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by Frank Grossman

*This article is the first of a series which will describe a hypothetical workplace dilemma, and then invite SOA members to submit their comments and suggested solutions, which will then be published in the following issue of The Stepping Stone. All member submissions will be received in confidence, and any identifying details will be removed (unless specifically requested by the member to do otherwise) prior to their inclusion in the discussion of the case.*

Jack the FSA has been asked by his manager, George the FSA, to perform a mortality study—the first detailed examination of their company's individual life insurance mortality experience. Jack tabulated actual deaths and exposures over the past five years, and estimated deaths according to a published industry table and his company's current pricing table. The resulting actual-to-expected [A/E] ratios, both by claim amount and number of deaths, were calculated for various cross-sectional data groupings: product, issue age group, duration, gender, tobacco use, rating classification and sum insured band. Though some study cells had less experience data than others, the overall study results were credible. Jack was satisfied with his data analysis and summarized his findings in a written report for George.

George was pleased with the report and returned it to Jack, asking that two modifications be made. First, that the report be spiral-bound for wider distribution, including a card stock cover and a title page with both their names as authors of the report. Second, that the A/E ratios by amount be adjusted to exclude amounts exceeding the company's retention limit. Based on his analysis, Jack knew that the A/E ratios by amount for a couple of products were significantly lower when calculated net of cessions. Jack consequently suggested that the ratios for those products be presented on both a gross and net basis in an appendix to the report—or, at least, that the report's introduction disclose that claims exceeding their company's retention were ignored. George disagreed, stating that, "everyone who reads the report will know that it's net of reinsurance."

What should Jack do?

*Send your suggestions before January 22, 2010, to Frank Grossman at [Craigmore54@aol.com](mailto:Craigmore54@aol.com). The discussion of Jack's dilemma will be published in the April 2010 issue of The Stepping Stone. ●*

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# Coming in 2010

by Kevin Leavey

It's a New Year. It's time to get things rolling. Resolutions have been made. Some have even been kept. As I start the new year as chairperson of the Management & Personal Development Section, I thought it would be helpful to lay out what sections do in general, and in particular, what our section hopes to accomplish in 2010.



## WHAT DO SECTIONS DO?

You are a member of one, and maybe more, sections. Sections serve an important role within the Society of Actuaries. In fact, sections are the only entity specifically mentioned in the SOA Strategic Plan.

This graphic represents what sections attempt to accomplish while fulfilling their link to one of the SOA's Strategic Themes, "Promote sections as knowledge communities and networking facilitators." Sections provide activities and make decisions from the perspective of their specific interest. They provide the SOA Board of Directors the grassroots connection to the membership. In contrast, the Board makes decisions for the good of the profession and is the ultimate ruling body within the SOA.

## WHAT WILL M&PD DO IN 2010?

We will focus our efforts for 2010 on the foundational tiers, "Create Grassroots Communities" and "Transfer Knowledge."

You can expect to see four issues of *The Stepping Stone*. The quarterly format seems to provide just the right amount of information. Through the great efforts of our editor, John West Hadley, and the SOA staff, we continue to publish a well-respected and well-read newsletter. I have been told by more than one person that our newsletter is the only one they read cover-to-cover. If you have an idea for an article, or would like to submit one yourself, I strongly encourage you to do so. We would love to hear from you.

We will strive to provide more free content on our Web page on the SOA's Web site, [www.soa.org](http://www.soa.org). This past year, we developed a webcast on tips for moderators. While the webcast was developed for moderating a session at an SOA event, the tips and education can be applied to any meeting you must plan.

Finally, we will continue to plan and implement management and business skills development for our members through sessions at future SOA events and through partnerships with local actuarial clubs.

Happy New Year! ●



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# How to Be a Complete Failure at Sales

by Michael Goldberg



Michael Goldberg speaks at conferences and associations, runs sales meetings and delivers real-world programs on networking, referral marketing and public speaking. To contact Michael or sign up for his free newsletter and blog, please visit [BuildingblocksConsulting.com](http://BuildingblocksConsulting.com).

*Looking to lose friends and alienate people? Just cultivate these 13 bad habits to confirm your reign as the office slacker.*

Being bad at prospecting and selling is at least as difficult as being good at it. It actually takes a lot of work to be a slacker. Think about it. You have to be bad at so many things so consistently: time management, prospecting, product knowledge, business etiquette, customer service, follow-up, relationship building and organization. That's a lot of bad habits you've got to form.

Hey, some sales reps and business owners have a knack for being bad at sales. They just make it look easy. If you are looking to join their ranks, use these quick tips to get on the fast track to nowhere!

1. **Leave your business cards at home.** If you do use business cards, be sure they are dog-eared and dirty. But really, why do you even need them? You might as well leave your cards in your office, home or car. If anyone is really interested in contacting you, let them take the initiative. They can always Google you.
2. **Don't send thank-you notes.** No one does that anymore, so why be old-fashioned? Plus, buying stationery is a pain and writing notes with a pen is a drag. If you really must thank somebody, just send 'em an e-mail and be done with it.
3. **Talk to your clients only when you want something.** Why else would you talk to them? Do not keep tabs on your clients as they experience changes in job, business, marital status, health, income level, family and lifestyle. You can be sure they will confide in someone who will relieve you of their business. Let someone else be the hero.
4. **Avoid calling prospects.** Why call people who don't want to be called to talk about stuff they don't want to buy? They'll just insult you, right? If you have to do it, put it off for another day when at all possible. So what if some people are
5. **Make it up as you go.** As we all know, life's more fun when you fly by the seat of your pants. Taking the time to make a to-do list or to follow a set routine gets boring. Thinking up mission statements? Writing business plans? Bah! Who cares if there are tools that make business planning easy, or that Ben Franklin developed a useful time management system—there's a game on TV. Enjoy the moment!
6. **Get in the habit of not returning phone calls.** All these callers can drive you nuts. And it's not like having a client service system is going to double your revenue, right? If it's all that important, they'll call back. What's great about this technique is eventually people will stop calling and the problem will pretty much resolve itself.
7. **Don't ask for referrals.** Referrals may well be one of the best ways to get more clients, but isn't it scary to put yourself on the line like that? It'll seem like you're begging. And you don't want to bother your clients. If they like you, just trust that they'll refer others without your involvement.
8. **Eschew professional development.** Aren't you done with school already? Besides, there's always someone who knows more than you that you can call if you need to. Leave the self-help CDs and classic business books to the top guns. The same goes for getting a good mentor or coach. You already know what to do, right?
9. **Don't follow up on sales opportunities.** Why bother? If prospects, clients or referral sources were interested in working with you, they would get in touch with you. You need not express interest in working with them. And whatever you do, don't send them marketing materials.
10. **Never give referrals to well-respected business people you know.** They might get the



wrong idea and refer you business right back. Referring others business is one of the best ways to build relationships, gain credibility and create ongoing referral streams. Who has that kind of time?

11. **Make your presentations boring.** Bring plenty of brochures and paperwork to overwhelm your audience. The more marketing collateral that describes your company's history, mission, vision, core values, recognition, reputation and financial status, the better. It's always a nice touch to deliver a lengthy PowerPoint presentation describing every aspect of your company, as well as its products and services. (Remember to look at the slides rather than your audience!) A thick three-ring binder works well too. Don't worry about being charismatic or developing your public speaking skills, either. People like you the way you are. Especially your competition.
12. **Don't ask for the business.** It's almost always obvious why you're there anyway, so why state the obvious? Don't find out what the client's needs or reactions to your presentation are. It's much better to leave the sales meeting not knowing what the prospect thinks, wants or expects as next steps. That is, if there are next steps. Tomorrow is another day.
13. **Sell hard.** Everyone is a prospect—they just don't know it yet. Introduce yourself as a sales closer to everyone you come in contact with, particularly in social situations. Let them know what you are selling and how much they need

you. Tell them how you can lower your fees and guarantee your work. In fact, practice selling your stuff to family and friends first. They always appreciate it.

Certainly, you can think of more ways to limit the amount of business you might ever get. But I guarantee that if you follow these tips, you'll be a complete failure in no time! ●

*Michael Goldberg is a speaker, networking strategist, and the founder of Building Blocks Consulting. His firm focuses on helping those in sales grow their business. Michael speaks at conferences, runs sales meetings and delivers dynamic "real-world" programs on networking, referral marketing and sales presentations. He has spoken at industry conferences including LAMP, NAIFA, NAHU and the Sales Mastery Forum and has clients that include MetLife, New England Financial, Genworth Financial, Guardian Life, AXA Advisors, Chubb & Son, and Amalgamated Life. Be on the lookout for Michael's book on networking in bookstores soon. For more information, please visit [www.NetworkingForProducers.com](http://www.NetworkingForProducers.com) and subscribe to his monthly newsletter and blog, The Building Blocks to Success.*

Referring others  
business is one  
of the best ways  
to build  
relationships,  
gain  
credibility and  
create ongoing  
referral streams.

# Make Smart Choices

By Kevin Leavey



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“**D**ecisions, decisions ... Oh! Pay me! Lawyer’s salary, please.” Do you remember the commercial for Milton Bradley’s board game, “The Game of Life®?” The game starts with you making the first of many decisions: Start a career or go to college. How much thought do you put into that decision? Later on in the game you have to make more decisions: Do you invest money in the stock market or not? Do you buy insurance for your car and your home? Did you think through the ramifications of those decisions? How did you deal with the consequences?

Decision-making is a life skill. You make decisions every day, decisions that can range from the inconsequential to the potentially life-changing. Are you making good decisions? Do you know how to evaluate whether or not a decision was a good one? Do you want to get better at it? If you do, there’s a way.

If you don’t think decision-making is important, think again. The SOA feels it’s important enough to make a demonstration of decision-making skill one part of the Fellowship Admissions Course, the final component prior to obtaining Fellowship. Employers want and need us to be better business-

persons. We cannot just analyze a complex situation and provide alternatives, we need to make decisions.

## EXPERIENCE

Most of us let experience be our guide. For example, at a very young age I learned that practicing my letters with a laundry pen on the family room paneling was a particularly bad decision. I learned a better decision would have been to either use paper or ask first. Looking back you can also see how some decisions you make will affect others. You can’t just replace or paint over paneling, so for years thereafter my parents had to defend their belief that it was all just youthful exuberance and not some major character flaw on my part.

When confronted with a situation that appears to be a familiar experience, we most often choose the path we’ve taken before. However, that’s a very inefficient approach. Very few situations are exactly the same as previous ones. If you don’t know the way to make a decision, you might freeze up when confronted with something new.

Another pitfall is using experience to validate your decisions is not foolproof. Passing an exam after only studying 75 percent of the material does not make the decision a good one, it just means you were lucky.

There are plenty of resources waiting to help you make better decisions. Just type “decision making” into Google™ and you’ll get about 80 million hits. The best book I’ve read on the subject is *Smart Choices: A Practical Guide to Making Better Decisions*. (Hammond, Keeney and Raiffa; Harvard Business School Press, 1999.) The book has everything I look for in an executive book: (1) It is engaging from the start, (2) it is more practical than preachy, and (3) it is reasonably priced. You should be able to find the book for less than \$20, and I strongly recommend you buy or borrow it. I will touch on many high points to help you make better decisions, but the added insights and stories are well worth your time and money.



The authors introduce and advocate a decision making approach they refer to as PrOACT. PrOACT stands for Problem, Objectives, Alternatives, Consequences and Tradeoffs. They like the acronym because it sends the right message. Be proactive about your decision making; don't just let decisions be made for you.

## PROBLEM

Make sure you are addressing the right problem. What is your problem statement? Ask yourself why you are even considering this decision. What are you trying to solve? If you are considering "What do I have for lunch?" the problem statement is pretty easy—you're hungry.

If you need to decide "What new product feature should we offer on our company's variable annuity?" the problem statement is less clear:

- "Do we choose this new feature or that one?"
- "Do we even need to create something new, or can we simply enhance existing products?"
- Are you sure the choice of the right product feature is the right problem?
- Is a better question "What's the fastest and least expensive way to increase sales?"

Analyze and question any constraints you've placed on yourself and constraints placed by others. Be prepared to re-examine and question your problem statement as you go. Don't expect to get it right the first time. Significant time and resources can be spent in defining the right problem. This can be time well-spent, knowing that you are solving the right problem and not just the most superficial one.

## OBJECTIVES

Clarify your real objectives. What do you really want or need? What are your goals? Defining your objectives and the objectives of all the stakeholders will provide direction to your decision-making. The authors offer five steps to identifying your objectives:

1. Write down all the concerns you hope to address through your decision.
2. Convert your concerns into succinct objectives.
3. Separate ends from means to establish your fundamental objectives.
4. Clarify. Ask yourself, "What do I really mean by this objective?"
5. Test your objectives to see if they capture your interests. Use your list of objectives to evaluate several alternatives and make sure you'd be happy with the result.

For something simple like lunch your objectives might be food that's good, reasonably priced and not too far from the office. For your company's annuity, you might wish to offer great customer value, competitive commissions and state-of-the-art sales support. Inevitably, you'll come up with some competing objectives (e.g. sales vs. profits). Clarifying the objectives and assigning a value to them will help you to rank them when determining alternatives.

## ALTERNATIVES

You should work hard to develop creative alternatives. Go through each objective and ask "How?" How can you achieve your goals? You could go to one lunch spot which is next door and reasonably priced, but another one has great food and is only a 15-minute walk. Have you thought about bringing your lunch?

You want your company's annuity to provide its consumers the ability to save for retirement and provide good insurance guarantees. You know the way to reach consumers is through brokers, so you want to make sure you are taking care of them as well and making it easy to do business with you. Challenge perceived constraints. Use all the creative brainstorming techniques you can and be over-inclusive of ideas. You can always rule out the all-actuary sales force idea later.

**Ask yourself why you are even considering this decision. What are you trying to solve?**

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Once you've come up with that innovative, jaw-dropping, paradigm-shifting idea, can it be sold? Is it legal? Can you administer it?

## CONSEQUENCES

Think through the consequences of each alternative. Once you've come up with that innovative, jaw-dropping, paradigm-shifting idea, can it be sold? Is it legal? Can you administer it? Treat this as a role-playing exercise. Mentally (and physically, if you can) put yourself in a post-decision state for each alternative. Evaluate what you feel the consequences are and discard clearly inferior alternatives.

## TRADEOFFS

Make appropriate tradeoffs among conflicting objectives. For decisions that only affect you, like lunch, determine appropriate compromises yourself. For broader decisions, work with all the stakeholders to determine appropriate compromises. Your sales force may be willing to accept a slightly lower commission if the product is just right and the sales support is excellent.

The authors provide additional guidance on dealing with uncertainty and determining your own risk tolerance level. They also caution the reader to be aware of and plan ahead for decisions linked over time.

Complex decisions need to be handled in layers. Deal with the biggest issue first. Keeping with my product development example:

- Decide first whether or not you need a new product feature to increase sales.
- Then consider which consumer need you expect it to address.
- Then determine how it will address that need.
- Then decide how you want to market it.

One of the best pieces of advice provided in the book is “know when to quit.” Don't let your propensity to analyze delay the decision unnecessarily. Make the best decision you can with the information you have available to you and move on. You won't always have the luxury of time.

Decision-making is a life skill, and I don't just mean in the board game. You can get better. Read the book. Follow these steps, and you won't just make better decisions, but smart choices. It's your turn. ●



# Translating Actuarial Vernacular: Effective Communication for Every Audience

by Mary Kilkenny



Mary Kilkenny is a Jacobson Associates actuarial consultant specializing in the life, health and pension arena for the professional recruiting division of the Jacobson Group in Chicago. She can be reached at [mkilkenny@jacobsononline.com](mailto:mkilkenny@jacobsononline.com).

In the current business environment, professionals across all disciplines are turning to actuaries to clarify a broad set of risk-related issues. Gone are the days of assuming that an actuary's role is simply behind-the-scenes "number crunching." The reasoning behind actuarial calculations and the business decisions resulting from actuarial analysis are of great value to an entire organization. Today's pressure for profitability, coupled with a widespread demand for internal and external transparency, has elevated the importance of data and the need to understand how it relates to all aspects of an insurance operation.

Who better to explain these calculations to insurance professionals than actuaries themselves? This means tailoring "actuarial talk" to a language that is universally understood. No matter who you are speaking to, get to know your audience: What is important to them about the subject matter? How does it affect them and their work? Remember that even though the data and explanations make sense to

you, those outside of the actuarial community may not understand what you are talking about. This means you must go beyond reporting the numbers—interpret and connect them to specific organizational functions.

### **Your sales team's bottom line: *How can they sell the product and earn commission?***

The key to explaining product pricing to the sales people within your organization is to make sure you thoroughly outline the reasoning behind the price point. Often, sales people will see prices only as being lower or higher than competitors' prices. In a way, you will need to act as a sales person in these conversations. Point out the attractive features or unique riders and describe how a customer could potentially benefit from the product. Clarify why it is sellable and discuss the techniques they can use to pitch the product. Be thorough in answering their questions and don't be afraid of seeming redundant.

**Today's pressure for profitability, coupled with a widespread demand for internal and external transparency, has elevated the importance of data and the need to understand how it relates to all aspects of an insurance operation.**

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

Your claims executives may not understand (or care) about how you came to your reserves. However, they will be interested in increasing efficiencies in filing, paying and recording the large number of claims they handle every day.

**Your IT team's bottom line: *How will a system make their lives easier?***

For your IT department, it is all about programs, codes, data management and storage. These colleagues will bring highly technical perspectives to the discussion, so you need to be focused and detailed in your analyses. While they may thoroughly understand the working of a system's platform or piece of code, they may not understand the intricacies of how a particular product behaves in that model. When explaining your perspective on an issue, use specific examples to clarify your line of reasoning.

**Your claims department's bottom line: *How can they better the claims data?***

Your claims executives may not understand (or care) about how you came to your reserves. However, they will be interested in increasing efficiencies in filing, paying and recording the large number of claims they handle every day. Explain loss data, benchmarking studies and apparent variances in terms appropriate to their level of understanding. By focusing on strategies that will improve financial metrics and overall claims outcomes, you will also enable these professionals to be more efficient in moving piles of claims off of their desks and out the door. Remember that talking to you takes time out of their days and time away from the claims they could be filing. Be brief and to the point, and emphasize the long-term benefits your data provides to their department.

**Your underwriters' bottom line: *How can they be more efficient and accurate in pricing?***

Underwriters are concerned about using the data you provide to appropriately identify risks and price coverage for customers. They don't necessarily want or need to understand the technological or mathematical particulars of your tables, but it is important to explain how your calculations can impact their work. Be seen as a true partner in the underwriting process by providing details on how they can best use your data to efficiently and effectively price products for their customers.

**Senior management's bottom line: *How can they make better business decisions?***

Think big picture! Your senior management team is interested in what your data means for the entire organization. Speak to them in terms of consequences and outcomes, rather than explaining how you reached your conclusions. They are interested in how your information can help fix past problems and avoid future hurdles, particularly as they relate to year-end reporting and next year's projection data. Interpret and explain the true consequences of your findings and offer possible solutions to become a trusted partner to your executive management team. By identifying potentially serious issues and suggesting appropriate risk management and mitigation techniques according to your organization's risk profile, you will also be contributing to your organization's bottom line.

Lastly, remember to come into all conversations with an open mind. The best communicators are those who listen and learn from those on the other side of the table! ●

# Leave Them Wanting to Know More

by John Hadley

**H**ave you ever run into someone at an SOA reception or other networking event who proceeded to ramble on for five minutes about the details of what he did? Did that get you interested in learning more?

This is one reason why a fundamental tenet of effective marketing is “*Leave them wanting to know more!*” Yet so few of us remember to do this ...

This is a powerful concept to keep in mind in everything you do. This should be how you approach status reports to your superiors, PowerPoint presentations, project descriptions at team meetings, discussions with your staff, self-appraisals, chance encounters with senior executives, client interactions, ‘needs assessments’ with prospects, panel discussions and workshops at SOA meetings, and of course, all networking meetings and events.

It is particularly important for anyone in or considering a career search to ask the following questions:

- Does your résumé suffer from “death by duties” syndrome, where you spend a lot of time talking about the duties you performed in each role, instead of boiling those descriptions down to the concise, compelling, accomplishment-and-result bullet points that get a hiring manager excited?
- Are your cover letters attempts to tell your history, or marketing pieces designed to create curiosity about what you can add to a company’s operations?
- Do you always make sure you use all 30 seconds of your elevator pitch at a networking event, or have you learned to focus on answering “*Why Should I Want To Pay Your Salary?*” and nothing else?
- Have you timed all of your accomplishment stories to make sure you can relate them in no longer than 60 seconds?
- Have you developed a powerful “HERO Story” with which to open your interviews, carefully constructed to include some key results that provide the ‘hooks’ to engage the listener? (For more on the HERO Story concept, see [www.JHACareers.com/HEROStory.htm](http://www.JHACareers.com/HEROStory.htm).)



Remember that a hiring manager who is interested and engaged will want to know more, and then will invite you to tell more. On the other hand, one whose senses have been dulled by your long explanations will never be curious enough to ask for more.

Also keep in mind that as much as I am judging your ability to produce results by the stories you tell, I am assessing your leadership and communication skills by the **WAY** you relate the stories. You shine through your ability to get quickly to the essence of the story, and to distinguish and present only the critical points that I will most want to know.

If I ask for an example of your project management skills, and you immediately launch into a long, detailed description of all of the steps you took to direct the implementation of a year-long project, you will have answered my question. **But if you instead tell a concise story with the key challenges, the most critical steps you took, and a powerful result, you will get me excited.** I can then probe on the points in which I am most interested.

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How you communicate a story tells me a lot about your current and future potential:

- Your skill at boiling down a story to its essence, and separating the wheat from the chaff.
- How much I can expect of your ability to negotiate effectively with my peers vs. continually having to reserve those efforts for myself.
- Whether I can rely on you to make powerful presentations to senior executives

Also think about this ...

If your typical accomplishment story is two to four minutes long, how many are you going to get the chance to work into a typical networking meeting or interview? On the other hand, if you boil them

down to the most powerful points that grab the listener's attention, AND they are shorter, you've achieved a double-whammy → more powerful statements, and time to share more of them!

### SO JUST REMEMBER: **LESS IS MORE.**

Create the hooks in your presentations that keep the listener at the level of maximum engagement, and provide interesting jumping off points for further questions. Instead of worrying if you've told people enough, put your attention to always leaving them wanting to know more! ●

# NEW

## Life and Annuity SYMPOSIUM

NEW DECADE. NEW DIRECTIONS.

May 17-18, 2010

MARRIOTT TAMPA WATERSIDE  
TAMPA, FL

WITH LIFE AND ANNUITY SEMINARS ON MAY 19.

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Then there was the Product Development Symposium.

Now the SOA is combining these two valuable meetings to bring you the best of both including:

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- Extended session lengths
- In-depth coverage of important topics
- More networking opportunities
- An optional third day with seminars

**BE THERE. MAY 17, 18 AND 19. TAMPA.**  
More details will be available soon at [www.soa.org](http://www.soa.org).

Actuaries  
Risk is Opportunity.®

# Cross-Sectional Help

by Mary Pat Campbell

In the April 2009 issue of *The Stepping Stone*, Paula Hodges exhorted us to keep up with technology in her Chairperson's Corner, writing:

"You may not realize how much the new technology impacts many aspects of our jobs, regardless of your practice area. I urge you to keep informed of new developments in technology. Why? Here are just three reasons:

- 1) If you're hiring entry-level staff, you need to keep up with the basics of how the younger generation thinks, learns and works.
- 2) Technology can help you make better use of your time, and the time of those you work with.
- 3) Social networking through the Web has more to offer than you think."

Tony Batory responded in the July 2009 issue that trying to keep on the cutting edge is overrated:

"I'm certain that techies will disagree with what I've said. Let me try something more palatable. It's not the technology that has value, but how you use it. Would I want an entry level person to text me during a meeting? NOT."

Both Paula and Tony are correct.

Keeping track of developments in the tech world can help you get your job done; that said, there are always so many developments it's difficult to know what to pay attention to, and what level of detail you really need to know. A lot of technology that supposedly will free up our time or make us more productive seems to just fill up more time and bring in more demands on our attention.

I come with a message from the Technology Section: We're here to help!

While we often have very technical articles intended for those already deep in tech-geek-itude, we are interested in covering more general interest technology issues. Without a filter on the large amount of

information on technology developments, it can be easy to lose what will really be useful to your work; or you may skip over some new service as a frivolous amusement, missing an opportunity for a good information channel.

For example, one of the more recent "fads" is Twitter [of course, by the time of publication here, things may have moved on—one of the disadvantages of this fast-moving world]. You may think that this is just a text-chatting tool, but Twitter has become one of the best real-time search tools I've found. I am often on the lookout for pension-related news, and I have a Twitter search permanently set up in my Tweetdeck. That has caught news I didn't find in a Google news search. For more information about what Twitter can do for you, check out the article by Eddie Smith in the *October 2009 CompAct* titled "Introducing Twitter".

We're also interested in informing people about using the tools they have at hand in a better way. Eddie Smith has another article in the *October 2009 CompAct* where he talks about tips for improving your experience with Microsoft Windows or Outlook. He has a list of handy keyboard shortcuts, for example, some of which may be familiar, but others may be new to you.

I invite my fellow Management and Personal Development Section members to tell the Technology Section [of which I'm also a member] what you'd like to know about in the tech world. We could publish these articles either here in *The Stepping Stone* or in *CompAct*.

Whether it's a certain type of business problem that technology developments can help with [say, a problem with institutional memory—perhaps a wiki will help there], or you've heard about a development you'd like to know more about—let us know! ●



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... Twitter has become one of the best real-time search tools I've found.

# How Polite Are You?

by Maureen Wild



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**C**an you answer the next few questions? Let's see...

1. What is the number one most irritating habit you can demonstrate?
2. The absence of which simple phrases can kick off an "incivility spiral?"
3. What is a surefire way of ticking off workmates when sharing a communal kitchen or dining lounge?
4. What vice can torpedo your admission to the career fast track?
5. What common act of oafishness labels you a loser?
6. The failure to extend this courtesy will turn off your colleagues faster than a speeding bullet. What is it?

Do you feel fairly secure with your answers? Check below to see if you are courteous or uncouth.

1. What is the number one most irritating habit you can demonstrate?

#### **Interrupting others.**

People who habitually interrupt others win the award for social ineptitude and downright boorishness. When you constantly interrupt, you are subliminally suggesting that what you think is more important than what anyone else thinks, (or says), and that your time is far too valuable to stop and really listen to someone else's point of view. If you tend to cut people off mid-sentence, cut it out. It's fearfully impolite. Whether on the phone, in a meeting or in ordinary conversation—no one person should dominate the chatter.

2. The absence of which simple phrases can kick off an "incivility spiral?"

**The absence of little pleasantries such as "Good Morning," "Thank you," "Excuse me," "Please," and "May I..." can cause real headaches down the road.**

Epidemiologists have used the term "tipping point" to describe how an infectious disease suddenly escalates from a few outbreaks to a full-on epidemic. If we tolerate just a little discourtesy, we invite rampant discourtesy. Forgetting to say "Good Morning," "Thank you," "Excuse me," "Please," and "May I..." encourages blatant incivility. People stop holding doors for each other, they don't wait for others to hop on an elevator, and they don't move aside to let others pass them in the hallways. Would you like to work in this kind of an environment? Not unless you have rocks in your head. Don't underestimate the importance of simple courtesy.

3. What is a surefire way of ticking off workmates when sharing a communal kitchen or dining lounge?

#### **Inconsiderately leaving the place a mess.**

Do you want to be perceived as a lout? Simply leave any housekeeping tasks to your colleagues and watch how quickly you become persona non grata. Don't litter countertops and tables with your dirty plates, silverware or food wrappers. Clean up after yourself. It is unpleasant for others to have to clean up after you, and a break room should be uncluttered and agreeable. No one wants to relax or eat a meal in a pig sty.

4. What vice can torpedo your admission to the career fast track?

#### **Using Profanity.**

Profanity is just the order of the day, correct? No sir! Despite the fact that we HEAR vulgar language on the radio, in films, in some kinds of music and on the sidewalk, it is NOT mainstream. Plenty of folks are offended by off-color language, and you need to remember that when you are associating with others. Think of it this way: It's more about the fact that you don't care if your language bothers the folks around you and less about the profanity itself.

Whether on the phone, in a meeting or in ordinary conversation—no one person should dominate the chatter.

5. What common act of oafishness labels you a loser?

**Talking at the top of your lungs in a working environment.**

I couldn't write an article about rude behavior without including at least one paragraph about the abuse of cell phones, Bluetooth devices and workplace speaker phones. No matter what device you are using or who you are speaking to, it is NEVER a good idea to raise the volume of your voice so that anyone in your vicinity can overhear what you are saying. It's ridiculous to expect your colleagues to get their work done if you are loudly blathering on in the next cubicle or outside the door of an office. Be respectful of others and speak in a normal tone of voice.

6. The failure to extend this courtesy will turn off your colleagues faster than a speeding bullet. What is it?

**Ignoring People.**

Never underestimate the good will that an acknowledgement will create. So often in our hurried lifestyles, we forget to greet people with a smile or a polite nod. Ignoring someone as you pass in the hallway or enter a room is unacceptable and hurtful. What kind of message are you sending if you avert your eyes or pretend that another co-worker is invisible? A moment or two of courtesy goes a long way toward building morale. ●



I couldn't write an article about rude behavior without including at least one paragraph about the abuse of cell phones ...

# Pride-Based Leadership Series – Part IV Why Your Employees Aren't Producing More

by David C. Miller



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## COPING IN TODAY'S CHALLENGING ECONOMY

In this series, we've been exploring how to be more influential by learning how to monitor and manage productive tension. Simply put, "tension management" can be defined as *the process of affecting a person's level of urgency in a way that results in optimal performance.*

As we build upon the previous parts of this series<sup>1</sup>, let's turn our attention to a critical question in today's environment: How do I get my employees to be even more productive?

In today's tough economy, we're all trying to do more with less. Your team may have gone through downsizing, but the workload you're carrying has not been reduced—in fact it has probably increased!

With the challenges growing at a rapid pace, we need our employees to be as productive as possible. If your employees aren't producing as much as you'd like, it comes down to one of two reasons: **either their tension is too high or too low.**

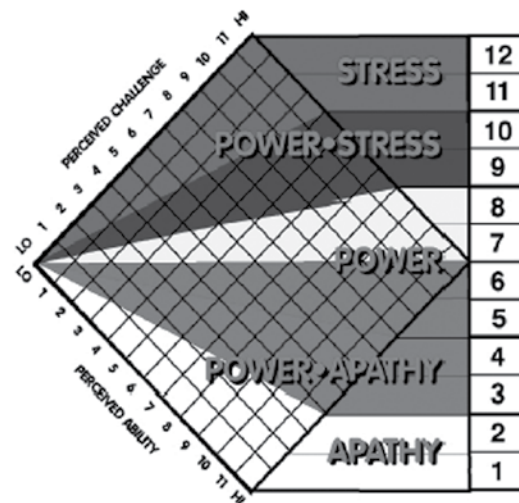
## A QUICK REFRESHER

To assess where optimal productivity occurs, we need to look at two things: 1) Our employee's *level of tension* around a specific activity and 2) their *Threshold of Activation* around that activity.

When examining tension it helps to reference T. Falcon Napier's ChangeGrid—an assessment tool that measures a person's productive tension. The ChangeGrid shows five levels of productive tension from high to low: STRESS, POWER-STRESS, POWER, POWER-APATHY and APATHY.

At any moment in time when it comes to performing a specific activity, we all experience one of these five levels of tension.

## THE CHANGEGRID



Every location on the Grid represents a level of tension, some that tend to be more productive than others.

We also need to know where their Threshold of Activation (TOA) is. The TOA is the *level of tension where someone takes immediate, definitive action.* The TOA is dynamic and can vary by individual, activity and moment in time.

The rest of this article will look at the two problem scenarios causing suboptimal productivity: 1) Tension is too high (STRESS), and 2) Tension is too low (APATHY).

<sup>1</sup> Parts 1 through 3 of the Pride-Based Leadership Series were published in the April, July and October 2009 issues of *The Stepping Stone*, available on the SOA Web site.



## SCENARIO #1: YOUR EMPLOYEE'S TENSION IS TOO HIGH

One reason employees aren't taking enough action is because tension is too high. If our tension level is above our TOA, productivity plummets. STRESS occurs when a person sees the challenge of completing a task as greatly exceeding their ability. It sounds like this: *"I know I need to do something, I don't know what to do, just tell me what to do and I'll do it!"*

In STRESS we are experiencing unresourceful emotions that cause us to magnify the problems. Thus, our decision-making is very reactive, resulting in false starts or lack of action because we're paralyzed.

One version of STRESS is called OVERWHELM. STRESS is all about an activity being too difficult for us to handle. In OVERWHELM, we may have plenty of ability to handle a specific activity, we just have too many of them to handle all at once!

OVERWHELM can feel exactly the same as STRESS because our whole list feels like one big task—thus, *"I don't know how to get this whole list accomplished!"* This is very common in today's environment where we have fewer employees to lift a heavier load. Additionally, managers tend to distribute the work in an uneven fashion, doling out most of the tasks to the more able employees, throwing them into overwhelm.

Whether your employees are in STRESS or OVERWHELM, they are in a very counter-productive place.

### WHEN TENSION IS TOO HIGH: UTILIZE DOWNGRID MANEUVERS

We need to lower tension in this scenario so that people get out of overwhelm into a more creative, resourceful place to tackle the challenges. In gen-



eral, there are four ways to lower tension:

#### 1) Normalize the situation.

For example, letting people know that the whole industry is experiencing these challenges, can have the subtle effect of lowering tension.

#### 2) Simplify the tasks.

Your employees may be overwhelmed because they're trying to take on many big challenges all at once. If we can help them break the challenges down to manageable parts, and give them a track to run on, we will reduce their tension.

#### 3) Add resources.

Tension goes up when resources are perceived to be limited or nonexistent. Although we may actually have less in the way of resources, we need to provide additional support to lower tension. As a leader you must think out-of-the box and be creative to provide

... managers tend to distribute the work in an uneven fashion, doling out most of the tasks to the more able employees, throwing them into overwhelm.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18



these resources to your employees. These resources could consist of time, money, technology, people, training, coaching and mentoring—just to name a few.

#### 4) Restore resources.

When we're in STRESS, we forget the resources that are already available to us. To lower tension, you need to remind your team about the resources they already possess. This could be the resources listed above as well as internal resources like their skills, talents, knowledge and expertise.

## SCENARIO # 2: YOUR EMPLOYEE'S TENSION IS TOO LOW

When tension is too low and far below our TOA, productivity is suboptimal. This scenario is much more insidious and, ironically, much more common than tension being too high. In my work with leadership teams, I find that more employees are in APATHY around their mission-critical activities than in STRESS.

In fact, I would go as far as to say that APATHY causes more productivity problems in an organization than STRESS. What's interesting is that companies provide plenty of stress-management programs, but where are the apathy management programs?

How could so many be in APATHY in the midst of a bad economy and job market? It seems like people would be on pins-and-needles to keep their jobs and thus be working harder. The main reason we see many people in APATHY around their mission-critical activities is not because they are not feeling stress—they are just not in Stress about their mission-critical activities!

Let's be clear, the level of tension called APATHY doesn't mean someone is "apathetic". It simply means "without concern." APATHY occurs when

someone perceives their ability to greatly exceed the challenge of accomplishing a task. It's the natural byproduct of mastery. So it would seem we would want all of our employees to achieve mastery and be at this level. But let's look at the downsides of APATHY.

APATHY sounds like this: *"Do something? I don't need to do anything. Things are fine just the way they are."* APATHY represents a place of **untapped potential and unrealized profits**.

What happens in APATHY is that a person stops adapting to the changing world, they get bored and disengaged, thus the great abilities this person possesses never get fully utilized.

Case in point, I was debriefing a woman's ChangeGrid who had most of her job responsibilities in APATHY and POWER-APATHY. You could tell that she was really good at what she did. But she told me she was interviewing at two different companies because she was "yawning at her desk"—bored out of her skull by her current job. I wonder if her boss has any clue that she's interviewing and will be gone in short order!

So many employees are in APATHY because organizations tend to be great at providing training, but are lacking at giving their employees appropriate challenges. So people drift DOWNGRID. Ironically, the talents of these employees are the very assets an organization needs to leverage in order to handle the challenges of today's environment.

## WHEN TENSION IS TOO LOW: UTILIZE UPGRID MANEUVERS

So how do we take advantage of all this untapped potential and unrealized profits when our employees are in APATHY? We need to move them UpGrid, which requires much more in terms of management skills to accomplish. There are four ways to raise tension:

**1) Raise the standards.**

Your employees perceive that they are lacking challenge. If they feel they have the ability of a “10” and the challenge is only a “2”, it’s time to give them more and raise the bar.

Now you may not feel they are knocking the ball out of the park, but they do. My question is, “Where’s the proof?” Have you clearly defined performance standards and expectations? Are you and your employees referencing the same scorecard? If you’re not sure, the first step is to clarify the expectations.

If that doesn’t raise tension enough, then raise the bar some more.

**2) Change the Task.**

Another way to raise tension is to change the task. How do we put all that mastery to work? Let’s change or vary the task. For example, if you have an employee who is great at dealing with IT projects, rather than relegating all such projects his way and making him feel pigeon-holed, why not let him train the rest of your team on how to be a masterful project manager?

You can change the task by adding a challenge or reward; making it more lively or fun; including an element of fun competition.

**3) Awaken Emotions.**

Emotions found downgrid are complacency, boredom and depression. If we want to move someone to POWER, we need to awaken emotions of pride and confidence. They have the mastery; inspire them to apply that mastery to handle the huge challenges your organization faces. Elicit the pride that’s in them.

**4) Boost Accountability.**

A research study conducted by Patrick Lencioni, author of *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, revealed that leaders struggle most with holding their peers and employees accountable. In our work we find

that accountability is near the top of the list of skills lacking among today’s leaders.

There are many reasons why this is, but a primary one is that holding employees accountable takes a lot of effort and managers are overwhelmed and time-deprived. For many, it’s easier to do it themselves than to get their direct report to accomplish a task at a proficient level.

It’s a high calling but if you’re willing to answer this call, you will set yourself far apart as a great and effective leader.

Remember, an effective accountability system has four elements:

- Clearly defined performance standards,
- Meaningful rewards,
- Meaningful consequences, and
- An enforcer.

Do you know where your team’s tension is around the activities critical to the mission of your organization? If you would like to know where it is, contact us (215-968-2483) and we can arrange a group profile using our proprietary instrument, the ChangeGrid. Once you know where their tension is, you will be able to implement a program to offer the support they need to achieve optimal performance. ●

*David C. Miller PCC, is president of Business Growth Strategies, an organization that specializes in helping executives become more influential leaders and consultants generate higher revenues for their practices. He is a Certified MasterStream Instructor providing coaching and training in MasterStream Precision Sales Techniques, Pride-Based Leadership and the ChangeWorks change management system. For more information, contact Dave at dave@BusinessGrowthNow.com or visit his Web sites www.BusinessGrowthNow.com (for sales) and www.LeadershipGrowthNow.com (for corporate leadership).*

**A research study conducted by Patrick Lencioni, author of *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, revealed that leaders struggle most with holding their peers and employees accountable.**

# Why You Should Work with a Recruiter

by Steve Glaeser



Steve Glaeser is an actuarial recruiter based in Colorado Springs, Colo. To obtain a free Career Map, contact him at [steveglaeser@juno.com](mailto:steveglaeser@juno.com) or 719.278.3883.

Everyone knows that *people* create profits—or more exactly—the right people make a company profitable. Author Jim Collins writes in his best-selling book, *Good to Great*, that companies must first “have the right people on the bus” and then have those people in the “right seats on the bus.”

Do you have all the right people on your bus? Should some be let off at the next stop?

Some companies will thrive in these challenging economic times, and many will fold. Those that win will be efficient, forward-looking, strategic, well-partnered and bold.

Their leaders will be the same.

If people are the key to profits, companies must find the *right* people—especially at the executive level, *right* away.

So why not just “go fishing?” Put HR on the job, take out multiple job site ads, collect resumes, have someone sort them and select the best? Simple: wrong lake, stale bait, wrong technique. If the traditional methods worked, you wouldn’t be looking now, right?

First, the top talent in your field probably isn’t looking for a new position, so they won’t see your ads (wrong lake). Second, if a “big fish” happens to be “in the lake” will your ad give them a reason to consider your company? Top professionals know not to answer blind ads (stale bait). If you use your company’s name in the ad, do you really want your competition to know you’re looking? Third, (no offense to the hard-working HR professionals out there) will the person who sorts the resumes recognize the talent (or lack of it) behind the paper (wrong technique)? Is it likely that a computer program can select a real specialist, a truly “out of the box” thinker? (Unlikely).

Why partner with a recruiter?

## RECRUITERS PAY FOR THEMSELVES

*“Recruiters cost too much!”*

Ever had a bad hire? What’s the cost of a less-than-stellar hire? Executives who make poor decisions cost companies millions. Add to that ongoing overhead expenses of HR labor, advertising, office support, etc.—you get the picture. Recruiters, on the other hand, will use their time, their advertising and their networks to find the talent who brings millions to the company.

*“Should I pay for a headhunter when I have full-time HR staffers who know what I need?”* Great question, and yes, you should.

Even if the HR staff knows exactly what talent you need, they don’t have access to them. Why not?

- The top talents aren’t looking for a new position.
- It is unethical for a company to recruit directly from a competitor.
- If HR people hire in more than one specialty, they aren’t specialists.

Recruiters, previously known (affectionately) as “headhunters,” can be tasked to find a top executive from nationwide competitors with no holds barred. Tell them who you want and let them loose.

Again, top candidates aren’t looking for a new position. They must be sold on the fact that your company gives them the chance to make a difference and do something great. Recruiters sell your company like a partner would—the only thing you need to do is provide the authentic opportunity.



## EFFICIENCY

Highly trained recruiters understand their field, know the position requirements well, know your corporate culture and sort for the best, knowing that you hire them to present only the best. Candidates are vetted well (the best recruiters will produce a written report from interviews with the candidate's references, if requested), and as industry specialists, recruiters know who is at the top of their game and can find them—fast. No wasted ads, no wasted interviews, just the right candidate in the right seat on your bus, making profits—now.

When you make them a partner in the process, whether you hire them for a retained (exclusive) search or a contingency search, recruiters get paid when they bring the right candidate.

## EFFECTIVENESS

Truly professional recruiters offer a candidate guarantee. The guarantee works like a warranty of sorts: if the candidate leaves your company within an agreed upon time (and top professionals always have alternatives to your company) the recruiter replaces the incumbent with a qualified candidate—at no additional fee.

## PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

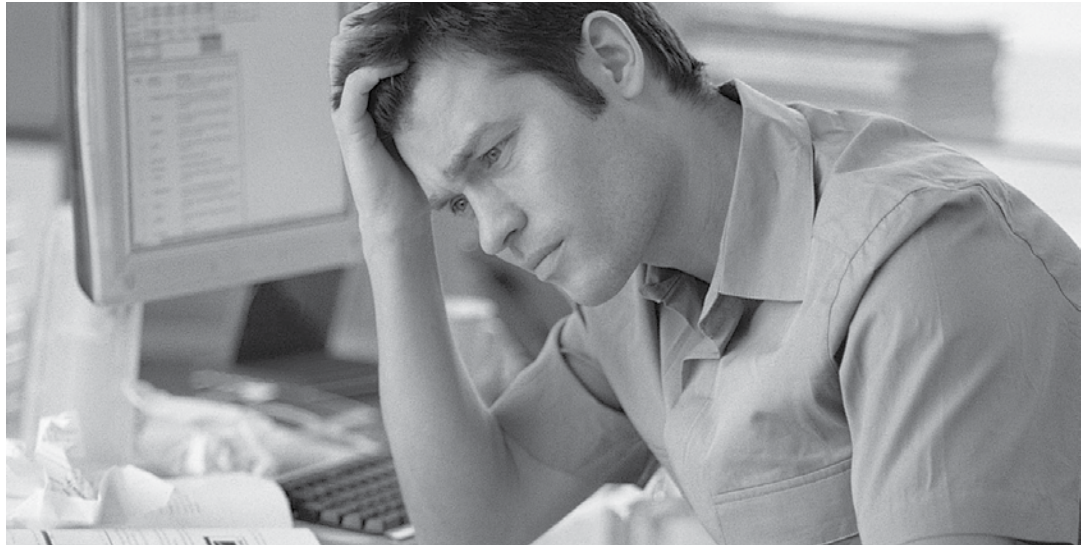
Recruiters know the candidate's situation in great detail and can often negotiate win-win solutions from salary targets to family requirements and relocation issues, saving your company thousands. They develop a personal, "career coach" relationship that often stretches for months and avoids the traditionally adversarial HR/candidate tug o' war. You get a satisfied candidate (and candidate family), they get a new position where they're ready to produce results . ●

# How to Reduce Screw-ups

by Doreen Stern



Dr. Doreen Stern is a motivational speaker, writer and business coach in Hartford, Conn. She is currently working on a book entitled, *Change Your Life in 17 Minutes!* She can be reached at [Docktor@DoreenStern.com](mailto:Docktor@DoreenStern.com), or at 860.293.1619.



It's the top of the eighth inning, in a home game between the Chicago Cubs and their rivals, the Minnesota Twins. Cubs outfielder Milton Bradley has his hands cupped toward the sky to catch a routine fly ball.

Thump! The ball lands securely in Bradley's glove and he generously tosses it into the stands. Then he poses for pictures.

Only thing is that Bradley erroneously thinks he has just ended the inning, when in reality, there was only ONE out. As a result of Bradley's blunder, the Twins score a run and eventually win the game.

Do you ever make foolish mistakes like the one Bradley made that cool, sunny day in June at Wrigley Field (6/12/09)? Maybe not as extreme, but do you ever miss a highway exit because you're talking on the phone or thinking about something else? Have you ever missed a due date when you had it clearly circled on your calendar? Or have you left your office (or home) without the file you need for an important meeting?

Mea culpa. I do these things more than I'd like to admit. In fact, just yesterday I sewed a button on the

inside of a boiled wool jacket, instead of on the front of it. What can account for these types of screw-ups? And how can we reduce them?

I call it "spacing out." On its own, your brain goes into "screen saver" mode: it stops focusing and begins to daydream. Neuroscientists call it the "default mode network" (DMN), and say it's one of your busiest neurological systems.

The ability to concentrate is one of your most important skills. Think of Tiger Woods: one of the reasons he is the number one golfer in the world is that he is usually able to tune out extraneous thoughts and hit the ball with same precision with which he hit it in practice sessions..

Focus is like a muscle: you can build up your concentration by doing multiple reps with light weights. What do I mean?

You can help your brain learn to focus by:

1. writing down your priorities
2. selecting one small part of ONE of your priorities
3. setting a timer for 17 minutes
4. focusing on that small part for 17 minutes, and

5. celebrating your success, by pumping your fist in the air and shouting “YES!” (Praise stimulates the hormone dopamine, linked to joy.)

“Why 17 minutes?” you will surely ask.

If you’re like most Americans, you’ll be increasing your concentration by a **whopping 50 percent**. (Did you know the average American spends only 11 minutes on any task before being interrupted or interrupting themselves?)

Also, you’ll be tricking your brain into focusing, because 17 minutes seems so innocuous, your brain says, “Sure, I can do that.”

Finally, your brain loves novelty: it becomes intrigued because ‘17’ is a prime number.

**Where can you find a timer?** You have a cell phone, don’t you? Even the most rudimentary phones have an alarm (usually under ‘settings’ and ‘tools’). At home, you can set the timer on your kitchen stove.

**What’s in it for you?** Minute by minute, you’ll be increasing your muscle tone: becoming more like Tiger Woods, who usually makes his putts; rather than like Milton Bradley, who prematurely thought the inning was over and helped the other team win.

Most of all, you’ll develop the focus and concentration to achieve your deeply held dreams. ●

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# A Shorter Work Week?!

## (COMMENTARY ON *THE FOUR HOUR WORK WEEK* BY TIMOTHY FERRIS)

by David M. Walczak



David M. Walczak, FSA, is a specialist leader for Deloitte Consulting working in the Minneapolis practice office. He can be reached at [dwalczak@deloitte.com](mailto:dwalczak@deloitte.com).

Often times, Europeans will tease Americans about how hard they work and how they need to enjoy life a bit more. It makes me think about watching *The Jetsons* as a kid and being amazed at how automated and easy life would become in the future. Are you old enough to remember the advent of desktop computers in the '70s and '80s? There were people then who were convinced that the usefulness of actuaries / teachers / engineers / others would somehow be threatened.

In his book, *The Four Hour Work Week*, Tim Ferris doesn't use an entirely technological argument in making the case for all of us to be able to shorten our week at the office. In fact, this is as much a book about the author's philosophy of life as it is a roadmap to streamlining one's approach to working.

Mr. Ferris coins the term 'the new rich' in describing people who can live with the freedom of choice and motion that a traditionally defined wealthy person would, but with a key difference. He asks "*What makes someone rich?*" The book's answer is the ability to de-link life from someone else's schedule, to have the free time to pursue your passions in life and to do it without exhausting yourself financially. The challenge includes having to rise above our preconceptions about work, responsibility, and society and then drumming up the motivation and clarity of decision to execute.

Before making specific comments about the advice Ferris offers here, I want to preface with an industry-specific observation.

The book is theoretically geared toward all employees or management of any company. However, many of the author's anecdotes take place in a marketing, manufacturing or production environment with basic "lets make and sell widgets" type of challenges. I tried to be open-minded in considering how the tactics discussed would translate to an insurance company or consulting firm context as I read the book, but I have a few comments.

When working in an environment where new professionals are coming up the ranks and trying to learn from more experienced folks, it's just plain clear that in-person contact, even if it's not solving specific sales or manufacturing issues at the same time, is crucial to the ongoing mission. There are also just going to be some autocratic bosses or corporate cultures that don't believe in designing one's own job and the style with which it is carried out. It is equally clear that many rules are in place in Corporate America, especially in old-school financial services companies, simply due to inertia and staying within somebody's comfort zone. All of that said, pitching himself as a contrarian may also give Ferris the appearance of an outlaw or scammer. Remember that guy you knew in high school who tried to get around the rules for the sake of it rather than for the sake of a better outcome?

In *The Four Hour Work Week*, Ferris coins the acronym **DEAL** to lay out his top-down structure for reorganizing and freeing your time:

**Definition** means to set personal goals and lay out obstacles that might hinder them as well as recognizing the expectations created by your own environment. What would it mean to be contrarian?

**Elimination** deals with managing time and adherence to the 80/20 rule – "80 percent of results come from 20 percent of total effort". It's possible to get a ton of stuff done each day, but is it in the sweet spot that moves along your key definitional plans in as brisk a manner as possible? A very key set of thoughts here revolves around optimal use of everyday time management tools. The book asserts that tools such as e-mail, PDAs, souped-up phones and Twitter do more to hinder you than to help you since you can become an ineffective slave to technology and feel like you are accomplishing things.

**Automation** lays out the concept of taking care of the income demands upon your life by doing key tasks once and letting the machinery you build keep things moving. Outsourcing repeatable tasks that are



algorithmic, like big companies do with call centers or certain IT functionality, is a large part of this section. I'll mention again here that the environment in which actuaries operate is much less akin to personal outsourcing than selling/shipping health supplements would seem to be. By the way, Ferris notes that if you have a nine to five type job, the order of steps will be DELA instead.

**Liberation** may be the true goal of the author and his multitude of followers. Can you free yourself from a location, a company, even a given skill set and become one of the new rich?

It seems like Ferris has gamed human nature in writing a book on “getting out from under the man” and enjoying retirement-type activities right now—audiences are gung ho on that type of messaging. Who

would want to live for a point in time 25 years from now when it's possible to somehow work outside of the typical systems people use and pursue the life we want immediately?

I visited the author's blog and even a few sites that were critical of him for not just telling people to become ‘scammers’, but scamming them into buying his book and other online offerings! My personal jury is still out. The analytical thinker and student of economics lurking in me is skeptical that we could all work toward *The Four Hour Work Week* and still maintain a growing GDP—who is going to do the heavy lifting if we're all pursuing tango lessons in Buenos Aires?! ●

Can you free yourself from a location, a company, even a given skill set and become one of the new rich?

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