
Performance Solutions

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THE JENKS GROUP – A STRATEGIC SERVICES COMPANY

Simple Ways To Spot A Business Trend

Successful managers should be able to anticipate and adapt to changes in their industry. The following are some quick tips to help you spot trends that may affect your job:

- Scan your junk mail before you discard it. What trends in advertising, marketing, new products and emerging technologies can you see?

You may want to let the mail collect for a week or two before reviewing it. It's easier to spot a trend when you have plenty of data to analyze.

- Reflect on the way your job has changed. What is in your "in" basket as compared to this time last year? Has your organization's mission changed?

Talk to the people you work for and with to uncover clues about the ways attitudes, values and commitments are changing.

- Listen to a different radio station every week for a variety of perspectives. Who is the market for the station? Who listens? Who advertises? Why?

Source: adapted from Thinkertoys, Michael Michalko, 10 Speed Press, (800) 666-5436.



Here's an area we can improve!

The Best Leaders Argue With Success

We've all heard the adage "You can't argue with success." But if you don't question your own success, you're doomed to eventual failure.

Here are some ways you and your staff can fight complacency:

- **Court complainers.** Not all of your customers are happy. Bring in unhappy customers and let them speak directly to employees about product or service improvements.
- **Study the competition.** Identify competitors that are making significant improvements. Ask your staff some tough questions. Example: "How are they keeping costs down, and what can we learn from that?"
- **Avoid happy talk and generalizations.** It's time for a reality check when your staff starts making statements such as: "We don't have to worry about..." or "We have a few problems, but they're no big deal." Talk to them about the challenges you face. Ask them to come up with ideas to improve procedures.
- **Focus on change.** No matter how well you've done in the past, you'll have to change to keep up. Study how your marketplace is changing. Are competitors coming up with new technology or products? Will your industry be hit with new regulations or rising prices? Encourage your staff to keep abreast of industry innovations. And don't allow yourself to be satisfied with the status quo.

Source: *Manager's Edge*, as adapted from *Be the Leader, Make the Difference*, Paul Thornton, Griffin Publishing.

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How To Be A Better Team Contributor

More and more often, employees are expected to contribute to the performance and success of their work teams. While it sounds great on paper, it isn't all that easy to work in a team, since often team members are different in style, attitude, commitment and work ethic. If you are a work team member, supervise, manage or lead a team, take a good look at these tips and hints which will make it easier for team members to contribute more productively to their teams, and decrease friction among team members.

Stop The Blaming Cycle

Often teams get bogged down in blaming members when things go wrong. As a team member you can do two things to stop this wasteful and destructive team behavior. First, eliminate blaming language you may use. Replace blaming and finger-pointing comments or questions with a focus on solving problems, or preventing problems. Second, if other team members get into the blaming cycle, step in and "turn" the conversation back to a constructive approach. For example, here's a good phrase:

"Ok, maybe we could save some time here by trying to ensure that the problem doesn't happen again, so what can we do to prevent it next time?"



Stop Back Channel Talk

Talking about a team member in private with another team member usually involves a blaming process. While sometimes it's good to vent frustration about a fellow teammate, you shouldn't be doing it within the team. It's counterproductive, and harmful. Stop doing it unless you have a specific, constructive reason for doing so.

Personal Responsibility

Take responsibility for your behavior and the results that your team produces, but NOT the behavior of your teammates. When you take responsibility for another member's actions, you will tend to want to change your teammate, something that often creates dissension.

Finally, focus on YOUR contributions. Think about what you can contribute, and how you can contribute more effectively. Then do it. For example, if you have a great suggestion, don't dump it on the group with the expectation that someone else will implement it. You should offer to do it...after all it's your suggestion.

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Advertising Success

Stay Out Of Legal Trouble

The wild frontier nature of the Internet has gotten more people thinking about what is and is not legal about advertising.

Here are a few guidelines to keep your advertising out of trouble:



- Don't talk about your prices with competitors. If you're a big company, this could be misconstrued as price fixing.
- Resist the temptation to mislead people with your advertising. Ask yourself if your ad claim is true or just wishful thinking.
- Never sell products or services that clearly hurt people. Don't limit who can take advantage of special deals.
- If a problem pops up and the media shows up at your front door, be open and honest with them. Telling them an untruth will only get you into hot water with the media later.

This point about media is a bit controversial. Lawyers often point out it is better to say nothing than to hurt your case by talking to the media. Studies show the public forgives a business faster if they publicly tell the truth.

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Five Ingredients For Loyalty

Do you think your employees are happy? Consider these findings from a recent survey of 700 workers at 70 firms:

- **54% said** management decisions aren't explained well.
- **61% reported** they aren't well informed about organizational plans.
- **64% admit** they just don't believe the information that management dishes out.

So if you see signs that your staff's disgruntled, regain their loyalty with these five key elements:

• **Research.** Before you can act, you need to know what employees are thinking. But don't just dabble. Go at it full blast with internal opinion surveys, focus groups and both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

• **Candor.** This is so simple that it sounds, well, simple: Tell the truth. *What to do:* Give employees the "un-facts"—unvarnished and uncensored. *The second part:* Tell it in person. Don't hide behind e-mail, voice mail or memos.

• **Answers.** Employees grow uneasy when they know what's going on but don't know why. True, questions that start with "Why" are the toughest to answer. But you won't get them back on your side unless you candidly answer questions such as: "Why are we doing this?" "Why are we doing it now?" "Why have we decided this is the best choice?"



• **Respect.** Studies over the past 60 years have regularly shown that employees covet respect almost as much as money—and sometimes they even rate respect higher than cash. These consistent results should be more than enough to make this point: You'll breed loyalty if you respect employees as individuals and recognize them for what they contribute to the organization. *Short version:* Treat them as partners not hired hands.

• **Leadership.** Leaders who earn employee loyalty need vision, courage and character. That means you need to make the organization's direction—the vision—clear. And reinforce that vision with your words and actions. Muster the courage to tackle tough decisions without delay. *Remember:* All great leaders sincerely care about those they lead.

Source: Steve Rivkin, president, Rivkin & Associates Inc., Glen Rock, NJ, writing in *The Public Relations Strategist*, Public Relations Society of America, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003.

*“When someone does something good, applaud!
You will make two people happy.”*

- Samuel Goldwyn

ne minute ideas

Strategic Planning Thought

The vision must be followed by the venture. It is not enough to stare up the steps; you must step up the stairs.

Web Site Of The Month

FORTUNE 2001: Best and Worst In Business

Honest CEOs. Harebrained ad campaigns. Appalling outfits. They've all earned a place on the year-end list of Fortune Magazine as it picks the best and worst in business for 2001.

Check it out at:
www.fortune.com/indexw.jhtml?channel=artcol.jhtml&doc_id=205535

FORTUNE

TIME 2001: Best and Worst

Animated actors dominated the box office, Barry Bonds hit 73 home runs and 'It' turned out to be a scooter. TIME picks the best and worst of 2001.

Check it out at:
www.time.com/time/bestworst2001

TIME.com

Receive Criticism Successfully

To receive criticism effectively, try these techniques:

- Put your shields up. Immediately picture a protective shield surrounding you before you react. This buys you a few seconds to examine your critic's intentions. Should you explore the criticism further as a possible way to grow professionally? Or should you dismiss it as only a hurtful message?
- Act like a coffee filter. If you explore the criticism further, you need to strain out the emotional grounds — the critic's fear or anger — from the facts. This allows you to respond only to the useful information and not the critic's emotions.
- Pretend you're Sherlock Holmes. Don't rest until you get all the pieces of the criticism mystery. Ask for specifics. Example: "When you said the report was incomplete, exactly what did you mean?"
- Say, "You're right." It's a lot easier to say than "I'm wrong." And these few words pour water on the potential blaze of a heated discussion.



Source: Mel Ann Coley, Coley Training and Development, 3830 Burning Tree Lane, Garland, TX 75042.

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