

PIPELINE

piping systems inc.

COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL/INSTITUTIONAL MECHANICAL CONTRACTORS

WINTER 2014

33 Crucial Questions To Ask Yourself Before You Hire Your Next Piping Contractor

When you are managing a piping project, what criteria do you use to select a contractor? Here is a checklist that may help you get started:

- 1) Are they easy to do business with?
- 2) Do they have the appropriate trade licenses? If so, can you see them? Are they current?
- 3) Have they been in business for at least 10 years?
- 4) Do they have adequate General Liability insurance and Excess Liability insurance? (Today's standard is \$2 million plus \$5 million excess liability.)
- 5) Will they supply credit references from their vendors?
- 6) Do they do the design and construction with their own crews?
- 7) Are they aware of and will they install the project to all city and state building codes?
- 8) Can they supply you with current references?
- 9) Will they be using first-class materials?
- 10) Do they procure the necessary permits when required?
- 11) How is their rapport with the Local Authority Having Jurisdiction?
- 12) What does their safety program look like? Will they provide you with a copy?
- 13) Do their technicians have a 10-hour or 30-hour OSHA card?
- 14) Do their technicians have CPR training?
- 15) Do they provide 24/7 emergency service?
- 16) How much experience do their technicians possess?
- 17) Will they require much "babysitting"?
- 18) What does their guarantee look like?
- 19) How will you be communicating with them?
- 20) Are they honest and trustworthy?
- 21) Are they multi-disciplinary, i.e., able to provide a wide variety of services?
- 22) Will they work around your schedule?
- 23) Are they able to design and make changes "on the fly"?
- 24) Do they really understand your needs?
- 25) Will they make time for you, especially if all you need is advice?
- 26) Do they know how to specify the right product for your application?
- 27) Will they install a project that won't work and that may put you and your facility in danger?
- 28) Do they hold regular meetings with their employees to discuss situations and concerns that come up in the field?
- 29) Will they leave their work area (your facility) neater than when they found it?
- 30) Will they agree to be paid under normal terms (net 30 days or other negotiated timeframe)?
- 31) Will they perform the warranty repairs, rather than require you to depend on the manufacturer to handle the problem?
- 32) Will they use reputable wholesalers who will be there if there is a problem?
- 33) How much of their revenues are based on repeat or recurring customers?

News from the Bureau of Pipefitters, Refrigeration Technicians, and Sprinklerfitters

During the summer and fall, the board met on an ongoing basis to complete its review of the proposed amendments to the Code Of Massachusetts Regulations Title 528: Bureau Of Pipefitters & Refrigeration Technicians. Once all the amendments have been reviewed, there will be a public hearing where members of the public are invited to attend to ask questions and voice their opinions. As of press time, that date had not yet been set.

For additional information visit the Department of Public Safety (DPS) website at www.mass.gov/eopss/consumer-prot-and-bus-lic/license-type/refrigeration/bureau-of-pipefitters-refrigeration.html.

Our president, Pauline Lally, recently received notice that she has been recommended for reappointment to the Bureau. Having served on the board since 2006, she looks forward to continuing her service.



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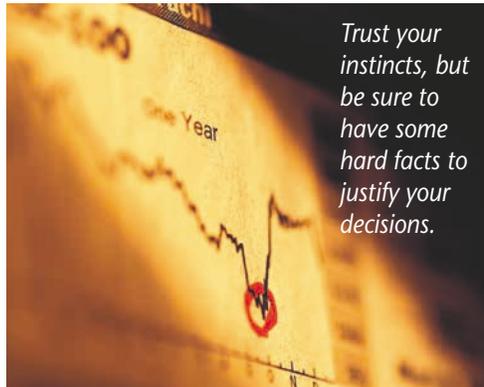
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Succeed At Work With Hard, Smart Effort

Whatever career you're in, success is a matter of hard work. But it's more than sheer effort. You've got to work hard at the right skills if you want to achieve your goals, whatever they are. Focus on these:

- **Base decisions on data.** Trust your instincts, but be sure to have some hard facts to justify your decisions. You'll do a better job of convincing people that you're right if you have objective data.
- **Share information.** In school, the rule may have been "Do your own work," but in the workplace it's just the opposite. Tell co-workers and managers what you're working on, why it's important, how you decided on a course of action, and so forth. This will increase everyone's confidence in you.
- **Get feedback.** Don't jump the gun on your conclusions. Show your work to trusted co-workers who can tell you what you may have missed. You'll avoid embarrassing mistakes, and your colleagues will be more invested in your success.
- **Take responsibility.** You expect credit when things go right, so be ready to be held accountable when a project doesn't work out. Admitting failure honestly will build your credibility, as long as everyone knows you've made a good-faith effort.



Trust your instincts, but be sure to have some hard facts to justify your decisions.

Turn The Numbers Around For A Fresh Look

Sometimes you need to turn questions and problems around to generate new solutions. An article from the *Inc.* magazine website expresses this in an interesting way:

The equation $5 + 5 = _$ has only one correct answer. But $10 = ? + ?$ has many different solutions—even though both equations produce the same result. Train yourself to turn problems around like this and you'll uncover new and exciting ways to look at the world and create fresh, surprising answers.

Retain Talent Without Blowing Your Budget

Competitive salaries and good benefits will help you hire the best employees. But it takes more than money to keep them. You need to make your organization too good to leave. Try these tips for persuading good workers to stick around:

- **Tell them what the company is all about.** Employees want to know what their company is trying to do, where it's going and what it stands for. If you think you've already communicated this information, try asking a few workers to outline the company's top three priorities. If you get several different answers, you haven't done your job.
- **Say "thank you."** People are hungry for appreciation. Yet employees often complain that their bosses never even say "thanks." It costs nothing, and the return is significant.
- **Keep training them.** One of the common reasons employees leave a company is they don't feel they were developing professionally. Training costs money, of course, but the investment is less expensive than the high costs of turnover.

Keep Your Brain In Top Condition

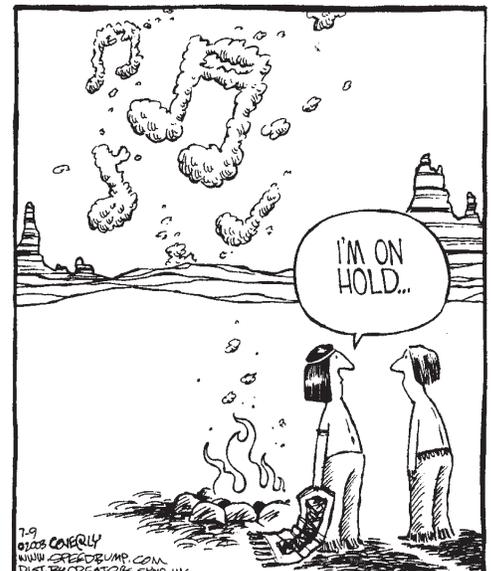
Like any other part of your body, your brain needs exercise to stay healthy. Although physical exercise can encourage the growth of new brain cells, mental exercises will also help your mind stay sharp.

Incorporate these strategies into your life:

- **Mix up your routine.** When you take the same route to work every day, or even fix the same peanut butter sandwich for your lunch, your mind stops stretching itself. Look for different activities that force you to think actively about what you're doing.
- **Stay mentally active.** Crossword puzzles, sudoku and other games can keep your mind in shape. So can taking a class, learning a new language or reading something challenging in a book group.
- **Reduce your stress.** Easier said than done for many of us, but meditation, yoga and getting plenty of sleep can relieve pressure that interferes with the ability to form fresh memories.
- **Socialize.** Don't let yourself get isolated. Talking to people and making new friends will stimulate your brain and give you more opportunities to learn and grow.
- **Test yourself.** Make up a few simple mental exercises. For example, try to identify the coins in your pocket, or the keys you carry, by touch instead of sight.

SPEED BUMP

Dave Coverly



On Deadline: How To Deliver Results When They're Due

Meeting deadlines shows that you take your work seriously and that you value other people's time. Even outside of work, the ability to keep your promises on time shows your commitment to doing the right thing. Here are some important tips for hitting your deadlines (without driving yourself to exhaustion):

- **Start with specifics.** What exactly is the deadline? Clarify whether "end of the week" means 5 p.m. Friday or first thing Friday morning. And hammer down the results: What does your boss want? How will he or she measure your effectiveness?
- **Negotiate.** Is the deadline realistic? Try not to accept an assignment you can't complete on time. Suggest alternative dates, or work out what other tasks you should put on hold in order to give the deadline the attention it deserves.
- **Break the task down.** Take a look at what's involved, and identify the individual steps you need to take in order to achieve your goal. Lay them out on a calendar in step-by-step form so you know what you've got to achieve and you can monitor your progress.
- **Get started.** Don't procrastinate on step one. Focus on beginning without getting overwhelmed by the number of steps or the magnitude of the task ahead of you.
- **Build in a buffer.** As you schedule your work, give yourself a cushion of time—mark the due date a few days ahead of the actual deadline, for example. This will help you deal with changes or last-minute emergencies.
- **Stay in contact.** Let your boss, or whomever you're accountable to, know where you are on the project. He or she will feel more confident about your abilities, and you'll be able to alert the powers that be about potential roadblocks before they become full-blown crises threatening the deadline.
- **Enlist assistance.** Don't be afraid to ask for help. Your boss, a friend or a co-worker will probably be willing to pitch in if you explain the circumstances and the stakes honestly.

Second Impressions Are Just As Important

First impressions are important, says billionaire entrepreneur Richard Branson— but second impressions can be even more vital. It's a good tip to remember whatever business you're in.

The first time a customer sees your operation, he or she is deciding to enter a relationship. But the second time the customer contacts you is usually when he or she is having a problem with your product or service. How quickly and effectively you solve the problem will set the tone for the rest of your relationship, or determine whether it will even continue. So keep an eye on what happens after that first impression fades.

We've Got Your Back

Back pain can make work difficult no matter what job you do, as well as wreaking havoc on your health. Keep your spine safe and strong by following this advice for a healthy back:

- **Practice good posture.** Follow your mother's advice and don't slouch. Stand and sit with your ears in line with your shoulders and your shoulder blades retracted.
- **Breathe through your belly.** A few times a day, place your hands on your stomach and feel it move as you breathe in and out. Deep breathing helps the nerves to move comfortably within your spine.
- **Stretch.** Some simple neck rolls and shoulder stretches can keep your back flexible. Just don't overdo it.
- **Eat right.** A healthy diet of vegetables, fruit and lean protein will keep your weight down, easing the stress on your spine.



It is impossible to do this in space. What is it?

Trivial Pursuits

- 1) According to Charles de Gaulle, which country was "invented by the British to annoy the French"?
 - a) Belgium
 - b) Switzerland
 - c) Germany
 - d) Austria
- 2) Dairy cows are found in the ads of which chicken-themed fast food chain?
 - a) KFC
 - b) Church's Chicken
 - c) Popeye's Chicken
 - d) Chick-fil-A
- 3) Despite his nickname, playwright Thomas "Tennessee" Williams was born where?
 - a) Missouri
 - b) Illinois
 - c) Mississippi
 - d) New York
- 4) "Little Shortcake Fingers" is the original name for what snack?
 - a) Fig Newtons
 - b) Twinkies
 - c) Swiss Cake Rolls
 - d) Moon Pies
- 5) In space, it is impossible to do which of the following?
 - a) Cry
 - b) Hiccup
 - c) Sneeze
 - d) Burp

—from *mental_floss*

Answers: 1) a 2) d (The chain's "Eat Moor Chikin" campaign stars Holstein cows.) 3) c 4) b 5) a (With no gravity, tears just stay on your face.)

Five Tips To Make You A Better Manager

Being a good manager requires different skills than just being a good team player. Follow these five tips to become a better manager:

- 1) Set S.M.A.R.T. goals. Goals you set for yourself, or others, should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-based.
- 2) Get off to a good start. If a project or a job gets off to a bad start it can be difficult to catch up. Do your planning upfront so you get a good start and you won't regret it.
- 3) Delegate the easy stuff. This one feels unnatural to many people, but the things you do well are the things to delegate.



Hold on to those that are challenging and difficult. That is how you will grow.

4) Don't do anything. Your job as a manager is to "plan, organize, control and direct." Don't let yourself waste valuable time by falling back on what you did before you became a manager. Now you need to concentrate your efforts on managing, not on "doing."

5) Train your supervisors. The key to employee productivity is their perception of their immediate supervisor, so invest time in training your supervisors and managers.

Lucky Winners!

Once a month we draw a name to select the winner of a free e-reader or a \$100 Amazon gift card. The way it works is this: For each fixed price contract, our customer receives an email directing them to our website to complete a customer survey for that particular project. Additionally, any customer for whom we've performed \$500 or more of service work in one month will also receive a similar invitation. The names of the companies that complete the survey go into a "hardhat" and one winner is chosen.

We began this program in April and have awarded five e-readers thus far. Here's a list of the winners to date:

- April - Concordia Co., South Dartmouth, Mass. - Customer since February 2007
 - May - Ferris Realty, Fall River, Mass. - Customer since April 2011
 - June - Armstrong Pharmaceuticals, Canton, Mass. - Customer since June 2009
 - July - Quad Graphics, Taunton, Mass. - Customer since August 2005
 - August - Clean Products, Fall River, Mass. - Customer since October 2011
- So, watch for that email asking you to complete a job survey!

On behalf of the entire Piping Systems staff, we hope you have a safe and happy new year.

Visit us online today at www.PipingSystemsInc.com



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