning Officer Business Intelligence Board, reports that 59% of their business skills training is accomplished in the classroom with coaching/mentoring coming in at 42%. But, 79% of Chief Learning Officers expect a change in those percentages by the end of 2018. And, classroom-based training will decrease by 24%. On the other hand, 58% have/will boost their coaching/mentoring efforts. I whole-heartedly agree as 1 on 1 coaching beats the classroom, almost every time, for sales and leadership education. Every "student" has different needs and the needs keep evolving, which is why mentoring usually beats classroom training.

Most interesting is that 72% of senior leadership (72%) have the strongest voice is determining how learning is delivered. Rio wrote, "Shockingly, in an era supposedly moving towards more employee-centered learning only 25% of respondents said employers are involved in how learning gets delivered to them. The more things change, the more they seem to stay the same.

Just note the trend. It's moving rapidly towards investing in repetitive mentoring. I vouch for this trend 100% as I know what ideas I throw out at 9:53 am, Mary loves it while John thinks it's stupid. What's stupid is thinking that either of them will act on it, anyway. Follow-up mentoring and accountability cures that.

I've given brief ideas for 5 components for success. Benjamin Franklin sums it up best: "Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I may remember. Involve me and I learn."

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