

Sailing the Seven C's of Collaborative Business Relationships

To some folks, the phrase "business relationships" is effectively an oxymoron. The more pressure to perform, the more likely there'll be a bump in the road to collaboration that sends things flying out of control. Hopefully the "bump" isn't the tip of an iceberg, but just a bit of rough water that will soon pass. Collaboration at work isn't required, it's just a lot more satisfying and fun when it works out that way.

These Seven C's provide a platform for building a culture where teamwork thrives, people are happy and productive doing their best work ever, and can remain resilient in the face of these constantly-churning whitewaters.

The first three C's are about you - how skillful you are in handling your business relationships; the remaining four factors are key to having successful agreements - where agreements provide the safety net that makes

workplaces work. These seven C's work together as a system of cooperation, continuous growth and performance improvement.

Courage - You have the nerve to say what must be said, and you temper it with consideration for the listener (the next principle), so the communication remains two-way. You show integrity when you assert what you know, and by daring to admit what you don't know. "Integrity" implies knowing if your communication is based in objective fact, your opinion (an interpretation of those facts), or a blending of both. Sometimes it takes courage to let silence speak on your behalf. **Inquiry:** Where might you want to step up and be more courageous in your business dealings?

Consideration - As a sign of respect, you take into account the other person's needs and wants, their present situation, and you "step into their shoes" (better yet, dance in

them) - without losing focus on the goals at hand. Paradoxically, the more considerate you are, the more tough-minded and courageous you can be without breaking rapport. Considerate also means listening so carefully that you can make requests and offers in ways that fit for the other person. How often do you let in the other person's agenda before pursuing your own?

Consistency - Do you treat everyone the same? ("Sure, I treat everyone like dirt.") No, I mean are you consistent, not arbitrary or biased, in your business relations? Do you operate out of a set of core values and principles (perhaps including these 7 C's?) or are you subject to whims? Consistency is the basis for being seen as reliable, dependable, trustworthy. When you can predict what someone will do, it engenders "trust" (even if you don't like their behavior). As a professional, do you put the company's interests ahead of per-

(Please see Sailing the Seven on p.4)

The Value of Being Utterly, Gloriously Wrong

When I started managing client monies back in the mid-1980s, I was as green as a Granny Smith apple. Although I was confident I knew what I was doing, I ended up getting my head handed to me in the market. And not just once. My investment strategy was a completely blinkered market-timing approach. And while I believed in it heart and soul at the time, it had little chance of success. (Pity my early clients.) Things never got better until the day I recognized that fact.

No one relishes the idea of being utterly and profoundly wrong. But discovering we *are* can be one of life's most rewarding experiences. For reasons of pride, ego, hubris, or fear, however, we have trouble accepting this. That means we miss some of the best lessons life has to offer. After all, when you admit you're wrong, all you're essentially saying is that you know more today than you did yester-

day.

Yet studies show that we glom onto ideas early and resist letting them go. Psychologists call it "confirmation bias". That is, we seek evidence that confirms our beliefs and ignore or reinterpret evidence that refutes them. It's easy to see how. We all gravitate toward like-minded souls, listen primarily to those who share our opinions, and read books and articles by writers who confirm our point of view.

But the narrower our sources of information, the more error-prone our thinking becomes. Our primary exercise becomes jumping to conclusions. In a 1989 study, psychologist Deanna Kuhn found that when subjects were exposed to evidence inconsistent with a theory they preferred, they failed to notice it. When they did recognize the contradic-

tory evidence, they simply reinterpreted it in favor of their preconceived belief.

In a recent study, *Scientific American* columnist Michael Shermer writes that "Kuhn played an audio recording of an actual murder trial and discovered that instead of evaluating the evidence first and then coming to a conclusion, most subjects concocted a narrative in their mind about what happened, made a decision of guilt or innocence, then riffled through the evidence and picked out what most closely fit the story."

Knowing this, is it terribly surprising that so far more than 200 death-row inmates in the U.S. have been exonerated by DNA evidence? (Maybe Woody Allen wasn't kidding when he said he's hate to leave his fate in the hands of twelve people who weren't

(Please see The Value of ... p.6)

Peliton Quarterly Seminar

March 17th, 2010
Yes it's St. Patrick's Day

Denver University
Gottesfeld Room

8:30am—11:30am

Leprechaun Lunch

Served

11:30am—12:30pm

HR Update- Randy Hake
Economic Landscape- Bruce Alexander, President Vectra Bank

Health Bill Status-
Ed Pittaway

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

MOVE IDEAS FROM ONE BUSINESS TO ANOTHER	2
PELITON CLIENT FOCUS: OURAY SPORTSWEAR, LLC	2
10 WAYS TO HAVE A GREAT BUSINESS	3
PAID TIME OFF — A COSTLY MISTAKE?	3
How to Measure Success: Uncovering the Secrets of Effective Metrics	5



Move Ideas from One Business to Another

To the best of my knowledge, the drive-up service window belonged to the [banking](#) industry before anybody else latched on to it. But it sure does account for a lot of the fast-food industry's sales. It is also used by dry cleaners, beverage stores, video rental stores and florists. In Las Vegas, one casino has a drive-up betting window for sports bettors. There are probably others using it that I haven't noticed and still others who could and should be using it.

Somebody in the fast-food business "stole" this idea. My vision is of a McDonald's executive sitting in his car in the [bank](#) drive-through line on Friday afternoon when it hits him--"Hey, I don't think we can fit the milkshakes in the little tube, but outside of that, this could work for us!"

Just about every great idea came from something already created or used. The enormously valuable Batman® franchise--made into money via blockbuster movies, cartoons, comic books and merchandise--exists because a couple guys borrowed pieces and parts from predecessor characters, notably The Shadow and Zorro. QVC is a Tupperware® home party conducted

on TV for a million people in their own living rooms--and Tupperware® is even sold on the home shopping channel. Fractional jet ownership came from timeshare real estate. Somewhere, right now, outside your business and its industry and industry norms, in an apparently unrelated business, lies the moveable idea that could revolutionize your profits.

Sometimes this can be about making the business about something different, but not actually changing the business. Domino's got its traction by focusing on delivery, not on pizza. Subway used Jared to make itself about weight loss and healthy eating rather than fast food. Apple remade itself, from "for nerds" to "for the cool kids." And the money followed. A great business is always about something, by the way, not just a [seller](#) and provider of goods or services.

This is a time for more practical creativity than ever. Just producing or providing good products or services at good prices is nowhere near enough to justify your existence and command and keep the interest of

your customers in The New Economy.

How to Be More "Creative"
For business purposes, focus on "practical creativity." Creative thinking guru and one-time leader in the development of Walt Disney World and Epcot, Mike Vance talks about it in terms of rearranging the old (i.e., tested and proven) in a new way, or "plus-ing" what already works. Either way, you're not starting with a blank page. Walt Disney didn't start Disneyland with a blank page; he started with already proven, profitable amusement parks and began subtracting things he disliked, adding things he thought could be done better, further plus-ing new ideas on top of the rearranged old ones.

Alex Osborne, a dean of creativity and the father of brainstorming, filled his book with checklists to facilitate rearranging the old in new ways.

I talk about this in terms of bringing something from outside your field that is proven elsewhere into your field. Or cutting and pasting from swipe files, whether stored in file

(Please see Move Ideas from on p.6)

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Peliton Client Focus: Ouray Sportswear, LLC

It began with an initial product offering of ski accessories and knit hats over 45 years ago. It is now one of the most recognized and respected brands in the sportswear industry—and they're headquartered here in Englewood, CO.

In 2007, Ouray Sportswear's assets were purchased by a private equity group named Jalex Holdings, a private investment firm focused on consumer products companies. Jalex partners Jon Boris and Ryan Harrington currently serve as interim management and have been focused on restructuring the old firm into a platform for an aggressive growth strategy. With a renewed focus and adequate resources to move the company to the next level, Ouray Sportswear, LLC was born. The new Ouray Sportswear is well capitalized, has new senior management, and is committed to several initiatives with the ultimate goal of a renewed focus on the customer. As they began to re-engineer almost every business process, a relationship with Peliton was formed to help streamline processes, including payroll, HR Consulting, Benefits Administration and Employee Benefit program .

"Initially, we were attracted to Peliton's ability to bring expert knowledge to bear on the full spectrum of human resources subjects from payroll and benefits administration through employment law and other HR best practices. However, it's rare in business to be able to increase one's level of service and save money. Not only have we achieved those goals but the culture, spirit and friendliness that we have experienced from the employees at Peliton have truly made this a wonderful partnership for Ouray Sportswear."

Ouray Sportswear, LLC designs, sources and decorates a full range of proprietary headwear and apparel for the collegiate, resort, retail, corporate, uniform, and promotional products markets. With a motto of Ouray Sportswear- Hard To Say, Easy To Wear," Ouray's recent organic growth is directly related to its ability



to provide a total solution for its customers.

A broad product line has allowed Ouray to offer year-round assortments and appealing products to all 55 of its independent sales reps throughout the continental U.S., Alaska, Hawaii, and the Caribbean. World class art capabilities, 3,000 actively sold graphics and a total graphic library consisting of 20,000 images, generated by 15 in-house artists, has enabled customers to target the entire range of demographics. Embroidery above, Screening below.



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10 Ways to Have a Great Business and a Great Life in 2010

In a recent AP-GFK poll, 72% of Americans said they're optimistic about what 2010 will bring for the country. That's a dramatic difference from their same poll answer where almost 75% of them thought 2009 was a bad year for the country. Despite the recent earthquake tragedy in Haiti (and who knows what else the year will bring), I've noticed that people are generally much more hopeful this year. I know I am! Here are some resolutions you can make, to have a great business and a great life in 2010:

1. I will first schedule for the year all activities that support my health and family (including work-outs, doctor appointments, vacations, family events). Why? Because without these, I won't be able to be productive in my business.
2. Each day, I will put appointments with enough time (and some extra built in) to complete my day's top 2 business activities. I will work on these even before I check my email (thanks for this great idea from Tim Ferriss of the 4-Hour Work Week fame - it really works!). These will be my business priorities for the

day. Once they are completed, I can work on other business activities.

3. By the middle of each day, I'll make sure to take a moment and determine if I have helped someone today. If so, continue with my activities. If not, take action to help someone in need - anything from returning an email from someone who needs help, making a phone call to someone who suffered a recent setback, or even just giving a compliment to someone.
4. I will backup my files in the easiest way possible, automatically, by using Carbonite.
5. I will meet regularly with my trusted advisors. These advisors may include my business coach, accountant, publicist, and banker. These folks are critical to the success of my life and business.
6. I will put aside a reserve of money, or get a line of credit, so I will never feel "desperate." I know that clients can sense desperation, and I won't attract them if I feel that way. Plus, if I am not desperate for the money, I won't

have to take on clients who will drain me.

7. Each day, I will put a 30-minute appointment on my calendar to learn something new. In today's world, we all have to be learning constantly, just to keep up. Each time I realize I need more knowledge of something, I'll put it in one of my 30-minute appointment slots.
8. I will include marketing and business development activities in my business activities. This means that I may be scheduling time for social media promotion, Website updates, customer contacts, etc.
9. I will develop a consistent way to stay in front of current and potential clients. I know that this is the best way to grow my business. I can do this in many ways - through a newsletter, a regular Send Out Cards program, scheduled meetings and more.
10. If something doesn't feel right, I won't do it. I need to trust my gut. *It's usually right.*

Margie Zable Fisher, Small Business Trends

Paid Time Off—A Costly Mistake? How Does Your Company Stack Up?

Instead of designating employee paid time off as vacation days, sick leave, and such, many employers have started to lump it together and simply call it paid time off or PTO for short. But there are pros and cons.

The advantages of undesignated paid time off for employers include reduced tracking of employee PTO and, often, reduced employee sick-leave abuse. Many employers use PTO as a strategic recruiting tool, and they find it to be just as successful for employee retention.

Increasing the number of days that employees can take off from work and still get paid seems to make workers happy. And, because most employees are healthy and don't ever use all of their sick leave, why not let them take the difference as extra vacation time?

PTO a Bad Thing? Are Employees In

or Out?

Unfortunately, the bad sometimes comes along with the good. PTO programs can invite abuse.

Abuse #1 — Employees are out of the office more frequently.

Because an organization no longer knows why an employee takes time off, their employees, in some cases, are gone more frequently. While this can be controlled somewhat by requiring prior approval for PTO, those employees who never used sick leave will start to use some if not all of that time in their PTO every year.

Abuse #2 — Sick employees are not using sick leave.

One of the most costly abuses of PTO is sick employees not taking time off. If employees begin to view all PTO as vacation time, they don't

want to use up their "vacation" time when they're sick, so they come to work and spread germs. This results in productivity declines as more and more of the workforce gets sick.

So How Can PTO Be Effective?

Be sure that your company culture suits the flexibility of a PTO program. If your company culture isn't flexible, the flexibility of a PTO program may invite abuse.

You must establish clear guidelines in advance. That will eliminate abuse at some level.

Manage your employees and not the PTO program. If employees are sick, make sure they aren't in the office. You have an obligation to provide a safe workplace to all your employees. If someone is sick and contagious, send him or her home immediately!

Bfr.hr.com Bob Brady

Did You Know?

President Theodore Roosevelt was a hunting enthusiast and naturalist he made many trips to Colorado staying at Denver's Oxford Hotel, the Brown Palace and the Beaumont Hotel in Ouray.

During a stay at the Hotel Colorado in Glenwood Springs the Teddy Bear was invented, when some hotel maids sewed and stuffed a toy bear to cheer the president up after a fruitless grizzly hunt.



Exciting News:

Peliton is pleased to announce the addition of Recruitment Services to its platform of HR solutions. As a leader in the Colorado Human Resources Outsourcing (HRO) market, Peliton is offering a growing network of highly qualified candidates of all levels. Personalized service will enable Peliton to provide Clients with a timely and cost-effective response to key staffing needs

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WOMEN'S HEART DAY
BURN AWARENESS WEEK
CHILDREN'S DENTAL
HEALTH MONTH
EATING DISORDERS
AWARENESS WEEK
WISE HEALTH CONSUMER
MONTH
NATIONAL CHILD
PASSENGER SAFETY
AWARENESS WEEK

MARCH

NATIONAL KIDNEY MONTH
NATIONAL MS MONTH
AMERICAN RED CROSS
MONTH
YMCA HEALTHY KIDS DAY
MENTAL RETARDATION
MONTH
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AMERICAN DIABETES ALERT
DAY

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Sailing the Seven . . .

sonalities and egos? When mistakes are made, do you focus on learning, on closing the gap between principles and practice?

Four Pillars of Agreements

Business is about forwarding the action and getting results. In order to uphold and apply the first three principles, the following four conditions must be met. If any of these four factors miss the mark, chances are good that the agreement will go nowhere.

Clarity - You and colleagues are clear about what needs to be done - the goal is explicit and you have acknowledged the complete set of "conditions of satisfaction" ("Oh, you want it this Friday?"). There are five elements to a complete request ... make sure the other person knows and can verify what they are agreeing to.

Commitment - A solid "yes" that represents unwavering alignment to give one's best effort. Your self-talk might be: "My word is my bond." Skillfully check for any unacknowledged resistance or concerns. Surface the downsides to enjoy the upsides.

Capacity - This is about one's "bandwidth," real-world ability to see it through to completion, to stay focused over time, to clear the path. If one's plate is so full that the new agreement won't fit, the capacity to get the job done is low. Self-talk: "This fits for me."

Competence: Having the skills and experience to carry out the request properly, and managing your resources so that you can honor all your agreements. This includes renegotiating the minute you notice an agreement that's likely to run aground. Competence also means making request of others to get help, and only making agreements with those who are competent to carry out the request.

Apply What You Know, Set Sail, and Go!

And if you were to rate yourself on each of these Seven C's, which are most solid -established strengths - and which one leaves you all wet? Pick one to ponder during the coming weeks, and you'll find that heightened attention to navigating those difficult waters makes for

smoother sailing on the seas of business relationships.

Collaborative Workplace Advantage

There are several sharp advantages to this approach and (the best part) there are no significant downsides, except perhaps an upfront investment of time that is perpetually scarce. This is one of the few areas of business where there are no real tradeoffs or conflicts of interest: if you include people and treat them with respect, you won't pay a price (it doesn't cost you or the company any more); in fact, inclusion and participation makes for a better, more enjoyable and productive workplace.

Let's say I have a project deadline this Friday, but I haven't yet received key information from another department. I made the request last week, but I'm not getting them to uphold my timeline. (The nerve! They think they have better things to do!?) Sure, they understand how important this is (to me), but so far, no accommodation. It turns out that, apparently, I didn't include them early enough in the project to get their full buy-in. Trying to negotiate now starts to sound like begging or blame. I can appeal to their "team spirit" and espouse "all win" platitudes, but this push-pull dynamic will, at best, end in compromise: I'll probably get what I need a bit too late, and they'll grumble at having to postpone other work to deliver our precious data.

What works better? If I had brought them in as partners and established an up front, early agreement, it would likely save us both time and trouble in the long-run. Nicknamed "go slow to go fast," including others at the right time doesn't require extra time (though you may perceive that it is a cost, with skill, it is in fact an investment), nor is it giving in to their wishes at your expense. It is simply more effective, and clears the runway for future sustained success.

Might Makes A Mess

Sure, you can still force "cooperation," especially if you have positional power, but why needlessly risk backlash, resentment or substandard results. Since no one person can have all the

answers, the chain-of-command approach often "orders" mediocre quality. "I did what you told me to do" (unstated subtext: "so you get what you deserve").

Understanding other people and using your "soft skills" doesn't make you a "soft" leader. Quite to the contrary, in fact; with practice, collaborative approaches can be more powerful, enabling you to lead more strongly and quickly toward the desired results. The more rapport you have, for example, the more room there is for intensity and passion in leading toward your goals, even and especially if there's disagreement about methods or priorities. This is simply because there's more of a genuine win-win when the other person feels included, consulted, respected.

Interpersonally, you can be more directive once you demonstrate that their views have been acknowledged. It's the core psychology of negotiation: we listen better once we've been heard.

Since You Asked

In subtle but powerful ways, asking questions takes the attention off you and opens a more collaborative, two-way exchange. Effective leaders use a coaching approach to draw out the other person's answers and make abundant use of that person's will and wisdom. Employees and executives both appreciate skillful facilitation and coaching as a "best practice" for bringing focus and a sense of partnership to projects and goals.

To collaborate, so-called "emotional intelligence" is no oxymoron. People skills are the maker-breaker for those wishing to succeed in business and advance in their career. However, be sure not to spend time discussing issues in depth that do not deserve it, and be aware that not everyone knows how nor necessarily values collaboration.

Due to the unpredictable and chaotic nature of human interactions, skillful collaboration creates a context, a "social environment" that allows people's differences to be the source of strength and unity rather than stress and conflict.

By Daniel Robin

How to Measure Success: Uncovering The Secrets Of Effective Metrics

"How's it going?" How many times have you been asked that question about your business? How do you answer that question fully and completely? Most of us can answer the question in terms of our current financial results, BUT ... is that a complete answer? Or just a partial or superficial response? And does our answer support the future plans for our business?

Just being able to answer the question is important. It means that you, in fact, do know how well you're doing, and where your company is headed. Businesses that succeed and make money constantly assess themselves and improve in all dimensions of their business; metrics are the cornerstone of their assessment, and the foundation for any business improvement.

On the converse, if you can't answer the question, that may be a precursor to dark times ahead for you and your business. Let's uncover the secrets behind SMART metrics that will produce results for your business.

What is a Metric? A metric is a standard measure to assess your performance in a particular area. Metrics are at the heart of a good, customer-focused process management system and any program directed at continuous improvement.

Secret 1 - Measure the right things: Your measurement system should cover the following areas at a minimum:

CUSTOMERS Performance against customer requirements and Customer Satisfaction

PERFORMANCE OF INTERNAL WORK PROCESSES
Cycle times Product and service quality Cost effectiveness (could be productivity measures, inventory, etc.)

SUPPLIERS Performance of suppliers against your requirements

FINANCIAL Profitability (could be at the company, product line, or individual level) Market share growth and other standard financial measures

EMPLOYEE Associate satisfaction.

Given an adequate set, of current measures, you need to ask yourself if these measures are driving you and your people to do the right thing... what will achieve the best results, both for today and for tomorrow.

Secret 2 - Create metrics that are SMART Developing effective metrics may appear easy but many have fallen into common traps that you can avoid. Common pitfalls are: (1) Developing metrics for which you cannot collect accurate or complete data. (2) Developing metrics that measure the right thing, but cause people to act in a way contrary to the best interest of the business to simply "make their numbers." (3) Developing so many metrics that you create excessive overhead and red tape. (4) Developing metrics that are complex and difficult to explain to others.

What you need are metrics that are Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Relevant, and Timely or SMART objectives. "Specific" in that your metrics are specific and targeted to the area you are measuring.

For example, if you are measuring customer satisfaction, a good metric would be direct feedback from customers on how they feel about your service or product. A poorer metric would be the number of returned products or number customer complaints. While direct "internal" measure, they are indirect measures of customer satisfaction and, as such, can be misleading and produce unwanted surprises later on.

"Measurable" in that you can collect data that is accurate and complete.

"Actionable" in that the metrics are easy-to-understand, and it is clear when you chart your performance over time which direction is "good" and which direction is "bad", so that you know when to take action.

"Relevant" simply means don't measure things that are not important. A common downfall of process professionals or standards groups is to measure everything, which produces many meaningless measures.

"Timely" metrics are those for which you can get the data when you need it.

Metrics should be simple. If they require a lot of explanation and definition, then collecting data, and translating that data into actions becomes more difficult. Easy-to-understand metrics are easier to sell, and have a stronger impact on the process and the people who use it.

Metrics generally fall into two categories: performance metrics, and diagnostic metrics

Performance Metrics are high-level measures what you are doing: that is, they assess your overall performance in the areas you are measuring. They are external in nature and are most closely tied to outputs, customer requirements, and business needs for the process.

Diagnostic Metrics are measures that ascertain why a process is not performing up to expectations. They tend to be internally focused and are usually associated with internal process steps and inputs received from suppliers.

A common mistake is to start first with your diagnostic measures - measuring yourself internally, rather than beginning with an external focus, namely your customer. That leads us to the third secret.

Secret 3 - Follow a proven process for developing metrics: First, identify your customers and outputs of your process. Process Block Diagrams or Flowcharts may help at this point. Second, determine your customer needs/requirements. Useful techniques include reviewing outputs with customers to gain their buy-in, establishing their needs and requirements, and asking them how to measure how well you are meeting their needs by using Interviews or Surveys. Use the same process with your suppliers. Third, ensure you understand the key goals of the business. Fourth, determine effective measures, including both performance and diagnostic metrics. Here, we've found brainstorming and affinity diagrams to be particularly effective tools. Finally, compare/filter/align your metrics for this process with those for the higher level processes of which they are a part. During this process you should be creating a table, where the rows of the table are labeled with the key measurement areas identified at

the beginning of this article. The column headings would include items such as: metric description, current performance level, short-term objective, long-term objective, and competitive benchmark.

How Good Are Your Metrics?

When you have completed determining what you want to measure ask yourself: Do the metrics make sense? How do they compare with your existing metrics? Do they form a complete set (e.g., have you adequately covered the areas of time, quality, cost, and customer satisfaction)? and Do they reinforce the desired behavior? For the long haul -- as well as for today?

Do not underestimate the last point. Your people will take action to achieve what you, by the metric, have told them is important. In some cases, the action they take may surprise you it may be very shortsighted and not at all what you had intended. The question to ask yourself is "Will this metric drive the desired behavior?" "What type of behavior might this metric drive?" And "Will it help you move your business to where it needs to be in the months and years ahead?"

Example: The metric areas of time, quality, cost, and customer satisfaction seem to be generic across industries. A product development organization maps to the first three of these areas include time-to-market, product reliability, and full-stream costs. In the area of customer satisfaction, they concern themselves with both end-users satisfaction, and downstream customers like Manufacturing and Services. Compare that to the key objectives of Lands End, a well-known direct-order clothing company. Their key objectives are:(1)Make your merchandise as good as you can (2)Always, always price it fairly (3)Make it a snap to shop, 24 hours a day(4)Guarantee it. Period.

You can clearly see the elements of time (item 3), quality (item 1), cost (item 2) and customer satisfaction (item 4) are evident in their objectives as well. ****Next Steps****Once you're satisfied with the evaluation of your metrics, have them in place, and are gathering data, you can begin tracking your progress;. When you see how you are doing, you're likely to ask, "Am I making progress fast enough?" and concentrating on the right objectives?" *Dave Trimble Senior Partner, ProScience*

"I view the utilization of metrics in a business as a barometer or GPS if you will, of where the business is at, and where it is heading. I like to use the analogy of flying an airplane. A pilot would not operate the plane without the necessary tools (altimeter, compass, speedometer, etc.) to tell him/her all they need to know to keep their plane safely on course. The same can be said for operating a business. Managers need to identify and track metrics that are relevant and important to the success of their business.

Once these are established, I like to take metrics tracking one step further and engrain them into a process known as Management By Commitment. Managers and employees at all levels sit down and mutually agree to future goals regarding these metrics. These business goals are now expanded to individual or team goals. By utilizing this method, I believe a company has a much greater chance of success as everyone's objectives are in alignment." **Bret A. Lee, COO, Peliton, LLC**

The Value of Being Utterly...

smart enough to get out of jury duty.)

In truth, by looking at the evidence with an open mind we have nothing to lose but our ignorance. And when our views *are* correct we solidify them, making them stronger.

In his book, *Confessions of a Philosopher*, Bryan Magee writes that he became a skilled debater by identifying his opponent's weak points and then bringing concentrated fire to bear on them, a tactic used by successful polemicists since ancient times. Yet he was blown away then he discovered that philosopher Karl Popper did just the opposite: He sought out his opponent's case at its strongest and attacked that. Indeed, he would improve it, if he possibly could, before attacking it...He would remove avoidable contradictions or weaknesses, close loopholes, pass over minor deficiencies, let his opponent's case have the benefit of every possible doubt, and reformulate the most appealing parts of it in the most rigorous powerful and effective arguments he could find - and then direct his onslaught against it. The outcome, when successful, was devastating. At the end there would be

nothing left to say in favor of the opposing case except for tributes and concessions that Popper himself had already made.

It must have been thrilling to witness. Yet no one reaches this level of understanding without taking the time to thoroughly investigate an opposing view rather than dismissing it out of hand. It takes time to weight the evidence, consider it and allow for the possibility that we could be mistaken. This is something more of us - if we're honest with ourselves - are reluctant to do.

When you bring an open mind to a conflict, one of three things will happen. You'll strengthen your existing convictions. You'll become more sympathetic to the opposing view. Or you'll end up smarter today than you were yesterday - and get a lesson in humility in the bargain.

That's why you should never lose your temper in an argument. If you're right, you don't need to. If you're wrong, you can't afford to.

Alexander Green, *The Secret of Shelter Island, Money and What Matters*

This is a terrific book, each chapter is different and the research and references are terrific. It can all be applied to every day life both personally and professionally.



Hubris means extreme haughtiness or arrogance. *Hubris* often indicates a loss of touch with reality and overestimating one's own competence or capabilities

Polemicist: a writer who argues in opposition to others (especially in theology)

COBRA Extension: Recently congress passed a bill that includes provisions extending the eligibility period for the COBRA premium subsidy through February 28, 2010 and expands it by another six months. The Amendment extends the maximum period for receiving the subsidy from nine to fifteen months. (This extension applies to individuals who had reached the premium subsidy period before the legislation extended it to 15 months.) For example - Individuals who elected the premium subsidy starting March 1, 2009 exhausted the subsidy on November 30, 2009. These individuals will be given the opportunity to continue the premium assistance for up to an additional six months with no lapse in coverage. Those who have lost their subsidy by completing their nine months in November or later would be grandfathered in under the new legislation. Involuntary terminations that occur on or before Feb. 28, 2010, would be eligible for the subsidy, regardless of when the individual's COBRA period begins. Employers will continue to receive a 941 tax credit. Those who are eligible for other group health coverage (such as a spouse's plan) or Medicare are not eligible for the premium reduction.

Move Ideas from One Business...

cabinets or your subconscious. But you'll never hear me talk in terms of starting with a blank slate. And catching me starting anything with a blank page is a rare event.

For purely artistic expression, raw, out-of-the-ether creativity may be an essential ingredient. But for commercial purposes, it is vastly overrated. Even if you look at the movie industry as a "creative" business, if you examine the biggest box-office successes of at least the past decade, you'll find very, very, very few to be original, birthed from the blank slate. Many have been remakes of previously successful films. Some have featured well-established, successful, well-known characters from comic books, TV shows or sequels. Even a movie franchise like Star Wars is merely a classic western with a shiny new wrapping on it. Here are five suggestions for where to get "beginnings" so you need not begin with the blank page:

Competitors

Direct competitors occasionally have good ideas badly executed. You should keep a close eye on competitors, as well as leaders in your field outside your geographic market. You ought to keep a file on each of these, making sure you have their ads, mailings, etc. Visit their stores or showrooms, and call and play prospect at their offices.

Comparables

This is my No. 1 source of good raw mate-

rial. A "comparable" is someone selling a totally different, completely uncompetitive product or service but either selling at your price point and/or to your customers and/or using the same media you use. If you ferret out successful "comparables" and carefully follow them, you'll often find terrific short-cuts. Just for example, I've told a cosmetic dentist eager to attract affluent patients from all over the country to fly in to "play prospect" and answer the full-page ads run in airline magazines by the carpal tunnel doctors in Texas, and by the Mayo Clinic for its Executive Program. These are not competitors, but they are comparable in many ways: the clientele, the geographic reach, pricing, the same marketing challenge, etc. Set a goal to find, thoroughly research, and build a file on one new comparable a month. You'll thank me.

News

News events beget opportunities, based on the Collier principle of "entering the conversation already occurring in their minds." Ad man Robert Collier advised connecting your business and messages about it to the kitchen table, cocktail party or water cooler conversation occurring at the present moment. These days, we're blessed with an arsenal of instant communications media, making this easier and cheaper than ever to implement, yet few marketers do it. Today's news can hand you tomorrow morning's marketing message.

In early 2009, when job losses were skyrocketing and consumers were justifiably panicked about the possibility of losing theirs, Hyundai created a new kind of warranty that permitted a suddenly unemployed car buyer to get three months of his car loan

forgiven, and if need be, to return the car and end the finance contract with no penalty or damage to his credit. The dealer I spoke to about this reported his busiest and best two weekends of business when these TV commercials broke. This was a great example of using news--in this case, bad news--profitably.

Old Ads

Go back 10, 20, 30 years, take big winners and recycle them. I use my swipe file of these "classics" more than I use current samples. Think about it: The direct-response advertisers from the 1930s, '40s, '50s, and even '60s had to get consumers to write out and mail in checks or go to a store or showroom; there were no websites. For most of those decades, there were no toll-free 800 numbers, no credit card ordering by phone. No fax. No FedEx. What they did then to get response and sales with such limited resources can work a thousand-fold better married to the modern ease of our buying environment.

Top Direct-Response Copywriters' Work

If you're going to crib, crib from the best. Look for direct-response ads full of copy, running repeatedly in national media, from USA Today to the National Enquirer to niche magazines. Often a good ad that has nothing whatsoever to do with your business can still provide a "platform" to work on (rather than a blank slate). This is why you should scan magazines far outside your personal interests on a frequent basis.

Dan S. Kennedy, No B.S. Business Success in the New Economy, Entrepreneur Press

