

# News You Can Use

by Haidee Allerton

## I SEE...

**N**OW, YOU no longer have to wait for prognostications to drift down from a corporate Delphi in order to chart your course. You can become your own futurist.

Watts Wacker tells you how. He's the resident futurist at SRI International, a Silicon-Valley consulting firm. Among Wacker's creative output is helping formulate Nickelodeon's *Nick at Nite* lineup, old TV shows from the 1960s and 1970s, which Wacker calls, "a distinctly American form of oral history." Wacker also wrote—along with Gateway 2000 senior vice president of global marketing, Jim Taylor—the soon-to-be-released book, *The 500-Year Delta: What Comes After What Comes Next* (Harper-Business, spring 1997).

Wacker says that people are at a point of absolute, positive, supreme discontinuity. "Human beings aren't built to process what we're going through now. If you live in New York, you see 8,000 commercial messages a day." That's why, he says, he studies how change is changing.

So, here are some tips from Wacker for developing your own capacity to stay ahead of change:

**Learn to be a better listener.** "You don't learn when you're talking."

**Read trade magazines from different industries.** Once a week, take a look at such titles as *Positive Grocer* and *Automotive News*. Find two things that relate to your business.



### Let your kids tutor you.

They know more than you do about a lot of subjects. And it's beneficial to realize you can learn from someone that you didn't think could teach you anything.

**Volunteer.** "In most volunteer activities, everyone is the same. It changes your perspective on hierarchy and authority."

**Read what has stood the test of time.** Crack open Aristotle, Shakespeare, Adam Smith, and such tomes as *The Federalist Papers*. Wacker points out that people still bring flowers to the grave of Austria's leader, Leopold the First, who has been dead more than 300 years.

Wacker asks, "Isn't that the kind of impact you want to have on your company?"

### ANNOUNCING...

**E**LEVEN MAJOR companies have formed a new consortium with the mission to foster change in fi-

nance development and training for large global enterprises by sharing best practices.

The members include AT&T, Bank of America, Texas Instruments, and General Electric. The consortium is run by Schiff Consulting Group, based in Montvale, New Jersey.

### TREND BLIP

**B**ONUSES ARE typically part of the compensation packages for top-level executives only. But that may be changing.

The Cambridge Group of Westport, Connecticut, reports that as companies compete to attract the best and brightest mid-level managers, they are increasingly offering candidates



a sign-on bonus.

The mini trend is appearing across a wide range of industries, most prevalently in medicine, financial services, and technology. The bonuses range from \$5,000 to \$40,000, given in lump-sum payments.

### TREND, 'EY WOT?

**E**NGLAND'S LABOUR Party has shelved plans for a compulsory training levy to support voluntary individual learning accounts, similar to U.S. 401K and 403B retirement

accounts.

ILAs would provide a way for employees to save money so they can purchase learning and development when they need it. The glitches—such as, whether the government or employers will fund the accounts and who determines the learning programs—haven't been worked out, but pilots are underway.

Stay tuned.

### A TREND WITHIN A TREND WITHIN A TREND

**C**OMPANIES SUCH as Ford Motor Company have trimmed the number of top U.S. universities where they recruit employees, from 400 in past years to 80 to 100.

The trend reflects the overall trend in business to intensify efforts to attain the best results—and to regard educational institutions as suppliers.

Says one Ford executive, "What we're



trying to say [to universities] is that you're a major supplier to us. We have needs to be met, and there are some joint things that can make it better for both of us."

In fact, Ford has worked with several universities to develop a "Ford" curriculum.

"We're not trying to run the university," says the executive. "We're trying to get out of the business of having to rework the graduates we get."

Universities are coming on board because they want the prestige of being associated with leading companies, and they want to compete with other universities already in partnerships with major corporations.

But the bottom line is: Universities want to assure that their graduates, whose parents have spent upwards of \$100,000 on their educations, get good jobs.

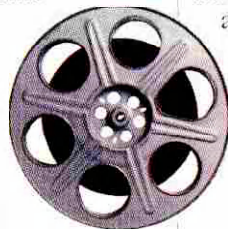
### OLDIE BUT GOODIE

**V**IDEO programs are still a staple of training professionals, especially for sales training. A video can stir emotion, excite, motivate, inform, and teach, says Mira Creative Group of Portland, Oregon.

Video can also present how customers use a product, who they are, and what problems they have that you must solve.

Here are some key steps to producing high-impact videos, suggested by Mira.

1. Select an experienced communications company to guide, develop, and produce your video.
2. After meeting with the company, request a comprehensive proposal on creative treatment, including the audience, objectives, key messages, theme, and process for execution.
3. Prepare to discuss budget parameters to help the company prepare a final budget.
4. Provide resources to help the company in the pre-production phase, which is the most critical and time-consuming part of your involvement. Your role is to provide information and resources for creating the script. The elements can include research data, interviews, company and product background, and access to experts and clients. That means you will have to en-



trust your video communications partner with confidential and proprietary information.

You should end up with an entertaining, creative, and informative tool that provides repeatability and consistency in instruction and that can be updated easily for a long shelf life.

### HAVE PROJECT, WILL TRAVEL

**C**ALL THEM *contractors, consultants, or high-tech nomads*, a new breed of freelancers roam from company to company tackling computer problems and other projects, reports the *Wall Street Journal*.

Mostly young and male, these lone rangers appear from nowhere for assignments that last a few weeks to a couple of years. Then, they're off again to another firm, another project.

High-ho, Silver, away!

### HE SAID, SHE SAID

**H**ERE ARE THE top 10 negative management behaviors that women employees think senior executives at their companies need to correct:

1. poor interpersonal skills
2. poor communication skills
3. failure to develop staff
4. rigid, inflexible behavior
5. disorganization
6. arrogance
7. demeaning behavior
8. abrasiveness
9. indecisiveness and nonassertiveness
10. unpredictability.

And here are the top 10 negative management behaviors that men employees would like their bosses to change:

1. poor interpersonal skills
2. poor communication skills
3. disorganization
4. rigid, inflexible behavior
5. unpredictability
6. failure to develop staff
7. not being a team player
8. demeaning behavior
9. failure to delegate authority
10. indecisiveness and nonassertiveness.

The results are from a survey of 350 U.S. organizations by MCAssociates, based in Philadelphia.

### SPLIT PERSONALITY?

**S**O, YOU'RE an *extrovert* on the Personal Style Indicator and an *introvert* on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, two widely used personality assessments. How come?

Everett Robinson—author of *The Personal Style Indicator* and vice president of training at Consulting Resource Group in Abbotsford, Canada—writes in *Leading the Way* (CRG's newsletter) that the reason may be the way PSI and MBTI define the terms.

Myers and Briggs designed their instrument on the Jungian model of psychological types, which implies that extroverts are socially acceptable and efficient and that introverts are withdrawn and depressed. Jung intended for his model to be used by mental-health professionals to treat emotional problems.

Robinson says that the MBTI types people as extroverts if they are people-oriented and verbal, even though they might be introverts socially or emotionally.

People that are task-oriented and nonverbal fall

## How To

Here are some ways to build trust in the workplace, say David B. Peterson and Mary Dee Hicks, vice presidents of Personnel Decisions, based in Minneapolis:

- ▶ Convey consistent principles.
- ▶ Give people plausible explanations for actions.
- ▶ Offer status reports and forecasts.
- ▶ Make realistic commitments.
- ▶ Showcase what you know.
- ▶ Protect the interests of people that aren't present.
- ▶ Show compassion.
- ▶ Verify understanding.



into the introvert category, even though they might be extroverts in other behaviors.

The PSI, on the other hand, identifies different possibilities for extroverts and introverts by crossing those personality differences with two other aspects of personal style, people-task orientation and verbal-nonverbal orientation.

Overall, says Robinson, a person's level of social functioning doesn't depend on how introverted or extroverted he or she is. In addition, extroverts can be as self-centered as introverts, they can be nonverbal and not people-oriented, and they can be affected by negative mental health.

### REALITY CHECK

**E**xecutives spend 20 percent of their time trying to resolve disputes between staff members, according to *Fortune*.

### HERE TO STAY

**T**HEY'RE NOT new, but they are growing.

Here are the top 10 trends for corporate training that aren't going to go away, according to Enterprise Management, based in Potomac, Maryland:

1. customized training
2. training used to address organization-wide issues
3. multiskilling and cross-training
4. development activities

for individual career building

5. large-scale change efforts
6. computer-based training
7. using groupware for multiple-site training
8. training on-the-job
9. line executives and non-training professionals conducting training and development
10. the involvement of senior managers in training and development.

### HABIT-FORMING

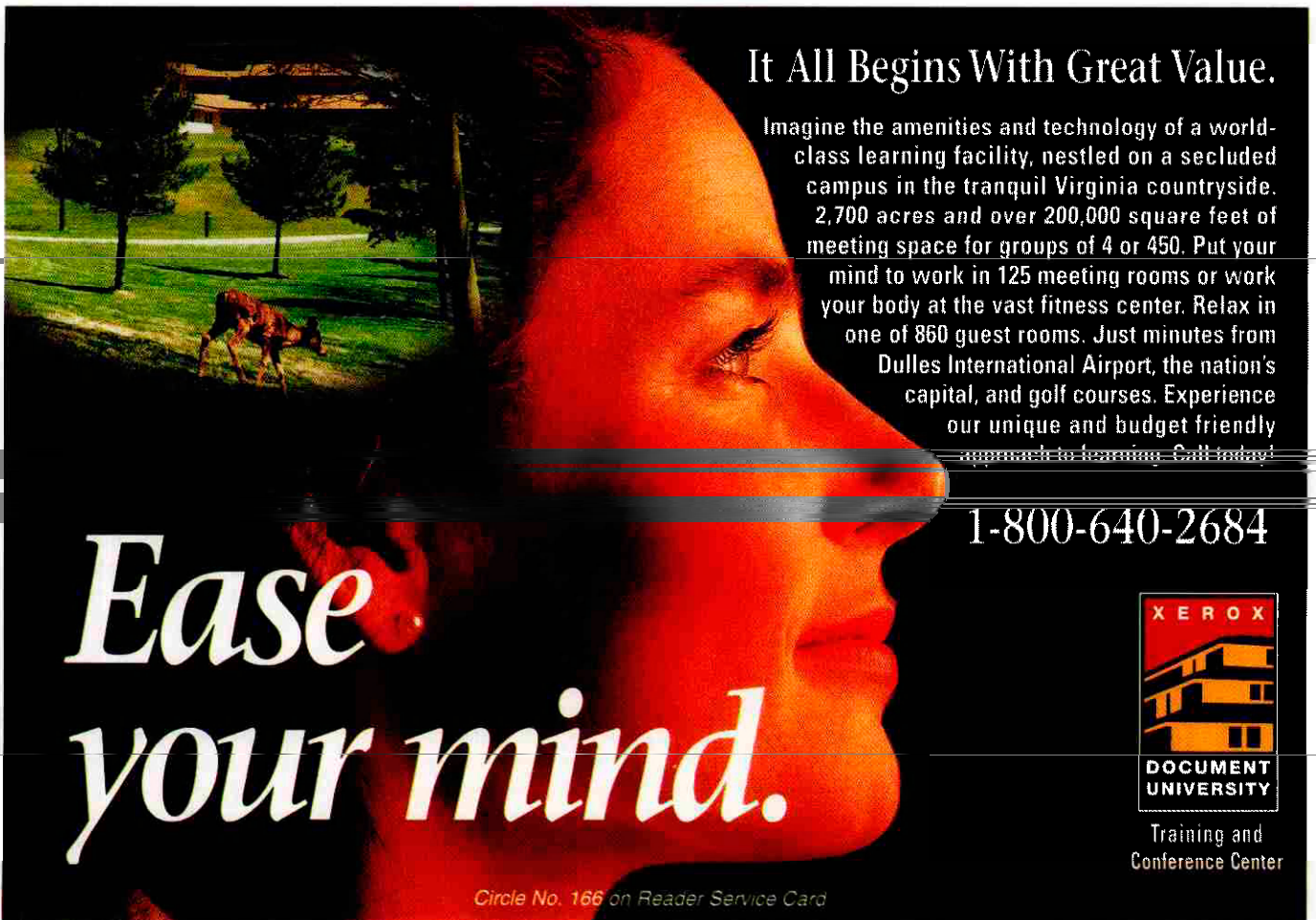
**T**HE FIRST 7 Habits Store recently opened in Park Meadows Mall, in Littleton, Colorado.

No, it's not designer clothes for nuns. The store will sell personal and professional effectiveness

products—in particular, the book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, by Stephen R. Covey. The founder of the planned retail chain is the Covey Leadership Center.

Sources include the New York Times, Fast Company, and People Management.

Send press releases or short articles on news, trends, and best practices to **News You Can Use**, Training & Development, 1640 King Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313-2043. E-mail [NYCU@astd.org](mailto:NYCU@astd.org).



**It All Begins With Great Value.**

Imagine the amenities and technology of a world-class learning facility, nestled on a secluded campus in the tranquil Virginia countryside. 2,700 acres and over 200,000 square feet of meeting space for groups of 4 or 450. Put your mind to work in 125 meeting rooms or work your body at the vast fitness center. Relax in one of 860 guest rooms. Just minutes from Dulles International Airport, the nation's capital, and golf courses. Experience our unique and budget friendly approach to learning. Call today!

**1-800-640-2684**

**Ease your mind.**

**XEROX**  
**DOCUMENT UNIVERSITY**  
Training and Conference Center

Circle No. 166 on Reader Service Card