

Association Executives of North Carolina

Success

B Y A S S O C I A T I O N

Improve Your Association by Attracting & Retaining Top Personnel




Ways to Get Your Association Back on the Ethical High Road

A Happy Worker is a Productive Worker

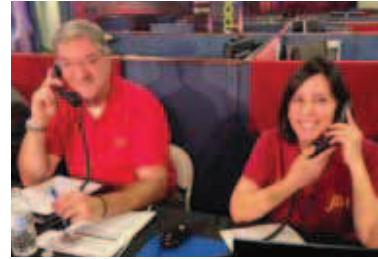
**How to Address Rampant Employee Disengagement?
Recognize Human Equity**

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The North Carolina Association of Health Underwriters: Bringing Order to Confusion 4

Polls at the end of 2013 showed that at least two-thirds of us partially or completely misunderstood the Affordable Care Act (informally known as Obamacare). The North Carolina Association of Health Underwriters (NCAHU) is here to help you sort things out.



With a Little Motivation From Dr. Seuss, You Can Dramatically Improve Your Time Management Skills 18

3 tips for managing a demanding and complicated workplace – and you might even rediscover some youthful enthusiasm for steering your own direction.

Get S.M.A.R.T.: With a Little Motivation From Dr. Seuss, You Can Dramatically Improve Your Time Management

By Bonnie F. Mattick

Whether you're a parent, grandparent or just out of college, you'll surely recognize the following lines from Dr. Seuss's *Oh, The Places You'll Go!*

**“ You can steer yourself
any direction you choose.
You're on your own. And
you know what you know.
And YOU are the guy who'll
decide where to go. ”**

No matter how old you are, it's a sentiment that takes us back to childhood, when we were first taught the principles of self empowerment and the importance of striving for what you want in life. You have the ability to take control and steer yourself on the course of your choosing.

As association managers with a busy schedule, you may get the feeling that Dr. Seuss was a little optimistic – and never had to deal with the day-to-day crises you experience in your job. In this article, I'll cover 3 tips for managing a demanding and complicated workplace – and you might even rediscover some youthful enthusiasm for steering your own direction.

“Know Where to Go...” — Set S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Writing down your goals and committing to achieving them is like having GPS for your daily life, and the acronym “S.M.A.R.T.” (originally developed by George Doran) can help you dial in the destination. Effective goals must be:

- ▶ **Specific:** state clearly what you intend to accomplish
- ▶ **Measurable:** state the timeline or at what point will it be done



- ▶ **Attainable:** possible, achievable and within your reach
- ▶ **Realistic:** knowing that you have the skills, ability and knowledge to complete it
- ▶ **Time-bound:** the target date you expect to complete the goal

Goals become more realistic when you define them and state the steps required to complete them. You can do it anytime, but the beginning of each year can be a good excuse to set your plan for high-level goals, which are meant to cover each relevant area of your job or your personal life. You assess the accuracy of the goals on an ongoing basis; and if one or more of them is no longer relevant, delete it or replace it with a more important goal. I recommend you review the goals monthly.

Specificity and honesty are key, as far as timelines and achievability. Knowing the restraints or needs of your business role gives you greater control over steering yourself to completion of your goals.

“Life’s a Great Balancing Act...” — Plan with Intention and Focus

Quoting again from Dr. Seuss: “Life’s a great balancing act...” Planning helps you balance your priorities. The Pareto Principle, also known as the 80/20 rule, states that 80% of results are from 20% of the actual efforts—which makes it an effective tool for understanding how to manage your time. In an article titled “Surprising Secret to Time Management” (INC Magazine online, May 2012), Geoffrey James gave some excellent advice on prioritizing your “to-do” list that I’d like to expand on for a moment.

Controlling a plan means putting it in writing; you can use an Outlook calendar or other electronic tool, but I find the act of physically writing down a task list and work plan for the week helps me reach my goals. Some tips you can use when planning:

- ▶ If possible, plan for the month, and identify important deadlines and what you need to do to complete them.
- ▶ Assign a priority to projects which helps you focus on the highest priorities and align the weekly tasks that lead toward completion of your goals.
- ▶ Write the strategies for completing the tasks that are unique to your job. For example, an association manager needs to be flexible in responding quickly to membership issues, discrepancies with budget requirements, and other challenges.

Planning is about organizing and prioritizing, whether you’re dealing with conferences, general meetings or management tasks. Your job requires efficiency with projects and effectiveness at meeting deadlines – so empower yourself with maximum control over your time.

“You’re on your own...” — Manage Your Time

The reality is, you’re not the only person or factor in the equation, but you are the one who can determine how your time is used. You need to watch out for “time bandits,” in disguise as phone calls, interruptions from other employees, urgent meetings, etc. In addition to reviewing your S.M.A.R.T. goals, which will give you confidence that you are staying on track, some additional tips are:

- ▶ Use your calendar to write down the purpose of your work day, the tasks for the day meetings you have to attend. Your calendar is your friend and will help you manage your time.
- ▶ Understand your personal behaviors. What is your mental attitude toward your job? If you are enthusiastic and positive when you go to work, you can easily move through your projects, face the crises that come up and not be discouraged when you have distractions. (Stephen Covey’s *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* can be a valuable resource.)
- ▶ Delegate tasks and involve others in achieving the goals for your department. Examples include accommodating tenants’ demands, developing relationships with reliable vendors and managing a staff.
- ▶ Keep your meetings to a minimum and limit the agenda. In *Seven Choices for Success and Significance*, author Nido Qubein said he conducts most meetings standing up. That way people stay focused on the topic and he can leave when the mission is accomplished.

Set your goals, plan your actions, manage your calendar and stay focused. “And will you succeed? Yes! You will, indeed! (98 and 3/4 percent guaranteed).” Thanks, Dr. Seuss. ☘

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