



EffortlessHR July 2009 Employer's Advantage Newsletter



FYI – Are You Ready for a TRIP?

Everyone says the economy will be turning around by the end of the 4th quarter 2009, with the employment outlook ticking upwards the first part of 2010. As a business owner, we can only imagine what the journey over the next couple of months will be. Because of the economic upheaval of the past few months, the face of business as we know it has changed. We need to understand and acknowledge the changes. We can do this by putting together our own TRIP ticket.

The American Automobile Association (AAA) has a wonderful program to help their customers prepare for a trip by providing them with a Trip Ticket. It is a detailed map from point of origin to final destination, with references to detours and obstacles. They provide guidebooks of points of interest and places to stay, to dine, to visit.

As we come out of this recession, are you ready? I suggest that as a business owner, we need to prepare our own TRIP ticket. We, too, need a road map of how to get to where we want to go, what obstacles may be in our way, and how to navigate the detours, We need to be aware of our competition (points of interest) and understand our processes (where to stay and visit) What does TRIP stand for, you may ask? TRIP stands for:

T – Technology

R – Realignment

I – Infrastructure

P – People

T is for Technology

Computers are smaller and faster than ever. I-Pods and I-Phones, as well as BlueTooth, BlueWave and a multitude of handheld devices are all the rage. In addition, we have You Tube, FaceBook, Linked In, blogs, and the newest Tweeters. Technology has taken enormous steps to help business owners stay in

contact with their clients, their employees, and the global community. If your business is not in sync with the latest technology, you will have a harder time keeping up.

Is this an easy thing to do? It depends upon your mindset. Younger entrepreneurs will most likely be there already. The more mature or seasoned entrepreneur may struggle with all the “social media” that is out there. I recommend, however, that this is a good time to take a class, talk to the up and coming young business mind to learn how to stay current with technology. Look at your website (and if you don’t have a website, get one) and make sure it is current and appealing. It makes me stop and think if I see a website that has not been updated for several years. That in itself sends a message – and not always a good message.

R is for Realignment

According to the dictionary, realignment means to reorganize or make new groupings. The recent problems with credit availability, high executive salaries, poor business decisions in the big automobile industry, should be telling all the small to mid-size business that they need to look at their current business plan and see where and how to realign their culture to meet the needs of the 21st Century consumer. Ensuring there are the right work ethics in your company is imperative in the new business culture of this Century. If you do not realign your policies and your procedures, you run the risk of falling behind and losing the ability to grow.

How do you do this? You look at your mission and vision statement and determine if it fits where you are in your business or where you want to be. Are you following your mission and vision, or are they merely pretty words used to inspire. Do you “walk the walk and talk the talk” or do you say to your staff “do as I say, not as I do”. Realignment comes from the top – you, as the decision maker, have to believe it is important and make it a priority, Change is not easy, especially in organizations. It takes time and dedication and belief. With the economic down turn, now may be the right time, so that you position yourself well for the “trip” ahead.

I is for Infrastructure

When you talk about infrastructure, most people think about the roads, highways and bridges. In our Nation, the economic stimulus packages are aimed at developing jobs rebuilding our infrastructure. In a company, the infrastructure I think about is the communication highway. Communication is a cornerstone to building a strong business.

Have you revisited your business plan since the recession started? Have you built in policies and procedures to help guide you through this time? Do you have an up-to-date Employee Manual and use it to communicate your policies to your employees? Are you putting together good training programs for your customer service people to empower them in responding to customer questions, thus increasing customer retention? Have you identified your “star” performers and looked to see why they shine and be sure these attributes can be found in other employees or new hires?

Look at your office layout (which is also part of your infrastructure) and see if you have “dead” space that can be eliminated or put to better use. Now may be a good time to do your performance reviews and determine if you have the right people in the right positions or if you can let someone go.

It is also a good time to look at your benefits by talking to your agent and determining if there are other options available, Now is the time to shore up your infrastructure to be better prepared in the future.

P is for People

We touched on the “people” aspect above, but let’s really look at our People. The people element of doing business is probably one of the biggest expenses for businesses. On average, an employee is about 40% of a business expense. That includes salary and benefits. I know of some businesses that think of their employees as a necessary evil and that if they had a choice they wouldn’t have employees.

Those businesses probably don’t have loyal employees or have a very good reputation as a good place to work. They probably have high turnover, low morale, and wonder why customers don’t come back. I believe that if you have employees, you have them to help you grow your business. How you treat your employees will determine the type of business you are or what you will become,

Do you have the right people in place? Do you have good job descriptions and do you check them regularly? Do you communicate with your employees so they feel they are a part of the process? Do you conduct performance appraisals and coach your employees through a rough time?

If your business has slowed down, as many businesses have, now may be the time to look at your people and make sure all the above mentioned issues are being properly managed. Be prepared and be ready to move forward.

Having your own TRIP ticket is important as we move out of this recession. It will put you ahead of those businesses that have “hunkered” down and done nothing but complain. Take advantage of the situation and you will be stronger for it. See you down the highway!

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FROM JIM SIRBASKU’S DESK

...How Long to Change a Light Bulb?

As the old joke goes, it takes XX number of people to change a light bulb. Insert any identifiable group you want to poke fun at—political parties, university students or professional groups. The number of people needed for the task shifts depending on who is changing the bulb.

When we think about a particular organization, the number of people required to change a light bulb depends on whether we have the right person doing the job. If we do, we will NEVER be in the dark. If we don't, the organization could be in the dark for as long as we are willing to put up with the darkness, or for as long as it takes us to fail—whichever comes first.

No one wants to fail, of course, but leaders don't always understand how not to fail, especially when it comes to putting people in the right places to get the job done. We hire someone who is intelligent, motivated and able to do many different things. Then, without considering our decision as thoroughly as we should, we put the person in a job that is completely unsuited to him. The demoralizing result? The job is not done efficiently, is not done at all or the person quits in frustration. Or we let him go.

We don't have to operate this way. Experts plan with their workforce in mind. Then they combine that plan with well-chosen tools so that they can get the company on target and keep it there. See below to discover how our team of experts views this planning process; perhaps it can help your organization identify flaws in your own plan:

1. Establish where your business is going. When you are on vacation, it's exciting to get to your destination by leaving the main road. When you are executing a business strategy, the "getting there" part matters more. You must ignore the side roads. You have to know the areas that you want to grow, the areas you want to maintain but make more profitable, and the areas to get rid of. You will also need to know how far and how fast you can move. Knowing your strategy helps you create a meaningful plan without distractions.
2. Understand where the labor market is going. You want to be where your potential labor force is. You must know and evaluate economic forecasts, demographic trends, regulatory changes, and where—and why—the talent is moving. This knowledge will help you realistically plan how long it will take to fill jobs and how much you will pay for talent.
3. Identify future talent needs. What jobs do you need to keep, create or phase out? What will be your most important roles to fill in a year? What employee groups will be most critical to your organization? In other words, which groups can help you accomplish your strategy?
4. Assess your current talent pool. Knowing who fits, who doesn't fit and who is capable of changing jobs will help you plan. Put some blinders on to keep from being swayed too much by personality. Focus on ability. Here are three questions that will help, if you answer them honestly: How well does the worker fit the new job? Will he/she have the skills to perform? How long does talent stay at our company?
5. Identify your talent gaps; plan how to close them. After you've done the assessing in step 4, you know what you need to do. Now focus on the four Bs: build your talent; bounce those who don't fit into new jobs or out of the organization; buy new talent by recruiting it; and borrow labor on a temporary or contract basis. You don't have to use all four tactics. Employing only some of them might work just fine.
6. Implement the process. The key word here is "process," meaning that this is an ongoing practice, not a one-time deal. To succeed, you will need top-level support. Executives will need to focus on priorities

in order to build momentum instead of trying to achieve everything at once. And you will have to track what happens by the numbers. This means that your decisions will be based on facts rather than gut feelings.

So, how long is it taking your organization to change light bulbs? If the process is too long and drawn out, it's probably not the bulb that needs changing.

Jim Sirbasku, CEO
Profiles International

Product Focus

Plan for Explosive Growth with PXT, PWC

Profiles' latest report on strategic workforce planning uses a time bomb as an illustration. Why? One reason is that only 21% of companies surveyed by a leading consulting agency take a strategic, long-term approach to workforce planning. This means that organizations seeking to maintain or grow key areas of the business may well self-destruct before business ever takes off.

One answer to this dilemma is ProfileXT®. It is also known as the Total Person Assessment because it evaluates thinking and reasoning skills, occupational interests and behavioral traits

PXT uses JobFit™ technology to clarify its measurements, and this helps employers build their hiring, training, managing, and promoting abilities. PXT helps predict job suitability, and it accurately matches people with the work they do, which helps businesses understand future talent demands and assess current talent inventories—steps 3 and 4 in the strategic workforce planning process.

Managers report success using PXT for initial job placement, identifying the best fits for promotions, succession planning, coaching, and self-improvement. Its multiple reports also help employers recognize potentially unproductive workers, as well as create solutions to the challenges of high turnover, poor training and communication, organizational identity confusion, interdepartmental conflict, and profitability issues.

Another assessment, Profiles WorkForce Compatibility™, examines seven important characteristics that define the relationship between an employee and the manager: self-assurance, self-reliance, conformity, optimism, decisiveness, objectivity, and approach to learning.

Once we measure and analyze these seven items for both boss and worker, each one receives a report. The manager's report provides a detailed description of the differences between herself and the employee on each characteristic, as well as a "best-practice" working style for both the manager and the employee. The "Working Together" section provides ideas for managing the employee, and the "Next Steps" section provides detailed instructions on how to move forward.

The employee report shows the worker her similarities to—and differences from—the boss, with ideas for making the work relationship smoother.

PWC helps both manager and employee communicate better, spot conflicts before they occur, and successfully resolve problems.

Are you ready for explosive growth? Plan for the success you envision by using proven assessments to help point the way. Call EffortlessHR at (520) 546-3947.

STRATEGIES FOR WINNING --

Antelope and Chipmunks*

Know Your Goals and Focus on Them

Goal setting is a subject that should be emphasized early in the development of a business career, and we can't emphasize it enough. We have formed the habit of setting goals daily, weekly, monthly, annually, and for the next 10 years! We think you should, too.

A Personal Story from Jim Sirbasku

I learned the power of goal setting early in my career when a mentor asked me to name something I really wanted. I told him that I had always dreamed of owning a Cadillac. With his coaching, I learned how to turn my dream into something I could drive. I soon learned the motivational power of visualizing my goals.

I went to the Cadillac dealer's showroom and found a brochure with a picture of the exact model I wanted—a blue convertible. I cut out the picture and made copies that I then pasted in places where I would see them every day: the bathroom mirror, the refrigerator door, the dashboard of my car, and the cover of my appointment calendar. Then I began writing a step-by-step plan for reaching my goal. Looking at the pictures of "My Cadillac" deepened my desire and motivated me to sell harder. When a prospect told me, "I want to think about it," I was motivated to try one, two, and three more closing questions. When I felt like quitting for the day, I would make a cold call. I prospected for people who were available to meet with me on weekends or in the evening. My goal was constantly on my mind. It made me focus on how I was using my time, and I carefully prioritized my daily tasks to make the most of every minute.

In less than a year, I returned to the dealership with cash in hand and drove away in the car of my dreams. The experience made me a confirmed goal-setter. I learned a process that I have repeated thousands of times to achieve other personal and business objectives.

Here is an interesting approach to the subject of goal setting. We hope you will use these ideas so that you can drive the car of your dreams, and obtain all of your other goals, too.

Is your life an antelope hunt or a chipmunk chase?

A former world leader once used an analogy wherein he regarded himself as a lion—the head of a pride, no less. And he categorized all of the issues he ever faced as either antelope or chipmunks. Even when a lion is dying of hunger, he won't give chase to any of the many smaller animals, like chipmunks, which gambol nearby, offering a quick and easy snack.

Why? Even if he made the effort and caught one—and there's always an outside chance he'd fail—it simply wouldn't satisfy him. However, even when weakened by hunger to the extent that he can hardly move, a lion will be motivated to act when he sees an antelope shimmering into view miles away. He knows that a failed effort could be the end of him, but the lion commits to the hunt. If there's even a slight chance of success, he'll give it his all because success will fill his belly for weeks to come. The greater reward is worth his all, and so he begins the long process of focused effort that he envisions will end in a successful kill.

A single-minded focus upon clearly defined antelope also characterizes most successful businesspeople.

Have you identified your antelope? Do you hunt them every day at the expense of less-satisfying chipmunks? Look out across your plains and spot your own antelope.

1. Think about your life or your business and write down what you'd like to achieve. Would you like to drive your company sales up to \$10 million, or even \$1 billion? Write a book? Hike through the Himalayas? On a single piece of paper, write down everything you'd ever like to achieve.
2. Identify the one item on your list you most want to achieve. This is your first antelope—shimmering in the heat of day, miles out on the plain of your life.
3. Focus on this antelope. Picture it clearly in your mind. How will you feel when you catch it? How will it change your life? What will your loved ones say? See it in full color, full detail. As you sight your first antelope and begin the process of throwing your whole self into an all-or-nothing hunt, you are going to need enough energy to stay in the hunt, even when things become difficult. That energy is passion. Fuel your passion: review the mental picture you've created, and capture on paper all of the benefits you'll enjoy once you've run this beauty to ground. Describe every benefit in detail. The more benefits you record, the greater the passion you'll bring to the hunt.
4. If it were easy to catch an antelope, we'd all dine on venison daily! Or at least we'd enjoy the benefits of achieving major goals daily. Life simply isn't that easy, is it? Obstacles always seem to get in the way. So now write down every obstacle that comes to mind. What's going to stop you from bringing down your antelope? Work out precisely how you will deal with the each obstacle. Form a clear strategy to deal with every pitfall you can predict. Doing so will enhance your confidence and vision.
5. Set clear deadlines in writing. Think about the various stages of a successful hunt. What must you do first? How much time will you need? What has to happen next, and when will the next stage be complete? Work your way through all of the stages of a successful hunt. Your target deadline is the date at which the last stage of your hunt is complete.

6. Do it again. Go back to your list and find more antelope, and work them down to the deadline stage. Don't focus on the whole list at once. Simply find one or two prime candidates. Later, as you complete one hunt, you can replace it with a new one.

7. Finally, on an index card (or using a software program of your choice), identify all of your antelope as succinctly as possible, including your deadlines. Once they're written, see if you can refine them—make them even sharper and more compelling. Keep this information in sight at all times. Read it first thing in the morning and last thing at night. As you start each day, make sure you've scheduled some actions that bring you closer to your antelope. No day should go by without moving you closer to one or all of them.

Don't allow yourself to get distracted by those easier-to-catch chipmunks. Always keep your focus on those more satisfying targets way out on the plains.

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Announcement:

EffortlessHR has refined the pricing of the program to be more compatible with benefits and compensation/payroll needs. We are still affordable and able to meet client needs.

We have also launched an Authorized Advisor program. This is an opportunity for consultants and other HR compatible functions (such as benefits and payroll) to offer their clients EffortlessHR at a reduced rate and earn a commission for themselves. If interested, sign up as an Affiliate and send me a note that you are interested in the Advisor program. I will contact you and explain the process and away we will go.

Keep your ideas and comments coming. We appreciate it and look forward to serving you in the future.

