ST. LOUIS SBM Small Business Monthly
The Source for Business Owners AUGUST 2021

STL's Top Accountants

St. Louis' Best Attorneys

Convincing Your Employees To Come Back

Best BOSSES in STL

Meet The Best Leaders
In The Area
And Learn What Makes
Them Special

Brent Feldman,
Owner, Matchbox
Design Group

SBM ST. LOUIS Small Business Monthly
The Source for Business Owners

AUGUST 2021

DEPARTMENTS & COLUMNS

RON AMELN, *president*
314-569-0076, ext. 100
ron@sbmon.com

PAT COATES, *vice president*
314-569-0076, ext. 109
pat@sbmon.com

ADVERTISING OR EDITORIAL INQUIRIES
314-569-0076
info@sbmon.com

PHOTOGRAPHY
BILL SAWALICH, *Barlow Productions*
314-994-9990
info@barlowpro.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS
$21.50 for 12 issues.
Online: http://store.sbmon.com
Pat Coates
314-569-0076, ext. 109
pat@sbmon.com

OUR EDITORIAL FOCUS

Our country was founded by visionaries who believed in free enterprise through individual determination. We support that spirit and hold that the future of our area lies in the growth and development of small businesses and the efforts of entrepreneurs. We are dedicated to supporting and promoting that growth.

St. Louis Small Business Monthly is St. Louis' locally owned business publication, bringing business tips, strategies and analysis to the presidents, CEOs, owners and top executives of 16,000 businesses in the St. Louis Metropolitan region. SBM, founded in 1988, publishes every month and also provides information at www.SBMon.com and through a variety of business-related forums and events.

ST. LOUIS SMALL BUSINESS INC.
2451 Executive Dr., Suite 109
St. Charles, MO 63303
314-569-0076/314-432-7016 fax
www.sbmon.com www.stlouisbusinessexpo.com info@sbmon.com

FOUNDED BY
Katie Muchnick & Bill Schneider 1988

Judy Meador
Owner & Publisher 1991-2007

PUBLISHER'S LETTER BY RON AMELN

15 Years And Counting...

Deepest Thanks To The Village Helping Grow Local Businesses

Years ago during my sports reporter days, a fellow reporter asked then Blues player Brendan Shanahan why hockey players, compared to other professional athletes, always seemed so humble and approachable.

His answer: It's hard to be arrogant when you're sprawled out on the ice spitting out teeth.

He said if a hockey player starts to get a big head, someone on another team will knock him back down to size quickly.

I feel the same way about owning a business — without losing teeth.

As a small-business owner, you are either six months from being out of business or six months from someone coming along and paying a premium for your business, at any given time during your journey.

In about four months, Pat Coates and I will have owned SBM for 15 years. Yes, to the dismay of some of our naysayers, we've actually survived and grown the business. With our simple mission statement of "have fun, make money and help others grow their businesses," we've probably surprised some over the past 15 years.

It hasn't been an easy journey. We've had our share of challenges along the way, including one of the worst recessions our country has ever experienced. The great recession officially began in December 2007, according to the U.S. National Bureau of Economic Research (basically 10 months after we bought the business). Talk about great timing. Then, we had to endure a changing media industry. Not to be outdone, we had to survive Covid-19 and the economy hitting rock bottom during 2020, one of the worst years EVER for small businesses.

I'm proud of what we've accomplished, along with our caring and dedicated employees. Over the years we've diversified our products and services and our minds. We could not have succeeded if it weren't for our readers, clients, advisors, supporters and friends who have guided and encouraged us along the way.

While we're living this story, there are so many people behind the scenes who have helped us with their advice, encouragement, ideas, support, etc. They go unnoticed to the public, but we couldn't have survived and thrived without their help.

It does take a village to build a business.

That's why I'm excited to feature our BEST lists each month. This month we're announcing our readers' choices for Best attorneys and Best health insurance brokers/agents. These lists not only help us identify the best providers in the region, but these lists also showcase the providers who are helping small businesses succeed in their entrepreneurial journeys. The advice, guidance, products and services these providers offer helps small businesses take on their challenges.

No matter where you are at on your journey, take a step back and think about the influencers that have helped you along the way. Reach out and thank them. Even better, pay it forward and become an influencer yourself. Help someone else along their journey.

Hopefully, 15 years from now I'm writing about 15 more great years in business. To those that have helped us and supported us along the way, my deepest, most heart-felt thanks. We couldn't have done it without you. ■

Ron

SALES MOVES BY MARK HUNTER

Email Phrases You Should NEVER Use

I don't want you falling into the trap of bad prospecting emails. You know what I'm talking about. You've received plenty of them. There are plenty of gaffes that can alienate a prospect. I want to help you avoid them at all costs.

1. "I" and "me."

"I" and "me" cannot be the focus of the email. It's about the prospect.

I love getting prospecting emails so I can play a little game. I'll go through and count the number of times the person says "I" or "me" in the message. It can be a lot.

Leave the personal pronouns for family emails, and just go ahead and send them to your website if they must know more about you.

Make sure that your email is about them.

2. "Just checking in…"

Excuse me, but "just checking in" is what I normally do at a hotel.

If somebody sends me an email that says they're just checking in, I want to call them back and say, "You know what, I'm sorry, but your room is not ready. Check back in about three years, would you?"

Just checking in is dumb. What that says is you don't have anything of additional value to share.

3. "In case you missed my earlier email…"

There are plenty of other versions of this phrase. If you're writing this, you are being lazy and you're confirming to the prospect that you send bad emails. In fact, he or she probably saw the first email, thought it was bad and chose not to respond.

You can do better than that.

Bring new value with each prospecting email you send out.

4. "I'm sure you didn't get time to read this."

People are not sitting around waiting to read your bad emails. I get that, but now you're calling it out.

If you can't bring more value, don't send the email. Don't recycle or resend the same message.

5. "Give me a heads up when you're ready to talk."

Excuse me, why are you wasting my time? Bring me more value to create a sense of urgency as to why I should call you.

I have a lot of people who will send me such notes. And you know what? I'm never going to reach out to them. Why should I?

Your message should motivate the customer to engage with you.

6. "This will be the last email I send you."

The proverbial breakup email. Some might profess they get a very high response from an email like this. I hear this all the time.

However, here's the argument. You may get a high response rate, but does your prospect convert?

My whole goal with a prospecting email is to set you up to become a customer, not to have a conversation with me that doesn't go anywhere.

My whole goal with a prospecting email is to set you up to become a customer, not to have a conversation with me that doesn't go anywhere.

I have people who say to me, "Hey Mark, we sent that email out, the open rate was amazing, and we've gotten an amazing response." I say, "Great. Terrific. What percentage has gone on to convert?"

And I always wind up with, "We don't know."

It just doesn't happen. You see, this message may create a high engagement rate, but it doesn't create a high conversion rate, which is what you really want.

7. "How's your day going?"

In an email, this question is worse than it is on a phone call.

Why do you care about how my day is going? You really don't. Be honest, you don't.

Don't waste time. This is not the first time your prospect has ever received an email. They're not going to want to respond to "How are you?"

8. "How's business?"

Again, why should I tell you? Why should I share with you?

Don't waste people's time on things they know you don't care about.

9. "I'm not sure you're the right person I should be emailing."

I've had plenty of people say, "This really works, it helps me breakthrough."

This is a desperate email. It simply doesn't fly.

Instead, do your homework, and you'll create engagement.

10. Trying to be funny or cute.

You may think you're funny or cute, but the person receiving the message doesn't. This is neither the time nor the era to sit there and think, "I'm going to try to crack a joke about this."

It just does not work and could make a terrible impression. Remember, it only takes one negative interaction to tank your reputation with a prospect.

That could take a long time to rebuild. ■

Mark Hunter, of The Sales Hunter sales motivation blog, is the author of "High-Profit Prospecting: Powerful Strategies to Find the Best Leads and Drive Breakthrough Sales Results."

ASK THE BANKER

Presented by:

Simmons Bank®

Member FDIC | simmonsbank.com

How To Reduce Bank Card Processing Fees?

I would suggest the following:

Make sure you are a Payment Card Industry (PCI) compliant originator. PCI is a set of rules and regulations aimed to reduce the risk of fraud in a transaction. This entails an annual questionnaire that is completed to make sure you are compliant. The processor will charge a monthly fee to originators that are not PCI compliant.

Capture as much data as possible when processing a transaction. These are items above and beyond the card number and expiration date including, security codes, billing address and name as it appears on the card. Different rates are charged by the processors based on the amount of data captured. The more data, the less the transaction fee. For the processors, the more you know about the party who has presented the card for the transaction, the less chance there is for fraud.

Review your fees annually with your provider. VISA and Mastercard make annual adjustments to their rates and typically your merchant services provider adds a fee on top of that. Your provider may take that annual adjustment as an opportunity to bump their fees as well. Depending on the dollar volume of transactions you process, you may have significant leverage to negotiate or even eliminate increases. ■

Answers provided by Jean Niemczyk, SVP, Commercial Banking at Simmons Bank. She can be reached at 314.569.7241 or jean.niemczyk@simmonsbank.com.

MASTERING LINKEDIN
BY KATHY BERNARD

Why Your Entire Team Should Be Strong On LinkedIn

When companies hire me to train their teams to master LinkedIn, they often ask if only their outward-facing employees should be trained or if everyone should be involved. I encourage them to train their entire staffs. The reason? LinkedIn is primarily a networking site for businesspeople, meaning people find people first – before they find companies – when searching for services on LinkedIn.

For example, if a prospect searches LinkedIn by keying in "Accounting, St. Louis," a list of accountants will pop up first and from there, the reader can review various profiles to find the accountant and then the accounting firm that's right for their business. It works the same way if someone is searching for anything from auto repair to senior care, so make sure your company is findable on LinkedIn for what you do or sell.

When you encourage everyone in the business to feature consistent company information on their profiles, such as a promotional paragraph in their About summaries, the more likely the chances are that prospects will find your company. And that's not just on LinkedIn, but also on Google and other search engines because these search engines tend to value LinkedIn content very highly.

Plus, when your employers learn how to share the company's LinkedIn posts, they are much more likely to positively comment on your articles and forward them to their network.

Most employees are glad to further your company's success, so give them the chance to help by getting everyone in your company trained on the world's largest business network, LinkedIn.■

Kathy Bernard (kathy@wiseru.com), CEO of WiserU.com, is a St. Louis-based LinkedIn expert/trainer who equips businesses to maximize LinkedIn for sales, marketing, or fundraising.

Creating A Place For Learning. Helping Communities Grow

by Jim Mosquera

The agora was the central marketplace in ancient Athenian civilization that integrated politics, religion, oratory, philosophy, art and education – flourishing activities crucial to the Greek way of life. Perhaps as important was the agora's place in hatching and supporting democracy. It was also a place where ideas were freely shared and discussed. Where do we freely share ideas today? Where is the modern agora?

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "The mind, once stretched by an idea never returns to its original dimensions." If we are to create the modern agora, we need to stretch minds. We need to contribute to the human warehouse of knowledge, not just information, which we have in abundance. Building this warehouse is an important step towards encouraging respectful public discourse. An educated populace is objective and fair, traits desperately needed in our world today.

We created Alliance University (AU) to fulfill our vision of the modern agora. Our platform consists of three parts: Seminars, Executive Briefings and Roundtables. Seminars are targeted opportunities for organizational and personal development with opportunities for more immersion.

Our complimentary Executive Briefings cover a broad range of subjects and typically last fewer than ten minutes.

Roundtables come in four varieties: Panel, Peer, Council and Case Study. Panels are traditional interactions involving a moderator, panelists and audience. Peer roundtables are led by moderators who facilitate discussions with an audience where we discuss controversial subject matter. Councils are homogeneous cohorts of professionals from the same walk of life (HR, IT, Financial Pros, Women, Non-Profit). A privacy cloak called the Chatham House Rule encourages free discussion in Peer and Council formats. Finally, Case Studies profile clientele and how Alliance supported them in their project journeys.

Alliance University serves as a marketplace of ideas – not just our ideas, but yours. Become part of the modern agora and help our communities grow.

Learn more at https://Alliance-U.co ■

Jim Mosquera is VP of Corporate Development at Alliance. Previously he operated a consultancy offering financing and debt mediation. He also served as an executive in the fields of telecommunications and technology. He's the author of the Escaping Oz non-fiction series and the Chandler Scott thriller series.

NO SWEAT PUBLIC SPEAKING
BY FRED MILLER

A DISCLAIMER, Early In Your Presentation Will...Help Your Audience GET IT!

When presenting, if you deliver information someone doesn't agree with, they may start viewing you with a bit of disbelief. If this occurs several times, they might tune you and your message out completely.

That's too bad because they may be losing out. Even if that part of your message is up for interpretation, there's a lot more in your talk that has great value, and they will likely miss some of it.

One proven way to avoid this situation is to issue a **Disclaimer** early in your talk. I deliver mine after my Opening.

Here's a DISCLAIMER I use. I deliver it right after the Opening and it goes like this.

"Before I get started, I want to give you a **Disclaimer**.
I'm going to show you my way to develop, practice and deliver a great presentation. It works well for me and for a lot of people I've trained.

However, there are people who do it differently, some *very* differently. And what *they do* works *really* well for *them* and others.

My advice is to **Be a Sponge**: absorb *everything, squeeze out* what you don't need, and *Do It Your Way*."

The reason a Disclaimer works is three-fold.
1. It gets their attention.
They won't be expecting it.
Some speakers want to be seen as the ultimate authority on their topics.

2. It gives me more credibility
By saying "My way is not the only way," I'm acknowledging I'm like most people in the audience because I don't know everything, and I accept the views of others.

3. It opens up their minds to taking in everything and actually squeezing out what they don't agree with.

Give a Disclaimer early in your presentations and I guarantee they will be absolutely, positively - NO SWEAT! ■

Fred Miller (fred@NoSweatPublicSpeaking.com) is a Speaker, International Coach and Author. Businesses and individuals hire him to improve their public speaking and presentaiton skills.

CULTURECENTRIC LEADERSHIP
BY JONATHAN JONES

Cybersecurity And Your Culture

60% of hacked small- to midsize-businesses go out of business after six months. The culprit in most cases is a phishing email sent to an employee. With more and more employees working from home, this becomes even more risky. You are only has secure as your weakest link to your network, and now that includes your employee's home network.

Cybersecurity begins with leadership. Leaders are responsible for the safety of their employees, both physically and virtually. The safety of your company depends on your decisions and actions. You have to take this risk seriously and you have to communicate how frequent this is happening. Without getting technical, here are a few leadership suggestions:

1. Establish a rigorous cybersecurity policy that is enforced from the top.

2. Ensure that your leadership team and technical team are aware of the latest cybersecurity risks.

3. Implement a security awareness and training program.

4. Regularly perform penetration tests by a certified cybersecurity vendor.

5. Make sure you have a competent IT team or vendor.

Finally, more and more companies are separating their IT team/Vendor from their cybersecurity vendor. Just as production leadership should be seperated from safety leadership, you do not want your IT team covering up their (and your) vulnerabilities.

These are very high level, but if these are not in place, you are at risk. 62% of businesses do not have an up to date or active cybersecurity strategy. Based on the rate of increased cybercrime, it is not a matter of if, it is a matter of when you will be attacked. As a leader, you must take this seriously and protect your business, your employees, and their livelihood.

Jonathan Jones (Jonathan.jones@vistagechair.com or 314-608-0783) is a CEO peer group chair/coach for Vistage International.

HIGH VOLTAGE MARKETING
BY TOM RUWITCH

How To Sell With Greater Confidence

I work with a lot of coaches, consultants and thought leaders who hate to sell.

They tell me they feel uneasy, even sleazy, when they sell.

They especially hate to tap into prospects' worries, fears and frustrations when selling.

One of my clients told me, "I don't do that. That's fear-based marketing. That's manipulative."

I hear that often, and I empathize. I struggled with this perception, too.

Here are two important ideas that helped me overcome the struggle and sell with greater confidence.

First: Most of us intend to serve our clients, to help them, to render benefits, to deliver value. If that's not our intent, we shouldn't be in business.

If you deliver a valuable product or service, you are NOT being manipulative. You are persuading prospects to act in their best interest.

Second: If you want to get prospective clients' attention, you must meet them where they are. And in many cases — perhaps, in most cases — prospective clients are dealing with problems, frustrations and fears.

When you cite their problems, you meet prospects where they are so you can lead them to a better place.

You don't mislead them. You don't create non-existent problems. You don't exaggerate and pour fuel on the fire.

Prospects know their struggles. They know what they're feeling. And if you tap into those feelings, they like and trust you more because you show you understand what they're going through. They welcome you in.

So don't be afraid to cite their worries, fears and frustrations. Meet prospective clients where they are. You acknowledge. You empathize. You take them by the hand, and you lead them.

If you're a Pied Piper, leading them to drown, that's manipulation. That's evil.

But that's not your intent. You're leading them to a better place. That's a gift.

Here's the rub. People get it when I describe the difference between unethical manipulation and ethical persuasion. But they get hung up on the critical point: If you deliver a valuable product or service....

So many coaches, consultants and other thought leaders deliver valuable products or services, but when it comes to marketing and sales, they don't believe in themselves. They suffer from self-doubt. They suffer from imposter syndrome.

When it's time to sell their products and services, doubt makes them question, "Am I the valuable service provider leading clients to the promised land, or am I the manipulative Pied Piper leading the entranced where they don't need to go?"

They may not even ask the question consciously. Self-doubt and imposter syndrome nag many subconsciously.

The answer? Exercise your mindset. Invest time, energy and (if necessary) money to recognize and overcome resistance.

We invest so much to master the latest and greatest sales tools and tactics. Those tools and tactics get us nowhere if we're stuck in emotional resistance, if we don't believe in ourselves and what we sell.

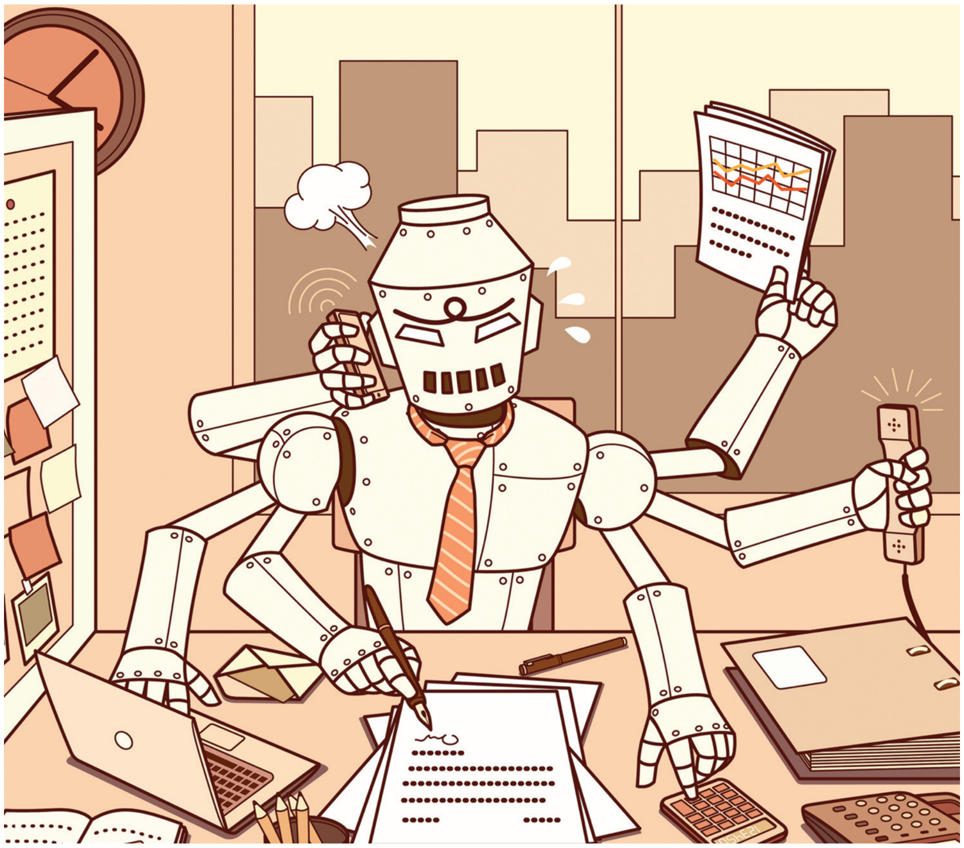
So find a coach. Read a book. Enroll in a program that will give you the tools and techniques you need to exercise your mindset, to believe in the gifts you offer.

You'll sell more, and you'll feel better about yourself as you do. ■

Tom Ruwitch is Founder and CEO of Story Power Marketing. Coaches, consultants, and other thought leaders choose Story Power to attract more leads, keep them engaged and interested, and inspire them to act. More at StoryPowerMarketing.com.

FUTUREOLOGY
BY JEREMY NULIK

You Do Not Have Time To Not Do This



The loneliness of being in leadership has never been more palatable than in our turbulent times. We have mounting uncertainties, a "Great Resignation," and a mercurial, unpredictable supply chain.

And, amidst this loneliness and exceptional grief, who has time for something like creativity, imagination, or vision? That is the stuff of children. That is for the people who don't have the weight of the organization and its employees on their shoulders.

We leaders are too busy doing the real work. We are trying to manage people's behavior, solve tech problems, manage people some more, follow up on important emails, and attend serialized virtual check-ins scheduled back-to-back.

However, it is precisely this thinking and its perceived reality that is the root of our troubles. I know you likely believe yourself to be an exception to that mindset either because:

1. I don't really understand the urgency of your needs.
2. You are immune to the bias of believing your urgent needs are important.

Regarding one: I can only say that I have spent decades with the leaders of complex organizations and entrepreneurs alike. And they all suffer this ironic exceptionalism.

Regarding two: All humans have this bias. We believe that our immediate needs are the most important according to multiple psychological studies.

We focus on the short term. We focus on the urgent. And it costs us. Every time.

When someone does dare to focus on the vision of the organization as an intentional priority, there are usually objections raised. These range from external influencers to internal dialog. They show up as contingencies. There is a belief that we will work on vision after:

- sales increase.
- hiring processes are improved.
- the market shifts.
- the dust settles on a global pandemic.

Anyone can add to this list. Shortly after any one of those contingencies are satisfied, there is a new contingency supplanted. We can always think of better conditions or a more optimal time to craft and align to vision.

And I, in the space of this column, can only entreat you. Those contingencies, the items that feel so urgent, are manifestations of something fundamental to your company and your role in it. Thus, the ideal time for you to work on your vision is now.

And if you think you have a vision, then ask yourself why you have busied yourself so much with the urgent. Do the people you work with know it?

A well-crafted and compelling vision is the needed power to overcome short-term confusion with the urgent and important. It is the thing that you and your employees must pursue.

You do not have time to not do this. (The double negative is intentional.)

Here is a prompt to get you started now: In ten years from now, what impact do you aspire to have in the lives of the people you serve? Who are the customers and how do they feel? Who are your key employees and what drives them? What kind of leader do you need to be in ten years?

It will not matter how haltingly you walk on this path. What matters is that you make vision your priority. As a leader, you must build trust and align your people to your vision. ■

Jeremy Nulik (jeremy@bigwidesky.com) is evangelist prime at bigwidesky, a human business consultancy, in St. Louis, Mo.

FINANCIAL FITNESS
BY KAREN STERN

Missouri Becomes Last State To Enact Economic Nexus "Wayfair" Law

A new law in Missouri is a long-overdue victory for many Missouri small-business owners.

Governor Parson recently signed Senate Bill (SB) 153 into law, making Missouri the last state that imposes sales tax to enact the economic nexus "Wayfair" legislation.

Effective January 1, 2023, this law allows Missouri and local jurisdictions to impose vendor's use tax on sales made by out-of-state vendors. Vendors that have cumulated taxable receipts of at least $100,000 from the sale of tangible personal property (TPP) in the state in the previous 12-month period are required to collect and remit vendor's use tax. This levels the playing field for Missouri brick and mortar businesses who are already subject to similar levels of taxation.

SB 153 was introduced in response to the 2018 U.S. Supreme Court case South Dakota v. Wayfair, Inc., in which the Supreme Court ruled in favor of states looking to impose a sales or use tax on remote sales. Since the 2018 case, all other states that collect sales tax have passed their own forms of legislation that establish an economic nexus on remote sales.

SB 153 also outlined other notable provisions meant to simplify Missouri's sales/use tax rate structure. The first of which, Section 144.054, RSMo., was amended to provide a full exemption for items consumed in the manufacturing process, including from local sales tax. Another provision, Section 144.049, RSMo., repeals the ability for political subdivisions to opt out of the sales tax holidays in Missouri.

Businesses meeting this new economic threshold should consider prior year(s) risk before getting registered to collect and remit Missouri vendor's use tax. If you have questions, contact Bernie Ottenlips, State and Local Tax at Armanino, at 314.687.2375 or Bernie.Ottenlips@armaninollp.com or Amy Jackson, State and Local Tax at Armanino, at 314.983.1336 or Amy.Jackson@armaninollp.com. ■

Karen Stern, CPA, (karen.stern@armaninoLLP.com), partner, Armanino, provides tax and accounting services for companies ranging from start-ups to $20 million in revenue. Prior to joining Armanino, Karen was a partner and practice leader for Brown Smith Wallace's Entrepreneurial Services Group.

Are You Ready For Teams And SharePoint? Part One of Two

BY SCOTT M. LEWIS

There are many discussions these days when it comes to Office 365, SharePoint and Teams. Teams and SharePoint do play specific roles but different roles within the Office 365 environment. These differences may not be apparent to the average user, and be honest, most technical people sometimes don't understand how the two programs work together. With the growing popularity of Teams, I'm going to clear some of the confusion and outline how Microsoft has integrated Teams and SharePoint platforms and the improved roles they can play within your organization.

SharePoint and Teams are two individual platforms designed to do two specifically different functions.

SharePoint is a file sharing and distribution platform, and it has been around for many years. The idea behind SharePoint was to be a repository for your data allowing file sharing within and outside of your organization. SharePoint is primarily a document storage platform and has some incredible features when it comes to document management, however, historically, you needed a programmer to make sense of SharePoint and make it useful. As Office 365 has evolved, so has SharePoint, and the integration advantages into Office 365 and other applications make it an attractive solution for production data.

Microsoft Teams is a communications and collaborations tool; Teams can track communications such as chat, emails, file changes, and revisions as some examples. Meeting documentation and information can be saved in Channels within SharePoint, which is your file structure within Teams. Don't worry; I'm going to explain all the new terminology. Now that Teams and SharePoint are tied together in the Office 365 suite, it will create new Calendars, Schedules, and Planners within Teams. Teams / SharePoint can get a little confusing; when you create a team, a SharePoint site is automatically created because SharePoint is the holding receptacle for all data within Teams. When you are in Teams and go to the Files tab in Teams, you are accessing the file structure in SharePoint. So, although you are viewing the document in Teams, the actual file is stored in SharePoint.

Teams and SharePoint Online is based on web-based technologies that help you organize your files in a manner that allows you to work online with customers, vendors, and suppliers. Some core features of Teams / SharePoint Online are:

- Connectivity with Mobile devices, being SharePoint and Teams, is web-based. It allows you to access them from anywhere on just about any device. You would have the ability to read, modify and share your SharePoint lists and libraries and documents through your mobile device using Teams as the user interface.
- Browser Support, SharePoint is very compatible with Internet Explorer, Apple Safari, Google Chrome, and Firefox.
- Permission Management, permissions, and access within Teams / SharePoint Online are very configurable so that you can control who and what groups have access to files and documents within the Teams / SharePoint environments.
- Web Analytics are some pre-built reports that can analyze different data points. There is the ability to create and manage reports and reviews of the data reducing the need to purchase other third-party analytics tools.
- Drag and Drop can upload images by merely dragging them from the computer to the library in SharePoint.

Why would you consider Microsoft Teams? One of the most important reasons to consider Team's is the documentation processes. Teams will help with the coordination of meetings and documentation of those meetings through the note pad functions. Teams will consolidate between all the parties involved in a project that will improve collaboration, streamlining many project management processes, and documenting activities that could save you in litigation. Another critical component is the evident integration to the Microsoft Office 365 suite of products such as Outlook, Word, and Excel, to name a couple of them. However, Teams is much more than simple chat: teams have grown far beyond the basic features to include some of the following features.

- Channels are whiteboards for collaboration between other employees and outside resources.
- Collaboration with other Channels, if you have cross over on projects where other channels or Teams need to collaborate, you can add them to your channel without changing the entire structure.
- Document Management within SharePoint, some basic functionality, automatically saves files to specific folders or conversations, which can have security permissions assigned to them to protect sensitive data.
- Teams does include Online video or audio calling and screen sharing. We have all become very good at holding virtual meetings, so this feature is nothing new to most of us, however since it is built into Teams, you can record and save the recording to specific folders so other members can review. It makes excellent documentation in the event of litigation.
- For online meetings this is a powerful tool; teams can host up to 10,000 users. These meetings can include anyone outside or inside your business and include a scheduling aid, note-taking app, file management, and in-meeting chat.
- For telephone integration, Microsoft does offer a VoIP phone solution. However, many other VoIP solutions now integrate with Teams.

As powerful a tool that Teams and Microsoft Office 365 have become, there are some limitations that I'm sure will improve over time. Still, they are items to consider while thinking about switching to Microsoft Office 365 and Teams. Channels in Microsoft Teams does have limitations that you have to be aware of and accommodate.

- Organizational teams in a single-tenant are limited to 5.
- The number of channels per Team is 200, including deleted channels.
- Private channels per Team are limited to 30, and the number of members in a private channel is limited to 250.
- Channel post size is limited to about 28K per post.

Other limitations in channels you have to remember is that these limits include archived items; deleted channels can be restored within 30 days after 30 days of deleting a channel, then its information is permanently deleted. Still, it no longer counts towards the 200 channel per team limit.

Messaging within teams also has limitations that might impact larger organizations more than smaller ones. However, depending on your organization's acceptance rate, these messaging functions' limitations could impact even smaller companies.

- Messaging is limited to 250 people in a private chat.
- Twenty people in a video or audio call placed from the Teams chat portal. If you have more than 20 people in a chat, the following features are automatically turned off, Outlook automatic replies, status messages, typing indicator, and video and audio calling.

The emailing feature within a channel is very popular, mainly because you can save the channel's email. It allows users to reply to that email and start a conversation that will all be recorded within the channel. However, you guessed it; there are some limitations to that functionality that you need to consider.

- Message size is limited to 24K.
- The number of attachments is limited to 20.
- Each attachment size has a limitation of less than 10MB.
- The number of online images is limited to 50.

However, there is a workaround if a message exceeds the limit; a Teams message is generated informing the user to click on the link and download the message. Depending on your company's size, the dependencies you have on attachments such as pictures could require a change in your processes to account for these limitations with Channels' email feature.

Some companies love long file names, job names, or folder names; then, when it comes to nesting files, how deep does your file structure go can be a problem within Teams Channel naming systems. Teams do not allow for the use of special characters such as @,#,-,* or other special characters. Also, Teams channels don't allow for naming that contains alpha-Numeric names or allow for names to start with an underscore or start or end with a period. In some cases, this may require that you change how your file structure is named or how deep you're nesting your files to accommodate for this limitation in Teams.

Virtual meetings are starting to become the norm, people working remotely or from home offices. Teams' ability to hold both video and audio conferences can eliminate the need for additional video and audio-conferencing tools. However, there are limitations;

- The number of people who can participate in a call-in chat is 300.
- The limitation on video or audio calls from the chat is 20.
- The max PowerPoint size presentation is 2 GB.
- The limitation on meeting recordings is 20 days before; it won't be available for download. ■

Scott Lewis is the President and CEO of Winning Technologies Group of Companies, including Liberty One Software. Scott has more than 36 years of experience in the technology industry and is a nationally recognized speaker and author on technology subjects. Scott has worked with hundreds of large and small businesses to empower them to use technology to improve work processes, increase productivity, and reduce costs. Scott has designed thousands of systems for large, medium, and small companies. Learn more about Winning Technologies at www.winningtech.com or call 877-379-8279. To learn more about Business Manager 365, visit www.businessmanager365.com.

Best Attorneys

Attorneys have always been known as one of the best advisors for growing businesses. The following attorneys were voted the best in St. Louis. *Make sure you check out the* **Awards** *page at* **www.sbmon.com** *to stay up to date with other* **Best in Business** *nominations for 2021.*

COMPANY NAME	CONTACT INFORMATION	
Jack Adams, Adams Law Group	636.397.4744 thinkadamslaw.com	1 Mid Rivers Mall Dr., #200 St. Peters, MO 63376
Michael F. Banahan, Evans & Dixon	314.621.7755 evans-dixon.com	211 North Broadway, #2500 St. Louis, MO 63102
Joseph Bealmear, Polsinelli	314.889.8000 polsinelli.com	100 S. 4th St., #100 St. Louis, MO 63102
Jim Borchers, InnovareLaw	636.946.3030 innovarelaw.com	320 N. 5th St. St. Charles, MO 63301
Guy Brandt, Berger, Cohen & Brandt, LLC	314.721.7272 bcblawlc.com	8000 Maryland Ave., #1500 Clayton, Mo 63105
Robert Brandt, Blitz, Bardgett & Deutsch, L.C.	314.863.1500 bbdlc.com	120 S. Central Ave., #1500 St. Louis, MO 63105
Julie Devine, Lashly & Baer	314.621.2939 lashlybaer.com	714 Locust St. St. Louis, MO 63101
Mallory Fisk, Summers Compton Wells	314.991.4999 summerscomptonwells.com	8909 Ladue Rd. St. Louis, MO 63124
Glennon Fogarty, Husch Blackwell LLP	314.480.1500 huschblackwell.com	190 Carondelet Plaza, #600 St. Louis, MO 63105
Bob Guest, Affinity Law Group	314.872.3333 affinitylawgrp.com	1610 DesPeres Rd., #100 St. Louis, MO 63131
Brian Kaveney, Armstrong Teasdale LLP	314.621.5070 armstrongteasdale.com	7700 Forsyth Blvd., #1800 St. Louis, MO 63105
John Kilper, Hamilton Weber	636.947.4700 hamiltonweber.com	200 North Third Street St. Charles, MO 63301
Scott Malin, Lathrop GPM	314.613.2800 lathropgpm.com	7701 Forsyth Blvd., #500 Clayton, MO 63105
Mark McLean, McCarthy, Leonard, Kaemmerer	314.392.5200 mlklaw.com	825 Maryville Centre Dr. Chesterfield, MO 63017
Jason McKnight, Stanton Barton, LLC	314.455.6500 stantonbarton.com	8000 Maryland Ave., #450 Clayton, MO 63105
Greg Mollett, Greensfelder	314.241.9090 greensfelder.com	10 South Broadway, #2000 St. Louis, MO 63102
Mark Mueller, Mueller Law Solutions	314.610.2526 muellerlawstl.com	1123 Boland Pl. St. Louis, MO 63117
Robert Pennell, The Law Offices of Robert Grant Pennell, LLC	314.863.1555 rgp-law.com	
Traci Dale Pupillo, Capes Sokol	314.721.7701 capessokol.com	7701 Forsyth Blvd., 12th Floor St. Louis, MO 63105
Glenn Robbins, Spencer Fane	314.863.7733 spencerfane.com	1 N. Brentwood Blvd., #1000 Clayton, MO 63105
Brian Rogers, Blue Maven Law	636.549.3499 bluemavenlaw.com	221 Thresher Dr. Eureka, MO 63025
Graham Stevens, Summers Compton Wells	314.991.4999 summerscomptonwells.com	8909 Ladue Rd. St. Louis, MO 63124
Tessa Trelz, Stinson LLP	314.863.0800 stinson.com	7700 Forsyth Blvd., #100 St. Louis, MO 63105
Robert Walsh Jr., Lewis Rice LLC	314.444.7600 lewisrice.com	600 Washington Ave., #2500 St. Louis, Mo 63101
Matthew Wilson, Affinity Law Group	314.872.3333 affinitylawgrp.com	1610 DesPeres Rd., #100 St. Louis, Mo 63131

CONGRATULATIONS

Bob Guest and Matthew Wilson

Listed as BEST Attorneys in St. Louis

by the readers of Small Business Monthly

Affinity Law Group, LLC

Estate Planning | Business Law| Elder Law
Mergers & Acquisitions | Real Estate Law
Employment Law | Corporate Finance

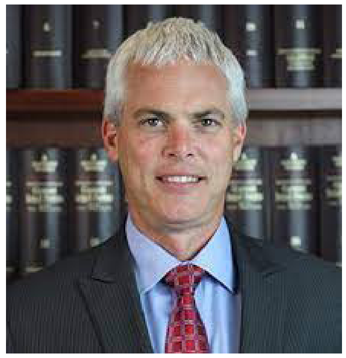
www.affinitylawgrp.com
1610 Des Peres Road, Ste 100
St. Louis, MO 63131
(314) 872-3333

The choice of a lawyer is an important decision and should not be based solely upon advertisements

---

Berger, Cohen & Brandt, L.C.

Congratulations **Guy Brandt**



Voted one of the BEST attorneys in St. Louis.

BC&B prides itself on being well prepared in its consultation, persuasive in its recognition and aggressive in its litigation.

We're also excited to welcome two new attorneys:
James E. Adkins - Douglas M. Worley

Berger, Cohen & Brandt, L.C.
8000 Maryland Ave., Suite 1500 | Clayton, 63105

The choice of a lawyer is an important decision and should not be based solely upon advertisements.

314.721.7272
www.bcblawlc.com

Congratulations!

Partner Scott Malin was named to the 2021 list of "The Best Attorneys in St. Louis" by *Small Business Monthly*. Congratulations, Scott, on this well-deserved recognition.

Working together, we build exciting futures.

Scott Malin
314.613.2807
scott.malin@lathropgpm.com
lathropgpm.com

Lathrop GPM

This is an advertisement. The choice of a lawyer is an important decision and should not be made based solely upon advertisements. The Supreme Court of Illinois does not recognize certifications of specialties in the practice of law, and the certificate, award or recognition is not a requirement to practice law in Illinois. Neither the Supreme Court of Missouri nor The Missouri Bar reviews or approves certifying organizations or specialist designations. Lathrop GPM LLP, 7701 Forsyth Blvd., Suite 500, Clayton, MO 63105. For more information, contact Ben Keller at 314.613.2800.

Best Health Insurance Brokers/ Agents

When it comes to benefits, nothing is more imporant than health coverage. The following firms were voted Top Health Insurance Brokers/Agents in St. Louis. Make sure you check out the **Awards** page at **www.sbmon.com** to stay up to date with other **Best in Business** nominations for 2021.

COMPANY NAME	CONTACT INFORMATION	
Arch Brokerage Inc.	314.849.6363 archbrokerage.com	8084 Watson Rd., #100 St. Louis, MO 63119
Beattie & Associates Inc.	636.532.4300 beattieandassociates.com	16666 Old Chesterfield Rd. Chesterfield, MO 63017
CLH Insurance	636.391.0700 clhins.com	14288 Manchester Rd. Manchester, MO 63011
Cornerstone Insurance Group	314.373.2900 cornerstoneinsurancegroup.com	721 Emerson Rd., #500 St. Louis, MO 63141
Crawford Butz Insurance	314.752.2500 crawfordbutz.com	9700 MacKenzie Rd., #120 St. Louis, MO 63123
Denny & Associates, Inc.	636.887.4700 dtdinsurance.com	1022 Peruque Crossing Ct., #B O'Fallon, MO 63366
DeWitt Insurance	314.966.6300 dewittinsurance.com	13523 Barrett Parkway Dr., #140 Ballwin, MO 63021
Heartland Insurance, LLC	636.477.8700 heartlandinsurance.net	2451 Executive Dr., #200 St. Charles, MO 63303
Hovis & Associates	800.411.0737 hovisandassociates.com	998 E. Gannon Dr., #240 Festus, MO 63020
Kreisman-Bayer Insurance Agency	314.567.3344 kreismanbayer.com	652 N. New Ballas Rd. St. Louis, MO 63141
K. Flynn Insurance Agency	636.528.6363 kflynnins.com	112 Professional Parkway Troy, MO 63379
Lang Insurance	636.229.7000 langinsurance.com	3920 S. Old Hwy. 94, #39 St. Charles, MO 63304
Meyer Insurance Services, Inc.	314.631.0900 meyerins.com	9312 Tesson Ferry Rd. St. Louis, MO 63123
Miller & Miller Insurance Agency, Inc.	314.843.3323 miller-millerins.com	4651 S. Lindbergh St. Louis, MO 63127
Naeger Family Insurance	314.802.8841 naegerins.com	4657 Hampton Ave. St. Louis, MO 63109
O'Connor Insurance	314.434.0038 oconnor-ins.com	12101 Olive Blvd. St. Louis, MO 63141
Powers Insurance and Risk Management	314.725.1414 powersinsurance.com	6825 Clayton Ave. #200 St. Louis, MO 63139
Ruzicka Group Services	314.778.3100 ruzickags.com	10324 Ladue Rd. Creve Coeur, MO 63141
St. Louis Benefits Group	636.349.0401 stlbenefits.com	106 Brook Fenton, MO 63026
The Bremer Group	314.725.2700 bremerbenefits.com	8000 Bonhomme Ave., #213 St. Louis, MO 63105
The ECCHIC Group	314.997.8865 ecchic.com	11704 Lackland Industrial Dr. St. Louis, MO 63146
Simpara	314.637.6756 simparahr.com	69 N. Gore Ave. St. Louis, MO 63119
Stitz & Associates	314.821.1946 stitzinsurance.com	326 S. Fillmore Ave. Kirkwood, MO 63122


Let's take advantage of tax reform. Call us today.
Specializing in:
Individual and Business Taxes
Auditing
Business Consulting
Software Integration
Our clients are our priority, so we provide professional services at a reasonable cost with experience and a friendly touch.
Your satisfaction is our success.
DEVEREUX & COMPANY
CPAS & BUSINESS ADVISORS
307 N. Main Street | St. Charles, MO 63301
314.209.7777 devereuxcpa.com


Protect your company with
DARK WEB MONITORING
&
PROACTIVE THREAT HUNTING
NTP
CYBER SECURITY INTELLIGENCE
Proactively Manage & Minimize Risk!
24/7 Monitoring & Rapid Response Team!
NTP offers a broad range of solutions to help your organization monitor, defend, and respond to today's continually evolving cyber threats.
636-458-4995 • NTPCyberSecurity.com


hostirian
Done For You -
Website Design
& Ad Management
We completely design and manage your website & online advertising.
Why Trust Us...
www.hostirian.com | info@hostirian.com | 314-216-2040


Andy's
SEASONING®
Cook it your way...
Bake BROIL or FRY
Quality Breading & Batters
For Fish and Chicken
For more information or recipe ideas:
www.andysseasoning.com


Attention Life/Health Agents
Are you looking to diversify your business?
MULTIPLE Contract Levels Available!
MEDICARE Made Easy!
Call Today to Partner with the BEST!
(888) 613-6196
HOVIS
& ASSOCIATES
Medicare Consulting • Financial Services
www.HovisandAssociates.com
Are You turning 65 Soon?
We Can Help!
You can sign up 3 months prior to your birthday month, your birthday month, and 3 months after.
Certified with ALL major carriers!
BEST IN BUSINESS 2021 SBM
(800) 411-0737
PRESCRIPTION DRUG, MEDICARE ADVANTAGE AND MEDICARE SUPPLEMENT PLANS

The Case For Coming Back

How Leaders Can Convince Reluctant Employees To Return To Work

by Rick Grimaldi

For a while it looked like remote work was here to stay. But with COVID cases declining and the vaccine available, some employers have realized having people in the office is better for business. Some employees are happy to come back, but others are not as willing. What's an employer to do? Of course, you could force people to come back, but you don't want to lose good employees — and frankly it's better for everyone if people don't come back begrudgingly.

That's why the best approach is to convince the reluctant returners. We all know the old-school, command-and-control style of leadership no longer works, and that includes determining where people work. Instead of dragging employees back against their will, it's better to entice them with a collaborative, happy, innovative work environment they can't resist. In other words, if you build the right case for coming back, you can pull them in your direction — no pushing required. Read on for nine strategies to incentivize your employees to come back to the office.

1. Be sure everyone understands the "why." Be crystal clear about your reasons for bringing people back to the office. If having people on-site increases productivity, share that fact. If profits took a nosedive once people moved to remote work, be transparent and give them the facts. When you level with employees about your reasoning instead of giving a command with no explanations, people are more likely to respect those reasons and comply.

2. If you have changed your mind, address that change. Some companies are just now seeing the value of having people in the office. Be honest about this fact. Tell employees: "We didn't realize at first that face-to-face interaction was so pivotal to our success. The past year has shown us that it really is." They will appreciate your candor.

3. Make your workplace a place they want to be. Employees don't want to work in offices with toxic cultures. Unfortunately, many workplaces were unhealthy prior to the pandemic, and workers may now fear returning to their former drama-filled, high-stress work environment. It's not too late to cultivate a culture where people want to be. Focus on building collegial, close-knit, trusting, inclusive, and uplifting teams that inspire a sense of belonging. When people feel they have a "tribe," they will want to come to work. After all, camaraderie is the antidote to burnout — something from which many remote workers are currently suffering.

Employees need an atmosphere of psychological safety to do their best work. Make sure your workers feel free to speak with candor, are allowed to make mistakes without blame or retaliation, and can deliver bad news without fear of your reaction. Finally, make it clear that the workplace is a bully-free zone. The best workplaces today do not allow anyone — including leaders — to dominate, demean, or belittle their workers.

4. Add policies that make sense for today's workplace. Jettison those that don't. The pandemic changed a lot about the way we do work. Organizations found ways to digitally transform overnight, shifted to remote work, and flexed to stay afloat. In some cases, those changes and new habits have made the workday run more smoothly. Figure out which of the new practices you adopted during the pandemic are worth maintaining — and which old practices you can let go for good. For example, if you got rid of daily morning meetings and opted instead to meet only twice a week (and it's working well for the company), you might decide to make that change permanent.

5. Talk with people one-on-one to understand their hesitancy to come back to the office. A candid discussion with individual employees can help you dig deeper to find out why they may not want to return. Is it a childcare or eldercare issue? Is it about safety? Is it something else entirely? Their reasons may not even be what you think they are. Once you understand their reservations, you may be able to help them manage their concerns or solve the problem.

In short, one-on-one conversations can help you get a sense of where people are coming from. You can learn who is burned out, who might be planning to leave, and who has new ideas around the future of work in the post-COVID era. Interviews are a great way to take peoples' temperatures and work together to find solutions to make the transition easier on everyone.

6. Make a case for mentoring opportunities. Remote workers don't get a lot of face time with leaders who could give them valuable career insights. Furthermore, younger remote workers are less likely to pick up strong communication and professional skills, establish career goals, and build a network they can rely on for years to come. Mentoring opportunities are abundant in an office setting. Young workers will benefit from the incredible wisdom and experience of senior employees, and more seasoned workers can rely on millennials and Gen Zers to help them develop digital skills, learn to use social media for marketing campaigns, and adjust to an increasingly diverse and inclusive work environment.

7. Play up the return of trust. Just ask your remote workers — building trust-based work relationships can be difficult when people only communicate via Zoom meetings and email. Without daily face-to-face interactions, people never get to know their colleagues and build strong relationships. However, spending time with colleagues at work allows for the informal exchanges that help people get to know one another and eventually build trust.

8. Highlight the power of in-person collaboration. Collaboration is necessary for innovation. However, chances are good that your employees aren't getting a lot of opportunities to collaborate remotely. The best brainstorming and innovation happen in person — and anyone who wants to hustle and harness that creative energy will be eager to show up in person to do so.

9. Offer more flexibility around when and where people work. (Just make sure it works for both leadership and staff.) During the past year, many employees have gotten used to being able to pick up their kids from school or take an aging parent to medical appointments. Naturally, they don't want to give up such flexibility. The solution may be to offer a hybrid model that allows people to be in the office part-time and to work remotely part-time. Likewise, consider allowing them to be flexible with stop and start times.

Often, you can set up a system that works for both leaders and employees. Leaders can get the facetime they need to manage and ensure workers are productive, and employees get more of the work-life integration they crave. Finally, by staggering schedules and shifts, or allowing a hybrid model, you can meet your goals while keeping people as safe as possible.

Not only will these nine strategies entice people to come back to the office more quickly, they also will help your organization attract top talent. When you make your business a place where people want to work, you are more likely to maintain the competitive edge that leads to innovation, creativity and success.

Rick Grimaldi is a workplace trends expert and the author of FLEX: A Leader's Guide to Staying Nimble and Mastering Transformative Change in the American Workplace. Rick's unique perspective comes from his diverse career in high-ranking public service positions, as a human resources and labor relations professional for an international hi-tech company, and presently in private practice as a partner with Fisher Phillips, LLP, one of America's preeminent management side labor and employment law firms. For more information, visit www.rickgrimaldi.com.

St. Louis' Best Bosses 2021

Shaping the Future Workforce

WORDS RON AMELN
PHOTOS BILL SAWALICH

For many employees, the difference between a great job and a horrible (I dread going) experience often falls directly on the boss. A great boss can keep employees motivated and inspired to come in each day. A horrible boss can make even the most loyal employee searching for a way out.

This month, we are proud to present some of the best bosses and managers in St. Louis. When we asked for nominations, we were searching for managers who inspire, motivate and positively challenge their teams not only to make them more productive but also make work more fun.

These are not your average bosses, they are the best in the region.

Joanie Zinser | Influence & Co.

Position: Director of Account Services at Influence & Co.

What was the smartest thing your company did in the past year? We implemented Summer Fridays, which involved closing the business on Fridays at noon from June through August. After experiencing a year of the pandemic, we wanted to create a structured environment for rest for our employees.

Who is your role model and what have you learned from him/her? This may be unique, but I have never considered myself to have a specific role model. I love learning and absorbing information from all types of people and leaders, then trying to apply characteristics of those individuals to my day-to-day life and work.

What's the best part of your job? I enjoy helping others achieve their goals and objectives. I find so much joy in coaching my people to solve problems and strengthen their skills. It's so much fun to be their biggest fan and observe how they develop. I feel success when my employees do, so that motivates me to be my best self for them and to always keep learning.

What is your top tip for leading people? Listen to and ask for feedback from your direct reports. Seek out the good and the bad — anything from ideas about the company to how to be a better direct support. Feedback from my people has been essential to help our company evolve and to help me individualize how I manage people to create a better working environment for those around me.

What is your favorite part of St. Louis? The historic parks in the city. Forest Park is a staple, but there are many parks like Tower Grove, Carondelet and the Arch grounds that hold unique history and are a fun place to spend time outside.


barlow PRODUCTIONS
PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO FOR BUSINESS.
314.994.9990
info@barlowpro.com
www.barlowpro.com


No More HR Nightmares.
simploy.com
HR


Congrats!
TO JENNAH PURK FOR BEST BOSSES 2021!
YOU DESERVE IT!
- Purk & Associates

Tayesha Schuldt | Enterprise Bank & Trust

Position: VP, Branch Manager, Enterprise Bank & Trust

What was your first job? My first job was at age 16. I worked as a hostess at Chuck E Cheese. My first experience with customer service!

What was your worst job? I have to say my worst job was Chuck E Cheese. Long story short, I had a not-so-good experience in the Chuck E costume, but definitely worth the laugh now.

What led you to your industry? They say banking can be an accidental career. I started at age 18 as a part-time teller — the best part-time job for someone in college. Twenty-four years later, I have never left. I have had the chance to learn multiple areas of a financial institution, from Mortgage Lending to Community Development and back to Retail. I have spent the majority of my years in Retail Banking and leading a team for half of those years. I love it!

What was the smartest thing your company did in the past year? Handling the pandemic the way Enterprise did was the smartest thing. They made their associates and customers the top priority. For example, they allowed customer-facing employees to work in shifts and gave us the technology needed to continue our meetings virtually. We were able to successfully help our clients and be there for our teams.

Who is your role model and what have you learned from him/her? I have a few role models. My mother is one of them. She is so supportive and encouraging. She has always taught me to be the best I can be. Her positive attitude definitely rubbed off on me, and I share that same energy with my team and anyone with whom I come in contact.

What's the best part of your job? Being able to lead, motivate and coach others. I love to share my knowledge and watch people grow, especially my team.

What is your top tip for leading people? The goal of leadership is to create an environment where everyone can be their best. Getting to know everyone on an individual basis will help you see his or her strengths. Everyone on a team has a different personality so it is important to take the time to really get to know each and every one.

What is your favorite part of St. Louis? The food! There is so much great food all around. I wouldn't even know where to start.

Tracy Butler | Acropolis Technology Group

Position: President, Acropolis Technology Group

What was your first job? I delivered newspapers when I was 10-14 years old.

What led you to your industry? When I was an engineering student in college, I was introduced to some sophisticated, engineering computer applications and was blown away by how much they could reduce workload and increase productivity. I have always been driven by the 'work smarter' concept, and nothing has enabled that philosophy more than technology. My brother and I are passionate about helping our clients optimize technology.

What was the smartest thing your company did in the past year? There have been several things Acropolis has done that have made me proud, but probably the smartest is to fully leverage and develop our processes around the Microsoft Office365 Platform. We had begun this process several years ago. However, the pandemic forced us to find efficiencies and speed up the transformation. We leverage PowerBI for data visualization, and Teams and Sharepoint as our collaboration platform.

Who is your role model and what have you learned from him/her? I have several, as I know I have a lot to learn. Currently, the person whom I look up to most is my brother and business partner, Brad. He's the one that often adorns these pages. He isn't scared of anything. While the unknown can make me feel uptight, he is just a "roll up your sleeves and figure it out" kind of guy. You don't see many super- intelligent people as easy going and laid back as he is.

What's the best part of your job? Every year I sit down and make my yearly plan and goals. Specifically, I write down one or two ways to help the six people who directly report to me. Every week I make a conscious effort to support them and do what I can to help them develop personally and professionally. I really don't see them as working for me. I work for them, and we all work for our clients and employees. (I just re-read that sentence, and it sounds as mushy to me as it probably does to you, but it's true.) I truly find personal joy in helping the people around me overcome obstacles.

What is your top tip for leading people? It's no secret: just care. Genuinely care about employees and their families, and what is important in their lives. Your management style doesn't matter as long as you genuinely care. You can't fake it. I truly see my fellow Acropolonians as my clients. Careers are challenging for everyone, but employees shouldn't have to work for companies that make it harder. We have all worked at places that suck. My job is to make sure it doesn't suck at Acropolis.

What is your favorite part of St. Louis? I like that it is a big "small town." We have the benefits of a large town with sports teams, a major airport, and great educational opportunities. I also like that the cost of living is reasonable and generally people are kind and respectful. I see the latter not only in my work dealings, but also in the families of my children's friends. Most people seem to be doing their best and not at the expense of others. The St. Louis area provides many examples for teaching my children how to be kind, caring, hardworking, loving adults.

Joshua Sample | Drive Social Media

Position: CEO, Drive Social Media

What was your first job? I worked in fast food when I was 14.

What was your worst job? Fast food. I used to ride my bike to work every weekend, down a busy road, then work a shift and bike back home. Between all the kitchen work and biking, I ended up being such a mess. I learned a lot from the experience, but I don't miss it.

What led you to your industry? I saw a need in the advertising space. A lot of small-business owners didn't understand what was happening online, specifically in the rapidly evolving social media landscape. We started Drive with the goal of saving small-business owners time and making them more money.

What was the smartest thing your company did in the past year?
We were able to navigate the Covid-19 crisis without laying off a single employee, while simultaneously offering more than $2 million in price breaks to our partners to help them navigate those challenges as well.

Who is your role model and what have you learned from him/her? Elon Musk is a huge role model for me. His tenacity and grit are inspiring. He never gives up, never complains and always innovates, especially in the face of adversity. My biggest takeaway from his story is to just sit down and do the work, solve the problem and take the next step.

What's the best part of your job? It's different every day. There is always a new problem to solve and a new hurdle to leap. The part I find most rewarding is seeing how our partner businesses use our product to grow, expand, open additional locations or retire early.

What is your top tip for leading people? I believe in people first, profit second. So often in my career, I have seen instances when leading with people allows profit to come. A profit-first mentality never sustains. We invest more in our employees every year, and every year we see more benefits from the investment.

What is your favorite part of St. Louis? The Blues. I'm a huge hockey fan. I love the excitement and culture of the game. Having such a successful and storied franchise in our backyard is amazing.

Brent Feldman | Matchbox Design

Position: CEO, Matchbox Design Group

What was your first job? My first job was at Domino's Pizza when I was 15 years old. My first job after graduating from Webster University was at Ameriwood Industries. Before deciding to transition to Matchbox full time, I was a marketing associate for 10 months.

What led you to your industry?
I got into HTML and CSS with software like Geocities, Visual Basic and Photoshop way back when I was 12 years old. It's always been my passion.

What was the smartest thing your company did in the past year? I would say the smartest decision we've made in the past year is deciding to become a remote company. At first, we viewed remote work as a temporary thing, but eventually we transitioned to being fully remote. Before finalizing that decision, we made sure that we put tools in place to keep us connected and on track. We were amazed by how well the team was able to adapt, so it just made sense to make the change. We still have a physical office at this time, and we plan to make the space available for those who live in St. Louis who would like to use that space.

Who is your role model and what have you learned from him/her? My dad. He owns and operates a tailoring business called Made to Measure Clothiers. One of the first things I learned from him was to not procrastinate. He literally had a sign on his desk that said "Do It Now," and that's something that has always stuck with me. Another thing I learned from him was how to interact with people by watching him over the years. He was really good at asking great questions and creating long-lasting relationships. He was the one who encouraged me to start a business when I was just 16, and eventually that's exactly what I did. He has always supported me by providing great advice and information.

What's the best part of your job? The best part of my job is working with our amazing team. We've hired so many talented and insightful people. Every day we get the pleasure of brainstorming, and building and growing with the team, and I couldn't think of anything more rewarding.

What is your top tip for leading people? Be a facilitator. Know what you've got to offer and be the spark that helps other people shine. Part of this is really just to listen - to your team, input, feedback and otherwise.

What is your favorite part of St. Louis? It's my hometown, born and raised, so it's hard to choose just one favorite part. We've got great food, great beer and plenty of Midwestern kindness from good people.

Jennah Purk | Purk and Associates PC

Position: President and CEO of Purk & Associates PC

What was your first job?
My first job was at Sears in the Craftsman Tool Department.

What was your worst job?
My worst job was working the front desk at a tanning salon. It was BORING.

What led you to your industry?
I was an accounting major at Auburn University, so public accounting was a natural career choice. It was a blessing that I ended up in Entrepreneurial Services and Taxation, which dove-tailed my eduction with my passion. I've loved public accounting since day 1. The diversity, flexibility and exposure to business has always brought me joy!

What was the smartest thing your company did in the past year?
The smartest thing we did as a company was to be in front of incentives and regulations pursuant to COVID-19. Not only were we navigating incentives and opportunities for our company, we were doing the same for our client base of Entrepreneur's. We were reading congressional reports ahead of regulations, and were ready to pull the trigger when policies went into effect.

Who is your role model and what have you learned from him/her?
I have many role models. I don't think I could name just one. God has used both good and bad relationships in my life to shape me into the leader that I am. I wouldn't change any part of my journey…I am a better leader, a better sister, a better mother, a better daughter, a better friend and a better Christian because of my journey. What I've learned by embracing the opportunities and relationships in my life is to keep learning, keep loving, lean in and let bygones be bygones. Failure is Cheap. Today I am the best "Jennah" I've ever been!

What's the best part of your job?
The best part of my job is advising clients and team members. My expertise is Tax Law, and applying it to diverse industries and problem solving has always been my "jam." I love the human heart, so whether I'm working with clients or leading team members, it is awesome to be engaged with humans day in and day out!

What is your top tip for leading people?
My top tip for leading is in all things exercise Candor and do it with Care. There is way to much "smoke and mirrors" in our world today. Be Candid, Do Not Hide! To be candid effectively, exercise great care. Lead Love Forward!

What is your favorite part of St. Louis?
My favorite part of St. Louis is ACCESS BABY!!! We've got it all and it's usually only 10 minutes from anywhere. I love art, sports, theatre, music, food, wine, and travel. The Lou has it all and its easy to get to!!!

Sara Stock | Stock Legal and Legal Back Office

Position: CEO and Founder, Stock Legal; Co-Founder, Legal Back Office

What was your first job? I started out working in the family business, Stock Transport, but my first official job was waitressing in a Chinese restaurant. At the job, I had a lawyer patron tell me I would never succeed as a lawyer because I was not a good speller. Thank goodness for spell-check!

What was your worst job? Telemarketing – it was hard to sell products I didn't believe in.

What led you to your industry? I grew up wanting to help family businesses, like my family's business, Stock Transport.

What was the smartest thing your company did in the past year? Focus on culture. We work hard to build an amazing culture at Stock Legal, and over the past year, we've started holding ourselves accountable to that culture and talking more about it on social media to attract the best and brightest lawyers in the US.

Who is your role model and what have you learned from him/her? Brené Brown. She's authentic and she struggles, picks herself back up, learns from her struggles and shares what she's learned with the world to help us grow as humans.

What's the best part of your job? I love hearing people's stories and building relationships. As part of what I do, I spend the better part of each day communicating with our clients, potential clients and team members.

What is your top tip for leading people? Actively listen with your ears and heart when people talk to you. To lead people, you must intentionally see and hear them in conversations. Doing so creates connection and shows that you care. Listening is a skill that can be developed, and it's clear when not being practiced. As leaders, when we are distracted during conversations – looking at our phones and computers, giving short or incomplete answers, etc. — people feel irrelevant. When you respond to your team and customers, do so in a heartfelt and thoughtful manner, and remember that a leader's personality, thought processes, optimism and energy set the tone for the entire company.

What is your favorite part of St. Louis? The Central West End. I live and work in CWE, and I love the people, shops, restaurants and walkability. It has a lovely charm and vibrance!

Our Salute to the Numbers People

2021 Top Business Accountants

For entrepreneurs, their accountant plays an active part in the financial success of their businesses. The following accountants have proven their dedication to helping small businesses in St. Louis grow and have been named the Top Accountants for businesses in 2021. *In the following profiles, this year's top accountants share their wisdom for your business.*

Keith Slusser

Fick, Eggemeyer & Williamson, CPAs

Number of years serving business owners: 20

Motivation to help business owners:
Sharing my experience and knowledge to help others succeed.

Obstacles you help entrepreneurs with:
Helping business owners understand the intricacy and importance of keeping proper books.

Best advice for small business owners:
Accounting isn't glamorous, but keeping up-to-date books enables business owners to make informed decisions about the direction of their respective businesses. We advise clients to remain current on their accounting to make the best decisions.

Biggest mistake that you see business owners make:
Diverting attention away from what makes them successful. I see them start new businesses in different fields, and their successful business starts to suffer.

Debra J. Annis

Smith Patrick CPAs

Number of Years Serving Business Owners: 41 years

Motivation to help business owners:
I enjoy helping clients become more successful. I want them to have the financial understanding needed to feel confident and satisfied with how they're running their businesses. It's great to have the continuity of working with people for many years.

Obstacles you help entrepreneurs with:
I help entrepreneurs overcome obstacles with cash flow, planning, stability and growth. I encourage clients to discuss what is happening on the accounting side with me. Then we can analyze the situation and discuss what might be the best choice.
When I'm involved on the front end, I can help clients avoid paying unnecessary tax while achieving their plans. To me, it's like solving a puzzle: putting together pieces to see the whole picture.

Best advice for small business owners:
I recommend meeting with your accountant at least annually, if not more often. Ask questions about what you can be doing better or differently.
You want an accounting team that is focused on forward thinking to help your future. You want someone who is asking questions and making suggestions. Otherwise, if your tax preparer just takes whatever you give them, you're looking at the past.

Biggest mistake that you see business owners make:
The biggest mistake that haunts business owners is making a major decision without raising the issue with their accountant. This could be selling the business, mergers and acquisitions, vehicle purchases, equipment financing or payroll, just to name a few.
By getting financial advice beforehand, owners can review all the options and might find a better approach. Doing so helps them avoid losing money, paying more taxes or being stuck in a structure that's unbeneficial. It's worth a phone call.

Brian T. Ostendorf

Conner Ash P.C.

Number of years serving business owners: 12 years public accounting; 4 years industry accounting.

Motivation to help business owners:
Helping them to accomplish individual and business goals.

Obstacles you help entrepreneurs with:
Developing and implementing business strategies in a tax-efficient manner.

Best advice for small business owners:
Do not lose site of the big picture.

Biggest mistake that you see business owners make:
Focusing on short term goals and sacrificing long-term opportunities.

Kelly L. Flaherty
Thompson Flaherty CPA

Number of years serving business owners: 33

Motivation to help business owners:
My motivation lies in the satisfaction and fulfillment I receive when I assist business owners in saving money by efficient tax planning and increasing their profitability through consultation and implementation of strategies developed from my years of knowledge and experience.

Obstacles you help entrepreneurs with:
The main obstacles I consistently assist entrepreneurs with is the appropriate entity selection for their new business, the setup and implementation of payroll and bookkeeping, and instruction on the use of financial statements and tax returns to provide them with useful information to make sound business decisions.

Best advice for small business owners:
When I was a young accountant, I asked a wealthy client the secret of his success, and he said, "A great Accountant, a great Attorney, and a great Doctor." I took his advice personally and pass it on to all my clients. In essence, surround yourself with wise counsel and leverage their knowledge when making decisions in business and life.

Biggest mistake that you see business owners make:
The biggest mistake a business owner can make is working so intensely "In" their business that they do not take the time to work "On" their business. Working "On" their business requires the ability to focus on improving overall business operations.

Dan Schindler
Anders CPAs + Advisors

Number of years serving business owners: 10 years

Motivation to help business owners:
I love helping clients grow, thrive and achieve their goals. Whether it's a manufacturer maximizing their cash flow through tax planning and operational efficiencies or securing pandemic relief funding so a local restaurant can keep the doors open and staff employed.

Obstacles you help entrepreneurs with:
I help entrepreneurs navigate difficult tax and business situations, most recently focusing on evolving legislation surrounding COVID-19 relief funding, including Paycheck Protection Program loan forgiveness.

Best advice for small business owners:
Understand your strengths and weaknesses, focus on what you do best and surround yourself with a strong internal and external team to handle various aspects of your business.

Biggest mistake that you see business owners make:
Working in their business rather than on their business.

Pamela Aman
Sikich LLP

Number of years serving business owners: 22

Obstacles you help entrepreneurs with:
A key component of my job is to monitor and understand changing tax laws, accounting policies and legislative updates that can improve or hurt businesses. While this knowledge is beneficial to understanding my clients' financial reporting and helping them to mitigate risk, what is even more vital to our relationships is an ability to communicate these complex accounting or tax changes in a way that my clients can comprehend and find value. So often, business owners realize the challenges facing their organizations or potential threats on the horizon, but they require assistance understanding what these obstacles mean and what they can do to avoid them.

Best Advice for Small Business Owners:
Build a team of professionals – legal, accounting, marketing and more – that put your organization's needs first. Choose a unique team of experts that you completely trust to effectively help you reach your goals. While you concentrate on the core components of your business operations, leave the rest to the team you have instilled your faith in to help you grow. If you find you are unsatisfied with this team or members of it, explore opportunities elsewhere. Put your business first.

Biggest Mistake that you see Business Owners Make:
When choosing your dedicated accounting, audit and tax firm, carefully consider all of your options. Weigh costs, value-add, experience, team and everything in between. While it might not seem like a huge deal selecting an accounting firm to support your operations, you will want a team that stays with you for years to come, through growth, hardship, change and more. Unfortunately, I often hear new clients talk about prior firms that neglected their businesses, overlooked crucial tax opportunities or challenges, and chose not to communicate with them. In these cases, we typically uncover many missed opportunities to see significant tax savings years back, or even cases where the companies paid too much in taxes. The biggest mistake you can make when choosing a firm to perform your financial and tax obligations is to partner with one whose only communication is a yearly invoice.

Anh Le
Anh Le CPA LLC

Number of years serving business owners: 28 years

Motivation to help business owners: As someone who is an experienced, small-business owner in the retail and service industries, I know how overwhelming the difficulties and struggles can be. Assisting other business owners with their success is not only our most valuable offering, but also our best achievement. In the process, personal growth, fulfillment and confidence flourish for my clients.

Obstacles you help entrepreneurs with: Helping business-owners navigate a complicated and sometimes stressful part of their business in taxes, audits, profit maximization and financial consultancy.

Best advice for small-business owners:
Everyone has something they are best at; focus on yours and don't be afraid to seek others' help.

LEGAL MATTERS
BY RACHEL A. QUINLEY

Estate Planning Misconceptions of Small Business Owners

Estate planning is the process of making advance arrangements regarding your assets if you become incapacitated and determining asset distribution upon your death. It sounds simple, but many misconceptions about estate planning exist.

Misconception #1: I will avoid probate because I have a will.

A will only applies to your assets without named beneficiaries and does not help you avoid probate after your death. Assets held solely in your name without named beneficiaries must go through probate, a court-supervised process to inventory your assets, pay your debts, and distribute the remainder of your assets to your heirs or beneficiaries. Assets that pass-through probate are subject to court costs, attorney's fees, and personal representative or executor fees. The process typically takes at least one year.

Misconception #2: My will alone determines how my assets will be distributed after my death.

Many people believe that their wills ultimately decide what happens to their assets after death. However, regardless of the terms of your will, your assets will pass to the joint owner or named beneficiary(ies) (a/k/a Payable On Death or Transfer On Death) on any bank account, life insurance policy, retirement plan (401k), or similar account with a named beneficiary designation. A good estate plan ensures that such assets are distributed as you wish.

Misconception #3: My trust will allow my estate to avoid probate without being funded.

Merely creating the trust is not sufficient to avoid probate. It is important to meet with an estate planning attorney to discuss ways to avoid probate, such as creating a revocable living trust, and to make sure your plan is consistent with your wishes. Your attorney can also help ensure that the trust is properly funded, with your assets placed into the trust or with the trust named as the beneficiary of your assets.

Misconception #4: Estate planning only deals with my assets after my death.

Estate planning is not just for your wishes regarding your assets after your death. Some of the most important estate plan documents protect you while you are living: a durable power of attorney for financial matters, a healthcare power of attorney, and a living will. If you become incapacitated and unable to make decisions for yourself, the powers of attorney appoint an agent or attorney in fact to act on your behalf, and the living will expresses your wishes regarding death prolonging treatments. They can help your family members avoid going through the courts to have a guardian or conservator appointed for you.

Misconception #5: I am a small business owner and my estate plan is my succession plan.

As a small business owner, it is important not to confuse personal estate planning with succession planning. Succession planning ensures business continuity after an owner retires, becomes incapacitated, or dies. Your estate and succession plans can overlap, so they must work together, especially for a family business. Even with a good succession plan, your state's probate laws will determine what happens to your business after your death if you do not have a good estate plan. ■

Rachel A. Quinley, estate planning and probate attorney with Danna McKitrick, P.C., focuses her practice on the creation and administration of trusts and estates, wills, beneficiary deeds, financial and medical powers of attorney, guardianships, and other matters related to estate planning. Rachel can be reached at 314.889.7155 or rquinley@dmfirm.com.

LEADER ACCELERATION
BY KATHY COOPERMAN

How's Your Feedback Quotient?

A core leadership competency is to provide constructive feedback to employees. When given well, feedback helps the receiver know what they're doing right and what could be improved.

Giving feedback is not always comfortable. Many leaders resist giving feedback until it's time for annual performance reviews. Few leaders give adequate feedback. I've heard from countless employees that they rarely hear positive feedback. One common example is from a worker when I asked, "How often do you hear positive feedback about your performance?" He laughed and said, "Are you kidding? I never hear anything until I do something wrong and then I hear about it like that!" (Snapping his fingers)

Purpose of Feedback

The purpose is simply to improve performance. When employees believe that you have their best interests at heart, they will welcome feedback.

Ask yourself:

1. Why am I giving feedback?

If your intent is to be helpful, then you're on the right track. If you take pride in helping your team members grow and develop then it will be a natural step to provide timely, specific feedback.

If, however, you are quick to provide feedback when frustrated, stop and consider other alternatives for relieving your stress.

2. Have I prepared my thoughts?

Taking a few minutes to collect your thoughts will make the experience better for you and your employee. One of the best models for giving feedback is called the SBI* model for feedback (developed by the Center for Creative Leadership).

S = Situation
B = Behavior
I = Impact

Let's say one of your employees has been a reliable and steady performer for the past two years. You've noticed lately that she has come in late at least four different days in the past two weeks. At first you ignored it thinking it was a rare exception. Now, though, you're concerned that this behavior is becoming a habit. You're concerned that not only is she slacking off but it's beginning to impact her co-workers who have to cover for her when she's late.

Applying the SBI model, you might say:

Gina, I've noticed you've arrived late a number of times in the past couple of weeks (Tuesday and Wednesday this week, and Thursday and Friday the week before). I noticed some of your co-workers taking calls that came in for you, creating a backlog in incoming calls in the department.

The leader then pauses and allows Gina to respond. This avoids jumping to conclusions about why Gina is late or assumptions about her motivation. She might, of course, have a valid reason for her lateness.

Situation: In the past couple of weeks (Tuesday and Wednesday . . .)

Behavior: You've arrived late a number of times

Impact: Co-workers taking calls that came in for you, creating a backlog . . .

This simple model can be applied to situations where you're offering positive feedback or constructive feedback—to shape behavior to meet expectations.

To make it work best, be sure it's timely and specific.

*SBI are trademarks of the Center for Creative Leadership. ■

For more information contact Kathy Cooperman, KC Leadership Consulting, LLC, kathy@kathycooperman.com, 1 (866) 303-1996 or (303) 522-2114.

Powerful Leaders Create Other Leaders

In most organizations, leadership development equates to helping those with management titles do a better job leading direct reports. At LifeWork Systems, we assert that leadership development is for all people, from CEO to front line staff. Some methods are antithetical to this and others expand leadership in all for full engagement.

What tactics does NOT foster leadership development

These include any approach based in limiting and fear-based beliefs about people or that require subjugation to an authority figure. These diminish internal motivation because external motivation is valued instead. Here are four common ways we squelch leadership development in people and perpetuate diminished intrinsic motivation:

1. An autocratic approach. In this, the limiting belief held about people is that they can't be trusted. The management approach is to manage people, using a power-over dynamic in which accountability is doing "what I say or else." Behaviors fostered are resentful compliance and rebellion and resistance and sabotage.

2. Incentives and rewards. Dangling carrots in an effort to elicit increased productivity and good citizenship has been proven in copious research to be harmful. When using it, you believe people are selfish and lazy and that your job is to motivate them so they jump through your hoops, doing what you want. This fosters artificial competition and scarcity, distracts from quality, and diminishes internal motivation.

3. Bestowing judgments (favorable and unfavorable). When leaders bestow praise (different from encouragement) or shaming saying things like, "go make me proud" or "I'm so disappointed in you, we foster people-pleasing, brown-nosing and repression of reasonable challenges to authority. These suppress authenticity and creativity.

4. Pampering and spoiling. When we do for people what they are capable of doing for themselves, including reminding, advising and coaxing when none are needed, the belief is 'they can't' Then the management approach is rescue and enabling, fostering assumed inadequacy and entitlement.

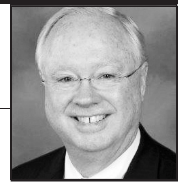
A tactic that DOES foster leadership development

1. A responsibility-based approach. In this, you hold positive beliefs that people are great and if they don't appear so, they want to be great. You make sure they are given support to adopt task ownership; the management of their relationships, productivity, engagement, emotional intelligence, and a success plan. Their internal motivation and engagement increase. They consistently bring their A-game to every effort.

Not only is leadership development of all people crucial, without it your people experience an activated inferiority complex with related internal and external struggles of every kind. They then weaken your organization and impede your business success objectives. I am happy to help you to make this shift from ineffective culture tactics to those that increase employee engagement and expanded human potential you need. Let me know if I can help! ■

Judy Ryan (judy@LifeworkSystems.com), human systems specialist, is owner of LifeWork Systems. Join her in her mission to create a world in which all people love their lives. She can also be reached at 314-239-4727.

People hire LifeWork Systems because we help businesses become agile and manage their priority system: their human system. I hope this article helps you make sense of what's most crucial to your evolving organization!



How To Buy The Right Business

Finding The Right Business Is A Full-Time Job

Locating the "right business for you" takes time — many, many hours of research and discussion — with a minimum investment of 12-24 months to complete the purchase. Research shows that before signing an asset purchase agreement, an average buyer will have reviewed more than 100 sterile (public) listings, selected 15-20 for preliminary investigation and signed 2-4 letters of intent.

The search is full of emotion and many buyers give up because:

1. They did not ask themselves three fundamental questions: Do I really want to do this? Can I tolerate the financial risk? Do I have the full support of my significant other?

2. They have not devoted the necessary time to the search, given their current job.

3. They never clearly identified the type of business that matches their individual profile of skills, interests and risk tolerance.

Additionally, many prospective buyers fail to reach out to multiple business brokers to gain the market coverage necessary to find the right business. Buyers must get on the radar of the business broker community. Best practices include:

- Signing up for email distribution of listings.
- Visiting in person with brokers to discuss interests, abilities and financing.
- Staying in touch as the situation evolves.

The key is to be remembered by the broker when the right opportunity comes along.

Entrepreneurs who want to buy a company can also become impatient. After months or years of the search process, prospective buyers can grow frustrated and biased, and they may fail to see the warning signs when evaluating a business for sale.

Buying a business simply to end the search is bad business!

Understand the motivation and emotions of the seller

Owners have strong emotional attachments to their companies and will be concerned about the business's future under new ownership. When first meeting an owner, be respectful, humble and sincere. When a successful owner has reached the point of selling, he or she will be unimpressed by a potential buyer sharing what he or she would do differently. In other words, listen more and talk less. The goal is for the owner to feel comfortable with you and envision you owning the business.

Work to understand the owner's motivation to sell. Learn about the fundamentals of the business to better relate to the seller's concerns. If you really listen, you may be surprised at what you find. Money may not be the trigger to getting a deal done.

Connect with the seller in terms of your business values. Many businesses do not require a Harvard MBA to operate successfully. Demonstrate that you can relate to many walks of life and be authentic rather than arrogant.

Understand the essential business drivers. How does the business make a profit?

Understanding why a business generates a (hopefully) healthy profit margin is not always obvious. Gaining the seller's trust will reveal the secret sauce necessary to turn continuous profits. The formula for success is not always visible via the numbers on a profit-and-loss statement. If possible, visit the business during regular hours of operation to observe its processes, including the movements of people and materials, and watch the customers. Before visiting, create a believable alternate identity (such as insurance or banking representative) that will not jeopardize confidentiality. Remember that employees and customers will not know that the business is for sale.

The seller's job is to make the business look attractive, including managing earnings to present the best scenario. Short-term performance gains may be impressive, but historical business performance is what really tells the story.

As a prospective buyer, be sure you are realistically evaluating the whole picture in terms of your own objectives and abilities as well as the company's performance and potential. ■

Dave Driscoll is president of Metro Business Advisors, a business brokerage, valuation and exit planning firm helping owners of companies with revenue up to $20 million sell their most valuable asset. Reach Dave at DDriscoll@MetroBusinessAdvisors.com or 314-303-5600. For more information, visit www.MetroBusinessAdvisors.com.

Funny Business

By Todd Schowalter

TIME WITH THE BOSS

Rachel A. Covington

Community Value Alliance

Website: www.cvastl.org

Tell me about the mission of the organization?

CVA was founded to assist non-profits in strengthening their business expertise. CVA's mission is to empower nonprofits by enabling leadership, staff and board members to focus on achieving and exceeding the mission critical goals of our nonprofit partners and clients. CVA has a team of professionals willing to assist non-profits with complex organizational challenges and in so doing, CVA can help non-profits increase their capacity for future sustainability.

What is your background and your role with the organization?

I have more than 25 years' experience as a non-profit professional, working in the social service and healthcare sectors. I've held leadership roles for my entire career , and I am proud to share those experiences with the non-profit sector. I've held leadership roles at the National Kidney Foundation, Ascension Health, SSM Health, and Mercy Health.

What are some of the challenges nonprofits are facing?

Nonprofits inherently deliver services in exemplary fashion as the mission of the organization is paramount, and nonprofit leaders are very passionate about the mission. However, nonprofit leaders tend to struggle with business acumen such as back-office support ie: IT, HR, accounting, fundraising all of which are necessary to sustain the mission over time. CVA was founded to fill those gaps and arm nonprofit leaders with the business tools necessary for success.

How are their challenges different than challenges facing for-profits?

The core business for the for-profit sector is to build revenue streams and the core business of nonprofits is to deliver the mission. Non-profits struggle with the Mission and Margin concept.

To sustain the mission, a margin (revenue) is necessary. For-profits tend to consider revenue as the primary incentive to do business.

What advice would you give nonprofits when it comes to overcoming challenges?

Collaboration and networking with like minded organizations.

Ability to recognize when your nonprofit needs assistance.

Build a strong diverse Board of Directors and ask board members to be the organization's ambassador.

What is the best way to contact your organization?

Phone at 314-780-2902 or email: rachel.covington@cvastl.org. ■

ARE YOUR EMPLOYEES WORKING FROM HOME?

Winning Technologies has all of the tools and expertise necessary for making sure your employees are successful and productive – wherever they are.

From innovative phone solutions to cloud hosting of your business software, we are prepared to help take your business to the next level. Put your trust in the remote workforce experts.

- Hosted Voice Solutions
- ERP Cloud Hosting
- Proactive System Monitoring
- Data Backup
- Disaster Recovery
- Virtualization
- Cloud Computing
- Cyber Security
- Virtual Private Networks

Give us a call at **877-379-8279**
or visit WinningTech.com

Winning TECHNOLOGIES INC.
Where Technology Meets the Boardroom