

News You Can Use

by Haidee E. Allerton

TREND WATCH

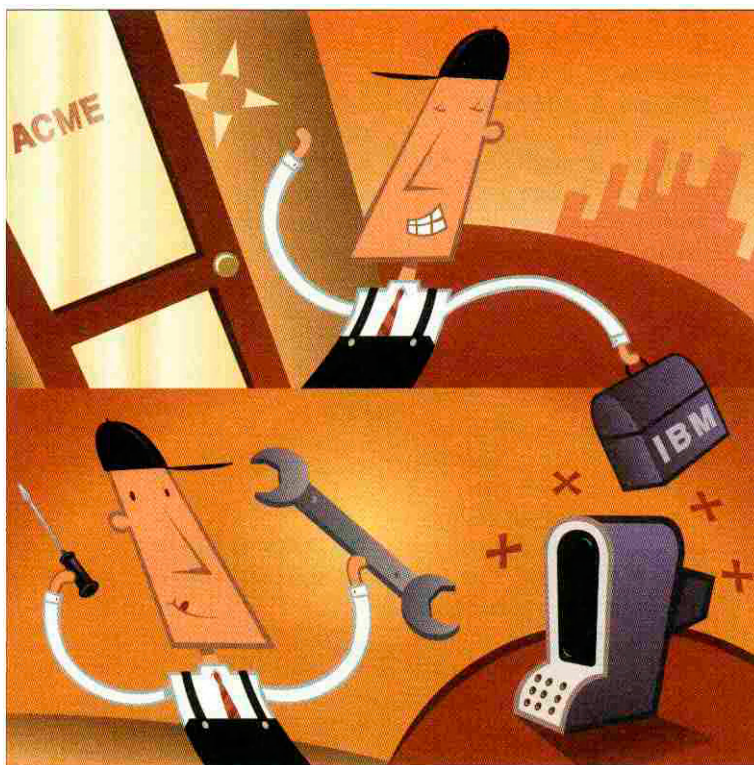
COMPANIES—SUCH AS Hewlett-Packard, General Electric, and Xerox—that once made their profits in selling products are transforming themselves into service industries, reports the *New York Times*. Unisys and IBM, for example, are designing, installing, and running other companies' computer operations.

Experts say that this move to services reflects such changes in the business world as intense competition, slim profit margins, and the need to outsource internal systems. Also, services tend to generate huge cash flows, a boon for businesses trying to maintain a competitive edge.

GRILLING THE FRONT LINE

IT'S KNOWN that people on the front lines of an organization can enhance productivity. They are the ones closest to the work processes that may need improving. And they may be the first to spot important industry trends.

But how do you get the best information from them? Here are some questions from *Manuscript*—a newsletter published by Manus in Stamford, Connecticut—to ask front-line workers:



- ▶ How do our competitors' products and services compare with ours?
- ▶ Are events happening that may affect our current and potential external suppliers?
- ▶ What is happening in government agencies and other regulatory organizations that could affect our business?
- ▶ What changes are occurring in the kinds of technology we use to do business?

SURVEY SAYS

WHAT'S THE most important basic skill in basic skills training?



communication, according to a National HRD Executive Survey conducted by the American Society for Training and Development.

- Some other types of basic skills deemed crucial by respondents, in order of importance, are
- ▶ problem solving
 - ▶ teamwork
 - ▶ reading (11th-grade level)
 - ▶ interpersonal.

OLDIE BUT GOODIE

VIDEO 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.

Videos can also present how cus-

tomers react, 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 re-

sources 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 entrust your video communications partner with confidential and proprietary information.

You should end up with an entertaining, creative, and informative tool that is repeatable and consistent

REALITY CHECK OF YOUR PAYCHECK

Salaries for senior-level human resource positions rose 15 percent last year,

according to a survey conducted by Manchester Partners International, based in Philadelphia.

How To

Welcome to your biggest nightmare: Your best friend at work has been promoted to be your boss. Now, how are you going to handle this icky situation?

The odds that you'll be able to maintain your friendship and a good working relationship are against you, says Val Arnold, senior vice president of Minneapolis-based Personnel Decisions. But here are some coping tips:

Realize that your friendship is likely to change.

If both you and your boss are to succeed, the focus of your relationship must shift to work.

Get over it. Know that the change has nothing to do with you personally. Try not to react negatively with anger and envy, but focus your energy on building a positive relationship with your new boss.

Recognize your boss's authority. Your friend is now the keeper of your assignments, salary in-

creases, and performance reviews. Remember: Authority changes what we expect from people, how we treat each other, and how we interpret behavior.

Talk about your new relationship. Take the lead in discussing with your new boss the nature of your working relationship and its affect on your friendship.

Don't expect special treatment. You may be tempted to expect perks, but taking advantage could alienate your new boss.

Be patient. Making this new relationship work will take time. Be flexible and stay focused on helping your boss and you do your jobs well.

Or, for the last tip, you could request a new supervisor. If that's a reasonable option, ask to report to someone else, saying that working for a close friend would hinder both of your performances.

in instruction and that can be updated easily for a long shelf life.

QUICK QUIZ

WORKPLACES are becoming more diverse...heck, they already are. So, perhaps it's time to test your cultural sensitivity.

Here's a quiz from Proverbs of New York: "Are You A Passive Bigot?"

▶ When you see media targeted to an ethnic, gender, or religious group other than your own, you

usually ignore it.

▶ When you look for a mentor or protégé, you choose someone most like yourself.

▶ When other people make bigoted remarks or jokes, you either laugh or say nothing because you don't want to seem sensitive or self-righteous.

▶ You make it a rule at work to never discuss race, ethnicity, politics, age, religion, gender, or sexual orientation.

▶ Before you hire someone, you have a vague picture in mind of what

Is Online Training On?

The online training market will surpass \$1 billion by 2000, estimates International Data Corporation of Framingham, Massachusetts. But, currently, the online delivery of training may still be in its infancy. According to a *Training* magazine survey, only 4 percent of respondents say they use online services to deliver training—though the sampling was small, only about 1,500 people.

In the meantime, you can receive tuition-based, online training on the Internet through DigitalThink, based in San Francisco.

The site features a self-directed curriculum of professional and personal skills, provided by best-selling authors and technology firms. DigitalThink customizes the courses for Web delivery.

The authors serve as course instructors, joined by specially trained tutors, sometimes available to users in real time. Courses include computer programming, multimedia, and entry-level Internet topics, as well as a tutorial on Quicken's personal-finance software and a wine appreciation course from Virtual Vineyards.

Contact <http://www.digitalthink.com>.

the ideal candidate would look like.

▶ You avoid talking about cultural differences when dealing with people that are different from you because you're afraid of saying the wrong thing.

▶ There are people in your organization that you like and respect, but whom you'd feel uncomfortable introducing to your family or friends.

If you agree with any of those statements, you might be guilty of practicing "passive bias."

WHAT'S YOUR IQS?

ARE YOU intelligent in a successful sort of way?

Some people that score poorly on traditional IQ tests achieve success in the world nonetheless. Take, for example, Robert Sternberg, the IBM profes-

sor of psychology at Yale, where he was a Phi Beta Kappa graduate. Not too shabby, though he says that he scored so low on standardized intelligence tests in elementary school that teachers wrote him off as "dull."

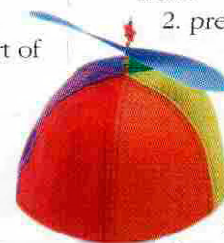
Here's a test developed by Sternberg to determine whether you are adept at solving problems, practically and creatively—in other words, "successfully intelligent."

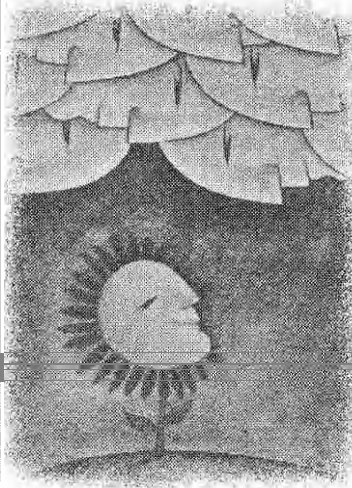
You have a great idea, but your boss hates it and gives you three reasons why it's bad. You

1. give up on the idea for now?

2. present the idea to someone else to get his or her reaction?

3. accept the criticisms and are relieved to be spared further embarrassment?





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4. evaluate the criticisms to see whether they're valid and, if they are, use them to improve the idea?
5. think how to communicate your idea better and then run it by someone whose opinion you value?
6. decide that the next time you have an idea, you will keep it to yourself?
7. realize that your boss is too unimaginative to appreciate an innovative idea?
8. ask your boss if he or she sees a way to improve the idea?
9. realize that truly innovative ideas usually get a negative reaction at first?

The correct answers: questions 1-3 "no"; 4-5 "yes"; 6-7 "no"; and 8-9 "yes."

NEW PARTNERSHIP

GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE NETWORK says that it has become the first author-



ized independent trainer for Shiva Corporation, a leading supplier of remote-access systems for training. The partnership is another in a growing trend in the training world in which companies are linking resources to expand their capabilities and their services to customers.

BETTER MEETINGS

HERE'S A MYRIAD of tips for more effective meetings.

- To reduce stress:
 - ▶ Bring Silly Putty or small, soft balls people can squeeze when they feel a need to ease tension and work off nervous energy.
 - ▶ Place pitchers of water on the table and scatter pieces of candy for times

when participants are "champing at the bit."

- ▶ Have participants take a breather, literally, by taking five to 10 long, slow, deep breaths before jumping back into the fray.

To make the most of every meeting, always bring along these essential process skills:

- ▶ brainstorming
- ▶ consensus-building
- ▶ voting
- ▶ affinity diagramming
- ▶ fishbone diagramming
- ▶ flipcharting.

To avoid clashes when tempers are about to flare and your own emotions are running high, write down your ideas, thoughts, questions, and frustrations, and address those issues later when you are calm. Then, people are likely to be more willing to listen to you and really hear what you say.

To set the emotional stage, either in posters or the meeting room's decor, try these colors:

- ▶ **orange.** Encourages the verbal expression of emotion.
- ▶ **yellow.** Boosts mood and enhances optimism, clarity, and intellect.
- ▶ **violet.** Reduces stress and creates feelings of inner calm.

The ideas are from *Better Meetings for Everyone*, published by Meeting & Management Essentials in Boise, Idaho. Jana Kemp, a principal of Meeting & Management Essentials, hosts a weekly radio feature on the Business News Network.

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