

Planning Possibilities

News & views brought to you by Michelle Coussens

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Welcome to my February 2014 Issue!



Many of us are fed up with Old Man Winter. This year's winter has been brutal, to say the least. While the cold, snow, and darkness zap our energy levels, it also makes for a good time to reconnect with family, nestle in and read, and make plans for better days. I hope you have been keeping warm, safe, and thoughtful during this difficult past month. As we move into the next month of winter, find ways to connect with your customers in new ways to support them during what are likely also difficult times for them. True customer service occurs during such times as these and is often outside the scope of regular product delivery.

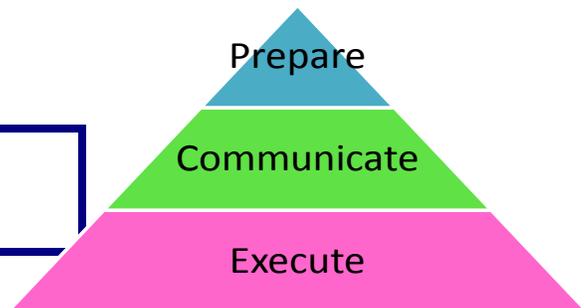
Inside this issue:

	2
Planning Predicaments	2
Communication Corner	2
Online Plug of the Month	2
Be My Guest	3
Book Banter	4
Personally Yours	4
Contact Information	5



Sending warmth and Valentines your way,
Michelle

**Planning for Good
Decisions**



PLAN B CONSULTING MISSION STATEMENT

To assist nonprofit organizations and small businesses become more effective and more efficient through practical business planning, resulting in meaningful and measurable impact on both the organization and its community.

Business leaders increasingly need to look for ways in which human capital can be more strategic and add value to the organization. Human capital review allows you to consider not just your organizational hierarchy but also roles and responsibilities, training and development needs, and personnel interactions. For new businesses, it helps you identify future needs. For existing businesses, it allows you to determine what has been working well between and among management, staff, and others, such as even volunteers, Board members, and other relevant stakeholders. Learn more on page 2 about what trends in human capital management may be affecting your business.

How are you addressing these human capital trends?

The success of our businesses increasingly depends on how we leverage the people we work with and the people we serve. Here are some trends you should be considering as you make your plans for the future:

- 1) Aging workforce: Will you need to replace workers who may be retiring? How are you retaining those you will still need?
- 2) Unmatched supply and demand of talent and associated gaps: How are you accessing the right people for the right jobs? How will you ensure that they are properly trained not only for today's challenges but for those of tomorrow?
- 3) Turnover issues through inadequate talent and/or inadequate fit: How can you make better hiring decisions? What do you do beyond posting jobs online and relying on computer robots to screen them?
- 4) Continued need for succession planning: How are you planning for expected vacancies and new types of position needs?
- 5) Impact of knowledge-based economy: Overall, how are you moving from hiring for knowledge to hiring for know-how?

Planning Predicaments: Work the follow-ups or work the leads?

*Where
planning
concepts
meet
reality*

Our time is infinite, so if you're like me, you often find yourself torn between marketing yourself to your past clients versus pursuing new ones. In addition, your marketing time is further split between keeping existing leads warm and reaching out to potential new leads. What to do?

I typically split my schedule up into different chunks, devoting any time outside of current client service to marketing myself in different ways to different constituents. How do you choose between working on the fifth touch of a warm lead, the reach out to a "cold case", and contacting another for the very first time? If you alternate between these situations too frequently, you lose efficiency. Do it too little, and you take on additional risk. Have some opinions? If so, I would love to hear how you choose.



Online Plug of the Month

Social media is an increasingly large component of all marketing efforts. I recently read a report on the state of social business and its outlook. Here are some related nuggets I culled from the report:

- * 78% of companies have a dedicated social media team. This is up from 67% two years ago.
- * Social media teams have grown from 11 people in 2010 to almost 16 in 2013.
- * Social media headcount across the enterprise has more than doubled at the largest companies from 20 in 2010 to 49 in 2012.
- * However, companies have a long way to go. Just 26% of companies approach social media holistically.

Communication Corner

I am a huge fan of Seth Godin. Recently, he wrote a blog post about conference call etiquette (http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog/2014/01/conference-call-hygiene.html). I took his list and customized it based on my experiences:

1. Consciously determine whether a call is the best way to convene everyone versus face-to-face, individual conversations, emails, or other communication.
2. If you are the one who scheduled the call, get on 5 minutes early so you can be sure the technology is working correctly and so you can open the line with your leader access code. Otherwise, people might call in, assume the call was cancelled, and move on.
3. Just as with on-site meetings, set and send out an agenda in advance. Have a set time limit per item and stick to it.
4. Only invite those who need to participate. Record the call so you can refer to it later and/or share it with other interested parties. Be sure to let the participants know that it is being recorded in advance.

Read more at:

<http://www.charleneli.com/2013/12/infographic-state-social-business-2013-outlook-2014/>

**Be My Guest! *Silence: Friend or Foe?* By Janet M. Shlaes, Ph.D.,
of Transformational Strategies**

One of the challenges I often face is cultivating an atmosphere for the reflection needed to really think strategically. Janet Shlaes provides some great advice through her own experiences.

After recently returning from a retreat where silence was my daily companion, I am reminded of how silence can simultaneously be both challenging and wonderfully restorative. The most challenging aspect for me is eliminating the use of technology as a means of communication, working and information gathering. The first day of retreat is usually filled with seemingly non-stop internal noise and a profound desire to phone someone and/or check my email, text or internet for some form of news. Then, over the course of a few days, silence creeps in slowly and elegantly like an old familiar friend and time takes on a different quality. It's impossible for me to adequately describe what this feels like. My intention every year when I return from my retreat is to integrate a day of silence into every week. Some weeks I am successful with regard to this intention and other weeks I am not. What I have found though is that the weeks that I invest in a day or even a half-day of silence are followed by an increase in creativity, resourcefulness, connection with others, patience and a simultaneous sense of high energy and calmness. I find that I am able to be more fully present to others and to myself.

Think about it. How much of your day is taken up with any form of technology and non-essential noise? What would it be like for you to have a whole day in front of you without the use of your phone, internet, iProducts, computer, notebook, tablet and/or any form of human conversation? What would it be like for you to exercise, walk down the street or be at home without falling back on the use of any form of technology or external conversation? What you would most likely have is a lot of internal space, coupled with a whole lot of internal dialogue. For some, a brief visit into the world of silence might sound wonderful and for some it may, given family and work responsibilities, feel impossible.

If the thought of a period of silence – however brief - feels even a tad seductive, I invite you to start out at the level that does feel possible given where you currently are in your life. Give yourself permission to start out gradually – perhaps a half a day, an hour, a half-hour or even fifteen minutes. Try it out at the pace that works for you. Notice how your relationship to your internal and external world gradually shifts in a delightfully surprising manner.

Want to read more? Contact Janet directly. Better yet, sign up for her blog, listed below.

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Book Banter THE WHY OF WORK, BY DAVE ULRICH AND WENDY ULRICH, MCGRAW-HILL, 2010

The workplace is increasingly complex and challenging for most employers. Many are dealing with employees with declining mental health and happiness; increased concern for environmental demands, social responsibility, organization purpose, and individual motivation; increased isolation; low employee commitment; growing disposability and change; and greater hostility and enmity. What to do? Dave and Wendy Ulrich have some suggestions:

- * “Commitment or engagement grows when we work in a company with a vision, have opportunities to learn and grow, do work that has an impact, receive fair pay for work done, work with people we like working with, and enjoy flexibility in the terms and conditions of work” (p. 43).
- * “For some perhaps a celebration of 10 years of service is meaningful; for others, a renewing sense of delight is evoked by a note from the boss, a compliment, a shared joke, a favorite song, a different chair, a new dish at lunch, or simply a beautiful sunset shared on the way to the parking lot. Delight often comes in small packages, and when money is tight it helps to know that small and simple pleasures spread over time have more impact on our sense of well-being than grand one-time gestures” (p. 46-47).
- * “Leaders build a positive work environment by facing and running into conflict rather than avoiding and hiding from it. This does not imply escalating conflict through blame, contention, or yelling. Quite the contrary. Running into conflict rather than away from it means respectfully airing multiple points of view, being transparent about problems, and moving quickly toward problem solving when things go wrong” (p. 145).
- * “Nonfinancial rewards like work flexibility, growth opportunities, access to valued relationships, and positive work environments are frequently at least as important as money in shaping employee meaning” (p. 258).

Personally Yours



A Column on Personal Planning

Plan on showing up!

It is increasingly typical for people to forget appointments or to cancel meetings at the last minute. While this can be annoying when you are on the receiving end, it can also present a stand-out opportunity for those who do actually make the effort to show up.

I cannot tell you how many times I have agreed to a networking or other type of meeting in doing a favor for someone only to find myself waiting alone in a coffee shop or on a phone line. What impression do you think that person has made on me? How likely do you think it will be that I will want to help him or her in the future?

Bad weather comes (and apparently comes and comes and comes), alarms fail to go off, and we can dread putting ourselves out there, but don't let the excuses beat you. Be the person who shows up for appointments. Be the one who doesn't ask to reschedule. Be the grateful but confident business professional that people walk away from meeting thinking, "Wow, what a great use of my time".

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This newsletter is intended to provide useful information but should not be construed as legal or financial fact, advice, or opinion.

Coming in March...

- * **Starting a business? How to pick the right people at the right time**
- * **Book bullets from HR From the Outside In: Six Competencies for the Future of Human Resources**
- * **And MORE!**



Have an idea or comment to share? Have a topic suggestion or planning question? Send it in! I would love to hear from you!

Be My Guest/Reader Feature

Look for this regularly featured column to introduce you to people and their planning stories. Have a planning success or horror story? Have some tips for others? I would love to feature you. If you are interested in being included in a future newsletter, let me know if you would like to write a guest column or be interviewed.

UPCOMING TRAINING & SPEAKING EVENTS

- * **02/24/14-02/26/14: Strategic Planning seminar, Chicago, register at amanet.org.**
- * **02/27/14-02/28/14: Moving from an Operational Manager to a Strategic Leader seminar, Chicago, register at amanet.org.**
- * **04/14/14-04/15/14: Fundamentals of Strategic Planning, Chicago, register at amanet.org**
- * **05/05/14-05/07/14: Strategic Planning seminar, Chicago, register at amanet.org**
- * **05/19/14-05/20/14: Developing a Winning Business Plan, Louisville, KY, register at nw.org.**

Email me for details!