

# The RightStaff Review

The right choice for your staffing needs



## Simple Ways to Spot a Business Trend

Successful managers should be able to anticipate and adapt to changes in their industry. The following are some quick tips to help you spot trends that may affect your job:

- Scan your junk mail before you discard it. What trends in advertising, marketing, new products and emerging technologies can you see?

You may want to let the mail collect for a week or two before reviewing it. It's easier to spot a trend when you have plenty of data to analyze.



- Reflect on the way your job has changed. What is in your "in" basket as compared to this time last year? Has your organization's mission changed?

Talk to the people you work for and with to uncover clues about the ways attitudes, values and commitments are changing.

- Listen to a different radio station every week for a variety of perspectives. Who is the market for the station? Who listens? Who advertises? Why?

Source: Adapted from *Thinkertoys*, Michael Michalko, 10 Speed Press, (800)666-5436.

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## The Best Leaders Argue with Success

We've all heard the adage "You can't argue with success." But if you don't question your own success, you're doomed to eventual failure. Here are some ways you and your staff can fight complacency:

- **Court complainers.** Not all of your customers are happy. Bring in unhappy customers and let them speak directly to employees about product or service improvements.

- **Study the competition.** Identify competitors that are making significant improvements. Ask your staff some tough questions. Example: "How are they keeping costs down, and what can we learn from that?"



- **Avoid happy talk and generalizations.** It's time for a reality check when your staff starts making statements such as: "We don't have to worry about ..." or "We have a few problems, but they're no big deal." Talk to them about the challenges you face. Ask them to come up with ideas to improve procedures.

- **Focus on change.** No matter how well you've done in the past, you'll have to change to keep up. Study how your marketplace is changing. Are competitors coming up with new technology or products? Will your industry be hit with new regulations or rising prices? Encourage your staff to keep abreast of industry innovations. And don't allow yourself to be satisfied with the status quo.

Source: *Manager's Edge*, as adapted from *Be the Leader, Make the Difference*, Paul Thornton, Griffin Publishing.



# ONE MINUTE IDEAS

## Projects at a Glance

Color-code your calendar so you can tell at a glance the status of projects or assignments. **Examples:** Red ink for high-priority items that day; blue for anticipated project deadlines; green for following up on other people's work; black for daily scheduled work.

## Bureau of Labor Statistics

### Latest Numbers –

#### CPI:

+0.1% in Aug 2004

#### Unemployment Rate:

5.4% in Sep 2004

#### Payroll Employment:

+96,000 in Sep 2004

#### Average Hourly Earnings:

+\$0.03 in Sep 2004

#### Productivity:

+2.5% in 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr of 2004

#### U.S. Import Price Index:

+1.7% in Aug 2004

Source: U.S. Dept of Labor  
website: [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)

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## Five Ingredients for Loyalty

Do you think your employees are happy? Consider these findings from a recent survey of 700 workers at 70 firms:

- **54% said** management decisions aren't explained well.
- **61% reported** they aren't well-informed about organizational plans.
- **64% admit** they just don't believe the information that management dishes out.

So if you see signs that your staff's disgruntled, regain their loyalty with these five key elements:



- **Research.** Before you can act, you need to know what employees are thinking. But don't just dabble. Go at it full blast with internal opinion surveys, focus groups and both quantitative and qualitative analysis.
- **Candor.** This is so simple that it sounds, well, simple: Tell the truth. *What to do:* Give employees the "un-facts"—unvarnished and uncensored. *The second part:* Tell it in person. Don't hide behind e-mail, voice mail or memos.
- **Answers.** Employees grow uneasy when they know what's going on but don't know why. Questions that start with "Why" are the toughest to answer. But you won't get them back on your side unless you candidly answer questions such as: "Why are we doing this?" "Why are we doing it now?" "Why have we decided this is the best choice?"
- **Respect.** Studies over the past 60 years have regularly shown that employees covet respect almost as much as money—and sometimes they even rate respect higher than cash. These consistent results should be more than enough to make this point: You'll breed loyalty if you respect employees as individuals and recognize them for what they contribute to the organization. *Short version:* Treat them as partners not hired hands.
- **Leadership.** Leaders who earn employee loyalty need vision, courage and character. That means you need to make the organization's direction—the vision—clear. And reinforce that vision with your words and actions. Muster the courage to tackle tough decisions without delay.

*Remember:* All great leaders sincerely care about those they lead.

Source: Steve Rivkin, president, Rivkin & Associates Inc., Glen Rock, NJ, writing in *The Public Relations Strategist*, Public Relations Society of America, New York.

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