



The

A to Z

of Work Ideas
and Questions

by Don Phin, Esq.

First edition, 2018

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Introduction

I thought it would be a fun project to do an A-Z list of ideas that could stimulate your thinking! In this small book you will find a wealth of information and questions around managing people that can improve your career and company.

Let me know what breakthroughs you had as a result of applying this book.

Here's to your awesome creativity,

Don Phin, Esq.



Note: if you are reading the print version of this book you can access the links in it by downloading the online version of the book, for free, at <https://www.donphin.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/A-to-Z-121217.pdf>

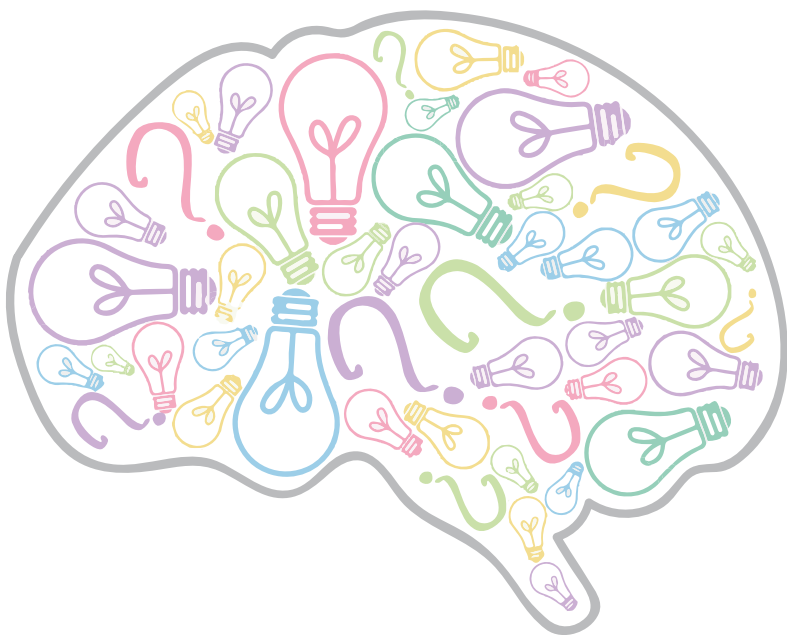


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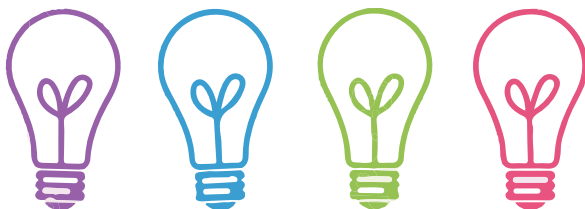
Abundance

We can think so small. We tell ourselves we don't have the time, we don't have the money, we don't have the authority, we are not in the right industry, it won't work... you name it. When we have a limited, or fear based mentality, it's all about what we can't do. About the blockages and obstacles in our way. We give in and up.

In any industry there are those executives that approach business and career with an abundance mentality and those who approach it with a scarcity one. They buy in to the fear. The noise. The limitations. All the "cant's" out there. Watch your words of limitation.

What if we had an abundant mentality? That would mean we have to ask ourselves abundant questions. How can I free up my time to do more great work? Or, I'm excited about the opportunity to help my company become an employer of choice... what will it take for us to do that?

QUESTION: How can you ask more abundant questions?



Anti-fragile

This is the metaphor used by author Talib Nassim in the book of the same title. I want to know where I might be fragile. When I coach clients, I want to know where they might be fragile too. For example, if you lose your job, and don't have six months of cash saved for the rainy days... you are fragile. If you can take a hit and keep standing then you are resistant. If you learn from the experience, recreate yourself in the process and put yourself in better position then you are anti-fragile.

QUESTION: How can you make yourself anti-fragile?

Art

Art stirs the soul. It generates agitation, calm or creativity depending on its nature. What art would be most effective in the boardroom, the lunch room, or hallways? I like the idea of having children of employees bring in 8 1/2" x 11" artwork you can place on a dedicated wall. If you are ever having a bad day just look at the kid's art!

QUESTION: How can you use art to support your strategic objectives and motivate employees?

Artificial Intelligence

AI is dramatically affecting the workplace. Hundreds of thousands of jobs are being eliminated every year by computer programs getting smarter and ever more capable of cognitive learning. Meaning they get better at something the more they do it. AI will impact HR, sales, marketing, customer service, design, service delivery and other functions.

QUESTION: How can you facilitate and benefit from the inevitable impact AI will have on your career or company?

Attention

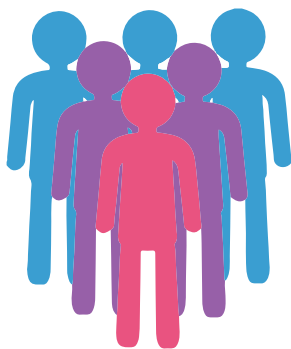
What are you paying attention to? As the saying goes, you get what you focus on. To be effective you have to pay attention to those things that produce the most value. Ignore those things that don't produce value, including distraction and wasted conversations with yourself.

QUESTION: What will I pay attention to today?

Authority

Do you want more authority? Do you want the responsibility that comes with it? Most people don't. The point is to be honest about it. If you want more authority then ask for it. Give a good reason why you have earned the trust. Prepare to address any objections that may come your way... because they will.

QUESTION: Where would you like to expand your authority?



AWE

This is one of the favorite coaching questions of Michael Bungay Stanier author of ***The Coaching Habit***. By asking "And what else?" we keep the conversation going.

QUESTION: Where can you use the AWE question to be a better manager and leader?

Beauty

Einstein stated he knew the theory of relativity would be valid (it wasn't proven up for many years afterwards) because it was "simple and beautiful." When I first read those words I circled them over and over again struck by the realization I had been making my life complicated and ugly.

Now my mantra is ***simple and beautiful***.

QUESTION: How can you make your life more beautiful?

Benchmarking

Every activity has a "benchmark" to it. Most benchmarks are defined in terms of quantity or quality. The number of hires, or the quality of hires, the time to hire, the cost of hire, etc. Many people are lazy about developing benchmarks because it takes thinking.

QUESTION: What quantity and quality benchmarks would define great work? Don't give up until you get the answers.

Benefits

As stated in **Barber's Book of 1,001 Proverbs** "The greatest benefit is the one last one remembered." Benefits can constitute as much as 1/3 of total compensation. What bang for the buck are you getting out of these benefits? How are they helping you to hire or retain better than the competition? Do they fit the needs of your employees and "plans" for your company? Are you better having rich benefits or great parties? Do you provide total compensation statements (otherwise known as total paychecks)?

QUESTION: How can you get a bigger bang for the buck out of your benefits?

Book Club

The smartest and most successful people I know read a lot of books. If they are millennials they probably read online. Point is they read.

QUESTION: How can you start a Book of the Month Club at your company? What incentives, bonuses or learning exercises can be implemented around it? What would happen if all of your leadership team read the same book every month and then spent a one hour talking about how it can help them improve the company or their career?

Branding

Branding is defined by how other people think about you. If we're good at branding we don't leave that up to other people, we consciously create our brand. One book I like is **Brand You** by Larry Linne.

QUESTION: What is your personal brand? The brand of your company? If you have not yet read a branding book do so and see how it applies specifically to you.

Career Planning

As Mary Kaye once put it "Most people plan their vacations better than their careers"... and that is a fact. When I ask people to raise their hand if they've got a written plan for their career, less than one in ten raise their hand! I bet that the other nine have a better plan for where they're going on their next vacation.

Check out the career planning tools on ONET.

QUESTION: Do you have a written career plan?

Checklists

I love checklists. Checklists are a great risk management tool. In the book ***The Checklist Manifesto*** the author, Atul Gawande, a Boston area physician, helped reduce instances of malpractice at his hospital by using checklists. The book shows how checklists are used by pilots and many others to reduce risk exposures. Let me ask you this – would you rather go into surgery or get on a plane with the use of checklist or not? Would you rather have your managers hire great people by using a checklist or not?

QUESTION: What great checklists can you create for your company? See my checklists at www.donphin.com/tools.



Choices

Our lives are defined by the choices we make. If you want financial freedom then you have to make wise choices. If you want a great marriage then you have to make wise choices.

What you can't control are the choices other people make. Worry about those choices that are within your control.

QUESTION: Where can you make better choices today?

Coaching

I am a coach for high performing executives. Most high performers have coaches. CEOs, entertainers, athletes and many high performing employees have coaches. I have a coach.

The goal of coaching is allow people to become their own hero. To find the value in their personal growth and contribution. To work hard on purpose and not out of confusion.

QUESTION: How can you help coach executives, management, and employees at your company? Where could you use coaching? Consider organizations such as Vistage, the Coaches Association or give me a call.

Communication

Over the years I've conducted many employee surveys. Communication inevitably rises as one of the top three issues at a company.

Many times we think we've communicated what's most important for people to get done. But when put to a simple test such as "what do you believe are the three most important things you have to get done?" employee answers seldom match the manager's expectations.

QUESTION: How can you improve the quality of your relationships by improving the quality and quantity of your communication?

Community

The purpose of business is to produce human well beingness. And every business impacts the community it works in.

QUESTION: How can you do well by the communities you work in? What non-profit organization can you support that aligns with company vision, mission, values or goals? How can you encourage employees to volunteer?

Compensation

The paradigm for many companies is to see how little they can pay employees. Those employees will do as much work necessary to not be fired.

What if your paradigm was to pay employees as much as you can so you can attract and retain the best for years?

Just like it make sense to obtain and retain A customers, it makes sense to obtain and retain A employees.

Remember this: when you pay peanuts you get monkeys.

QUESTION: How can you increase employee wages and pay for it with increased productivity, retention, prices and customer satisfaction?



Compliance

It seems as if business has been overwhelmed with employment law and other compliance concerns. It is a litigious society and employers have reason to be concerned. Have you identified the most likely compliance risks faced by your company? Remember, not all compliance concerns are weighted equally.

www.ThinkHR.com is a great program to help manage employment law compliance. Let me know if you are interested in access.

QUESTION: What are the three top compliance exposures that could affect your workplace and what proactive strategies are in place to prevent them?

Control

The workplace has been a battle over control for hundreds of years. Perhaps the most drastic change in the workplace is the *Death of Control*. The Catch-22 is the person you can control you don't want working for you. Trying to control other adults is a losing game. When you do, people will expect you to take care of them. It's like parenting.

QUESTION: Where can you let go of control so you and your employees can accomplish more?

Creativity

The perception is that in order to be creative you have to have to get hit with some ah-hah moment out of the blue. While that can happen on rare occasion, you can produce creative thoughts going through a creative process.

Creativity is often about taking two disparate ideas and finding a connection between them to produce a novel result. Sort of like mixing a cocktail. I encourage every executive to read ***Orbiting the Giant Hairball*** by Gordon MacKenzie, one of the most creative people of all time and ***A Whack on the Side of the Head*** by Roger Von Oech.

QUESTION: What is the most creative idea you can think of?



Culture

Culture is often discussed in terms of aspiration. But that's only half of the reality. Culture is a mix of what we aspire to and how we deal with what feels unfair. That defines one's personal culture, too. One of the best definitions of culture I have ever heard was from Anthony DeMeo, an author and former Jesuit seminary student, who stated "Culture is defined by how we collectively deal with our shit."

Let me ask you this – does the culture at home show up when everything is wonderful or when something feels unfair? Is it any different at work?

QUESTION: Where do things show up at your company or in your career that feel unfair and what is the culture surrounding that?



Data

We are flooded with data. Most of it meaningless to our success. Identifying what data is relevant, accurate, and helpful is essential. Then the question becomes what does the data tell us? What does it tell us about employee satisfaction or a new customer service opportunity or anything else that's important?

Every executive will have to be comfortable with learning the data associated with functions they manage.

QUESTION: What relevant data applies to the functions you manage? What is it telling you?

Dilbert

I love the **Dilbert** cartoon. Scott Adams has a wicked sense of humor. You need not read a Gallup Engagement Survey when you can simply read **Dilbert**. The **Dilbert** cartoon identifies why so many employees feel disengaged. In my consulting days I used to look around offices to see which **Dilbert** cartoons were posted by employees. I figured it would tell me a lot about that company's culture.

QUESTION: What would **Dilbert** complain about at your company?

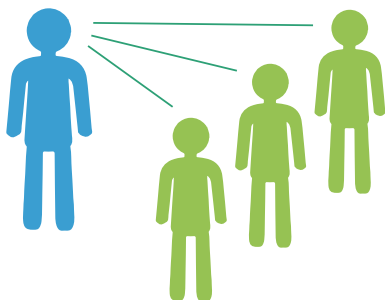
Delegation

I was always trying to do so much. I could never say no. I had endless energy. So I just kept adding more and more responsibility to my plate. Then it caught up with me and I was exhausted. I vowed never to do that again. So I finally learned how to deal with my time... and part of that was to delegate!

I had to learn how to ***stop doing things and delegate!*** I outsourced administrative tasks. I was further emboldened by Tim Ferris's book ***The 4-Hour Work Week***. The book is a metaphor for working in your highest and best use.

Because of learning how to delegate I've been able to be there for my loved ones, earn more income, produce a greater difference, and all in less time.

QUESTION: What is the least cool, lowest value work you should delegate today? How can you do it in a way that will reduce the likelihood of someone making a mistake?



Diversity

There is strength in diversity. Nature is diverse.

Interestingly, over 99% of our genetics is the same. It's that less than 1% that generates the diversity we experience.

Part of managing diversity is to find the commonality in every one of us. That's the starting place. Then we can progress to learning about that part of us that is unique.

I remember going to a 10-day Tony Robbins retreat years ago in Hawaii. On the first day we were asked to mingle amongst hundreds of people to pick out a partner we would work with for the next ten days. My immediate reaction was to find another guy kinda like me. But then I caught myself and realized I was there to grow. So I looked for the person who looked the most opposite of me. And I found Beth. She was the visual opposite of everything I desired in a woman. During those ten days I learned how blind I was and how amazing a person could be. We both grew by leaps in those 10 days.

Get comfortable working with people not like you. You'll grow as a result.

QUESTION: How can you form a friendship with someone who is the exact opposite of you? Who can be the Beth in your story?

Dreams

I have a dream...

When we were young we had lots of dreams. As we get older we surrender them one by one. We give ourselves excuses like it's too late now, or I'd never be able to do that, or a similar thought.

Go back to the dreams of your youth. That's where your innate passion lies. Find out how you can bring those dreams to your current circumstances and reinvigorate yourself in the process.

QUESTION: What did you dream that your work would be like when you were a kid? How can you make that dream your reality?

Edge

One of my favorite questions is "What is your edge?" Visualize it: you're standing on the edge of a cliff and it's spooky because the next step maybe your last one.

QUESTION: Where is your professional edge? Where are you venturing to a place that is spooky for you and exciting at the same time?

Elephant in the Room

What is the greatest concern nobody is doing anything about? Is it an out of control leader? A failed product launch? Declining sales? Numerous compliance problems?

QUESTION: If there were an elephant in your room what would it be?

Employment Practices Liability Insurance (EPLI)

One of the best ways to reduce stress surrounding employment law compliance is to ensure against possible claims. Make sure your company has EPLI. If price is concern then look for a high deductible. Having an EPLI policy will help you do a better job of terminating that employee who should have been fired a long time ago.

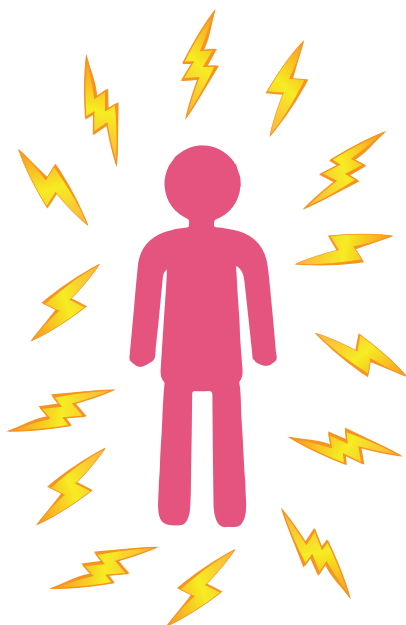
QUESTION: Do you have an EPLI policy? If not, ask for Peter Taffee at www.eperils.com.

Energy

Energy is all we've got. When we don't use our energy properly we become stressed, exhausted, and fearful. Our energy is greatly affected by how well we manage our health, emotions and mentality.

QUESTION: What activities are you engaged in that are energy giving? What do you do to conserve your energy? Where do you find it needlessly getting depleted? How can you expand it?

P.S. Check out my book on emotional energy, *The 40/40 Solution*.



Engagement

The term engagement was popularized by the Gallup Employee Opinion Survey. It is a well-known that some two-thirds of employees consider themselves “disengaged.” Personally, I feel sorry for these people. I can honestly say I have never held a job where I was not fully engaged. It’s a personal choice as much as a management burden.

Unfortunately, managers and leaders cause disengagement by focusing only on the negative anyone does and forgetting to praise the good deeds.

QUESTION: What conduct on the part of company managers and leaders might cause disengagement?

P.S. Check out the Engagement Training I did for [LinkedIn/Lynda](#).

Environment

Your environment is always communicating. It is never not communicating. So, what is your environment communicating? If I walked into your company what story would your environment tell me? Would I know your story without having to ask? Would I know what you were passionate about doing without having to ask?

QUESTION: What can we do to bring our environment to life? How can we improve it with plants, light, paint, pictures, photographs, kids art, messages, testimonials, logos and so on?

Ergonomics

Ergonomics is about taking care of your body and putting yourself in the optimal position to do great work. Whether it's a tool, vehicle, or chair, good ergonomics help increase productivity and reduce health claims. Personally, I love my stand up VariDesk and Topo mat.

QUESTION: How can you improve your ergonomics?

Ethics

Ethics begin with the individual. Ethics serves as a moral compass helping us to discern right from wrong. Every company has its unique ethical challenges.

QUESTION: Where can incentives, culture, and other factors cause ethical dilemmas at your company? How can you train on them in advance to help make better ethical decisions?

Exercise

Nobody doubts the benefit of exercise. Unfortunately, most people don't do it. So, they become obese and sick. The excuses are the same: lack of time, bad weather, lack of facilities, maladies that get in the way, etc. Good health is about taking action. It starts one safe step at a time. *Just do it!*

QUESTION: Are you exercising at least 30 min, per day? How can you get your fellow employees exercising together? Even if it is just walking around the block or up flights of stairs? Maybe a lunch time session at the local gym?

Experiment

It is hard to learn without experimentation. Few companies experiment with one way of hiring versus another way of hiring to help find the best way of hiring. The same is true for the other employee life cycle events.

QUESTION: What low cost experiments can you run to find the best way to manage people?

Fairness

I can remember my old man telling me that "Life wasn't designed to be fair, it was designed to be a learning lesson." It took me some time to find the wisdom in that statement. Most of today's laws are built around a notion of fairness. The Catch-22 is when we focus on the fact we have been treated unfairly we surrender our personal power. The most successful people I know have risen above the notion of unfairness. They realize life is a learning lesson. Either you learn your lessons or you become a victim.

QUESTION: Where can you let go of the idea that you're not being treated fairly? How can you rise above those circumstances? What lessons are left to be learned?

Fear

As with any human emotion fear is there for good reason. Unfortunately, fear can prevent us from reaching our full potential. Over the years I have learned fear is related to judgment.

QUESTION: Whose judgment are you concerned about and how is the fear of it blocking you from moving forward?

Finance

The reality is many people have a poor grip on finances, whether it's at work or at home. I was one of those people. A smart lawyer who had a poor relationship with money. I didn't learn about finance growing up and accounting was the most boring class I ever took. That head in the sand approach caught up with me when I went bankrupt at 40.

Now I know my dollars and cents, inside and out. And so should you. Do you have a budget and retirement plan? Have you seen a financial planner?

QUESTION: Where do you have to learn more about finance?

Flexibility

Flexibility has arrived at buzzword status. While it's important to have rules, we also need flexibility. Flexible work and flexible jobs. The metaphor of the bamboo that bends but does not break is the best way to approach the notion of flexibility.

QUESTION: Where can you be a little less rigid and a bit more flexible? Where can you help support flexibility programs at your company?

Food

Food, glorious food.

You are what you eat. Eat a bunch of junk and you will feel like junk. Eat a bunch of live food and you will feel alive. How can you help employees make wise food choices? Wouldn't it make sense to buy them healthy lunches and gain greater productivity in the afternoon?

QUESTION: How can we use food at our company to increase health, engagement and productivity?

Fun

“You’re no fun.” Iggy Pop

Life is too short not to have fun! I often ask executives if there’s anyone in the room who does not want to have fun while making their money. Nobody wants to be that person... yet, there they are. Many are not having fun but they make no conscious effort to turn things around. There is nothing unbusinesslike about having fun if it furthers the interest of the business, and that includes the well-being of its employees. See my [checklist](#) of fun ideas for the workplace.

QUESTION: What can you do to bring fun to your company? Maybe start a fun committee?

Games

We all love games. We are making work, learning, data management and otherwise “dry” tasks more game-like and engaging. Many HR service providers (HRIS, Payroll, Think HR, etc.) are moving towards gamifying their offerings. See my [Checklist](#) on Gamification.

QUESTION: How can you help gamify everything from hiring, orientation, performance management, benefits enrollment, training?

Gifts

It seems like a lot of the fun has been taken out of giving gifts in the workplace. Sometimes, I'm nostalgic for the days of the Mad Men.

Gifts are important. Gifts tell people we care about them. Whether they are a boss, an employee, a customer, a vendor or custodian. Gifts need not be expensive if they are thoughtful. A written thank you note, from the heart, is one of the greatest gifts of all.

QUESTION: What gift can you give somebody today?



Glass Door

[Glassdoor.com](https://www.glassdoor.com) is making the hiring process transparent. Company culture too. What do people say about your company on Glass Door? Do you respond where you can? Do you understand social media guidelines when dealing with online statements?

QUESTION: What can you do to improve your Glass Door profile?

Great Work

My favorite webinar guest was Michael Bungay Stanier. He wrote the book **Do More Great Work**. Michael works within an easy framework – you either do bad work, good work, or great work. Think about each one of these categories in the work you do.

QUESTION: What will you do to do more Great Work?

P.S. If you are in HR, you can get access to the [Great HR Program](https://www.greathr.com) (www.greathr.com).

Growth

You either grow or you die, there is no middle ground. One of my favorite quotes is by Paulo Coelho who said "Only the mediocre are ever truly comfortable." Are you willing to constantly grow or are you instead seeking comfort? Growth comes from venturing into the unknown. Going deep. Right to the edge. Where you are guaranteed to learn something.

Just like in the weight room, there is no growth without resistance.

QUESTION: What can you do to disrupt your comfort zone and increase your growth?

Haiku

You probably know that Haiku is a poetic art form. Remember, the first and last lines have five syllables and the second line has seven. Wouldn't it be fun to have a haiku contest at your company? Here's my HR haiku:

Human Resources...
A great opportunity
for people and work.

QUESTION: What's your career haiku? Send it to me!

Health

Health is the greatest wealth. Unfortunately, most wellness programs don't improve employee health because people are about as healthy as they choose to be. Employers should make sure employees have skin in the healthcare game and share both responsibility and rewards. The best you can do is to educate and encourage employees and applaud them when they take action.

QUESTION: How can we make it easy for our employees to be healthy? See my [Checklist](#) on Health and Nutrition.



Hiring

I remember listening to a Stanford Entrepreneurial School podcast with Jim Collins, author of numerous best sellers including **Good to Great**. At the end of that presentation he was asked what one piece of advice he would you give an entrepreneur to have a successful company. Collins' reply was "Make sure your managers hire great people."

Do you and your managers realize the single most important thing they'll ever do in their career is hire great people?

QUESTION: How can you place managers into a hiring process that makes sure they hire great employees? Training, checklists and tools are a great start. See my [Hiring Checklist](#).

Holidays

For many people the holidays are the most stressful time of the year. There is the financial stress and family politics. There is all the food, sugar and alcohol consumed. You can understand why so many are stressed about the holidays. Maybe you get that way.

QUESTION: How can you support your employees through the holiday season? How can you have a stress-free holiday?

HRIS

Human resource systems are like Quickbooks for HR. They can help manage employee data from hire to fire. Different HRIS systems are designed for different size and type companies. If you have even 25 employees you should look into a simple HRIS system like www.bamboohr.com.

QUESTION: How can you use HRIS system to better streamline workforce operations?

P.S. Check out the training I did on HRIS systems for [LinkedIn/Lynda](#).

Humility

In **Good to Great** Jim Collins talks about the Humble Level 5 Leader. I speak about that leader being a true hero – someone who allows the people around him/her to become their own hero. Isn't that what humility is all about – allowing other people to become their own hero?

QUESTION: Where can you humble yourself and allow someone around you to become their own hero?

Humor

My webinar guest Andrew Tarvin, whose company is Humor That Works, was excellent. He shared how leaders can use humor to help battle stressful times, to make a point, or to provide a lasting memory. Don't be a stick in a mud. Have a sense of humor.

QUESTION: Where can you bring more humor to your work?

Independent Contractors

I love independent contractors and love working as one. Most I. C.'s like the freedom it provides. But it can also generate financial stress when the business is not coming in, yet all the bills remain.

Many of the laws surrounding the independent contractor relationship are archaic. They were designed in 1938 when the whole notion of who is an employee centered on control. Today control is dead. Whether it be related to managing an independent contractor or an employee.

The “uberization” of the workforce is running right up against these archaic laws. But they are the law. Bottom line is if it walks like a duck and talks like a duck... it’s a duck. If that worker looks and acts like an employee then chances are that’s exactly what they are.

QUESTION: How can you use independent contractors to delegate work either of low value or not within your scope of expertise? How can you make sure your company doesn’t misclassify employees as I.C.’s?

Innovation

Innovation is mostly about constant improvement, not leaps and bounds. Dr. Deming taught that to be innovative we have to think in terms of perfection, not tolerances. He would ask: how can we produce the world’s most efficient car as opposed to one that gets 50 miles per gallon? When you ask questions like that you build Teslas.

QUESTION: How can you bring innovation to the work you do?

Inspire

When you inspire people you breathe life into them. One of the best ways to inspire someone is with a great story. Tell a great story about the future and bring it present. For example, we are the #1 real estate company... in the making.

QUESTION: What great story can you tell to inspire others?

Internships

Smart companies have great intern programs. They develop talent long before it's needed. Just remember the wage and hour laws around internships are very strict. Most companies have adopted the practice of paying at least a minimum wage to their interns. Over the years I have hired many work-study students as interns.

QUESTION: How can you create a great internship program at your company?

Investigations

After 30 plus years of being a lawyer I know this: most people would rather *ignore*, *bury* or *deny* a problem. However, the best time to deal with a problem is right now! The law and common sense require you to do a prompt and thorough investigation into problems. Depending on the concern you should get an outside independent investigator. Like me! A good resource is www.awi.org.

QUESTION: Do you have a plan for how you would conduct an investigation? To see a report I wrote on investigations go to www.donphin.com/investigations/.

J.O.B.

At network marketing meetings they tell the attendees the word job stands for Just Over Broke. For many people that is a fact. In a country of our wealth we have people who can work full time and still live in poverty.

The most important place to pay a great wage is with your entry level workers. A few dollars per hour difference can literally change their lives... and your bottom line.

QUESTION: How can you raise the entry level wages and attract the top 10% of entry level employees in the process?

Joke

I know one executive who requires job applicants to provide a joke with their resume. Think about it – if they don't do it, then they can't follow instructions, so you don't hire them. If they give you an inappropriate joke, don't hire them. And... you get to laugh doing a tedious job.

QUESTION: What if you asked applicants to submit a joke with their resume?

Judgment

It took a while to figure out that fear is directly related to someone's judgment; perhaps my own. What would you fear to do if there was no judgment attached to the outcome? Likewise, fear of our judgment can hold back others. I remember once a CEO told me his son in Little League hits better when he sits in the dugout as opposed to standing in the third base coach box. His son was concerned about his judgment and it affected his swing.

QUESTION: Whose judgment affects your swing to this day and who's swing is being affected by your judgment?

Kaizen

The concept of kaizen was popularized by Dr. W. Edwards Deming. It stands for constant improvement in Japanese. Dr. Deming help revolutionize manufacturing by looking at quality from the front end. He said a dollar invested in the first 15% of a manufacturing process was worth at least six times that amount on the back 15%.

QUESTION: How can you use the concept of kaizen to help improve quality of personnel practices at your company? How can you do a better job of focusing on the first 15% of the personnel function, which is hiring and onboarding?

Leadership

We need leaders. Leadership depends on circumstances. Somebody could be a great leader of their country and a lousy leader in their home. Someone else can have a leadership title and then hide from big problems.

A commonality cuts across all great leaders – their conviction. They are set on a path of their own making. They have a deep belief in it.

One of my favorite books on leadership is the **Effective Executive** by Peter Drucker.

QUESTION: What can you do to become a more effective leader?

Let It Go

Letting go is the path to enlightenment. Letting go provides us with humility and strength. Letting go means you understand that events happen but you get to choose how to react to them.

QUESTION: Where is it time for you to let something go?

Life Balance

I love the conversation around “life balance.” If that’s what you want, then do it. If you could not care less about being balanced and would rather play your saxophone 12 hours per day, then do it. Maybe that’s what keeps you balanced. Don’t let the judgment of others affect your idea of what balance should be.

When I think of life balance I want to spread my energy appropriately across my career, finances, relationships, health and spirit. That’s how I think about it. Not to spend equal time in these areas but to balance my energies in them. There is a report I did on Balanced Life Checkup at www.donphin.com/tools.

QUESTION: What does life balance mean for you?

Lighting

There's plenty of medical evidence to show that good lighting is good for our health, emotions, vision, attention, and so much. Of course, natural lighting is best.

QUESTION: How can you improve your environment with better lighting?

Marketing

I've learned a great deal about how to better manage people from reading marketing materials. You can cross out the word customer or client and insert the word employee and learn a lot. Marketing is about getting people to pay attention to you which will be helpful in the recruitment process. It's also about retention and engagement which will be helpful to you throughout the remainder of the employee life cycle.

QUESTION: What marketing technique can you use to better communicate with potential and existing employees?

Mastermind Group

In ***Think and Grow Rich*** by Napoleon Hill (you have read that book, haven't you?) Mr. Hill explains that the most successful executives of his time belonged to a "mastermind group." While, the Carnegies, Mellons, Vandebuilts, and Rockefellers may have had their Algonquin Club, Union Club, and Yale Club, there's no reason you can't have yours.

I've presented over 400 times to CEOs of the Vistage organization, which runs monthly CEO mastermind groups. I have also run mastermind groups. You don't have to join a formal group; you can begin by creating your own. To learn about Vistage go to www.vistage.com.

QUESTION: What mastermind group can you join or form?

Meetings

“Meetings, bloody meetings.”

I like meetings that start and stop on time. I like meetings that are short and to the point. I like meetings that have a clear objective. I like meetings when there's follow up and commitment to getting things done. As a result, I don't like most meetings.

Experiment with different ways of conducting meetings. Give a new twist every month and by the end of the year you should be able to figure out the best way to run a meeting at your company.

QUESTION: What can you do to improve meetings at your company?



Mentoring

I love mentoring. Companies have a unique opportunity to pass down the knowledge and wisdom of the generally older, more experienced workforce. Given rapid workplace changes, we can also have mentorships where younger, typically more tech savvy employees, help mentor older, more experienced workers.

A company in San Diego County, Veridium, created a mentorship training program to help train younger employees at their manufacturing plant. A three-year effort yielded a 28% increase in the company's EBITA! Not a bad result. The plan not only reinvigorated the senior workers, it also helped with succession planning and recruitment efforts.

QUESTION: What mentorship programs can help grow your EBITA?



Mindfulness

Mindfulness at work has been gaining attention. Wouldn't you like to be "mindful" about your work? Isn't it much better than being mindless? Much of mindfulness has to do with being in the moment, whether we are reviewing a report or coaching a subordinate. In many workplaces employees are encouraged to take a mindful break so they can re-center themselves and come back to work better focused. Check out www.mindful.com.

QUESTION: How can you bring mindfulness to your work?

Mistakes

I wrote a book on mistakes. (It is also on the free tools page.) Perhaps the most important lesson to learn is most mistakes are easily avoided. Things like checklists, training, standard operating procedures and proper delegation methods are good ways of avoiding mistakes.

We have to allow ourselves to make mistakes. That happens when you push to the edge. The company that makes mistakes faster and at lower cost than their competition will be the company that succeeds. The same is true for our careers.

QUESTION: How can you go for it while reducing your exposure to making mistakes?

Music

Music stirs the soul, too! Consider where you can bring music into your work environment. Perhaps classical music in the lobby, a 90's jam in the lunch room, or new age in a meditation room. Perhaps you can start your next meeting with a stirring song.

QUESTION: How can you bring the power of music into the workplace?

Name It

It's cool when you name your projects, initiatives or goals. As a simple example, many companies will name their training programs as some type of "university." Your Manhattan Project. Once you name it you can better market it through social media posts, t-shirts, marketing material and the like.

QUESTION: What project, initiative or goal can you give a cool name to?

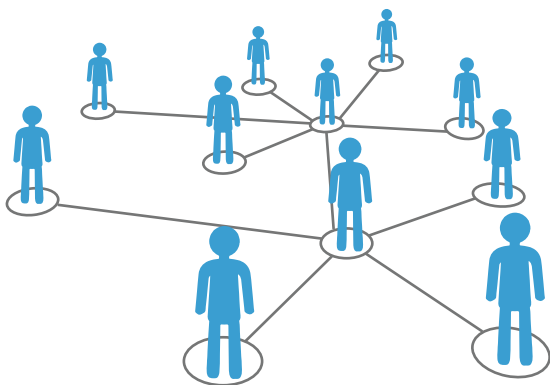
Network

Plenty of success gurus will tell you that your career value is directly connected to your network. I don't disagree with this. It's hard to accomplish much in this life without a network, whether it's at work or home.

Many of us shy away from "networking" because we don't think we are good at conversation or have little to offer. Actually it's easy to network – just ask a lot of questions. Be curious. Find out about other people. The more you find out about them the more they'll want to know about you.

When people ask what you do, give them a great response. I tell HR executives to say "I put the kickass into HR." That will stir somebody's interest.

QUESTION: What can you do to build the power of your network? What's your response to the question "What do you do?"



NO!

I always found it far easier to say yes than to say no. Then I found myself over extended, over committed, and exhausted. It wasn't until I learned to say "no" that I began to better manage my time, improve my health, increase my productivity and personal wealth.

QUESTION: Where do you have to say "no"? What is it you have to **stop doing** that will allow you to grow in your career? Where can you use the power of NO! in your life right now?

Observation

Sometimes the answers are staring us in the face; if we would only step back for a moment and be a better observer. Pretend you walked in to your company as an outside consultant with no preconceptions about how things are supposed to be done. What would you observe about your environment? What story does it tell? Is it inspiring or drab? What is it missing?

QUESTION: How can you become a better observer of your work environment?

Obstacles

Opportunities are realized when you remove the obstacles to them. Nowadays it's not like there's a lack of information. It's the implementation of that information that somehow gets blocked.

QUESTION: What obstacles stand in the way of your opportunities? What will you do to remove them?

ONET

ONET (www.onetonline.org) is the most comprehensive set of job descriptions available and it's free. Look at jobs at your company and see how you can improve your job descriptions and define required skill sets and training needs. ONET can also help you with career planning and creating career ladders.

QUESTION: How can you use ONET to improve your job descriptions, career planning and career ladders?

Openness

Open, open, open. Do you really want to live your life any other way? Do you see any benefit in being close minded, shut off or stubborn in your ways?

Dr. Edward Deming stated that “Profound knowledge comes from outside of a system, because a system can’t understand it itself.” Are you open to that profound knowledge?

QUESTION: Where can you be “more open” in the work you do? As a person? With your team?

Opportunity

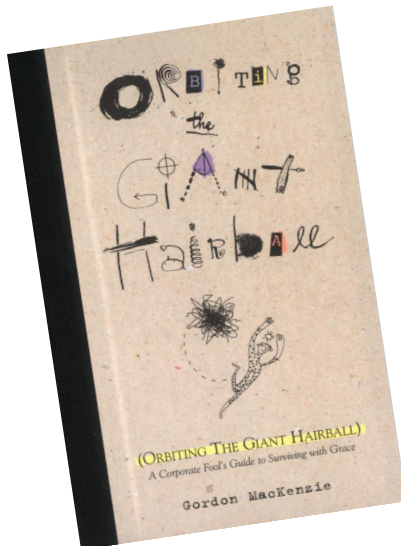
There is great opportunity in every business and every career. As the saying goes, there are acres of diamonds in your backyard. Your job is to find those diamonds.

QUESTION: What are the greatest opportunities your company or in your career that are right in front of you?

Orbiting the Giant Hairball

This is the title of a great book on generating a creative work environment. The title is a metaphor. Gordon MacKenzie was the creative director for Hallmark Cards in its heyday. Hairballs are all those policies and procedures, generated by human resources and others. People often complain that the hairball stifles creativity. MacKenzie didn't believe so. He thought you could "orbit" around the hairballs if you remained tethered by way of company vision, mission, values and goals. To buy the book [click here](#).

QUESTION: How can you orbit the giant hairballs that exist at your company?



Overcommitment

The greatest trap of the hero is overcommitment.

In the book ***A Hero with a Thousand Faces***, author Joseph Campbell reminds us the mythology of the hero is one of self-sacrifice. He cautions us not to confuse reality with mythology. You are not a hero simply because you sacrifice more than anyone else. And since we don't have swords to use any longer we'll sacrifice our time, energy, health, relationships and more... to be a hero.

When you overcommit you are guaranteed to produce lies and be villainized for doing so.

QUESTION: Where are you overcommitted and what are you going to do about it? What will you have to stop doing?



Performance Reviews

Nobody likes to give them and nobody likes to get them. That's largely because they are waste of time. They seldom improve performance because we have so ill-defined what performance is.

The notion we should review performance annually was promulgated over 100 years ago... which makes it irrelevant for our fast moving times.

Today we have to create a performance dialogue that provides continuous feedback.

QUESTION: How would your employees know if they were doing a great job without having to ask their manager and without having to be told by their manager... because they understand the quality and quantity benchmarks of great performance?

P.S. Also check out the YouTube video on how Google uses OKRs.

Podcast

I love Podcasts! I typically have about a dozen on my iPhone. Some relate to business, personal growth, classic literature, spirituality, and more. I typically listen to them when I'm in my car or at the gym. I remember buying dozens of cassette tapes and then CDs and now the Podcast – which is free and easy.

QUESTION: What Podcast will you listen to when driving around? See my list of [Great Podcasts for HR Executives](#).

Planning

As Mary Kaye stated “Most people plan their vacations better than their career.” I have found this to be a fact. When I speak, I will very often ask groups whether or not they have a written plan for their career. The typical response is about one in ten have a plan. My guess is that 10% contains most of the successful people in the room.

QUESTION: Have you planned your vacations better than your career? If so, time to get with the career planning thing... in writing! Again, [ONET](#) is a good place to begin.

Privacy

Our lives are becoming less “private” all the time. Everyone from recruiters to hackers want our private information. Companies and their employees are vulnerable to cyber-attacks and more.

QUESTION: What can your company do to better protect the privacy of its employees? What can you do to protect your personal privacy? See www.privacyrights.org.

Productivity

There’s a big difference between being busy and productive. I know many people that seem to be doing it, doing it, doing it... but produce marginal results. Then there are the truly productive, who work efficiently with their time. Much of productivity has to do with focusing on the most valuable work to be performed. That means you have to stop doing less valuable work.

QUESTION: What low value work should you stop doing so you can move to higher level of productivity? (Notice the stop doing theme in this book?)

Proprietary Property

Proprietary property is an all-encompassing term which includes things like trademarks, patents, copyrights, and trade secrets. For many companies there is little PP. There is simply great execution. For other companies their greatest value is their PP.

QUESTION: What proprietary property do you have at your company that should be protected?

Purpose

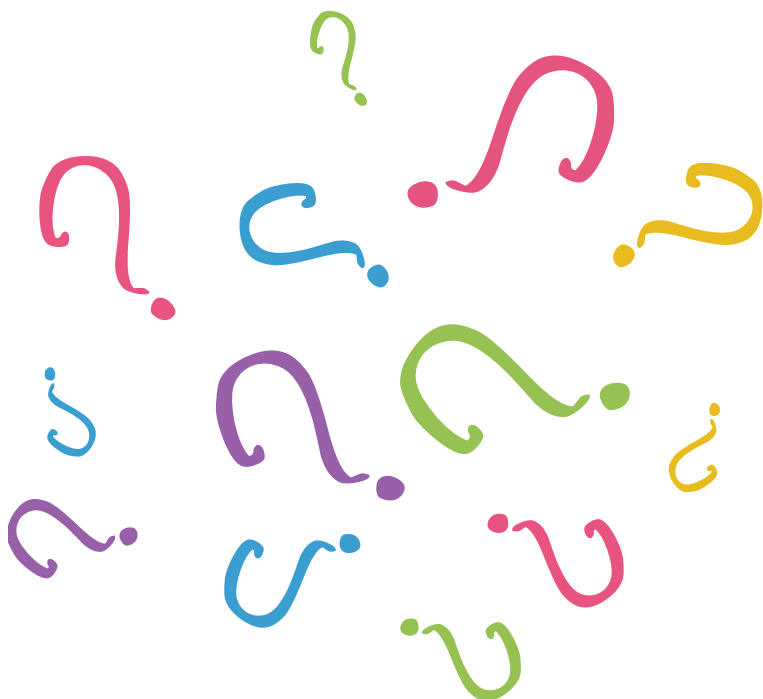
Purpose is the “Big Why” behind the work you do. As Victor Frankel reminded us, all of us search for meaning. The ultimate purpose of business is to produce human well beingness. A business that does not do so will not last for long.

QUESTION: What is the deep purpose behind the work you do? How does it affect the wellbeing of all stakeholders?

Questions

As you can tell from this book I love asking questions! So much of our personal and professional success is based on the questions we ask ourselves. Ask the right the questions and you get the right answers. Ask a great question and you'll get amazing insight and clarity.

QUESTION: What's a great question you can ask about the work you do?



Quiz

I love quizzes. They help keep score. They can help you decide who to hire, who needs training, and who doesn't know as much as they think they do. For example, see my [50 Question Compliance Quiz](#).

QUESTION: What quizzes can you create to identify benchmarks of knowledge at your company?

Recruitment

As the Buddha said "What comes to you comes from you." How are you *attracting* great candidates? If I went to your company hiring page would I be excited about working for you? Do you have videos produced by current employees talking about their amazing work experience? Have you done web searches to see what is being said about your company that can affect your recruitment efforts?

QUESTION: What can you do to better attract and recruit great employees?

Referral Programs

The best source of new employees is your current employees.

It amazes me how many employers think that offering a \$50 bonus for referring a potential hire will somehow motivate employees to do just that. As I ask in workshops “What is the fear of referring an employee?” The answer is, “they may not work out.” Is it worth \$50 to suffer everyone’s judgment about the employee who didn’t work out? In a vast majority cases is the answer is a resounding no.

However if you put real “juice” into the program, perhaps \$500 or more, you will see people move past their fear of providing referrals.

You can also make it easy to help with those referral conversations by providing existing employees a one-page referral sheet they can simply provide to a potential candidate.

QUESTION: How can you create an employee referral program that works?

Resources

We often underestimate the availability of resources that surround us. It maybe untapped data, an old professor, under-utilized employee or insight from across the hall in marketing. Never underestimate the resources available to you.

QUESTION: What resources are readily available that you have not taken advantage of?

Responsibility

When we are a responsible person, we don't play blame and justification games. That only gives our power away. Instead we go "above the line" and take responsibility for that which we can control. One hundred percent responsibility.

The beauty of being 100% responsibility is that it leaves no room for regret, remorse or guilt. What more could you have done nothing? It allows you to let go.

QUESTION: Where can you be more responsible for your relationships, finances, health or career?

Retention

Employee retention rates are affected by many factors including the industry you are in, the age of employees, demographic trends and other factors not exactly in your control. However the three main causes for turnover are well within your control: 1) not hiring misfits in the first place, 2) providing growth opportunities and 3) a quality relationship with their boss.

Turnover is expensive. Retention is where it's at.

QUESTION: What can you do to help better retain your employees?

Retirement

I kid that we're having a second midlife crisis, this time in our 60's related to retirement. Weren't we all supposed to get a pension we could live off of so we could play golf in Florida? For some that dream may still exist. For most others they will live well into their 80's, 90's, and may be even 100's and the idea of early retirement is not realistic. Once again our stories have caught up to reality and we face a crisis.

QUESTION: Are you or your employees thinking about retirement in a realistic manner? Are you saving for your long future today and thinking about how can you remain "in the game" well into your 60's, 70's, and even 80's?

Risk

I have been writing for risk management publications for over 25 years. Without taking some risk there is no growth. If we are cavalier about risk then we unnecessarily put ourselves in harm's way.

QUESTION: How can you better manage the risk exposures in your life? Do you insure those risks wherever you can?

P.S. There are a number of risk management checklists on my [website](#).

Robotics

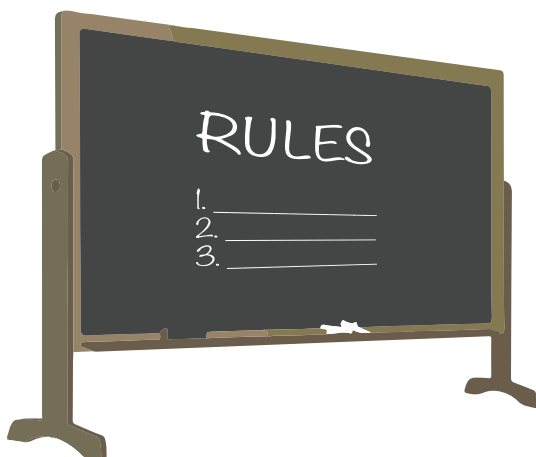
The abilities and costs of robotics are dramatically improving. It is estimated that robots cost from \$1 – \$10 an hour to do work which costs much more than that if done by an employee. Robots don't complain about having to work over time, don't need breaks and don't file work comp claims or law suits.

QUESTION: Where are robotics replacing workers in your industry? How can you get on the front end and facilitate that change while maintaining your corporate culture?

Rules

When it comes to rules we either love them or hate them. What's most important is you don't get stuck using rules that no longer make sense, either because they are outdated or don't fit the circumstances. HR departments are in charge of creating rules to prevent employment law violations. We should also consider simple rules that help increase productivity, engagement and performance. I liked the book ***Simple Rules***.

QUESTION: What rules are no longer makes sense at your company? What rules are dogmatic and of no real benefit anymore? What simple rules can help increase productivity or engagement?



Safety

Whether at work or at home, it makes no sense to engage in unsafe practices. Most safety exposures are common ones – auto accidents, slips and falls, food quality, flood and fire.

QUESTION: What feels unsafe in your life? What are you doing to address it? See my checklist for Being Safe at Home, Work and on the Road.

Sales

Everybody has a sales job to do, no matter what your job may be. If you are not willing to sell yourself, nobody else will do it for you. Much learning and dollars have been spent on improving sales. I encourage everyone to read a few sales books and ask how the tools, techniques and strategies discussed would apply to selling the value of the work they do.

QUESTION: How can you do a better job of selling the value of the work you do, even if you are not in sales?

Security

A sense of security is one of our basic needs. In a country of "at-will" employment, many people have the erroneous belief the only job security may come from joining a union or filing a grievance. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is job security. It's doing a positive job, with a positive attitude, where there is a customer need, and a cash flow to support it. I have never in my 30+ year career seen anyone terminated who has met those four factors.

QUESTION: How can you do a better job of communicating what job security means at your company?

P.S. I wrote a book on Job Security which is on my free tools [page](#).

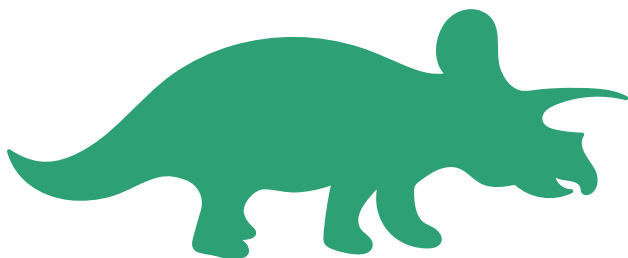


Seniority

We live in a what-have-you-done-for-me-lately corporate environment. While some companies still have protections based on seniority, it is often driven by a union contract. What is the real value in seniority today? Many workers have done the same job the same way for 30 years, which means despite their seniority they produce no greater value. Seniority can also negatively affect compensation structures and succession planning.

Bottom line: don't allow employees to become dinosaurs.

QUESTION: Where does seniority provide a true benefit in your workplace? How can this wisdom be tapped into?



Silence

There is great power in silence. For example, when you're trying to be "present" during a conversation. In our harried, got to do something this second world, it's very difficult for any of us to sit in silence. Yet that's where creativity and peace comes from. In the space between your thoughts.

Meditation is an excellent exercise to help center yourself and take advantage of the power of silence.

QUESTION: How do you take advantage of the power of silence?

P.S. If you haven't checked out a "float-tank" yet, do so. You'll experience silence in a whole new way.

Social Media

You can no longer ignore the impact social media has on branding our company and career. It also produces an enormous risk exposure for companies due to its transparent nature.

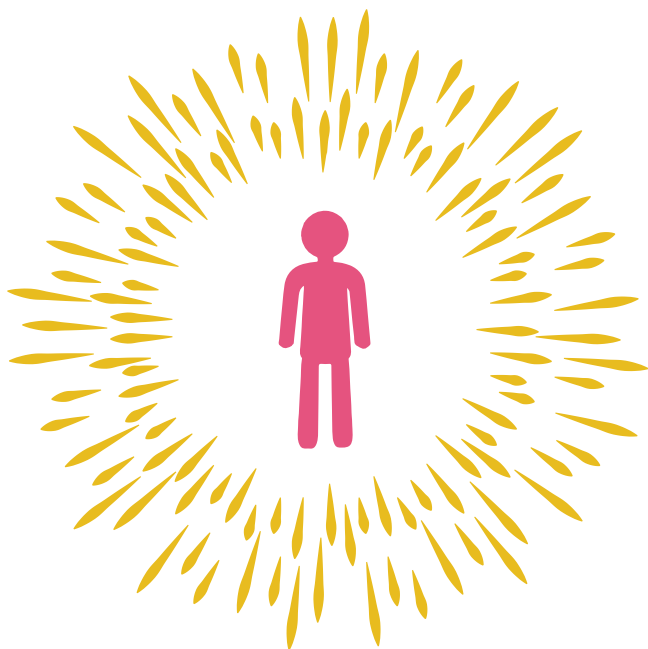
QUESTION: What can you do to improve your social media profile? How do you monitor social media impacts on your company or career?

Spirit

I wrote a report on [Spirit at Work](#). When work lacks spirit it becomes a life draining affair. We show up like zombies, day after day, simply crossing days off the calendar.

It need not be that way! When I talk about spirit at work I am not focused on religion at work. Spirit is a broader concept, inclusive of all human beings. It breathes life into us.

QUESTION: What can you do to lift the spirits of the people you work with every day?



Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)

Years ago I read the ***E-Myth*** written by Michael Gerber. One day he walked into a McDonald's and asked himself how a bunch of pimpy-faced teenagers can be held accountable for running a billion dollar company? His ah-hah was the power of the standard operating procedure. Gerber suggests that we build our business as if we planned on franchising it. This means we would develop a standard operating procedure for each task. When developing SOPs we identify both the task and the best practice for implementing it. Through ongoing continuous improvement suggestion meetings (Kaizen) we can constantly improve our best practices.

It is easy to create SOPs – just think through your day and identify all those different things you do and the best way you do them. If you're not a good typist simply dictate it and have someone transcribe it.

QUESTION: How can developing SOPs benefit your company?

Story

It would be a mistake to ignore the power of story in our lives and at our companies. We have every right to have a story of our own making. We also have the opportunity to define and brand our company story.

QUESTION: How can you do a better job of consciously creating the story for your career and company? How would I know your company's story simply by walking around your office?

Strategy

Strategy can be defined as the best way to produce a winning outcome. What strategy can we apply to quickly hire 100 software engineers? Or, what strategy can we apply to help grow our sales effort by 50%? Align personnel practices to the most important company business strategies.

QUESTION: What are the three top corporate strategies you are supporting with your personnel practices?

Succession Planning

Employees come and employees go. Those companies that plan for this reality end up more successful than those who don't. They realize they have to nurture high-potential employees and groom new leaders before they are ever needed.

The old school notion of succession planning, centered on employee retirement, doesn't work in today's environment. People no longer work for a company their entire career. You're often lucky if you can get them to work for you for three years or more.

QUESTION: Do you have your succession planning act together? What positions are most vulnerable to turnover?

Suggestions

I have never seen a voluntary employee suggestion system that works. When there are voluntary suggestions, they tend to be delivered anonymously, and be of the finger pointing nature.

I believe providing suggestions should be part of everybody's job. I would put it into job descriptions. I would have mandatory suggestion meetings. And I would make them fun. A great book on the topic is ***I-Power*** by Martin Edelston.

QUESTION: How can you run a fun meeting where every employee must bring a suggestion of how they can do their job better?



Surveys

Over the years companies have asked my advice on how to manage a situation having never once presenting that question to the employees involved. Don't be that company. While consultants are great, most of the knowledge you need rests within the confines of your company.

Consider doing surveys throughout the entire employee life cycle. Entrance surveys, orientation surveys, performance surveys, engagement surveys, and the exit survey. You may want to use a service like Survey Monkey.

I like open ended questions with hand written responses. This allows you to easily follow up on those responses to gain additional information. I am not a big fan of anonymous surveys. We do anonymous surveys because we are afraid that if they are not anonymous, employees won't answer accurately, because they're afraid if they do they will be punished. The more you say that out loud, the sillier it sounds. We do it anonymously because we're afraid they're afraid that we're afraid... you get the idea.

QUESTION: What non-anonymous, hand written survey can you conduct today?

Sustainability

To say we have been a wasteful society would be an understatement. How can you manufacture or produce a service in a more sustainable way? Corporate sustainability is about being kind to Mother Earth and her inhabitants. It's about producing goods and services at the lowest cost to the environment and people possible.

QUESTION: What sustainability project can make your company more environmentally friendly?

Talent

Great companies have great talent. That means they need a great talent scout; who has an understanding of hiring metrics. Think **Moneyball**.

QUESTION: What are you doing to find and nurture potential talent for your organization? How can you use data and analytics to bring a more scientific approach to talent acquisition and management?

TEAM

TEAM stands for Together Each Achieves More. Life is a team sport. At work and at home. One of the best ways to support team members is by asking two questions: 1) what are the most important things you do every day and 2) how can I help you in each area?

QUESTION: What team member can you do a better job of supporting today?

Technology

Over recent years I've been doing a deep dive into how technology and computerization will disrupt the workforce. My conclusion is this: ***you either eat technology or you will be eaten by technology.***

Robots, artificial intelligence, big data, cyber challenges, are all coming to the forefront due to rapid advancements in technology. You can expect most routine tasks will be replaced by technology. Industries like insurance, finance and transportation will be hit the hardest. See my report on the impact of technology.

QUESTION: How will you use technology to disrupt and improve your workplace?

Testing

Half of the people out there test on any one subject better than the other half. Unless we clearly identify and test for skillsets we have only assumptions about a person's ability to do things. We can test both substantive and procedural knowledge. So for example when I helped hire a CFO, I tested their substantive knowledge of GAAP and their procedural knowledge of QuickBooks. The best website on this planet for skill testing is www.shl.com.

QUESTION: What tests can you take to get clear about your skills? What about your employees?

Think

I remember a quote to the effect that thinking is the most valuable commodity because so few people truly engage in it. Often we have only to give ourselves or others permission to think. And then amazing things happen.

Tom Watson famously put up THINK signs all around IBM to stimulate just that.

QUESTION: How can employees at your company be encouraged to think?

Tools

Anthropologists claim we became human once we used tools. I love great tools because they help me do great work.

QUESTION: How can you increase productivity by providing your workforce with better tools?

Training

“Training is not necessary, neither is business survival.”
– Dr. Deming.

Today you have to learn more to earn more. Training comes in all forms – formal instruction, mentorships, online, in person. Top companies have robust training budgets.

Understand this: you either train ahead or you fall behind.

QUESTION: How can you improve your company's training program? What training do you need?

P.S. Learn about my training programs for leaders, managers and HR.

Unique Selling Proposition (USP)

This is a term used to describe a value proposition. For example FedEx built its business on the USP they will deliver messages overnight.

What is your unique selling proposition for the workforce? At In-N-Out Burger they offer wages higher than their competitors, which allows them to attract and retain great employees. At other companies it's about the growth opportunity, the total compensation, the unique work being done or the great parties thrown.

QUESTION: What is your unique selling proposition for attracting and retaining employees?

Urgency

There is a Catch-22 here – while we want to reduce the need to deal with things in an urgent manner, we want to have a sense of urgency about the work we do. As Stephen Corey reminded us, focus on the urgent and important matters.

QUESTION: Where do you deal with “manufactured” urgencies that are simply the result of poor planning or irresponsibility? How can you transition that wasteful use of energy to put urgency behind the meaningful work you do?

Vacation

“Who’s got the time to take a vacation?”

Have you had a vacation lately? Many companies are going to unlimited vacation, which they know they can get away with, because statistically less and less workers are taking advantage of vacation time!

Not taking vacations is nothing more than a road to burn out. Take a vacation even if you can’t afford to or don’t want to go anywhere.

QUESTION: How can you generate a vacation policy that encourages and rewards people for taking time off for renewal, nourishment, and wellbeing?

Values

Values are about who we are as a person or team. A manager may value obedience more than creativity. While that manager may develop a very regimented workforce expect little in the way of innovation from it.

QUESTION: Has your company defined its values? If not, how can you help define them? Once you do, how can you help brand them?

Vampires

Vampires are those people you become attracted to that then suck the life out of you. Vampires don't care who they harm, they simply are interested in their own survival.

QUESTION: Who are the vampires you have to remove from your company or life?



Victims

My wisdom here is do not let people play victim on you. Identify what their fears are and take them away. Perhaps they fear that if they try something new and fail they will receive harsh criticism. Therefore they play victim and do nothing. If you don't want them to play victim on you, you can let them know that they will only be judged if they make no effort. If they make a responsible effort and things go wrong then it's simply a learning lesson.

QUESTION: What can you do to prevent people from playing victim with you? If you would like a copy of the ***Victims, Villains, and Heroes*** book I wrote, email me don@donphin.com and I'll send you a PDF.

Vision

"Without a vision the people will perish."

We've known the power of vision for centuries. Vision propels us forward to our future selves.

QUESTION: Is there clarity about the vision for your company and career? Is it in writing or just a pipe dream? Are you a visioneer? See my report on the [Visionaries](#) and [Visualization Techniques for Success](#).

Volunteering

Many companies encourage employees to volunteer in the community. It provides a great deal of goodwill and helps employees know they can make a difference.

QUESTION: Where can you support volunteerism at your company? See www.pointsoflight.org.

5 Why's

This is an inquiry tool used by Six Sigma practitioners. It allows us to dig deep into a question just as an eight year-old would. By the time you get down to the fifth why you've exposed what the real problem or opportunity is.

QUESTION: Where can you use the 5 Why's strategy to dig deeper into a challenge you are facing?

Waste

Peter Drucker reminded us we do three things at work – add value, manage administrative duties, and produce waste. We want to spend 80% of our time on value added work, 20% of the time in administrative work, and no time wasting time.

QUESTION: Where do you waste time? What will do to eliminate it?

Whistleblowing

At the end of my litigation career I represented nuclear power plant whistleblowers. It was the most stressful part of my life. When someone is a whistleblower they are complaining about illegal, immoral or unethical conduct, often with third parties. That may be regulators, the press, lawyers, etc.

The challenge of being a whistle blower is you can get so caught up in being right that you lose your life in the process. I learned that litigating a whistleblower case for five years does nothing to improve one's life or sense of justice. Consider using a program like www.employeeconfidential.com to get on the front-end of problems.

QUESTION: What can you do to head off illegal, immoral or unethical conduct in your environment?

Work

“To work we love, with delight we go.” – Shakespeare

As I like to kid... it's called work... not jail! Work need not be a life training affair. The need to work is inherent to our soul. The challenge is to bring our soul into the work we do every day. We do that by finding the meaningfulness in our work.

QUESTION: What is the meaning in the work you do every day?

World Wild Web

It's hard to think of life without the internet. And it's hard to fathom how it is changed our lives. We are now bombarded with endless information we trust blindly. I can't tell you how often people have sent me articles they've read off the internet that when put under the microscope are nothing more than non-sense. Fake news, if you will. Before you rely on any information from the web try to see if it is accurate by using www.snopes.com.

QUESTION: Where do you or others blindly rely on information derived from the internet?

Xenophobic

When people are xenophobic they are afraid about mixing with different cultures. The Japanese culture is fairly xenophobic. Japan is facing a worker shortage, unwilling to open its borders to immigrant workers. Individuals can be xenophobic. Managers tend to hire in their own image.

QUESTION: Where is xenophobia holding you or your company back from working with the best talent?

YMCA

I've been a "Y" guy for over 50 years. Few organizations have produced as much good as the YMCA.

QUESTION: How can you support your local YMCA and encourage your employees to use their facilities?

Zombies

Closely related to vampires, zombies are just as deadly, only slower moving. When Gallup said that more than two-thirds of the workforce is disengaged, my response is because so many are zombies. You can see what the Center for Disease Control and Prevention says about protecting yourself from zombies by going to [emergency.cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov/emergency) and search zombie.

QUESTION: What are you doing to eliminate the zombies from your workplace?



A Final Note

This book was a brain dump. Using the A to Z approach helped me think through the ideas and questions presented.

QUESTION: How can you take an A – Z approach to documenting and sharing your wisdom or company wisdom?

About Don Phin, Esq.

Don has been a California employment practices attorney since 1983. He litigated employment and business cases for 17 years and quit once he figured out that nobody wins a lawsuit.

Since leaving litigation, he has written numerous books and presented more than 500 times to executives nationwide.

Don was the founder and President of HR That Works, used by more than 3,500 companies and acquired by ThinkHR in January of 2014. He worked there for two years as a V.P.

Now in his “wisdom sharing years,” Don loves coaching executives and continues to inspire with his speaking and training.

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