Managing Your Brand

You surely know that Nike’s motto is, “Just Do It,” and “McDonald’s is, “You Deserve a Break Today.” You, too, have a brand motto. That’s right - your reputation. What do you think it might be right now? Think about this: You either control this message or you let it emerge by default. A blind survey might tell you what it is right now, but you can decide what you want it to be. Your tools are your words and the actions you demonstrate as you interact with others on the job. Everything you do, say, and produce is an unwitting pitch of your personal brand. Gain control over this message. What must you do to communicate your brand accurately to others?

Boosting Self-Confidence to Achieve Goals

No matter what your goals are in 2015, getting pumped and staying energized usually begins with an inspiring moment, but action steps maintain the momentum. Remember this: “Success is attracted to action.” To boost self-confidence, take action with steps, “sub-steps,” and if needed, “sub-sub-steps” so you don’t feel overwhelmed. Anticipate the inevitable lulls in motivation and you will persevere through them instead of giving up. Hang out with like-minded persons who are pursuing goals like yours. Celebrate each milestone and give yourself the earned rewards.

Responsiveness: A Secret to Great Customer Service

You can’t respond to all your customers’ inquiries immediately, and you may not be able to resolve their concerns completely, but you can reduce their stress (and have a better day yourself) if you do the following: 1) let them know they are heard; 2) let them know that you understand their concern; and, 3) let them know that you are working on the solution. Nothing feels worse than being ignored. An example is the inattentive host/hostess ignoring your wait at a restaurant. Recall the busy hostess who acknowledged your presence, apologized for the wait, told you a table would be available soon, and gave you updates. See the difference?

Plan Your Time Off

Here’s a switch: For your New Year’s resolution this year, commit to planning your time off more effectively and start checking off some items from your “bucket list.” Avoid the consequences of not thinking through your time off - often it gets nibbled away only to have Monday morning sneak up on you. You plan your work day, so why not plan your leisure time? If your answer is, “no way, that’s the one part of my life I don’t want planned,” think again. Memorable leisure activities become the anchors you rely on to feel balance in your life. We know recreation is beneficial for both your physical and psychological well-being, and this makes you more productive at work. So, start planning more exhilarating weekends and maximize your time off, so it will carry over to make your Monday mornings more cheerful.

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Are You Culturally Competent?

The ability to work successfully across cultures is crucial for employers. This is called “cultural competence” (a term coined by social worker Terry Cross, MSW, in 1988). Cultural competency can be applied to an organization or an individual employee. Here is what it means for you: possessing a set of behaviors and attitudes that allow you to work effectively with people, no matter what their background. When you meet fellow workers or customers, each one has unique thoughts, customs, communication styles, beliefs, biases, and values. For your organization to fulfill its mission, only you can take charge of removing personal barriers that may stand in the way, and which can lead to ignoring, overlooking, or being “culturally blind” to these dynamics. Cultural competence is not a “one shot, now I know it” concept. It’s the ongoing process of increasing ability and capacity. Visit the resources available at: www.unc.edu (in the search box type: “terry cross”). Read about the six levels of competence to discover your current level of cultural competence. Ask, “Where am I right now in my attitudes and beliefs?” And then ask, “Where do I need to go in order to have more fulfilling interactions with others on the job?”

Getting Your 2015 Budget on Track

If getting off on the right foot financially in 2015 sounds good, and you’re determined to start a budget that you will help you achieve this, follow these tips: 1) Don’t try a “crash diet” budget. A crash diet budget is one in which you decide to give up every bit of extraneous expense. Doing so curtails your fun activities and eventually leads to budget failure, because you’re only human. In a weak moment, you’ll break it, and from there things will fall apart. A better plan is to reserve some money in your budget for enjoyment. The ability to look forward to something fun is part of balanced living, and attempting to do away with it will undermine your larger goal. There are at least 10 types of budgeting software programs that are easy to use. You can read more about them by doing an online search for the following: 10 Best Personal Budget Software and Online Budgeting Apps.

Supporting a Friend in Grief

Offering a heartfelt “I am sorry for your loss” and showing support can be meaningful gestures to those grieving the loss of a loved one. Grief is a unique, personal experience. It is not something to fix, but rather a journey to accept. This is why attempting to “make things better” might undermine your intent to be supportive. Some statements may make you feel like you are being empathetic, but they may be words that do not comfort the bereaved person. Such comments include the following:

- “I know how you feel.”
- “Don’t cry.”
- “God never gives us more than we can handle.”
- “At least she (he) is in a better place.”
- “You’re attractive, you can always remarry.”
- “Everything happens for a reason.”
- “At least he lived a long life.”
- “God has a plan.”
- “Try to find closure.”
- “Don’t worry - it gets easier after a year.”

Reducing the Risk for Dementia

Research continues to increase our understanding of Alzheimer’s. The strongest risk factors are age and family history. No cure exists, but research suggests that onset may be prevented or delayed by keeping your mind active by: 1) engaging in stimulating activities such as puzzles and word games; 2) staying physically and socially active; 3) quitting smoking; 4) lowering your blood pressure, since high blood pressure may lead to damaging effects on the brain that increase risk; 5) pursuing education - there is some evidence that a lower rate of dementia exists among persons who have more education; 6) maintaining a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and omega-3 fatty acids, commonly found in fish and other foods; and 7) getting plenty of quality restorative (deep) sleep.

Lack of Sleep during Critical Period of Night Linked to Dementia Risk

Source: bit.ly/1AbDs1J