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ChangeAbility
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ChangeAbility brings you actionable, hands-on tips and cool resources for starting or building your business on a bimonthly basis.

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I How to Give Effective Feedback

As a successful business owner, you do not accept failure but transform problems into opportunities to learn and grow.

A key to your success is the ability to give and receive effective feedback. Giving effective feedback helps you and your people to learn, grow and change.

As a business owner it is your responsibility to create an environment where giving and receiving constructive feedback is the norm. Effective teams regularly exchange feedback between all members. Giving feedback should not be a once or twice a year activity, but rather a continual process.

Make sure to be well prepared when giving feedback: keep a file for each employee with specific examples and prepare notes for the 'feedback meetings' and practice giving feedback in role plays with your coach.

Use and practice the following guidelines for giving effective feedback. Remember, the way you give feedback determines whether it is accepted and acted upon!

GUIDELINES FOR GIVING FEEDBACK

- (1) Use the Sandwich Strategy:
 - (1) Something positive ("You did a great job with the presentation this morning.")
 - (2) Something to improve ("I don't think you answered Maria's question very well because.....")
 - (3) Something positive ("Your finish was very punchy!")
- (2) Feedback should describe specific behavior, not judge a person.
NOT: "You don't do well in those types of situation." BUT: "I thought the comment you made to Jo was not thought through."
- (3) Feedback should be constructive, not negative.
NOT: "You screwed up!" BUT: "Well, that did not go well at all, what can we do to improve the situation?"
- (4) Feedback needs to be factual, specific, accurate and not vague.
NOT: "That presentation was useless!" BUT "Your presentation does not communicate our product's benefits effectively. In particular slide 5, 7, 9 need to be cleaned up."
- (5) Feedback should be about behavior the person can change, not about situations outside the person's control.
- (6) Feedback should be prompt. The best feedback is in 'real time' when both sides can recall the context of the situation.

And remember: Praise in public and criticize in private!

II What is the Single Best Interview Question Ever Asked (and the Best Answer)?

The purpose of any interview is simple: to determine whether the candidate can do the job.

An interview should therefore be a roll-up-your-sleeves, hands-on meeting where all the focus is on the job. Think of the interview as the candidate's first day at work with only one question that matters: +++"What is your plan for getting this job done?"+++

To successfully answer that, the candidate must demonstrate an understanding of your business problems, challenges, and goals. Since you do want to make a great hire and get back to work, why not help the best candidate succeed?

A week before the interview, call up the candidate and say the following: "I want you to show me how you are going to do this job. That is going to take a lot of homework. I suggest you read through our and our competitor's websites, review the following publications and speak with these three people. When you are done you should have something useful to tell me." This will eliminate 9 out of 10 candidates. Only those who really want the job will put in the effort (note: you might choose to adapt this assignment according to the type of business and position. The point is to have the candidate prepare for a real 'working meeting').

In the actual interview, you should expect the candidate to show you how hiring her will benefit your business. This means you should expect her to walk you through how she will help to solve the company's problems step by step (or even demonstrate certain skills on the spot if it is a more hands-on job).

The details do not need to be right, but if the candidate demonstrates an understanding of your most pressing issues and lays out a clear plan of attack, adding something to your bottom line - you have an excellent reason for hiring.

(Adapted from a memo by Nick Corcodilos in July's issue of Fast Company p. 72)

III Are You Paying for Performance?

Annual salary of General Tommy Franks, commander in chief, U.S. Central Command: \$US 153,948

Severance package for Richard Brown, ousted CEO at EDS: \$US 32,000,000

Annual salary, U.S. Army private (one year of service) \$US 15,480

Chelsea Clinton's estimated starting salary at McKinsey & Co.: \$US 120,000

(Data from: www.fastcompany.com)

Ask yourself: Is your business paying you and your staff strictly according to performance? How often do you review your and your staff's performance? Is each of your staff clear about how they have to improve performance in order to receive a salary increase?

II The Athlete's Corner: My Sister is World Champion!

My sister Vroni just reached another peak in her amazing athletic career. Last Sunday she and her fellow Swiss team mates Brigitte Wolf and Simon Luder won the gold medal in the relay at the world orienteering championships in Switzerland.

What made this success even more special for Vroni was the fact that the event was held less the 3 miles from our childhood home in front of a huge home crowd. I am one proud brother!

For all the results click on:

<http://www.olwm2003.ch/static/index.php%3Flang=en.html>

Check out Vroni's website:

<http://www.suunnistus.net/konigsalmi/>

V Meet the Coach

BUSINESS PLAN WORKSHOP AT THE U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (SBA), SEATTLE, WA

Starting in August, I will be teaching the Marketing Plan section of the Small Business Administration workshop 'Building a Business Plan' in downtown Seattle. For more info on this and other small business workshops see the SBA and the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) website: <http://www.sba.gov/wa/seattle/>, <http://www.seattlescore.org/index.htm>, or call the SBA at 206 553 7310

BUSINESS START-UP WORKSHOP - "THINKING OF BECOMING YOUR OWN BOSS?", SEATTLE WA

If you are thinking of, or are in the process of, starting your own business or if you want to learn how to run your business better, please join me for this 3 hour workshop at Centerpoint, based in downtown Seattle. For more information, please send me an email or check out:

www.centerpointonline.org

The workshop will be offered on:

- Sept. 5th;and
- Nov. 11th

The fee is \$54 for non-members and \$45 for Centerpoint Associate Members.

INTERNATIONAL COACH FEDERATION (ICF) CONFERENCE, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

I am speaking at the International Coach Federation Conference held August 22-24 in Sydney, Australia. In conjunction with Centerpoint, a leading center for life and career renewal in Seattle, I will be presenting a paper on "The Seasonal Cycle of Change: A New Coaching Model for Working Through Change".

+++++LET ME KNOW WHAT YOU THINK+++++
Simply reply to this newsletter. I welcome your feedback!

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