



Corley Hanson Newsletter

Making Your Business a Team Sport!
October 2004

Dear Wendy,

Autumn has arrived. In New England, the landscape is bejeweled in the dazzling colors of fall foliage. The quest for the perfect pumpkin on which to carve a wicked grin is afoot. The sweet smell of the apple harvest is in the air. And speaking of reaping what you've sown, this issue prepares you for a solid performance in your communication efforts, based on the 5 P's of Effective Communication we've been learning about. Plus, we'll see why sometimes asking is better than telling.

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The Fifth "P" for Effective Business Communication - Performance

Over the last four issues of this newsletter, we've reviewed the steps you can take to improve your communication skills to ensure your audience gets your message. Let's have a quick review:

Purpose: Define your objective. Ask yourself what your desired outcome is and focus every effort on that.

Preparation: Take the time to know your material and your audience so that you can anticipate questions and concerns and be prepared with answers.

Planning: When you plan every step that's under your control, you're ready for those that aren't.

Practice: Better to realize a mistake or gap when the stakes are low.

And now: **Performance.** The moment of truth. This is where it all comes together. Performance is the culmination of all your efforts. If you started out with a clearly defined objective, did your homework, planned for questions, and visualized your success, then this is where you shine. It's also the step in which your audience is directly involved. Take a moment to measure your objective. If your goal was to provide information, is your audience engaged? If your goal was to identify a solution, are the members of your

Book Review

Geeks and Geezers by Warren G. Bennis and Robert J. Thomas

Authors Bennis and Thomas look at the styles of more than 40 leaders who they determine fall into two categories, depending on their age (hence the title). The Geeks and the Geezers represent two distinct generations that were shaped by the values and defining moments of their respective eras. Dubbed the "Alchemy of Leadership" by the authors, four competencies arise:

1. Adaptive capacity (hardiness, learning, proactively seizing opportunities, creativity)
2. Engaging others by creating

audience reaching consensus?

If you haven't met your objective, chances are it's not your audience's fault. So here's a learning opportunity: after the performance, evaluate each step to determine where you could improve next time.

A few tips for successful performance:

- Whether your audience is large or small, don't start speaking until you have everyone's attention. Once you do, take a few deep breaths and begin. This simple action creates a powerful moment, focusing attention on your message.
- Keep a soft focus on your audience. Make brief eye contact with each person in the room if possible. This gets their attention and keeps them connected to you.
- Project your voice to the person farthest from you. The volume and tone of your voice keeps your audience alert.
- Be aware of your body language and make sure it enhances, rather than hinders, your message (this is why practice is so important).
- Above all, be yourself! Your audience can sense your honesty and will be more attuned to you when you are comfortable with yourself and your message.

Asking for Help

A manager was working with a group of 30 of her employees in the exploration phase of a new product development cycle. They were meeting to identify the manufacturing options. Her idea of leading any group was to tell them what the best solution was and then let them figure out how to make it happen. This time, however, she was at a loss for ideas. But because she believed the answer should come from her, she started to panic. Standing in front of her group, she started to feel dizzy and the room closed in around her.



Meanwhile, the people in her department waited for her to tell them what to do. They didn't always agree with her, but they were used to her style. Each of them had learned the best thing to do was to comply, even if they knew there was a better way to do things. As a result, the manager's employees weren't committed to her or the goals of the organization. The department lacked the energy that's created when members of a group are not just involved, but truly committed. Thirty pairs of eyes watched the manager struggling to speak.

And when she finally did speak, they were taken aback by her words. Out of sheer desperation, she admitted that she didn't have a clue as to the solution. She asked the group for their ideas. Once the initial shock wore off, the group couldn't hold back if they wanted to. Their ideas came pouring out and their enthusiasm was almost a tangible thing.

The moral of this story? The manager asked for help. What a brilliant-and simple-move. Team input is one of the most important tools a leader has at his or her disposal. When a group of people puts their heads together, the result is exponentially better than one person thinking to himself.

- shared meaning
(encouraging
dissent,
empathy,
obsessive
communication)
3. Voice (purpose, self-awareness, self-concept)
 4. Integrity (ambition, competence, moral compass)

At the heart of this book is an examination of the most critical elements that create effective leadership: the resiliency to adapt and the ability to create meaning out of experience.

Leadership is a 24/7 mission and it's shaped as much by individual will as by the environment one is in. And so, successful leaders emerge from life's challenges transformed and infused with the determination to form their future, whether they be Geeks or Geezers.

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Ask for help-and create an opportunity for success!

Movie Review: *The Journey*, directed by Eric Saperston



Take a just-graduated-from-college filmmaker, put him and his dog, Jack, on a Volkswagen bus and send them off to follow the Grateful Dead while working ski season in Aspen. The result is an existential journey, during which Eric asks, "Why am I here?" and "What is success?" When he decides to ask 200 people (some are household names, others just ordinary mortals) out for coffee to talk about those things, the outcome is this award-winning, inspiring film.

Conversations are like that. One minute you're talking about the weather and the next you're sharing an epiphany on the meaning of life. The simple act of talking with another human being can create change in ourselves and in others. This mesmerizing film captures this ordinary yet remarkable dynamic. In one conversation, Eric asks a Fortune 500 CEO what creates success. The executive replies that the more you ask for help, the more successful you will be in life and business. Hmm. . . sound familiar?

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