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December 2019

The CFO Advisor

Guidance for Small Business Success™

Another year has quickly passed us by, and as we get ready to close out 2019, it's important to set ourselves up to get 2020 started on the right foot.

This issue of "The CFO Advisor," focuses on peace, health, and prosperity as we get ready to ring in the new year. You'll read about how to keep a safe and peaceful work environment, as well as ways to keep motivated and inspired in tough times. You'll even learn tips on how to make it through the holiday shopping season!

From all of us at "The CFO Advisor," we don't only wish you happy reading, but we also wish you a **Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2020!**

Until next month...

Dwight L. Hulse, CPA/CITP, CGMA

Want To Increase Production? Find Out What Gets Your Staff Going



When you try to inspire employees, keep in mind that the rewards that you would like to have are not necessarily the rewards they would like to have. What inspires one person probably won't inspire another person, because true inspiration is about helping someone get

something they want very badly. And work can be a place where employees make money, or attain a lifestyle, or get fulfillment from feeling like they are good at something so that they don't burn out, get disgusted, and quit.

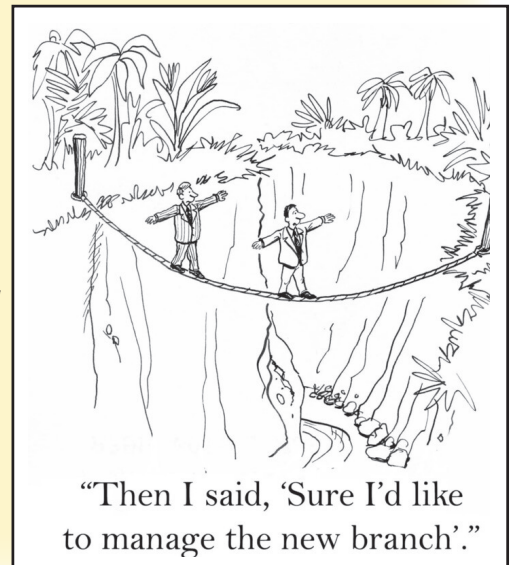
Truly inspiring employees takes some work. According to Jennifer White in *Drive Your People Wild Without Driving Them Crazy*, there's a big difference between motivating employees and inspiring them. Motivation she says is an outside force that carries pain; it "pushes, kicks, and forces your team to get things done." Inspiration, she says, is effortless. "When you're inspired, you naturally do

the things you need to do."

So, back to the question of how to inspire your workers. You might take the advice of President Harry Truman on how to help children. Truman said, "I have found the best way to give advice to your children is to find out what they want and then advise them to do it."

With a few minor changes, this quote can help you get to the treasure hidden in each and every one of your employees. Hang this revised quote up where you can be reminded every day that your most important job is to help your employees get what they want — because an inspired employee can move mountains.

The best way to inspire your employees is to find out what they want and then help them get it. If you don't already shoot for inspiration in the workplace, try it and see the amazing results.



"Then I said, 'Sure I'd like to manage the new branch'."

Holiday Shopping Tips That Will Keep Your Budget Intact

Before you start your holiday shopping it's a good idea to take stock of what it means to be a smart shopper. Here are some basics that can keep you out of trouble:

- **Before you buy anything, sit down and determine the amount you want to spend.** Then work up a budget for everything you will need to buy to complete your holiday shopping. This can be tricky. You don't want to fool yourself into thinking you're keeping within budget when you've forgotten to add in everything you will need. Don't forget to add in the cost of stocking stuffers, wrapping paper, shipping — all those things that are so easy to forget when you are creating your budget — and which can put you in debt in the year to come.
- **Before you head out the door or log on to make your purchases, educate yourself about what's out there, and who has the best prices.** Doing this has never been easier. Get on the Internet and use the sites that compare retail prices. Check out websites for shipping deals. Surf for great ideas for gifts if you're stumped. Look for coupons. Peruse newspapers for sale inserts and deals. Then decide if you're better-off making your purchase online or in the brick-and-mortar arena.
- **Make a list.** And then follow it. Don't change the amount you want to spend or what you want to buy when you are shopping. This will get you in trouble and make it hard to stay within your budget.
- **If you are going to make online purchases, make sure you know what the deal is.** Do you have to purchase a certain dollar amount to get free shipping? Is free shipping available, and if not, how much will it add to your purchase, and does that cancel out your reason for buying online in the first place? Also, remember to check out shipping deadlines.
- **Don't use your credit card, if you can avoid it.** You'll be happier if you avoid running up debt. However, if you make online purchases, it's safer to use a credit card than your debit card. If you do use your credit card, don't purchase beyond your immediate ability to pay off what you purchased.
- **Think gift cards.** Gift cards are a great way of staying within your budget, because you avoid the temptation of buying something more expensive that you stumble upon while shopping. If you decide to buy gift cards, however, make sure you understand their terms. Some have expiration dates; others deduct percentages after periods of time that the card is not used.



Manage The Holiday Atmosphere With A Balance Of Spirit And Duty



December is a month of celebrations — Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, New Year's — and many distractions as well. While you don't want to squelch your employees' enjoyment and enthusiasm for the holidays, you also don't want to spend the month watching workplace productivity plummet. Here's how to maintain the right balance:

- **Celebrate accomplishments.** Let your workforce feel good about what they've achieved this year. Remind them of successes, small and major — even if your most substantial achievement is just surviving a tough year. Emphasize the value of working together on common goals.
- **Set the right example.** If employees see you sticking to your job during December, they'll be more likely to stay attentive to their own responsibilities. At the same time, be a little flexible to show employees you understand the stress and excitement they're feeling.
- **Support the festive atmosphere.** If you try to suppress any holiday spirit, employees may go "under the radar" to celebrate. Encourage people to decorate, bring treats, or set up a gift exchange so they can enjoy the season openly.
- **Plan for the future.** Looking ahead to new projects and goals can be more attractive when people are feeling excited and hopeful. Get employees involved in strategic planning now, instead of waiting for the day after New Year's, when everyone feels tired, let down, or possibly hungover.

Are You In Need of a Trusted Business Advisor?

If you are not my client and would like to explore whether we might be a good fit, please contact me. As an experienced business advisor, I have worked not only in private and public industries but also across many functional areas and can help you implement best practice solutions to improve profits.



Do You Have A Tough Accounting / Finance Question You Want Answered?

I love hearing from my small business clients and friends who enjoy reading my monthly newsletter. I'm always looking to answer pressing questions you might have relating to small business.

If you have a question, tip or idea, please call me at 352-450-2880 or email me at dwight@dlhulseconsulting.com. Perhaps I'll feature you in a future issue!

WATCH FOR THESE WORKPLACE DANGERS

You want to stay healthy on the job, right? Then watch out for these all-too-common workplace hazards, laid out on the *Business Franchise* website:



• **Heavy workloads and stress.** If you're a manager, don't overload your employees with more work than they can reasonably accomplish.



Whatever your position, learn to manage stress appropriately so it doesn't cause health problems or inappropriate behavior.



• **Bullying and harassment.** Safety isn't always a physical issue. Bullying behavior and harassment take a mental toll that can adversely affect anyone's health.

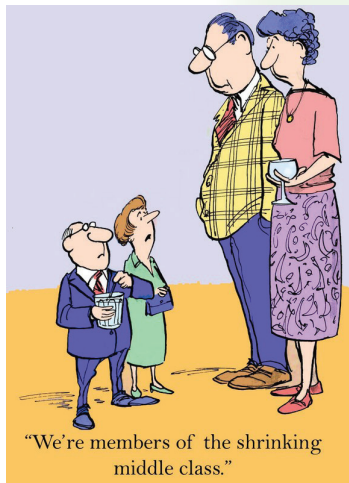


Keep an eye open, and step in whenever you see anything inappropriate.

• **Clutter.** Keep your workspace clean and organized. You can trip over a box or extension cord, or overstuffed shelves could fall over on someone.

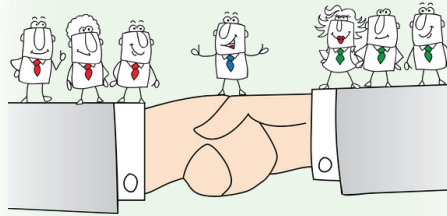
• Inaccessible safety equipment.

Fire extinguishers, first-aid kits, and other basic tools should be clearly marked and easy to get at. Check them regularly to ensure that they're in good working order should you need them.



"We're members of the shrinking middle class."

When To Get Involved In Conflicts Between Staffers



You can find lots of advice on the Internet about how to help employees settle a disagreement. But before taking any action, you have to decide whether jumping into the fray is a good idea. You don't want to involve yourself in every workplace squabble. First ask yourself these questions:

• **How important is the issue?** If the conflict is trivial or doesn't affect your department or organization, you should probably steer clear.

• **How important is the relationship?** If the disagreement threatens to create a serious breach between employees who need to work closely together, you may have to intervene in order to preserve harmony on your team.

• **What would happen if you did nothing?** Some conflicts fade or burn out quickly, unless something exacerbates them. If the situation doesn't seem to pose any serious threat, you're probably safe sitting it out.

• **What do you want to happen?** If you believe a certain outcome is desirable, think about how you might bring it about — or how you can avoid the problems of a negative outcome. If you have no preference, you might be wise not to interfere.

Train Yourself To Be Accountable

Goals are important to a successful business, but they're meaningless if you don't commit to them wholeheartedly. Here's some advice from the *Supportti* website on how



to hold yourself accountable for your progress:

• **Start with a plan.** Set a start date and a deadline for achieving your goal. Then identify the steps you'll take on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis to get from point A to point B. Include as many steps as you can think of. Leaving something out can derail your effort.

• **Make goals visible.** Create a tangible reminder of your goal that you'll see every day. A picture of what you want to accomplish or a note detailing the benefits can reinforce your motivation every time you see it.

• **Track your progress.** Crossing items off a to-do list gives you a sense of completion. Set up a system for marking off the positive steps you've taken, and you'll look forward to doing more and moving closer to your objective.

• **Work with a buddy.** Tell a colleague or friend about your goal, and ask him or her to check in regularly on how you're doing. Answering to someone else means you'll work to avoid having to admit that you're not following through on your effort.

Quotes:



"Opportunities don't happen; you create them." — **Chris Grosser**

"The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any." — **Alice Walker**

"Like dreams, statistics are a form of wish fulfillment." — **Jean Baudrillard**

"Success is not in what you have, but who you are." — **Bo Bennett**





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Four Paths To Inspiration

Creativity calls for patience and willingness to make mistakes along the way to success. The *Thrive Global* website offers some advice on how to begin this sometimes difficult path:

- **Anticipate the future.** Look at trends instead of the status quo. What's changing, and how can you take advantage of it? This helps you challenge conventional thinking and start finding new areas to explore.
- **Let yourself play.** Don't take your projects too seriously. Take time to relax and do something different. When working, give yourself the freedom to try something new and outlandish. Even if it leads nowhere, it should loosen up your mind so you can spot new possibilities.
- **Let your mind wander.** Focus is important, but so is a wide perspective. Think about the project you're working on, and allow your mind to explore all the angles without worrying about what's "right." A wandering mind will sometimes come across a useful idea.
- **Embrace ambiguity.** Look at elements that don't seem related, and try to forge connections in your mind. Looking for similarities instead of differences can help you link ideas usefully and develop more options than what's immediately apparent.



Safety Hazards Of The Gig Economy

Today's gig economy, in which more and more people work as contractors, freelancers, or temporary workers, has created a number of safety issues employers should be cautious with. The *JD Supra* website shares a list of potential problems to watch for:

- **Many gig jobs are in higher-risk industries.** Ride-sharing companies like Uber and Lyft are open to dangers like crashes and unlawful behavior on the streets and highways. Make sure to emphasize safety in every situation.
- **Transient workers may not have experience.** Some gig jobs require specialized skills. You may choose to train gig workers or confirm that they have the proper experience before they start.
- **Workers may not know how to report problems and concerns.** Who should the worker talk to about potential hazards? Create a robust reporting system so gig workers can quickly and easily express their concerns.
- **Many gig workers are young.** A recent college grad may gravitate to a gig arrangement in order to make money quickly. However, younger workers may not be as careful as they should be, especially because they lack experience and perspective. Closer supervision is in order, as well as reinforcing the need to be safe on the job.

