

You Will Leave Your Business

"Begin with the End In Mind." -Stephen Covey, speaker and author of The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People.

by Jeff Johnson, CPA and Tom Siders, CPA

Serving customers and growing the business. For many people in your shoes, those are the two tenets that drive most decisions. That's great, but you also need to factor in where you're headed, right?

You will leave your business. It may not be today or tomorrow. It may not be by choice, but you will leave your business. Do you have a plan for that? When you leave, what would that look like? If something tragic happens and your exit is unexpected, what happens to the business? What effect will it have on your family? A plan not only provides context and the basis for adapting to unanticipated events, it also provides alternatives based on assumptions about your goals, objectives and resources that may need revision.

Unfortunately, even owners who have great business plans often fly without Exit Plans. If an unanticipated event arises (such as a deterioration in the economy), they shelve their exit plan thinking (and thinking is all they have since they haven't created a written plan) because their only option is to wait for conditions to improve. These successful owners would never consider a similar passive response to be acceptable in a business plan.

If the importance of an exit plan isn't obvious yet, consider this:

First, according to a PricewaterhouseCoopers' survey of 364 CEOs of privately held, fast-growing companies, 65% planned to exit within a decade. Translation: there may be a glut of companies on the market which may drive down the value of your firm.

Second, if you're a Baby Boomer, the generation following you is smaller in size so expect far more sellers than buyers in the marketplace.

Third, even during boom times less than half of the owners who have tried to sell their business actually were able to accomplish it (2005 Business Reference Guide, Tom West).

Fourth, if you choose to wait for a rising tide in the economy and the M&A market to exit, you'll lose control of the timing of your exit, how much and the terms of payment you'll receive, and even the type of buyer.

Exit planning is what we mean by working on, not just in, your business, and it pays off long before you leave. The process of creating a plan involves determining the firm's current value, the factors that may have the biggest impact on future value, your financial needs and taking time to consider what different exit options might look like. These are all factors that can, and should, play a role in your day-to-day decision-making, providing one more tenet to guide you.

When you begin with the end in mind, you'll know what to do when you get there, despite the glut of sellers, dearth of buyers, volatility of the market, and the myriad of known and unknown influences on your business.

One of the most successful entrepreneurs and planners in American history, John Pierpoint Morgan, said, "The wise man bridges the gap by laying out the path by means of which he can get from where he is to where he wants to go."

About the Authors

Jeff Johnson and Tom Siders are CPAs and partners with L. Harris Partners. Jeff and Tom each have over 30 years experience in successfully helping business owners plan for and transition out of their business. You can reach them at LHarrisPartners.com or (952) 944-3303.



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CMS finds most companies are not aware of this federal tax credit, or if they are familiar with the program, they don't have the resources or don't want to ask the sensitive questions needed to acquire the tax credits. That's exactly the reason many companies outsource this function to CMS. CMS performs the screening process of each new hire and thus protects the employer from any sensitive

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About the Author

Brian Kelly is the President of Cost Management Services (CMS) and has over 25 years experience in the Employee Management industry. CMS has been providing employment tax credit "WOTC" processing services for over 15 years for companies of all sizes, including several large CPA companies, across the United States. Follow Brian on Twitter @cmsbrian or visit his website at www.cmshris.com

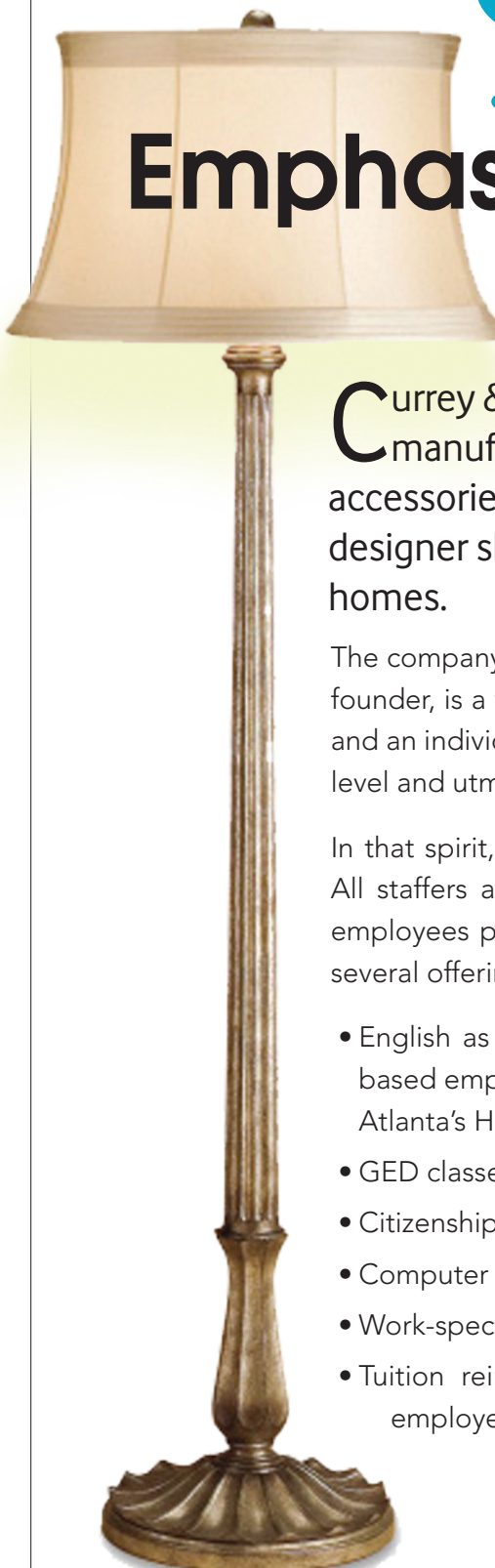
QUALIFYING GROUPS

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- Other TANF recipient - member of a family that received TANF payments for any 9 months during the 18-month period ending on the hiring date.
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- 18-39 year-old SNAP (food stamps) recipient -- member of a family that received SNAP benefits (food stamps) for either the 6-month period ending on the hiring date, or for at least 3 of the 5 months ending on the hiring date in the case of a family member who ceased to be eligible for such assistance under Section 6(o) of the Food Stamp Act of 1977.
- 18-39 year-old designated community resident -- individual who lives within an Empowerment Zone (EZ), or Rural Renewal County (RRC). New: On December 17, 2010, P.L. 111-312 reauthorized each HUD-designated urban Empowerment Zone (EZ) and each USDA-designated rural EZ from January 1, 2010 through December 31, 2011.
- 16-17 year-old summer youth -- individual who works for the employer between May 1 and September 15, and lives in an EZ.
- Vocational rehabilitation referral -- disabled person referred to the employer upon completion of (or while receiving) rehabilitation services approved by the State, the Ticket-to-Work Program, or the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Ex-felon -- individual who was convicted of a felony and who is hired within one year after the conviction or release from prison.
- SSI recipient -- individual who received Supplemental Security Income benefits for any month ending during the past 60-day period ending on the hiring date.

CURREY & COMPANY Y

Emphasis on Employees

by Alicia Anderson



Currey & Company is an Atlanta-based company that manufactures and sells high-end lighting, furniture and accessories to the designer market. Currey designs are featured in designer showrooms, elegant hotels and restaurants, and stylish homes.

The company's focus on its employees is what truly sets it apart. Robert Currey, the founder, is a visionary whose philosophy is that people are the heart of a business, and an individual's capabilities are essential to developing a company to its highest level and utmost potential.

In that spirit, the company offers unique educational programs to its employees. All staffers are eligible, regardless of position or tenure. Almost 70% of Currey employees participate in some program. Currey's education program consists of several offerings:

- English as a Second Language classes. About 60% of its roughly 100 Atlanta based employees are non-native English speakers – many employees come from Atlanta's Hispanic and Vietnamese communities.
- GED classes so employees can get their high school diplomas.
- Citizenship classes for those seeking to become American citizens.
- Computer classes, in Excel and other commonly-used applications.
- Work-specific instruction to help employees cross-train or acquire needed skills.
- Tuition reimbursement - the company pays 100% of college tuition for its employees.

You can learn more about Currey & Company at:
www.curreyco.com



Employees being trained at the Currey & Company facility in Georgia

The company's emphasis on employees doesn't stop with the education programs. Controller Mike Moran says, "During the height of the recession, we opted to furlough workers instead of instituting layoffs." The company also offers standard benefits (health, dental, 401(k), disability), as well as the ability to purchase product samples at significant discounts.

Lauren Gold is Currey's Education Coordinator. Gold started at Currey as a part-time ESL teacher, and now teaches many of the courses herself in the company's dedicated training room. Since the program's launch in 2002, yearly employee turnover has decreased to almost zero. Employee loyalty means that company managers spend relatively little time and money on staffing or recruiting.

Team member Juan Miguel Mir was recently awarded his GED, opting to take the exam in his second language, English. Mir said "I feel so little, so now I need to grow." Mariana Leal took citizenship classes at work, and became an American citizen in April, 2011.

In the shipping department, Alma Solano clearly summarized the benefits of the education program – she is working towards getting her GED on a "fast track," hoping to finish within six months. "To me, it's been great. Without this program, I would have to drive to a school and spend three or four hours a night attending school," said Alma. "Here, I can spend an hour and a half, not have to commute, and have more energy and time for my job – it's really motivated me!"

Currey's internal newsletter is an elegant, printed piece which highlights employee stories. A recent version includes a story from a

"I love the heart and soul of this company and feel very honored and blessed to be a part of it."

sales representative, who says "I love the heart and soul of this company and feel very honored and blessed to be a part of it." Currey & Company truly understands that investing in employees pays off in loyalty and

productivity, and the result is an environment of high achievement and cooperation among all levels of the company.



What is Preventing Your People from Achieving Optimal Performance?

by Dawn Westerberg

Ask any employee and they'll tell you that they've taken on a lot more responsibilities over the months and years – most of it maybe not what they wanted or expected. A lucky employer has people on the team who eagerly look for new challenges, a better way to build the mousetrap, ways to use tools to streamline tasks so that they can dig in to metrics and results that might suggest a more effective approach to attaining goals.

But often, these employees can be few and far between. More frequently there is a mood of resignation, doing what needs to be done and hoping that things will get better or another job opportunity will come along. While there may be some hopeless cases, as leaders, part of the burden is on us to make the workplace and the company objectives dynamic and inspirational to our team.

Mary Poppins (magical motivator and practically perfect in every way) used fun to inspire her young charges to seek optimal

performance. I can still remember Julie Andrews' lovely voice singing "In every job that must be done, there is an element of fun – you find the fun and snap – the job's a game." While this is an admittedly corny reference – there is undeniable truth in the message. Look around. Has the workplace become dreary and devoid of fun? Is it an environment of optimal performance?

Leading researcher, psychologist and author Mihaly Csikszetmihalyi uses the term "Flow" to define when we achieve optimal performance in an activity. You've probably

experienced flow – it's when you become so absorbed in an activity that you lose all track of time, thoughts settle down and you're in a mode of complete focus, and you seem to be operating at maximum effectiveness. There is an enormous sense of satisfaction that follows achieving the flow state.

It seems almost like serendipity when we enter a flow state. Most of us would love to be able to enter the flow state on demand. So what prevents us?

Csikszetmilhalyi's research indicates that there are two impediments to flow state: boredom and frustration. If we're unchallenged by an activity, it becomes boring. If we are too challenged by an activity, it becomes frustrating. We enter flow state when we are in the zone between boredom and frustration. We feel challenged but at the same time we feel equipped to meet the

challenge – that's the perfect environment for flow and optimal performance.

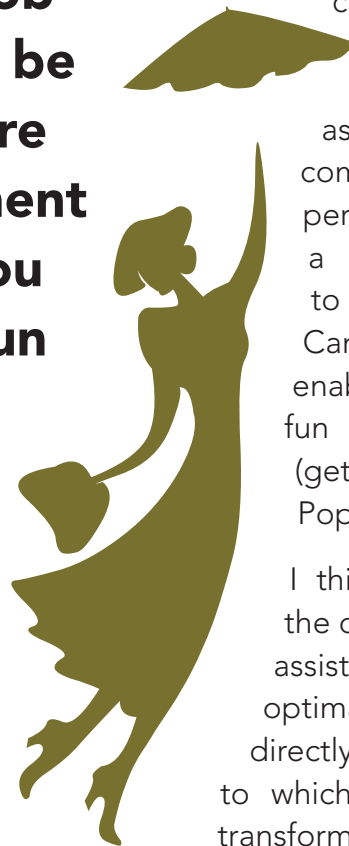
As leaders, we can help our team find that zone where flow is most likely to happen. Do we throw tools or technology at our team and wait to see if they sink or swim? Could an investment in training help to better position our teams to feel equipped to meet the challenge in front of them? Could a thoughtful conversation help

to illuminate a boring process as being vital to the company and give the person responsible a different mindset to bring to the task? Can we as leaders enable a little bit more fun in the workplace (getting back to Mary Poppins)?

I think we can. And the degree to which we assist our team in finding optimal performance directly affects the degree to which we will enjoy a transformed workplace.

“In every job that must be done, there is an element of fun - you find the fun and snap - the job's a game.”

Mary Poppins

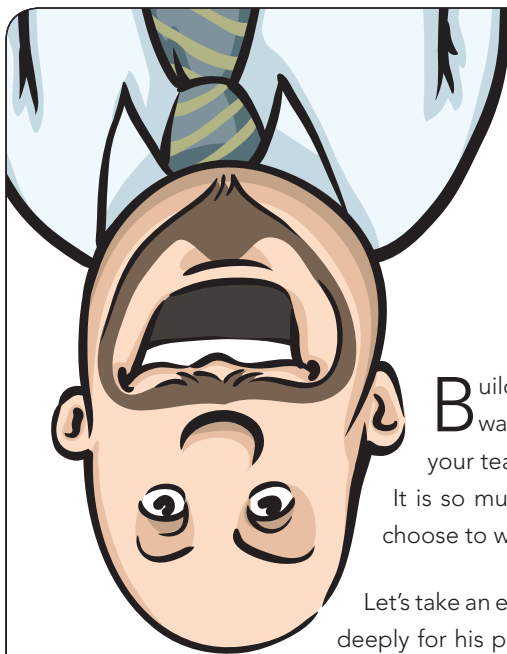


About Dawn Westerberg

Dawn Westerberg is the President of Dawn Westerberg Consulting LLC where she specializes in helping business owners fall in love with their business again through installing marketing systems that optimize fun work and awesome results. She is an Authorized Duct Tape Marketing Coach and has held senior management marketing positions at Sage, Lawson, and Open Systems. You can learn more about Dawn at www.dawnwesterberg.com.

Much Ado about Culture

by Apryl Hanson



Building culture in an organization sounds like a daunting task, and if you think of it that way it will be. Culture isn't a set of initiatives or tasks that you assign to someone on your team to execute in hopes that at the end of the performed tasks there will be culture. It is so much more. The everyday interactions inside your organization and the people you choose to work with as a part of your team determine the collective group culture.

Let's take an example of a CEO who has built a small company from the bottom up. This CEO cares deeply for his people. Often times during the day he can be found wandering from desk to desk asking people not only about their day but also about their families. When times are tough, he focuses his teams on how to get things done instead of blaming people for what hasn't been done. He doesn't yell but remains calm, and when people bring things to his attention he listens. If an employee has a family issue, he takes the time to understand the situation and work with the employee on what is needed. What type of culture is this building in the organization?

Take a look at another CEO - one that puts strict guidelines on his people about how many family photos can be left on their desk. He monitors the times they clock in and out of the office and puts limitations and consequences in place if people are late. He installs cameras to watch his employees when he is not in the office because he is worried that they aren't being as productive as they could be if he isn't there driving their behavior. What type of culture is this building in this organization?

What type of leader are you?

Every leader and every employee in a business builds culture. That seems to put a lot of responsibility on the Human Resources team in a company along with managers to find, hire and develop excellent people that build upon the culture. It only takes one bad manager, who takes his or her own approach, to misalign and derail a team and subsequently an entire company. As leaders, it is our role to keep managers and employees aligned to mission and vision and therefore culture.

Who do you have in your organization that is risking your company's culture?

Think about how your developing culture is impacting the productivity of your business. Many of us tend to avoid conflict and often sweep what we consider small issues under the table. Small issues and challenges that we see as potential derailing qualities need to be addressed as they appear so that your teams know that certain behaviors and attitudes aren't permitted. This is the way that culture begins to develop. Likewise if behaviors are excused, ignored, or even tolerated, the culture learns collectively that this is what is accepted, and this is how the company develops.

As a leader think about:

1. What are you ignoring that you shouldn't be?
2. Who on your team is at risk for derailing the culture you want to have?
3. What type of leader are you, and what culture is that building in your organization?

For more stories on cultures that have been developed, check out our blog series under the "Leadership" section of think.blytheco.com.





FACTOIDS

from Blytheco's 2011 Social Business Benchmarking Survey

Just a few interesting stats from Blytheco's 2011 Social Business Benchmarking Survey (SBBS). How does your company stack up?

For additional results of the survey, visit our website at www.blytheco.com/survey.

The top three business issues that IT leaders are looking to solve in the next 24 months are:

- *Greater automation of tasks*
- *Integration between systems*
- *Reduction of paper generated*

95% of marketers report using a website for brand awareness. Other top tools used for brand awareness are:

- *Events/tradeshows - 76%*
- *Print advertising - 62%*
- *Word of mouth - 62%*
- *Twitter - 62%*
- *Facebook - 62%*

Executives are optimistic. 80% project growth for their companies in the next year.

Most (80%) HR leaders use LinkedIn personally, but only 44% say they use it for recruiting new employees.

By far, the largest source of qualified leads for salespeople is referrals from customers or partners, with 82% saying they rely on this source for leads. Websites are the second largest source, with 61%.

Magnets Under the Table (continued from page 6)

Dynamics of Emotional Triangles

Mary and Jane occupy the inside of the Emotional Triangle and Suzie is stuck on the outside.

It is normal for a person on the outside to get anxious, try to change things between the two insiders and get an inside position.

Suzie reacts. She yells at Mary and Jane and calls them names. Unfortunately, this backfires and only solidifies everyone's position. Suzie has just supported the status quo. Nothing changes.

Anxiety and reactivity by the person in the outside position only solidifies the relationship between the two insiders. This is true between adults as well. It is even true when one of the insiders is a thing rather than a person. The spouse of an alcoholic will only solidify the relationship of the alcoholic with the bottle if they continuously nag and try to change it. Nagging is futile and only supports the addiction.

There are all kinds of relationships that leaders end up on the outside of. The insiders can be:

- Two employees who can't get along. (Yes, they are insiders.)
- An employee or group member and his or her disease.
- An employee or member and his or her anxiety.
- You fill in the blank.

How to Stop Supporting Stuckness

So if anxiety and reactivity of the person in the outside position only keep things stuck and prevents real change, what is the person on the outside to do? The answer is:

1. Manage personal anxiety
2. Remain non-reactive

These seem counter-intuitive but we instinctively advocate for these behaviors when we tell a child who is getting teased in school to "just ignore it" and don't respond.

The main point of Emotional Triangles is this: All attempts to directly try to change the relationship between two insiders in an emotional triangle are likely to result in the opposite effect. A correlation of this is, "You can't will togetherness."

The best chance for change (and it is no guarantee) is to stop trying to become an insider. Rather, stop the "reactivity loop" from the outside position of the Emotional Triangle.

A direct intervention must be abandoned. In fact, the very idea of intervention must be abandoned. Instead of applying leverage to change someone, the attention is given to one's presence to encourage a climate in which others can choose to change, or not.

Non-anxious Presence

The person in the outside position of an Emotional Triangle cannot attain an inside position. Being anxious and reactive from the outside position is counterproductive.

The key to negotiating change in relationships is through intentionally staying in the outside position.

This is called "maintaining a non-anxious presence."

There are 2 ways to stay in the outside position and refusing to support things the way they are.

1. Focus on self rather than the others -You can only change yourself and you have to stop trying to change others.
2. Manage your own anxiety - Self care is important. If you need others to change to be ok, you give away your power.



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