

# The Competitive Advantage

## P Squared Management Consulting

*Maximizing the Synergy of People and Process Improvement*



### The Competitive Advantage Notes from the Editor ...

At the beginning of this issue, I'd like to take the opportunity to acknowledge all of our new readers – over 200 of you – that have been added to our growing circulation. I know of no better compliment to the value of *The Competitive Advantage* than to have you pass the copy you receive on to others in your organization and have them added to our distribution list.

For our new readers, a bit of introduction...our newsletter is focused at providing articles to help you achieve sustained *competitive advantage* by maximizing your most valuable resource - your people..

Welcome and thanks for your support!

*Jan Barnett, Editor*



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

#### Is Stress Affecting Your Health?

Most of us think of stress as an unpleasant feeling, a state of mind or an emotion. But what many people don't realize is that stress causes physical changes in the body. The way your body responds to stress is known as the

“fight or flight” response. It's an inborn chemical response that humans have had since the beginning of our evolution.

When our early ancestors were confronted with a threat (like a saber-toothed tiger), their survival mechanism prepared them to either fight or run away. They began to breathe faster and sweat. Their hearts raced and sent more blood to their muscles so that they could be ready to take speedy action.

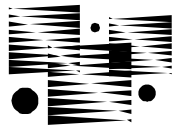
Next, by taking action – either fighting or running away – they made instant use of this extra energy, burning off the tension, lowering their stress hormones, and coming to a peaceful rest.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, our bodies still behave the same way. While most of us don't fight tigers, we often confront modern stresses. These stresses cause us to breathe faster and to sweat and our hearts to race. But here's the difference: in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, most of us don't fight or run.

#### 10 Techniques to Take Control:

Pick a couple of the following strategies to help you take control and cut back on the stress in your life:

1. *Keep a Daily To-Do List* – Start each day with a clear sense of what you need to do.
2. *Plan Ahead* – Long term planning can give you an even greater sense of control. Schedule important things like car maintenance, important birthdays, and medical appointments.
3. *Set Aside Time for Planning Every Week* – Once you get used to keeping a personal planner and making a daily “to-do” list, start planning a full week in advance.
4. *Prioritize* – Don't save the most important things until last – get them done first.
5. *Take it One Step at a Time* – Some stress-inducing situations just seem too big to handle. When faced with this situation, break the task into pieces. Then tackle it one step at a time.
6. *Don't Procrastinate* – The longer you put off doing something you dread, the longer you have to live with the stress. It's like getting a shot: dreading it is usually worse than the shot itself.



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7. *Avoid Crowds* – Ever try to visit the bank at lunch time? When possible, make plans to avoid crowds.
8. *Don't Over-Organize* – Organization should help you feel more in control – it shouldn't add more stress!
9. *Ask for Help* – If you're feeling overwhelmed, ask for help – especially if the sources of stress in your life involve others.
10. *Name Your Biggest Problem* – What source of disorganization is causing you the most stress? Work on it first.

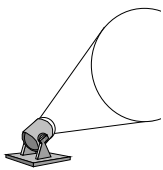
***We are all faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as impossible situations.***

*... Charles Swindoll*

### Rules of Life:

Sometimes we just need to remember what the *Rules of Life* really are:

- You need only two tools: WD-40 and duct tape. If it doesn't move and it should, use WD-40. If it moves and it shouldn't, use duct tape.
- The five most essential words for a healthy, vital relationship: "I apologize" and "You are right."
- Everyone seems normal until you get to know them.
- When you make a mistake, make amends immediately. It is easier to eat crow while it's still warm.
- The best advice your mother ever gave you was, "You will understand why when you become a parent."
- If he/she says that you are too good for him/her – believe it.



### Spotlight Article ....

#### ***Motivating Employees During Times of Rapid Change***

by Scott Playfair, President, P Squared Consulting.

### **Life is change. Growth is optional. Choose wisely.**

Take a look at the following quotes. In what time periods do you think the statements were made?

1. "A new factor, that of rapid change, has come into the world. We have not yet learned how to adjust ourselves to its economic and social consequences."
2. "The world is too big for us. There is too much doing, too many crimes, casualties, violence, and excitements. Try as you will, you get behind the race

despite yourself. It is an incessant strain to keep pace and still you lose ground. Science empties its discoveries on you so fast that you stagger beneath them in hopeless bewilderment. The political world witnesses new scenes so rapidly that you are out of breath trying to keep up with them."

3. "All is flux, nothing stays still."
4. "I cannot wait until we get through this crazy period and things get back to normal."

Sound familiar? These remarks could have been said last week. Certainly, they might have been uttered within the many ups and downs of the past few years. The first comment was written in the Harvard Business Review by Wallace Donham in 1932. The second comes from the Atlantic Journal in 1837. The third remark was made by the Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, five hundred years BC. The final quote is mine or could be yours.

### **Change is inevitable – except from a vending machine.**

Change *is* inevitable and maintaining the motivation of employees during times of rapid change is an important challenge for leaders today. Change is nothing new – change has always been with us and it will always be with us. So, no matter what time frame or what period in history - change is normal.

If managing change is so important, has always been with us, and we have always had to deal with it - what is so special about change right now, in today's environment? The punch line is *rapid* – change is coming at us more rapidly than ever before and dealing with this extremely rapid change is a challenge for each and every one of us.

Let's look at the definition of the key pieces of this article's title (*Motivating Employees During Times of Rapid Change*) per Webster:

- Motivate: to move to action
- Change: to become different or undergo alterations
- Rapid: moving, acting or occurring with great speed

Each of these concepts individually denotes significant disruption in and of themselves, but put them all together and you really have a challenge on your hands. Have you ever changed a tire on your car because it was flat? Of course you have. Now imagine changing a tire on a moving car – how do you do that? It's like the difference between hitting a slow-pitch softball versus a Roger Clemens fast ball – the process is the same, but the speed is totally different.

## Spotlight Article, cont'd

***If you can keep your head when all about you  
are losing theirs, it's just possible that  
you haven't grasped the situation.***

*... Jean Kerr, American Playwright*

The affect of rapid change is so important now because it is literally impacting every facet of our lives. And change isn't happening just at work, but consider other areas: healthcare, banking/investing, how you travel, how you communicate – nothing is static or stable anymore and it all seems to be changing daily.

So what's at the core of how people handle all this change? When people are presented with change, it is a disruption in their personal pattern of expectations that directly affect them. If you watch the 6 o'clock news and hear that we have changed our foreign aid policy to Afghanistan – how does that personally affect you? For most of us, it doesn't affect us at all. But if someone says your job responsibilities will change at work, it hits so close to home that its significance disrupts our pattern of expectations creating huge personal change.

Not only is it disruptive, but change can also be scary. When change is imposed in the workplace without giving people any notice, input or control, people get paranoid, nervous and, in some situations, they even shut down. Because it is not just change in the workplace - it is everywhere in their lives. It may just be the straw that breaks the camel's back.

The key to managing change for employees is to manage their resilience in handling that change. In other words, to manage people's capacity to absorb a large amount of change while displaying a minimal amount of dysfunctional behavior. You want people to change and modify their behavior at work for the good of the organization but you don't want them to become unproductive while they change.

### Things change, but people transition

People must be intellectually and emotionally linked to change. As with any kind of change – a death in the family, a divorce, a move, a change in job responsibility – people go through a process consisting of three stages:

- Grieving (an ending or letting go)
- The Neutral Zone (an empty and chaotic wilderness)
- Acceptance and Readiness to launch a new beginning (people feel at home again).

Your job is to help them go through this process in a healthy manner.

The framework for successful change and how you get people through change, is represented by the Glieker change model:

$$C \leq f(d, p, l)$$

Quite simply put, the cost of change, **C**, must be less than or equal to a function or combination of three things:

- d:** Dissatisfaction with the way things are at present (*WHY* change)
- p:** Picture of a clearly defined future state/vision (*WHAT* the change will positively create)
- l:** Logical first steps/a plan (*HOW* to change)

So, increasing any or all of the factors on the right side of the equation engages people to make change more likely. Let's consider an everyday example of a desired change to better understand this change model – *the desire to lose weight*.

- **The cost of change (C):**  
The negative aspect of any change is the cost associated with that change. You can imagine the variety of costs associated with losing weight: not being able to eat cake, not eating buttered popcorn at the movies, being restricted to low fat food or restricted to lesser amounts of food...
- **Dissatisfaction with the way things are at present (d):**  
As discomfort increases, we become more likely to change. If we are very comfortable with the way things are, we are not likely to support change. In our dieting example, a dissatisfaction with the way you look, the fact that your clothes don't fit, a health concern...



“Some dope in tonight's paper claims 8 out of 10 people need glasses and don't even know it.”

Source: *The Saturday Evening Post* 1950

## Spotlight Article, cont'd

- **Picture of a clearly defined future state/vision (p):**  
To increase the probability of change, paint a clear and inviting picture of the way things can be once the change is accomplished. Clear visions increase the drive toward making the change possible. If people can create a vision that is inviting, they are more likely to find that engaging and will put their energies toward that desired outcome. Create a vision of what you will look like in that new bathing suit next summer, in that tux at your daughter's wedding, or in that favorite dress you can no longer fit into...
- **Logical first steps/a plan (I):**  
Change generally occurs with a straightforward idea on how to accomplish the first steps and a plan that will ensure success. Take our example of starting a new diet – a significant number of companies such as Jenny Craig, Slim Fast, Weight Watchers,... have become extremely successful offering logical first steps and a well laid out plan.

As is evident, this change model applies to both work and personal scenarios and is quite straightforward in theory. However, the combination of factors that will positively generate change do vary in every particular scenario.

If we want to create healthy change, how can we increase the three factors on the right side of the equation (**d, p, & I**) in a way that is clear and in which employees have ownership? Simultaneously, how can we reduce the fears associated with the cost of change? You cannot expect people to take responsibility when they do not feel some sense of ownership. And that is the key challenge – understanding how to motivate your people to take responsibility during times of rapid change.

In fact, you cannot motivate another person... but you can create an environment for them to motivate themselves, which takes strong, focused, and consistent leadership.

Regarding this issue, P Squared has recently published an article entitled, *“Seven Proven Ways to Drastically Increase Workforce Productivity in 3 to 6 Months”* which helps leaders address workforce motivation. It has been highlighted in our previous newsletter issues and is available on our web site, [www.p2mc.com](http://www.p2mc.com), or can be requested by contacting P Squared at (936) 271-0712.

***A competitive world has two possibilities for you. You can lose. Or, if you want to win, you can change.***

... Lester C. Thurow Educator

## Inheritance

“You had better get your house in order,” the doctor told an elderly, wealthy patient.

The man had built his fortune through a number of calculating moves and, consequently, he had few friends.

Nevertheless, he decided to have his entire estate divided among his friends, if he could only find out who they were.

He died a few weeks later, and all of his acquaintances were told that the funeral would be at 4 o'clock in the morning.

Only two men and one woman attended the service. Scores of acquaintances were there when the will was read, expecting to receive a share of the estate.

The will directed that his estate be divided equally among the three people who had attended his funeral.



### Insightful Ideas...

#### ***Do You Possess the Qualities of a Good Leader?***

Almost everybody thinks they're a good leader. But according to a Gallup Poll, 25 percent of U.S. employees would fire their bosses if they could. That means at least one in four of your supervisors, managers – your leaders – are failing.

But that number's not surprising when you consider how few leaders receive any kind of formal management training. If you're curious about how your people stack up, ask them to determine how many of the following practices they follow and how many they need to incorporate into their management style. It's never too late to learn.

1. **Communicate the big picture.** If you want your employees to work hard and be committed to your business, you've got to keep them in the loop. Open communication helps foster loyalty and gives employees a sense of pride. It helps them understand how their work contributes to the company's success. Set up a recurring meeting (some companies call them "all hands" or "town hall" meetings) to inform your employees about new business developments and answer any questions.
2. **Delegate work and responsibilities.** Now that you're a leader, share your workload with them. Delegate projects according to people's strengths and weaknesses, and let employees develop their own good work habits and leadership skills. Control freaks will struggle with this initially. Before you take on a

## Insightful Ideas, cont'd

project, try to get in the habit of asking yourself if one of your employees can handle it instead.

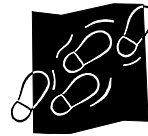
3. **Help employees set goals.** Setting deadlines and goals helps keep employees focused, busy and motivates them to do their work. Talk to each of your employees about the company's goals, and work with them to set individual goals directly linked to your business's mission. Make sure each employee understands their professional growth path in the company.
4. **Recognize problems.** It's impossible to know about personality conflicts, lagging productivity or other problems in the office if you've got your head in the sand. Stay tuned in to your employees so you can be proactive and resolve situations before they escalate. If you notice a change in an employee's work habits or attitude, try to get to the root of the problem before it starts affecting the rest of your group.
5. **Reward employees.** Everybody appreciates raises and bonuses, but monetary rewards aren't the only way to thank employees for a job well done. In fact the easiest way to recognize a worker's contribution — by simply saying "thank you" — is often the most overlooked. Whether you do it with words, money, an employee-of-the-month program or other incentives, make sure your employees know you value their efforts and contributions.
6. **Be a mentor.** As a leader, one of the greatest gifts you can give your employees is sharing your knowledge and experience. Showing your employees firsthand how you close a deal, forecast sales or solve a problem is far more effective than just talking them through it.
7. **Provide feedback.** Employees need feedback about their performance to improve their skills and grow professionally. Set up a formal review program and give performance appraisals once or twice a year. If you set goals and give performance reviews in the same meeting, make sure you spend equal time addressing past performance and future goals.
8. **Take the time to be a leader.** During busy times when work's piling up, don't forget to be a leader. Employees depend on your strength and guidance — especially when they're stressed out or faced with new projects that require your time and input. Give employees your undivided attention when they want to talk. If you can't do that in your office, head out to a neighborhood café and chat over a cup of coffee.

Many companies are now realizing that through promotion from within - making "super workers" into supervisors - they have a management team without any formal training. P Squared can help you guarantee their success by providing valuable training to develop your managers and supervisors leadership skills. The skills

listed above and many more are critical elements in these programs. Contact us at (936) 271-0712 for more information about our Leadership Development programs.

*Source: AllBusiness.com*

***Outstanding leaders are future-oriented.  
They love to dream about what could be  
and to involve others in their dreams.***



## The Path to Leadership....

If someone were to draw a line and tell you that stepping over it would change your life for the better, would you accept the challenge?

Of course you would. Especially if you realized that it was the first step on a journey that would continuously bring satisfaction to each aspect of your personal and professional life. Every great journey begins with a single step.

No doubt you have heard or read "success" stories highlighting the great achievements of individuals whose backgrounds offered no indication that they would be a success. They came from poverty-stricken neighborhoods, had physical handicaps, were without formal education, and had to work to provide food and clothing for their families. Suddenly, without the benefits of a formal education, exceptional talent, or a large bankroll, they rise to positions of respect and power. Is it luck? Or fate? Or chance?

Other individuals, whose greatest thrill in life is discovering ways to serve others, command respect through their constant pursuit of public service and their contributions which improve the world for mankind. The respect, appreciation, and satisfaction they receive as a result of their contributions outshine dollars and cents.

Both of these portraits reflect the true meaning of leadership. It is an active process of knowing what you want out of life, and what you are going to give in return. It is the realization that you are one-of-a-kind, and that your unique talents and abilities have been given to you by the Creator to use wisely and to their potential.

Those who develop their potential and exercise leadership accept the challenge of "stepping over the line." They view new experiences as exciting - as another step toward the crest of the hill from whose

## The Path to Leadership, cont'd

peak the world can be viewed in unobstructed Technicolor. They look at problems as a challenge, and work to find a solution. They turn detailed plans into goal direct actions. While others wait to follow, they lead.

Our Leadership development programs will provide you with:

- the inspiration to develop a strong purpose in life
- an action plan to map out your goals
- the skills needed to follow your plan to completion

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## Web Site of the Quarter....

**LibrarySpot.com** is the library and reference portal of the Web. LibrarySpot.com brings valuable research information together with insightful editorial in one user-friendly spot. The site simplifies the search for top-notch reference tools, periodicals and online texts, library information and much more. LibrarySpot.com was recently named the Best Reference Site on the Web by Forbes and a Top 100 site by PC Magazine.

So if you are researching for an upcoming term paper, looking for the latest White House press releases, want to research a medical condition, searching through the UCLA cinema library, or want an on-line Thesaurus – it's all there!



## Synergy Snapshots....

Great leaders never tell people how to do their jobs. Great leaders tell people what to do and establish a framework within which it must be done. Then they let people on the front lines, who know best, figure out how to get it done... **General Norman Schwarzkopf**

Dreams in life may seem impossible. They are not. Impossible dreams are achieved one goal at a time... **Herman Cain, Chairman of Godfather's Pizza**

Education is when you read the fine print. Experience is what you get if you don't... **Pete Seeger, Singer**

Life is more meaningful when you are always looking to grow and working toward a goal... **Les Brown, Motivational speaker**

It doesn't matter how strong your opinions are. If you don't use your power for positive change, you are, indeed, part of the problem... **Coretta Scott King, Reformer**

I've read that I flew up the hills and mountains of France. But you don't fly up a hill. You struggle slowly and painfully up a hill, and maybe, if you work very hard, you get to the top ahead of everybody else... **Lance Armstrong, Cyclist and cancer survivor**



## 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**