

# The Competitive Advantage

## P Squared Management Consulting

Maximizing the Synergy of People and Process Improvement



### The Competitive Advantage Notes from our President ...

As Andy Rooney would say, "*Did you ever wonder where all the human beings have gone?*" The P<sup>2</sup> answer to this complex question is "*I don't know, but it sure seems like things have changed.*" We believe they have changed as a result of things that make our world more harried and complex, such as:

- Email, voice mail, fax, beepers, cell phones, (let's face it... you can run but you can't hide.)
- The information age driven by PCs and electronic devices designed to make our life easier. (Do you feel like your life is easier or just faster, much faster?)
- Managed health care (an obvious oxymoron)
- Teleconferencing, video conferences. (One can only be looking forward to telepathic communication implants - always sleep with one eye open!)

As one person recently asked a co-worker, "*Are you a human being or a human doing?*" He had no response, but it made him think...

- Do we really treat others these days the way we would want to be treated?

- Do we really spend time on the important stuff in life - like our family and friends?
- Do constant thoughts run through our minds about the good old days, or at least any day but this one?
- Is your favorite cartoon character the Tasmanian Devil because he is most like you? (gotta love that tornado!)

Well, we are offering you a well deserved break in this issue. Please stop; put a "Do Not Disturb" sign on the door and read this issue of *The Competitive Advantage*.

It's our gift to you as a time to relax and think openly and freely about your fellow human beings and how to be a better one yourself...

So, as they say on the airlines (long after you've been through two hours of security)... Sit back, relax, and enjoy the flight... With our compliments!

Scott Playfair, President, P<sup>2</sup> Consulting



### Tips to Simplify Your Life....

#### Perspective

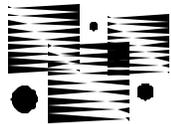
An expert in time management was speaking to a group of business students.

"Okay, time for a quiz," he announced as he pulled out a one-gallon mason jar and set it on the table in front of him.

He also produced 12 fist-sized rocks and carefully placed them into the jar.

When the jar was filled to the top, he asked, "Is the jar full?" Everyone in the class yelled, "Yes."

Then he took out a bucket of sand and poured it into the jar, causing the sand to work itself down into the spaces between the big rocks. He asked again, "Is the jar full now?"



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## Tips to Simplify Your Life, cont'd

"Probably not," one of them answered. Next, the professor poured a pitcher of water into the jar until it was filled to the brim.

Then he looked at the class and asked, "What's the point of this illustration?"

One student raised his hand and said, "The point is no matter how full your schedule is, if you really try hard you can always fit some more things in."

"No," the professor replied, "that's not it. The truth this story teaches us is 'If you don't put the *big rocks* in first, you'll never get them in at all.'

"What are the *big rocks* in your life - time with your loved ones, your faith, your education, your dreams, a worthy cause, reaching or mentoring others?"

"Each of us selects our own big rocks. Remember to put them in first or you might run out of room later. So tonight when you're reflecting on this short story, ask yourself this question, 'What are the big rocks in my life?' Then put those in your jar first."

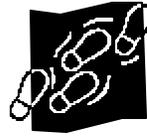
***For men who matter, life's intangibles have more meaning than the tangibles.***

... B.C. Forbes

## 20 Things You Should Do in the New Year

1. Sing in the shower.
2. Treat everyone you meet like you want to be treated.
3. Watch a sunrise at least once a year.
4. Strive for excellence, not perfection.
5. Compliment 3 people every day.
6. Keep it simple.
7. Floss your teeth.
8. Be forgiving of yourself and others.
9. Say "thank you" a lot.
10. Say "please" a lot.
11. Avoid negative people.
12. Commit yourself to constant improvement.
13. Plant flowers every spring.
14. Stop blaming others.
15. Take responsibility for every area of your life.
16. Don't expect life to be fair.
17. Live your life as an exclamation, not an explanation.
18. Don't be afraid to say, "I made a mistake."
19. Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know."
20. Count your blessings.

***If you expect the best from your personnel, more than likely you will get it.***



## The Path to Leadership....

### ***Seven Traits of Effective Leaders***

#### **...How Many Do You Share?**

Are leaders born or made? Can you learn superior leadership skills? No one is sure, but experts have noticed seven specific actions that successful leaders carry out, regardless of the organization or cause they lead. Effective leaders:

**...Make others feel important.** If your goals and decisions are self-centered, followers will lose their enthusiasm quickly. Emphasize their strengths and contributions, not your own.

**...Promote a vision.** Followers need a clear idea of where you're leading them, and they need to understand why that goal is valuable to them. Your job as a leader is to provide that vision.

**...Follow the golden rule.** Treat your followers the way you enjoy being treated. An abusive leader attracts few loyal followers.

**...Admit mistakes.** If people suspect that you're covering up your own errors, they'll hide their mistakes too, and you'll lack valuable information for making decisions.

**...Criticize others only in private.** Public praise encourages others to excel, but public criticism only embarrasses and alienates everyone.

**...Stay close to the action.** You need to be visible to the members of your organization. Talk to people, visit other offices and work sites, ask questions, and observe how business is being handled. Often you will gain new insights into your work and find new opportunities for motivating your followers.

**...Make a game of competition.** The competitive drive can be a valuable tool if you use it correctly. Set team goals and reward members who meet or exceed them. Examine your failures and celebrate your group's successes.

Source: The Toastmaster, P.O. Box 9052, Mission Viejo, CA 92690



## Spotlight Article ....

### **Motivate Your Employees and Increase Your Productivity**

*This article is the third excerpt of a published paper written by Scott Playfair, President, P Squared Consulting.*

In the last issue of *The Competitive Advantage*, we spotlighted the second of a four article series dealing with employee motivation and its impact on productivity. In this third article of the series, we will first offer a brief introduction to the scope of the paper and then continue with the discussion.

One of the greatest challenges in today's rapidly changing and intensely competitive business environment is balancing the three critical factors essential for business survival and success: People, Processes, and Technology.

The people element is often the most neglected of these three critical success factors. However, *people* represent a company's only true competitive advantage. It is critical to understand how to motivate your human capital (your people) in order for a business to prosper.

Seven key human needs must be fulfilled for a business to leverage its human capital.

1. Basic Survival
2. Empowerment / Freedom to Act
3. Variety
4. Feedback and Positive Reinforcement
5. Wholeness and Meaning
6. A Team-Based Environment
7. Room to Grow and Succeed

The first need, basic survival, is a "satisfier". It is a need that must be fulfilled before all others. It consists of fair and adequate pay, job security, benefits, and health and safety. The remaining needs represent needs that are called "motivators". Once the "satisfiers" are fulfilled, people look to fulfill higher level needs that motivate them. Fulfillment of motivational needs is critical to organizational success. There are two types of motivators: Optimal and Maximal.

*Empowerment, variety, and feedback* represent "optimal" motivators. These are needs that must be optimally met because too much can be as bad as too little.

*Wholeness, a team-based environment, and room to grow* represent "maximal" motivators. Employees cannot get too much of these (the more the better).

In the last issue, the optimal motivators were explored in detail. Let's now review the "maximal motivators" needs in detail and discuss what must be done to optimize them in the work environment.

#### **Wholeness and Meaning**

This motivational need depends on two important elements, customer focus and cascaded organizational goals. The first element, "customer focus", requires employees to understand their primary customer (internal to the company or outside of it). They must also be aware of what makes up the customer chain leading to the final end user of the company's goods or services. This understanding clarifies the necessary internal and external customer-supplier relationships. It defines the critical links for all business processes that lead to the company's success.

#### **Employees gain a solid perspective of their importance in a customer-focused organization.**

Customer awareness is essential to give a person a true sense of significance and importance at work. After all, a customer-focused chain is only as strong as its weakest link, and no one wants to be the "weak link". Employees gain a solid perspective of their importance in a customer-focused organization and acquire an incredibly powerful sense of meaning for their job. They clearly understand their significance to the whole organization and the responsibility that their role carries.

The second element necessary for a feeling of wholeness and meaning, "cascaded organizational goals", requires employees to understand how their individual contribution supports the goals of the entire organization. Company goals and objectives must be clearly articulated. Divisions, departments, and individual employees must then generate supporting goals. As a result, corporate goals are effectively cascaded down through all levels of the organization.

Employees then feel that by achieving their individual objectives, they are directly contributing to the success of the organization. Understanding their contribution reinforces the employees' sense of wholeness and meaning.

The combination of these two elements – customer focus and cascaded organizational goals – generates internal drive and motivation in each employee. Peak performance results because the employee

## Spotlight Article, cont'd

feels that *"what I do truly matters!"* Direct line of sight feedback is also generated, which helps them determine what they need to do or improve to *"make a difference"*.

There is no substitute for the benefits of a feeling of wholeness and meaning. It separates high performing organizations from average performers.

*Do your employees understand how their objectives tie to the corporate and customer priorities? Do they realize what a critical role they individually play in the company's success?*

### A Team-Based Environment

A team-based environment promotes mutual support and respect among all individuals in an organization. Made up of a cross section of levels and responsibilities, teams can reduce fear. Fear is typically the biggest barrier to exceptional performance for most adults.

In this type of environment, people look out for their teammates and do what is right for team success. An envelop of protection develops which eliminates playing it safe and promotes healthy innovation, creativity and risk taking. Mediocrity is abolished and high performance is the norm.

The team-based environment reduces perceived barriers of level or status and creates a feeling of unity. Employees feel that they are in this together. In other words, it creates a "family environment" typically lost in today's day and age.

### **Tremendous synergy is created that can only be achieved through teams.**

A winning team supports and encourages all team members to be the best they can be. Being part of the team creates a feeling of confidence, security, happiness, and inner peace. Employees enter the performance "zone". They are on the road to exceptional individual productivity. In addition, tremendous *synergy* is created that can only be achieved through teams. A high performance culture is formed that ensures sustained competitive advantage.

*Are teams playing an important role in your company? What would your company's P&L be like if it were built on a foundation of high performing teams?*

## Room to Grow and Succeed

Human beings have an innate need to improve and advance. Organizations that offer an environment for learning, development, and advancement will attract and retain top-notch talent.

No one wants to be in a dead-end job where "it all pays the same no matter what I do". In fact, the most valuable, highest contributing performers will leave an organization before conforming to a stagnant environment – regardless of the level of pay and benefits. Even solid performers will become mediocre and complacent in an environment without challenge or the hope of future advancement.

Organizations can insure their current and future success by investing in the growth and development of their employees. Two factors are critical to this success. The first is to create an environment of continual training and development for the employee. The second is to formulate individual career paths and succession plans.

### **Successful organizations realize that humans have this growth and development need both personally and professionally.**

People want to grow in their professional lives, but they also want the same thing in their personal lives. To have an outstanding performer at work, there must be personal and professional balance in the employee's life. If the personal life is sacrificed for the work life, it will eventually lead to disaster for both the individual and the employer. Therefore, progressive companies help individuals grow and prosper in both areas of their lives. Through self-assessment and personal goal setting, an employee can achieve this balance.



*"LaGuardia, and hurry - I've got a flight in six hours."*

## Spotlight Article, cont'd

This type of caring and support by a company not only improves the employees but also gives them a sense of trust and loyalty to the employer. It comes across as a belief that the company cares about them as a whole person and not just as an employee. Again, this is a feeling that cannot be bought but must be earned by the employer. However, once achieved, it is a priceless mindset - one that leads to incredible dedication and loyalty. Once this mindset permeates an organization, it creates an unbeatable team.

*Do your employees feel they have a bright future to look forward to in your company? Or are some just putting in time until retirement?*

*How could you improve this situation? Wouldn't it make an incredible difference in the productivity of your workforce?*

This completes an overview of the seven key human needs. Successfully fulfilling these needs isn't confusing and complex. It is actually dependent on good solid common sense and some focused attention.

Next quarter in our final excerpt of this paper, we will discuss the benefits to your organization of fulfilling these needs for your employees. We will also present some of the enlightening supporting research used as the paper's foundation.

For a copy of the complete article, "**Seven Proven Ways to Drastically Increase Workforce Productivity in 3 to 6 Months**", please contact P Squared Consulting.



### Insightful Ideas...

#### Learning... The Foundation for the Future

Two all beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, onions, on a \_\_\_\_\_

Be all that you can be in the \_\_\_\_\_

What is  $6 \times 7$ ?    What is  $5 \times 8$ ?

Why is it that you can easily remember some slogans, mottoes, and multiplication problems... and not others? It comes from a powerful learning technique called "spaced repetition". Advertisers make great use of repeating the same slogan over and over until we almost can say it in our sleep. This technique is also used at

early grade levels as we repeated our multiplication tables over and over. And this learning technique has great application for learning new skills in the work place as well.

Spaced repetition is the key to learning. Just as you didn't learn the ABCs the first time you heard them, it takes time and repetition for the mind to accept and embrace any new idea or concept. Ideas that did not seem particularly applicable the first time you heard them may be the exact information you need to deal with a current situation.

There are several different ways in which we learn. Through conventional learning methods, research shows that if a person hears something once, four days later they will have forgotten 65% of the information. Thirty days later they will have forgotten 98% of the information. But if a person hears the same information six to eight times in a week, 30 days later they will remember over 92% of the details. And the best part is that fifteen years later they will remember at least 60% of the information.

We have discovered that to increase your employee's potential, three essential ingredients must be simultaneously nurtured: Attitude development, skills training, and goal setting abilities.

Studies have found that attitudes are really habits of thought. It would be convenient to think that we react to our surroundings on a "stimulus-thought-response" basis; however, in reality, 88% of the time we react based on "stimulus-response". Action results in reaction. Most of our behavior is based on reflex.

If behavior is based on attitudes, we must look at the thought process that creates that behavior. The first three words an infant learns are "mama", "dada", and "no". During the early learning phase of our lives, most of our conditioning is negative to protect us. - i.e. "Don't touch that", "Don't talk to strangers", etc. Therefore, most of our basic attitudes are more negative than positive. Interestingly, if you examine how we develop attitudes, you will find it is similar to the way we learn things, because our attitudes are learned.

### Attitudes are really habits of thought

Based on "spaced repetition", we have developed methods to help people change and develop more positive and effective attitudes. Moreover, armed with these new attitudes, we find that people can do more with their skills, qualification and experience.

## Insightful Ideas, cont'd

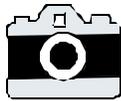
Combined with skills training and goal setting abilities, you have an unbeatable combination. Imagine that you have a workforce that has developed positive and confident attitudes, is trained with the necessary technical and people skills, and has the ability to define, set and achieve goals. Do you believe there would be any limit to what they could achieve?

In summary, let me leave you with this last thought, ...Attitudes are nothing more than habits of thoughts... repetition can change attitudes. If attitudes are changed, then behaviors are changed.

The powerful combination of spaced repetition, application based learning, and effective goal setting described in this article is the foundation that P Squared uses for our development programs.

Our programs are targeted to the specific needs of executives, middle managers and first line supervisors and are customized to your company culture and goals. This makes our training unique and differentiates us from other training companies.

We change attitudes and behaviors which creates more effective people, both professionally and personally.



## Synergy Snapshots....

A good plan, violently executed now, is better than a perfect plan next week.... **General George S. Patton**

Being a leader is like being a lady. If you have to tell people you are, you aren't... **Margaret Thatcher**

A good manager knows that there is more than one way to skin a cat. A great manager can convince the cat that it is necessary.... **Gene Perret**

Things may come to those who wait, but only the things left by those who hustle... **Abraham Lincoln**

The quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence, regardless of their chosen field of endeavor... **Vince Lombardi**

Leadership: the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it... **Dwight D. Eisenhower**

**Because People Make the Difference.**



## Web Site of the Quarter....

**Fastcompany.com** is billed as the "handbook of the revolution". This site presents the latest thinking on cutting-edge business management and leadership issues and techniques, such as teams, participative management, the impact of information technology, and more. You can subscribe to periodic newsletters including that offers a daily jolt of inspiration and smart thinking.



## P Squared Consulting.... Scope of Expertise

P Squared (P<sup>2</sup>) is focused on working with companies to maximize their human capital through the facilitation of positive change. We accomplish this by the use of our expertise in the following core areas:

- Team Building at All Levels
- Training and Development
- Team-based Process Improvement
- Cutting edge HR Practices

P<sup>2</sup> is a nationally known management consulting and human resource development firm based in Houston, Texas. We have helped small, medium, and Fortune 100 companies with equal effectiveness. P<sup>2</sup> has a staff of seasoned professionals, highly experienced in its areas of expertise.

At P<sup>2</sup> Consulting, we believe that people are your most valuable resource. Our focus is getting people to do more and feel great about it. We help them develop an insatiable desire for continued personal and professional growth and improvement - which is a win for everyone.

Our specialty is helping clients develop cultures where continuous improvement, higher levels of achievement, measurable standards of excellence, and exceeding customer expectation prevail. And to assist clients in sustaining true .....**Competitive Advantage!**

Offices in Texas and South Carolina.  
Contact us by phone at (936) 271-0712,  
or email at [p2mc@wt.net](mailto:p2mc@wt.net)  
Visit our web site at [www.p2mc.com](http://www.p2mc.com)

**We look forward to hearing from you soon!**

....*Scott Playfair, President*  
....*Jan Barnett, Director, Sales & Marketing*