

Trend Watch

❑ **Phased retirement** lets employees approaching usual retirement age reduce their work hours and responsibilities gradually to ease into full retirement. The tight job market will make retaining veteran workers through such a transition more attractive, despite some hitches in corporate practices and federal laws. (HRWire)

❑ More companies (such as America Online) are letting employees bring their pets to work. Last June, the first ever “**Take Your Dog to Work Day**” was held, and 200 companies across the United States participated. According to Pet Sitters International, 24 percent of pet owners bring their dogs to work. PSI says that having dogs in the workplace improves morale, camaraderie, and job performance, and deters crime. But professor Ray Browne in the Department of Popular Culture at Bowling Green State University says that bringing a pet to work is a sign of insecurity. (*Christian Science Monitor*, *Detroit News*)

❑ If you worry about leaving your pet at home while traveling on business, here’s a trend you’re going to love: **the five-star pet hotel**. A Wheatfield, New York pet hotel provides not only accommodations and meals, but also makeovers and appropriate videos, such as *Lady and the Tramp*. An Auckland, New Zealand pet hotel offers homemade dog biscuits. So, keep that in mind for your next business trip to Wheatfield or Auckland. (*Buffalo News*)

❑ **Pre-employment burnout.** Children are being over-scheduled with school, jobs, investment clubs, athletics, shopping, and other adult-like routines. High-achieving parents are breeding high-achieving kids who carry day planners, pagers, and cell phones to manage conflicting

schedules. The trend may present a market opportunity for sellers of kid-friendly products and services, but it raises concerns about developing unhealthy habits early in life. (*Trend Letter*)

Reality Check

Online job boards are obsolete, according to Hire.com’s e-recruiter service. It quotes Monster.com CEO Jeff Taylor as saying, “The matching process is begging for innovation.”

Hire.com says that in June 1999, Monster had 7,500 companies listing job openings and 1.6 million resumes online. That means that the average number of candidates a company has access to is only 213.

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How to Take the Plunge

As you read the word *dive*, replace it with the word *risk*.

Dream a little dream

Understand the benefits. How will doing the dive make you a better (manager, employee)? Rehearse the dive in your head, and crystallize the accuracy of your vision through visualization.

Get a coach

Make sure you’re taking the dive under guidance of a coach who will drive, support, challenge, motivate, and critique you.

Have safe equipment

Are your teammates there for support? Is the ladder secure? Is there a life preserver nearby?

Do your lead-ups

Start at the bottom. Break the dive into small steps. On the ground, rehearse the movements of the dive until they become second nature. Practice from the side of the pool, then dive from 10 feet, 20 feet, and higher and higher.

Jump!

Enjoy the Eden Moment. Look around, take a deep breath, count to three, say a prayer, and JUMP!

Commit to the dive

Once you’ve left the platform, there’s no turning back. The pre-jump is about courage; the post jump is about commitment. Hold on tight, and commit to the dive.

Review

Review all of the elements of the dive. What about it was good? What was bad? How could you dive better?



How To

How to Take a Risk

By Bill Treasurer

It may be the only change management consultant whose business attire includes a Speedo. From 1984 to 1991, I was a member of the U.S. High Diving Team. High diving isn't an Olympic sport. They compete from 10 meters; we tripled that—about 100 feet.

So, what does change management have to do with risk taking? In a word: risk. Here are a few things that high diving taught me about taking risks.

Injuries are for the unafraid. High divers aren't fearless, they're "enfeared." Fear heightens a diver's sense of his or her surroundings so that the diver won't make mistakes. In organizations, complacency is a time-delayed outcome of success. Bloat follows growth, slowing a company's response to competitive threats. I saw a senior exec skillfully enfeard employees with a healthy respect for the competitive threats that still loomed despite the company's great economic success.

Courage means facing fear. Confronting fear enlarges one's Courage Capability: It grows, and we become encouraged. Courage involves a lot of knee-knocking but takes the risk anyway because risk taking is

the key to personal growth. For executives, courage has to do with authenticity—comfort within one's own skin, despite one's imperfections.

The greatest risks are emotional. I am convinced that it takes more courage to confront one's boss, coworker, or self than to do a high dive. A lack of predictability makes interpersonal risk riskier. The rub is that you can't build trust with people without taking the risks associated with interpersonal confrontation. Taking emotional risks builds trust, and trust enables greater risk taking, which builds more trust. People who want an open and honest atmosphere at work should start by taking the emotional risk of telling the truth themselves. Enjoy the Eden Moment.

Risks, like high dives, are characterized by moments of hesitation. Just before leaving the platform, you confront the jump/don't jump decision. I call that the Eden Moment. The creative tension of that mental tug of war can be addictive. Our heads swirl with possibilities as we fantasize multiple scenarios and outcomes. Before leaving the risk platform, the risk taker seizes control of the situation. Once the decision is made, the post-risk outcome is less controllable. Depending on whether the outcome is positive or negative, the

risk taker is affirmed, or he or she is likely to experience cognitive dissonance, regret, and risk aversion. Once you've left the platform, however, you must direct your attention to committing to the change. Strong executive sponsorship, closely monitored performance metrics, and rigorous project management are all ways of ensuring safe landing for organizational high dives.

Risk involves pressure. Employees will take risks if mechanisms are in place that pressure them to do so—from the gentle prodding of a patient mentor to the "at risk list" generated by a utility company of workers at risk of losing their jobs if they didn't comply with changes. Employees never saw the list, but its rumored existence served as a fear tactic to promote buy-in. More positively, performance management systems can include risk taking as a behavioral competency to promote risk-taking behavior as an integral part of career progression. I prefer the latter approach; it's more effective and humane.

Risk is in the eye of the beholder. Senior managers are

often baffled by frontline workers' resistance to changes they believe are in the workers' best interest. But from the perspective of the people most affected, the ones taking the high dives, change involves a greater risk. Instead of MBWA (management by walking around), leaders should practice MBJF (management by jumping first). A good example of MBJF in action is a group of executives who decided that they would be the first attendees of a cultural transformation workshop that they were requiring workers to take.

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News Flash

The hip Swedish furniture purveyor, Ikea, recently promised to hand over to employees the profits from one day's sales. The policy applied to all of Ikea's 152 stores worldwide, including 13 in the United States.

Ikea estimated that it would divvy up about \$65 million, or \$1,600 for each of its about 40,000 employees. Ikea workers in Paris rollerbladed around the city trying to entice customers into the store. At the Ikea store at Potomac Mills in Virginia, the usual daily sales total rose from about \$550,000 to \$750,000.

Says one salesperson, "I was asking customers if they needed four sofas with their chairs. I need a computer!"

Source the Washington Post