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Fall 2020

Thoughts Rolling Around In My Head

I sincerely hope, that by the time this newsletter reaches you, we are in some semblance of normalcy. I use the term loosely and the word “normal” is dynamic and ever-changing. Being the optimist and harboring positive thoughts, it’s been quite a learning experience. Things we could never conceive consumed us from day-to-day. Human touch was put on hold and some of us buttressed up against the slogan “No Man is an Island.”

Times of stress, change, and hard times brings out the best and the worst in people. Fortunately, I found the best of people. I ignored the worst. There are thousands of stories that we could all share on how the past six months has changed our lives. For me, it served as a reminder that the best gift we can give to ourselves and to others is to take life one day at a time, never take things for granted, and give lots of hugs to those you love.

Here’s to that idea and my New York granddaughters!

—Pauline Lally



The Essential Role Of Licensed Technicians

There are several ways that service companies can try to cut their costs of doing business. A common cost-cutting measure that is seen in any industry, including plumbing, electrical, and HVAC services, is to hire unlicensed people to provide repair and service work.

While this may initially cut costs, there is a huge price to pay. Unfortunately, once a service company has a reputation for sending unlicensed people to work on their customers’ commercial businesses, it is almost impossible to gain a positive reputation in their community again.

Hiring licensed technicians is a sign of quality standard for any service company. It demonstrates to their customers that they are focused on the best possible service by sending experienced, educated, and knowledgeable professionals on any service call, even the small ones that may

not sound like a significant problem.

Business owners should be aware of the risks involved in hiring unlicensed professionals and the benefits of hiring licensed techs. Most consumers are increasingly focused on ensuring only licensed techs work on their systems, and they take the time to review information on websites and review sites before hiring.

The benefits of hiring a licensed tech in any trade include the following:

Regulations and Codes

For companies providing HVAC, plumbing, or electrical work on commercial properties, hiring licensed techs ensures that all work is done to code. This is not only important for a service company, but it is critical for a commercial business owner.

Having the work done to code means it is done correctly, without the risk of

faulty work that can result in leaks or an increased risk of fire.

Professional Responsibility

Licensed techs have experience in following protocols and procedures, as well as being responsible to professional and ethical standards. By choosing someone committed to these standards, the customer has the added advantage of a job that is done correctly—to code and regulations—and that is done to last, not just for a short time only to fail again.

Insured to Eliminate Your Liability

Hiring independent licensed techs or companies that are fully insured, licensed, and bonded eliminates the risk of injuries that can happen on your property, becoming your liability and financial responsibility. Additionally, by hiring licensed professionals for the job, any damage done to your property is also

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Seismic Noise Drops in Wake of Lockdowns

COVID-19 has made an impact on people all over the world, but curiously, it's reduced their impact on the planet. *The New York Times* reports that self-quarantining has had an observable effect on seismic activity beneath city streets.

Thomas Lecocq, a seismologist at the Royal Observatory of Belgium in Brussels, measured the seismic noise beneath the city after Brussels established a lockdown in mid-March. He found that it had diminished quickly and significantly once Belgians and their cars were off the streets.

Other scientists around the world have followed his lead and detected similar declines. In Great Britain, one seismologist tracking activity from her suburban house observed a 20–25% reduction in average weekly noise one week after the British commenced their lockdown. In the center of London, another seismometer recorded a 30% drop. Similarly, noise levels in Los Angeles have declined more than 50% of normal, and the Paris Institute of Earth Physics has detected a 38% drop in average daytime seismic noise in the city.

All our footsteps have more of an impact than we realized.

SPEED BUMP

Dave Coverly



'White Road' May Have Been Built by Mayan Warrior Queen

More than 1,000 years ago, ancient Mayans built a 60-mile long road to invade another city. According to the *Fox News* website, archeologists believe it was the work of Lady K'awiil Ajaw, warrior queen of the city of Cobá, who ordered the construction of the road to conquer the city of Yaxuná in the Yucatan Peninsula.

Lady K'awiil Ajaw was one of the most powerful and ruthless leaders of Cobá. Carved stone monuments show her standing over captives. The Yaxuná invasion may have been motivated by the growing power of Chichen Itza, some 15 miles north—an attempt to counter Chichen Itza's dominance and establish a stronghold in the center of the peninsula.

The raised road was constructed of plaster made from limestone, earning it the name "sacbe," or "white road." It was the longest of such roads at the time, and would have called for a large investment in time and resources.

Surveys using lidar—light detection and ranging, which can penetrate heavy jungle canopies—show that instead of being a straight line, it curved in some places, probably to bypass smaller settlements. This suggests to archeologists that the purpose of the white road wasn't just to conquer and control Yaxuná, but also to enlist and possibly control other small towns and cities.

Give Your Workforce a Sense of Urgency

Challenging your employees to do their best work instead of the bare minimum requires a sense of urgency. Here's some advice for getting the most from your people.

- **Get specific.** Tell employees what problems your organization is facing, and how those difficulties could affect them. You don't necessarily want to scare them, but educate them on the impact that the economy, your competition, and their performance can have on your business. Use concrete terms to eliminate any doubt about the seriousness of the situation.
- **Set goals.** You've got to tell people what you expect them to do. Once you're both absolutely clear on the results required, step back and let them decide how to accomplish that. Don't micro-manage them.
- **Supply resources.** Talk about what employees need in order to get results—time, money, equipment, etc. Provide what you can. If something's out of reach, talk about how you could work around it. Showing your commitment to helping them succeed will spur their motivation.

Fun Facts About Your Father's Day Gift

This year for Father's Day, 65 million dads in the United States (give or take a few million) will be showered with gifts—mostly neckties.

The modern necktie evolved from the small, knotted neckerchiefs worn by Croatian mercenaries working for the French in the Thirty Years' War. The word cravat derives from a combination of the French "Croate" and the Croatians' own name for themselves, "Hrvati."

With the rise of the business class in the 19th century, demand grew for neckwear that was durable, comfortable, and easy to tie.

In 1926, a New York tie maker named Jesse Langsdorf developed a technique that improved the tie's elasticity, which allowed it to revert more easily to its original shape. The "Langsdorf" became the most popular form of necktie.

Since then, ties have widened as far as 4.5 inches and thinned to three inches (or skinnier) depending on the current style, but they seem to be here to stay.

Expert Financial Advice for Staying Solvent During a Crisis

The pandemic isn't just a health threat; it's also an economic one. Finance expert Suze Orman shares tips on keeping your finances under control on the Yahoo Finance website:

- **Put bills on hold.** Some mortgage lenders are giving homeowners a break on payments, and many states and communities are prohibiting evictions over nonpayment of rent. Citizens with student loans can withhold payment for two months. Talk to your creditors to see what they can do for you.
- **Don't sell stocks in a panic.** Yes, the stock market is down severely right now. If you have your savings there, you might be tempted to get out before things get worse. Orman advises staying the course as much as you can. In time, the market will rise again. Keep investing if possible.
- **Beef up your emergency fund.** Most experts advise saving enough money for three months of bills. Try to expand that. Chances are this crisis will last a long time, and if you're laid off or furloughed, three months may not be enough to tide you over.
- **Be reasonable with purchases.** Put off buying that new smartphone or major appliance unless you absolutely have to. Conserve water and electricity as much as possible. And don't go overboard with online shopping if you're cooped up at home. It's all too easy to click "buy" on something you don't really need.

Hold a "Trial Balloon Day"

Your employees may have great ideas for improving your organization, but they may feel hesitant about sharing suggestions or feel that they don't have the time to flesh them out adequately. One company got around these problems by holding a "Trial Balloon Day."

Employees could sign up to present their ideas privately to an evaluation committee. If an idea had merit, the committee would support it and help the employee implement his or her selection. If the idea seemed impractical, the employee wouldn't feel embarrassed about sharing it in public.

"Management's job is to convey leadership's message in a compelling and inspiring way—not just in meetings, but also by example."

—Jeffrey Gitomer

Smarter Than You Thought

At the bar, Joe made a bet with the man sitting next to him, Bill.

Joe said, "Hey buddy, every question I ask you that you don't know the answer, you have to give me five dollars. And if you ask me a question and I can't answer yours, I will give you \$100."

Bill shrugged. "OK."

Joe asked, "How many continents are there in the world?"

Bill wasn't all that smart, so he didn't know. He handed over a five-dollar bill.

Then Bill said, "Now you tell me: What animal stands with four legs, but sleeps with three?"

Joe thought long and hard, but in the end he gave up and handed over the \$100. Then he said, "By the way, what was the answer to your question?"

Bill shrugged and handed over five dollars.



True or False: Daddy Long-Legs—a.k.a. harvestmen—are more closely related to scorpions than to spiders.

Trivial Pursuits

- 1) In 1949, this company—which is famous for its trading cards—developed a board game called Meet the Presidents.
 - a) O-Pee-Chee Company, LTD
 - b) Topps
 - c) Fleer
 - d) Top Deck
- 2) According to one study, how many minutes are actually played during the average American football game?
 - a) 45
 - b) 25
 - c) 11
 - d) 33
- 3) This actress, who played a witch in 'Hocus Pocus,' is related to a woman who was accused of being a witch in the Salem Witch Trials.
 - a) Sarah Jessica Parker
 - b) Bette Midler
 - c) Kathy Najimy
 - d) Margaret Hamilton
- 4) True or False: Daddy Long-Legs—a.k.a. harvestmen—are more closely related to scorpions than to spiders.
 - a) True
 - b) False
- 5) What real-life shipwreck inspired Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*?
 - a) The Charles Carroll
 - b) The Two Brothers
 - c) The Essex
 - d) The Roebuck

—Mental Floss

Answers: 1) b; 2) c; 3) a; 4) true; 5) c

EOS Anyone?

EOS is an acronym for Entrepreneurial Operating System. I came across this way of leading through a peer group of business owners I belong to called Vistage. I kept hearing about EOS and my curiosity got the better of me. After some investigation, I felt that it would be a good operating model for us to follow. According to their website (www.eosworldwide.com), EOS is a complete set of simple concepts and practical tools that has helped thousands of entrepreneurs get what they want from their businesses while creating opportunities for their team members. Implementing EOS will help you and your leadership team get better at three things:

Vision—getting everyone in your organization 100% on the same page with where you're going, and how you plan to get there.

Traction[®]—instilling focus, discipline, and accountability throughout the company so that everyone executes on that vision—every day.

Health—helping your leaders become a more cohesive, functional, healthy leadership team.

I've enjoyed working with my leadership team, navigating our company through very trying times during the last six months. I admit, for a couple of weeks, at the beginning of the pandemic/crisis, we were operating from day-to-day. After

a couple of weeks, when it became evident that we needed to get out of crisis mode and go into leadership mode, we got back in the saddle.

After a day-long session called "Vision Building" we brainstormed about what we felt our values were as a company. It was interesting to me that some of the same themes have appeared over the years. The latest version is:

RELIABLE

- Be trustworthy
- Be available and helpful; especially during emergencies

SAFE

- Create security for our families, co-workers and clients by working safe

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EOS... *continued from above*

DRIVE

- Become the best version of yourself through continuous improvement
- Be positive with a "can-do" attitude
- Embrace challenges
- Always be open to learning

CUSTOMER ORIENTED

- Engage in exceptional communication, follow-through and follow-up
- Make it easy for clients to work with us
- Understand the value of reputation

ENCOURAGE TEAMWORK

- Collaborate to get the job done well, quickly and efficiently
- Be enthusiastic; empower and inspire those around you by your example

- Be transparent and communicate
- ### **HONESTY AND INTEGRITY**
- Do the right thing, especially when no one is looking
 - Be accountable to each other

From these simple statements, we have guide-posts to analyze our staff, our operations and what we want to be in the future. I'm looking forward to our next quarterly meeting and listening to the great ideas from my senior staff.

If I've peaked your interest, I would highly recommend the book, *Traction* by Gino Wickman. It's one of a series of books which make up the TRACTION Library.

Technicians...

covered by their liability insurance.

Know Equipment and Services Beyond the Basics

There are many unlicensed people who know a significant amount about working in their trade or across trades. However, they do not have the training and the expertise that is provided by both coursework as well as an apprenticeship that is required for licensing. This can make the difference in having confidence in the repair or installation or having to deal with increased costs when further problems are discovered at a later point in time.



We're doing our part!

