



# TALENT JOURNEY

BUILD A TEAM • CREATE A DESTINY

November 2008

Volume 8, Issue 6

## *Healthy Employees = Productive Employees*

Companies are constantly searching for new and better ways in which to increase the productivity of their workforce, and thereby, enhance their bottom line. They try new tactics and strategies, all of which are designed to help employees reach their full potential and maximize their contribution to the company.

However, sometimes the best solutions are the ones that are so readily apparent that they go unnoticed. One such solution involves the health and lifestyle choices of the employees in question.

### **Factors for success . . . or failure**

There are many factors that can impact employees' productivity levels. They include diet, sleep (or lack thereof), stress, morale, and exercise (or lack thereof). A recent survey conducted by *ComPsych*, the world's largest provider of employee assistance programs, sheds some interesting light on these factors and how they can negatively – or positively – affect employees.

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*Are Your Employees Healthy and Productive?*

## *Leading Through the Reality of Holiday and Economic Stress*

If you read any newspaper or listen to TV or radio, there is constant reminder of the stress our economy is experiencing. There is no doubt that this pressure is shaking employees across the nation and world. As the holidays approach, employees will also face the traditional stressors of family events, gift buying, office functions, and overall additionally hectic schedules.

As reported through NIOSH, more than 25 percent of workers feel significant stress at work, and often feel “burned out” in the workplace (Yale University). In the same report, one-fourth of employees viewed their jobs as a significant stressor in their lives (Northwestern National Life).

It is clear that during this time of year and especially under the current stressful economic conditions, there are important leadership principles to keep in mind. In this article, we want to emphasize one of those principles: the skill of inquiry.

Inquiry is a skill that can be used immediately and refined over time. We'll highlight three main areas of inquiry which will help you lead during stressful times.

First, inquiry begins with the ability of the leader to value people in the organization as whole people, instead of just valuing them for the job they do. People respond and perform when they know they are cared about.

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Second, inquiry involves active listening skills. This means being present in the moment – setting aside your other cares and thoughts to listen to the speaker. Active listening means that we are not thinking about what to say next. Active listeners pay attention to the words being said, as well as the body language and tone being conveyed.

Finally, inquiry involves setting aside judgment of what is being said. It involves the ability to understand what others are thinking and feeling from their perspective. This is a bigger challenge than most of us realize at first glance. Often, people filter the other person's communication through their own experiences. The filter can easily distort the true meaning being conveyed.

So, how do we apply this skill to the holiday season, especially in light of the economic concerns your employees are likely feeling? Here are some specific tips:



1. Connect on a personal level – check in with your employees over the course of the next 6 weeks. Ask them about their plans for the holidays.
2. Take a pulse of the emotional state of your employees. Actively listen for signs of joy, hesitation or stress.
3. Stay focused on what your employee is sharing with you. Keep the spotlight on them. Consider refraining from sharing your own story unless they ask or it seems right.
4. If you sense stress or concern, give purposeful thought to how you can encourage and support employees. This usually does not mean reducing expectations for year- end deliverables. It does entail helping to find solutions that work. Employees appreciate support and encouragement, especially during these stressful times. Listening and caring are often enough to get them refocused.

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Beyond that, get creative in finding additional ways to diminish the stress they are likely facing. You might also suggest utilization of your company's employee assistance program to help talk through solutions for reducing stress.

At the 2008 ASTD San Diego Conference this month, Bob Nelson, one of the world's leading authorities on employee motivation, spoke about the importance of creating an emotional bank account with employees. Creating an emotional bank account means that you deposit positive experiences as a leader with your employees. The more deposits you make into that account, the more stable your relationship and the more opportunity you have to influence that employee for both their good and the goals of the organization. Putting the skill of inquiry to work for you in small ways over the holidays will pay dividends including decreased stress, more cohesive work relationships, and long-term good will.



Written by Diane Brown of Talent Journey, November 2008  
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## Things to do when you have 5-minutes or less

Often time is lost by waiting for someone, being stuck in traffic, waiting in line, etc. Here are some quick tips of things to do while you are waiting.

1. **Update your daily planner.** Use this time to mark off completed tasks, transfer tasks to a different date, keep it current, etc.
2. **Update your goals.** This is a good time to look over your goals and transfer the completed goals to your goals accomplished list and add or update your current goals.
3. **Make a quick call.** The use of cell phones (although annoying to some) can be used when you are waiting for an appointment to show up, standing in line at a store, stuck in traffic, etc.
4. **Read your mail.** Keep your mail in your briefcase and then when you are in line, stuck in traffic, etc., take it out to read.



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ComPsych surveyed more than 1,000 employees across the United States during the timeframe of January 1 through February 15, 2008. The survey involved companies of all sizes and those operating in a variety of different industries. Overall, the survey was quite extensive and unearthed a wealth of data. However, in the interest of brevity, we'll address a few of the more important findings, as they relate to the factors listed above.

- **Diet** – Of employees with balanced diets, 73% reported having high levels of productivity and 50% reported having high levels of energy.
- **Stress** – Approximately 70% of employees with poor diets had high levels of stress. In addition, 76% of employees participating in no physical activity reported a high level of stress.
- **Exercise** – Over 65% of physically active employees reported high productivity levels, and 67% reported high energy levels, as well.
- **Morale** – Of course, as you might imagine, the three factors listed above can have a profound impact on morale. About 55% of very active employees reported having high morale, and 51% of workers with ideal weight reported the same.



### The power of promotion

So . . . what does all of this mean? You might be thinking to yourself, "I already knew this. It doesn't help me any!" Or perhaps you're thinking that you can't force employees to be healthy, so this information constitutes a moot point at best.

But that would be underestimating the power of promotion. There is plenty that a company can do to build and cultivate a corporate culture that promotes a healthy lifestyle. While it's true that you can't force an employee to make healthy choices, you can make it **easier** for them to make those choices. That's why it's imperative for company officials to analyze their culture and ask some tough questions:

- Does our culture promote health and well being?
- Do we make it easy for employees to make healthy choices during the workday . . . or difficult?
- How much more productive could we be through promotion and other health-related programs and initiatives?

The evidence is indisputable. Healthy employees are productive employees, but it even goes beyond that. They're **happy** employees, as well, and that combination is almost impossible to beat – especially by your competition.

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# ONE MINUTE IDEAS

## Security Minute – Opt Out for Mailings

Are you tired of receiving all those "credit card of the month, loan, insurance, etc." applications in your home mail? Are you shredding and simply NOT tossing them in the trash? Are you concerned about identity theft and worried that an unscrupulous person could be filling those out, getting credit in your name, and at the same time ruining your credit?

To opt out from all three credit bureaus providing your information to those "legitimate" requestors, you can either call the following number or simply go to the website to opt-out from receiving Firm Offers for 5-years or Opt-Out permanently.

1-888-567-8688 or  
[www.optoutprescreen.com](http://www.optoutprescreen.com)

**OptOutPrescreen.com**

*In the middle of every  
difficulty lies opportunity*  
– Albert Einstein

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## *Survey on the Economy*

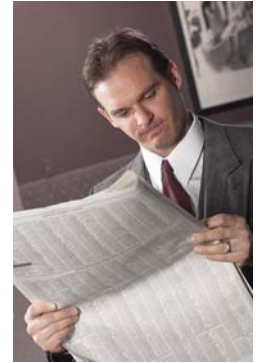
Is the economy really in as bad of shape as the media is telling us? Watch any news program or listen to any radio station and all you hear is how bad our economy is and that there is no relief in sight. Is it really that bad? How do we know?

***We would like to hear from you and get your opinion!***

Please take a couple of minutes to answer the following questions and e-mail them to us.

1. Are the fears of an economic downturn due to the media?
2. Have you changed your lifestyle to accommodate for these challenges?
3. Is business down over last year and is it due to the economy or increased competition in your marketplace?
4. Have you taken your money out of the bank due to fears of a financial crash?
5. Do you think that our perceived slow economy is because it is an election year?

Please e-mail your response to [diane@thetalentjourney.com](mailto:diane@thetalentjourney.com) Thank You! TJ Associates



Happiness is not in the mere possession of money; it lies in the joy of achievement, in the thrill of creative effort. – Franklin D. Roosevelt

## *The Spirit of Leadership Column*

***What one thing should our team do to produce a measurable impact on our business?***

Renew your focus before you change your actions. Most teams fall short of potential to produce desired results until everyone is “on the same page.” To gain clarity of action you need improved clarity of purpose, so begin with strategic thinking and business planning – even if your organization already has a plan. There is no better ‘teambuilding’ process that will produce desired impact. Does your team share the same goals, as well as understand individual roles? Really? How do you know?

Become a strategic thinking and execution team. Developing an executable plan that focuses collective actions to produce desired results requires more than just an annual one-day “retreat.” In effect, many businesses *do strategic planning* without any sustainable benefit other than a dusty document and to say “we did it.” That is not what we suggest. The objective of planning is the establishment of an *ongoing planning process as a routine part of teamwork* in order to achieve substantially improved performance for the short term and the long term.



Re-engage your purposeful thinking, planning and action. Involve an experienced coach who understands business and behavioral change. Such a person will ask questions that take you from where you are to where you and your team really want to be.

Mark Sturgell, Performance Development Network – Copyright protected

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