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Reducing turnover through effective employee orientation

By David Boulay, PhD

Business owners and managers recognize the importance of hiring the right people and getting them up to speed as quickly as possible. Attention is focused on an effective hiring and interviewing process. However, in the effort to reduce turnover, the hiring process is only the beginning. The orientation process is another vital stage to maximize the potential success of new employees.

Businesses often find a majority of employee turnover occurs during the first 90 days of a new employee's start date. For a new employee trying to learn a new job, new routines, and the new people around them, those first few months can be exciting and overwhelming. We can all recall experiences in a new job when we might have felt confident, nervous, anxious, and even apprehensive about our success at an organization.

It is not uncommon to find orientation processes focused only on required paperwork, training videos, and doing the job. The hope is that the new employees will "catch on quickly." Generally, orientation may last a few days, or even a few hours. However, a systematic approach to orientation that includes completing required tasks as well as gaining commitment to the organization can be an effective approach to reducing turnover. An orientation process should take place over an extended period of time and include the following:

1. Develop a structured schedule that clearly identifies who does what aspect. No one person should conduct all orientation pieces. This is also an opportunity for new employees to know many people in the organization.
2. Beware of information overload. It is not necessary to cover everything in one or two hours or days. Start with the priority information and build a reasonable schedule that prevents overload.
3. Include time that addresses the culture of the company. This is important for new employees to find their fit in the organization. How are they a part of the team? Explaining the big picture and goals of the company and how employees fit in achieving those goals is important. This may include monthly meetings with the owner or other top management to discuss these topics.
4. Mentoring and coaching from seasoned co-workers can be a tremendous boost to employees understanding of their job as well as see a role model of company expectations. Mentoring can be subtle but a powerful approach to helping ensure an employee's success.

Reducing turnover is a priority in many businesses. An effective hiring and orientation process can improve turnover during the first 90 days when turnover tends to be highest.

In this issue:

Reducing Employee Turnover	1
Managing Rising Energy Costs	1
Time Management	2
Third Frontier Internship Program	2
SmallBizU Free Courses	2
Commercialization Corner	3
eVantage Class	3
Staff Updates	4
Training Event Schedule	4

Managing Rising Energy Costs for your Rural Small Business

By Christie Welch

As we all know, energy costs are on the rise. For most small rural businesses, increasing energy costs are cutting into profitability. If your small business is exploring upgrading equipment to save on energy costs, now might be a good time to consider your options. Interest rates are continuing to fall, and USDA Rural Development has recently announced the availability of funding for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. Funding for these projects can be available in the form of a loan guarantee and/or grant for some projects. Competitive applications are required and must be submitted by June 16, 2008. If you would like more information about this program, please contact Randy Monhemius, Business Program Specialist, USDA, Rural Development. Randy can be reached by telephone at 614-255-2424 or via e-mail to: Randy.Monhemius@oh.usda.gov.

Time Management

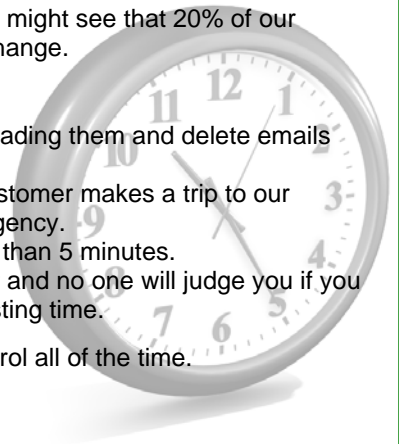
by Pat Dengel

It may be hard to believe, but each of us have 168 hours in a week. Equally, each of us have the same 24 hours in a day that everyone else has. Yet, it seems there is less time to do everything that needs to be done. Our technology and our fast paced society allows us, even forces us, to multi-task.

To free up some time, perhaps time management can help. Time management is organizing your daily and weekly schedules to optimize accomplishing activities **that are the MOST important**.

1. Realize that time does not change; it is how we manage time that is important.
2. Spend 15 minutes in the morning planning and listing out what we want to accomplish by the end of the day. When possible, undertake the hardest tasks first and get them out of the way. There will be less worry and fretting.
3. Have only 1 main calendar and keep it up-to-date. All other temporary calendars should be directed to the main one.
4. Keep the tasks that have been accomplished in the main calendar. It takes 15 seconds to jot a note about what one has accomplished during the day, and 15 - 30 minutes to remember and rewrite it at the end of the week.
5. Prioritize and manage time ruthlessly. If we keep track of what we have been doing, we might see that 20% of our activities are duplicated or unnecessary. Recognizing time-wasting habits allow us to change.
6. Learn to delegate and outsource to others.
7. Set time limits for undertaking tasks and stick to these limits.
8. Handle a piece of paper only once whenever possible. Likewise, answer emails after reading them and delete emails whenever possible.
9. If we are with someone discussing business, never answer the phone. Likewise, if a customer makes a trip to our business, never answer the phone when we are with that customer unless it is an emergency.
10. Don't waste time waiting. Always have something you can do if you have to wait longer than 5 minutes.
11. Keep track of where time is wasted by maintaining a time sheet. No one needs to see it and no one will judge you if you keep one. It takes minutes out of one's day to keep, yet tells us where we might be wasting time.

Time can be our best friend or our worst enemy. Time is also the one thing we can control all of the time.



Third Frontier Internship Program returns in 2008

by Brad Bapst

Businesses looking to employ college students through internship positions this year may be able to access financial assistance through the Third Frontier Internship Program.

The Third Frontier Internship Program, administered by the Ohio Department of Development (ODOD), aims to dramatically enhance Ohio's ability to retain highly skilled workers and foster innovative businesses. The program is intended to develop a pool of talented workers for Ohio businesses, create exciting student work experiences, enrich the students' educational experience, and expose educators to the strategies and processes of today's business environment. As Ohio transitions to a knowledge economy, the program is expected to help keep Ohio's graduates in the state by offering good jobs and an excellent quality of life.

Through the Third Frontier Internship Program, companies receive up to \$3,000 per student per year to defray 50 percent of the student's wage costs during the internship. Participating students must be enrolled in an Ohio college or university and major in math, science or engineering. To date, more than 2,000 students have been placed or have completed internships in the following areas: Advanced Manufacturing, Advanced Materials, Bioscience, Engineering, Instruments/Controls/ Electronics, Information Technology and Power & Propulsion.

For additional information on the Third Frontier Internship Program and changes for 2008, contact Brad Bapst at 740-289-2071 EXT 230 or bapst.4@osu.edu.

SmallBizU™ Anniversary Special 2 free courses

The benefit of internet-based courses is that they can be taken anytime and anywhere. For busy business owners and managers seeking to improve their business, this 24/7 access is vital. Since we began to offer SmallBizU for small businesses and entrepreneurs in the spring of 2007, over 230 participants have completed at least one course. SmallBizU is the largest collection of entrepreneurial training resources available on the internet. There are numerous core courses that teach business principles by using the 3M's – Money, Marketing, and Management. They feature animated Power Point presentations and worksheets. Each course is \$29.95, with a block of courses in one of the three areas costing \$99.00.

To celebrate the 1-year anniversary, we are offering two free courses called "Marketing 101" and "Crafting a Business Plan" through June 31st. To access the free courses go to www.southcenters.osu.edu/benet/freecourse.htm

For more information about SmallBizU, go to our website: www.southcenters.osu.edu/benet or contact Kelly O'Bryant at 740-289-3727 Ext. 235 or obryant.6@osu.edu.

Commercialization Corner

Have a new idea? Ask yourself these questions...

What current problem(s) within the selected industry does my idea or invention address?

Does my idea or invention provide a solution to the identified problem?

A key piece to commercialization is identifying the problem your invention addresses within the specific industry. Why are these questions so important? Because if you can clearly identify the problem and illustrate the solution, it shows the need for your invention and the potential market or customer base. Any idea has to be able to be sold to generate revenue. This is easier done by clearly addressing a customer problem. Then, the market potential can be recognized more easily by prospective investors.

Having clear answers to these questions provides the building blocks for your product commercialization. The business plan and marketing strategy can be developed from the answers to these questions. Investors are looking for the answers to these two questions when making the decision to invest in your product or company as well. How you pitch your idea to potential investors and customers should be based upon a clearly identified problem and a clear illustration of how your idea provides a solution. For information on commercialization, contact Meagan Barnes, at 740-289-2071 EXT 227 or barnes.484@cfaes.osu.edu.

eVantage Taking Charge of Technology class completes

By Jerry Driggs

On February 19th, 2008 graduation was conducted for the latest students successfully completing the eVantage Taking Charge of Technology class. Jim Ackley, President of the Ohio Business Connection and Kim Kollig, Administrative Assistant at the Ohio Business Connection, Dave Boulay, Director of the Region 7 Small Business Development Center and Brad Bapst, Director of the Region 7 Manufacturing and Technology Small Business Development Center attended the graduation ceremony.

The class was comprised of these students and the organizations they represent: Candee Basford - The Art of Possibility; Bryan Davis and Kevin Prater – Hocking Valley Hardwoods; Scott Evans – Scioto Shoe Mart; Karen Hughes – Christian Education Department; Leo Gillen – Leo Gillen Ent., Judi Mills and Jenny Powell – Hopewell Jobs for Ohio Graduates; Michelle Treber and Rami Yoakum – Ross County Health District; and Andrea Wiseman – Wiseman Brothers Machining.

A few of the topics taught during the class were:

- evaluating web site design
- how available technology impacts web site development
- determining your core audience
- reaching your target audience with a succinct 10 second message
- the evolution of the internet
- how search engines operate
- web site hosting
- blogging, video, audio and email encapsulation in web sites

Additionally, all students were encouraged to develop a web site from scratch. Detailed instruction with hands on learning is provided during class time, enabling even students with minimal computer experience to successfully create new sites. Each student is also provided with 30 hours of one-on-one instruction outside of class to review and implement class materials as their new web sites are developed.

The eVantage course is made possible by funds from the Ohio Department of Development's Ohio Investment in Training Program and is implemented locally through the Manufacturing and Technology Small Business Development Center. The course is taught at the Ohio State University Endeavor Center in Piketon, Ohio. Those interested in obtaining more information concerning upcoming eVantage courses may contact Jerry Driggs, OSU Endeavor Center Manager, at 740-289-5220.



Screen-shot of Candee Basford's web site that she created as a result of participating in the eVantage course. Her website, The Art of Possibility, can be viewed on-line at <http://www.candeebasford.com/>.

The Ohio State University South Centers

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Sign-up to receive future newsletters and announcements electronically! Contact Joy at:
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We're on the web!

<http://southcenters.osu.edu/benet/>

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Mapes joins business development team

Ryan Mapes recently joined the OSU South Centers Small Business Development Center team as a Business Development Specialist. Prior to joining OSU, Ryan taught high school woodworking for four years, and spent 5 1/2 years in the banking industry of which 3 1/2 years were spent as a commercial lender. Ryan lives in Jackson with his wife and two children.



Boulay earns PhD



David Boulay, Director of the OSU South Centers Small Business Development Center, recently

received his PhD in Workforce Development and Education from The Ohio State University. Congratulations, David!

Schedule of Business Training Events

April 3	Department of Labor Seminar , Bob Evans Farms Hall, University of Rio Grande, 9 am - 3 pm	Sessions on Fair Labor Standards Act, EEOC, ADA, child labor laws, OSHA, Family Medical Leave Act, COBRA, ERISA, and 401k.	\$25
April 15	Building Your Own Business , Brown County Extension Office, 9 am - 11 am	Provides you with the tools for developing your business. This workshop will focus on money, marketing, and management.	\$20
April 22	Doing Business in China: Opportunities for U.S. Companies , OSU South Centers, 9 am - 2 pm	Information on investment and trade regulations, trade finance, and managing global logistics. To register, contact Jennifer Schwachter, 513-684-2944 or Jennifer.Schwachter@mail.doc.gov .	\$30
May 15	Strategies for Growth - Women and Minority Business Conference , Vern Riffe Center, Shawnee State University, 8 am - 4 pm	Panel discussions: Ask Your Banker, Maximizing Your Business Potential. Keynote Speaker, Mrs. Frances Strickland, First Lady of the State of Ohio. To register, contact Karen Arthur at Shawnee State University, 740-351-3171.	\$20 Advance \$25 At door

To register for any of the business training events, unless otherwise noted, contact Joy Bauman at 740-289-2071 EXT 111 or 800-860-7232 (Ohio Only) or email jbauman@ag.osu.edu.