

SHARPEN THE SAW!

BY WES FRIESEN

To help you — and your team — achieve full potential, we must proactively and continually “sharpen the saw.” The concept of sharpening our saw is the pinnacle habit of Stephen Covey’s timeless classic *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Sharpening the saw means we have optimum performance by having a balanced program for continuous self-renewal in the four areas of our life: Body (physical), mind (mental), heart (social/emotional), and soul (spiritual). By taking time to continuously renew ourselves in these four dimensions, we will be much more effective and successful when engaging in life’s tasks and pursuits — including leading our teams to success. Abraham Lincoln illustrated this truth by saying, “If I had only two hours to chop down a tree, I would spend the first hour sharpening my axe.”

The key is to embrace the concepts of continuous learning and improvement. We have all experienced success in our lives, but future growth and success is contingent on avoiding complacency and being intentional about growing and developing. To begin this process, let’s explore ideas that can help us continually renew ourselves in each of these four important dimensions.

Body (Physical)

The following basics for good physical health are well known — but not consistently practiced. Being physically healthy

improves the quality and expected quantity of our lives. When we are physically healthy, we are happier, have more energy, are more productive, and are stronger mentally (“the body feeds the mind”). Here are four proven keys to being physically healthy:

Eat healthy. We can benefit from reducing fat, sugar, refined flour, and salt intake while increasing whole grains and fresh fruits and vegetables. Eating healthier isn’t all bad. In fact, I’ve heard that dark chocolate is good for us! And for coffee drinkers, recent studies show that drinking coffee also has health benefits!

Exercise regularly. Exercise revs our body’s production of feel-good endorphins, can help regulate our sleep, lowers the symptoms associated with mild depression, boosts our energy, and helps us remain calmer and more focused, all of which can go a long way toward good health and stress management. For me, I enjoy walks with my wife and playing tennis with friends, and I always feel physically and mentally energized and less stressed afterwards.

Get enough sleep and rest. Experts say that most adults need at least seven hours of sleep to function optimally. It may be tempting to scrimp on sleep to get more work done, but there is a price to pay if we do. Numerous studies have found a link between insufficient sleep and serious health problems such as heart disease, diabetes, and obesity.

Manage stress. The first three items on this list all help us manage stress, but it is important enough to have its own place on the list. My column in the July/August 2017 issue of *Mailing Systems Technology* discusses in detail 10 ways to manage stress.

Mind (Mental)

Exercising our mind (brain) is one important key to good mental health. Here are four of the important ways we can exercise and develop our minds:

Life-long learning. Henry Ford challenges us when he said, “anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young.” As a long-time university teacher, I believe in the value of formal education. Whether it’s pursuing a degree or taking a class just to learn more, college and university classes are worthwhile. But informal learning is also valuable, and nowadays, there are numerous opportunities to learn from webinars, seminars, online classes, etc. We can also learn by getting involved with conferences like National Postal Forum; professional organizations like postal customer councils (PCCs), Mail Systems Management Association (MSMA), and the National Association of College and University Mail Services (NACUMS); and trade journals like *Mailing Systems Technology*.

I am inspired by the example of Pablo Casals, who bore the nickname “Mr. Cellist.” A young reporter once asked, “Mr. Casals, you are ninety-five and the greatest cellist who ever lived. Why do you still practice six hours a day?” Pablo smiled and said, “Because I think I’m making progress.”

Reading. The simplest and most straightforward way to expand your mind and keep your brain sharp is by reading. Joseph Addison was right when he said, “Reading is to the mind is what exercise is to the body.” We especially grow and develop when we read books and other materials that force us to think and engage our minds. Studies have shown that an enthusiasm for reading is a common characteristic of successful leaders and individuals. It’s been said that the most ignorant among us decided they know everything they need to know, while the wisest among us decided they could never know enough.

Writing. Writing is another powerful way to sharpen the mental saw. Keeping

a journal of our thoughts, experiences, and learnings promotes mental clarity. Writing letters, blogs, articles, and the like in which we go beyond the shallow and superficial develops our abilities to think clearly, organize our thoughts, and to communicate effectively.

Puzzles and other mental activities.

A study of American nuns and retired priests found that those who pursued various kinds of cognitive activity — including doing puzzles — were 47% less likely to develop Alzheimer's than those who undertook such activities infrequently. So, if you want to exercise and keep your brain sharp, take out your Sudoku, crossword puzzles, and jigsaw puzzles and start solving them! Challenging games like Words with Friends or Scrabble are also helpful.

Heart (Social/Emotional)

We develop and grow our social and emotional dimensions primarily by developing meaningful relationships with others. Harvard has been conducting a nearly 80-year monumental study on the key to happiness and health. Is it fame? Is it wealth? Is it high achievement?

According to the study, it is none of these things; rather, the key to long-term happiness and health is having close, loving relationships! So, how do we develop these relationships? Here are some ideas:

Build emotional bank accounts.

We have emotional bank accounts with people in our lives. We can build large positive balances over time by making "deposits" into these accounts, or we can end up with negative balances by making "withdrawals." We make deposits by our positive actions and words — including writing letters and notes, phone calls, texts, social media messages, small gifts, and favors. We make withdrawals by our negative actions and words. Just as we like to keep our financial bank accounts positive, we should strive to keep our emotional bank accounts positive as well.

Practice the magical 5:1 ratio. The Magical 5:1 ratio means we should have at least five positive statements or interactions with people for every one negative/critical statement or interaction. Multiple independent studies have landed on the importance of this ratio, including the landmark work by Dr. John Gottman.

Serve others. N. Eldon Tanner has said that "service is the rent we pay for the privilege of living on this earth." Serving others makes deposits into emotional bank accounts, and is a win-win for us that serve and the recipients of our service.

Laugh and have fun, and shed tears when appropriate. Laughter and having fun is good for our physical and mental health — and when done with others help to build better relationships. Spending enjoyable time with others eating meals, playing games, and attending fun events all help build personal connections. There are also times when we can empathize and even shed tears when others are going through tough times.

Soul (Spiritual)

Covey described the spiritual dimension as "your core, your center, your commitment to your value system." He added that for him, daily prayerful meditation on the scriptures was important because they represent his value system. I resonate with this.

However, there are several other ways to feed our souls. Examples include nature, music, art, great literature, and

service. I find that being actively involved with a faith community (my local church) is valuable to my spiritual development as I worship, love, serve, learn, encourage, and grow alongside others on the same pathway.

I would like to close with the following inspiring quote by Dr. Covey: "This is the single most powerful investment we can ever make in life — investment in ourselves, in the only instrument we have to with which to deal with life and to contribute. We are the instruments of our own performance, and to be effective, we need to recognize the importance of taking time regularly to sharpen the saw in all four ways." ■

Wes Friesen is a proven leader and developer of high performing teams. He is also an accomplished university instructor and speaker and is the President of Solomon Training and Development, which provides leadership, management, and team building training.

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THE POWER OF POSITIVE LEADERSHIP

BY WES FRIESEN

Research in recent years is demonstrating the most effective leadership approach is positive leadership. What is positive leadership? Professor and author Kim Cameron summarizes, "Positive leadership refers to the implementation of multiple positive practices that help individuals and organizations achieve their highest potential, flourish at work, experience elevating energy, and achieve levels of effectiveness difficult to attain otherwise."

Key Strategies of Positive Leaders

Positive Leaders Embrace the Servant Leadership Philosophy

The most effective and positive leaders are those that understand and practice the philosophy of "servant leadership." Servant leaders feel their role is to serve others — employees, customers, and other key stakeholders. If you think about the most respected and effective leaders you know, chances are they saw themselves as "serving leaders," not "self-serving leaders." Servant leadership has been championed by the most prolific leadership and management authors of our time (e.g. John Maxwell, Ken Blanchard, Stephen Covey). Many of the top-performing organizations across all industries embrace the servant leadership philosophy and are enjoying the benefits.

Positive Leaders Lead with Optimism and Positivity

The challenge we face is that negativity is rampant. Gallup estimates negativity

costs the economy \$250-\$300 billion a year and hurts the morale, performance, and productivity of teams. In contrast, a number of studies have demonstrated numerous benefits of optimism and positivity. For example, optimistic and positive people:

- ▶ Work harder, get paid more, are elected to office more often, and win at sports more regularly
- ▶ Perform better as salespeople
- ▶ More likely to see bigger picture, build relationships, and thrive in their work and careers
- ▶ Positive teams are more productive and outperform negative teams

Disney CEO Bob Iger suggests, "The most important characteristic of a leader is optimism." Respected general and statesman Colin Powell emphasizes, "Perpetual optimism is a force multiplier." We need to consider the concept of "shadow of a leader," which says the people on our teams tend to shadow or follow our emotions, attitudes, and behaviors (a humbling and scary thought!). Positive leaders cultivate their personal optimism and positivity and project it to people around them.

How do we cultivate more optimism and positivity? One tip is to start your day with focusing on information that motivates and inspires you. Another tip is to carefully choose our closest friends — people that are positive, competent, and of good character. Jim Rohn advises, "You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with." A final tip is to invest time reading from good books that will grow, develop, and inspire you.

Positive Leaders Provide Meaning and Purpose

People want to know the "why" behind their work and feel what they do has real meaning and a higher purpose. CEO and leadership expert Frances Hesselbein wisely observed, "People want to feel that what they do makes a difference." German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche emphasized, "He who has a why can endure any how." It is up to us in leadership roles to explain why the work individuals and our teams do makes a difference. I suggest that during the Great Recession organizations eliminated teams that did not add value and kept those that did — so all remaining teams add value. And it's up to us as leaders to explain to our teams the value we add for stakeholders.

Research shows true motivation is primarily driven by meaning and purpose rather than extrinsic rewards, numbers, and goals (which do have their place, though!). For example, a study of West Point alumni showed those who had intrinsic rewards such as, "I want to serve my country and make a difference" outperformed those with extrinsic rewards like, "I want to rise in the ranks and become an officer because it's prestigious." Studies have shown that work is considered having meaning and worthwhile purpose when it possesses one or more of these key attributes:

- 1) The work has an important positive impact on the well-being of individuals.
- 2) The work is associated with an important virtue or a personal value.
- 3) The work has an impact that extends beyond the immediate time frame or creates a positive ripple effect.
- 4) The work builds supportive relationships or a sense of community in people.

It is well worth our efforts to provide meaning and purpose, as studies have shown that when people feel they are engaging in meaningful work that serves a positive purpose, significant benefits result.

Positive Leaders Are Trustworthy and Ethical

Multiple surveys show that people respect and want leaders that are trustworthy and ethical. The core of being ethical is doing the right thing — which often is not the easiest thing. Knowing what is

"right" becomes easier when we have developed and internalized our personal value system and beliefs. Many of us look to respected "moral codes" derived from worthy sources. Values such as following the Golden Rule (treat people positively like we would like to be treated) and "loving our neighbor" can guide us in those situations where the right thing to do is not obvious.

In addition to defining relevant moral codes we ascribe to, there are a variety of "informal" ethical questions (tests) we can use, such as:

"Would I feel comfortable if my decision or action was on the front page of the newspaper?"

"What would my parents and/or my children think if they know about this action/decision?"

"Will my conscience be clear and can I sleep well at night with this action/decision?"

"What would the most respected people in my life (e.g. a spouse, parent, mentor, counselor, or pastor) do?"

Ethical organizational leaders have a positive impact on their staff. Studies show that employees who consider their leaders to be ethical are more satisfied with their jobs and perform better. Ethical leadership enhances people's sense their work is meaningful and "good." People are very sensitive to what is fair, just, and right. Not surprisingly, employees with ethical leaders are far less likely to engage in unethical behavior like discrimination, and this further adds to a positive work environment. The leader is important because others see them as role models whose good behavior they want to copy. There's also human reciprocity at play: when employees are treated well by their leaders, they reciprocate by treating others well too.

Positive Leaders Deal with Poor Performance

Positive leaders are optimists and, at the same time, they are realists. Positive leaders strive for great results and high performance for themselves and their teams. At the same time, they realize poor performance happens and needs to be dealt with. Researchers from the Positive Organizational Scholarship found the need for both/and attributes throughout organizational culture. For example, we need to both allow some creativity and have strong controls in our processes where neces-



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sary. We need to be both supportive and challenging to help people grow. Bob Quinn has used the metaphor of a positive leader having one hand on her teammate's back to push her along faster than she thought possible; the other is under her arm to break her fall if needed. Giving someone endless free passes for poor performance is not being a positive leader. In fact, it is not being a leader at all.

Positive Leaders Demonstrate Love

An increasing number of leadership experts and scholars — and accomplished leaders in organizations — are embracing and promoting the concept of "leading with love." Talking about "love" in business makes some people squirm. Part of the problem is that our English language has only one word for love — while our friends the ancient Greeks had four, one of which is "agape" love, which is the one that is most relevant for business settings.

Agape love is not about feelings and is not emotion-based. Agape love is unconditional and is behavior-based — it's about choosing to care and following up with actions. When we look at love in

action, love works — at work. And it can be a powerful tool to help us strengthen our teams and improve the value we add to our stakeholders.

Positive Leaders Build Positive Relationships

Let me leave you with a final quote from Kim Cameron: "Positive leadership is often interpreted as touchy-feely. But the evidence over the last 10 years is clear: if you implement it, performance and customer satisfaction go up. The duty of a leader is to create an organization where it is easy to practice kindness." ■

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Carpe Diem: Seize the Day!

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By [Wes Friesen](https://www.mailingsystemstechnology.com/by-author-38-1.html)

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The motto “carpe diem” (seize the day) was first uttered by the Roman poet Horace more than 2,000 years ago. The motto still resonates in popular culture today as evidenced by the band Metallica’s “Carpe Diem Baby,” movies such as *Dead Poets Society*... and actress Judi Dench having the motto tattooed on her wrist for her 81st birthday! In a nutshell, the phrase encourages making the most of today and attacking it with vigor and purpose.

Understanding and applying the concept of carpe diem can help us be more successful and benefit our teams as we model and pass on the importance to them both individually and collectively. Following are 10 ideas to help us better understand and benefit from embracing carpe diem.

1. Live with purpose and remember what’s important. What are the most important goals, priorities, and values in your life? Once we have defined these for ourselves, then we can live our lives accordingly. For example, one of my key purposes is to provide useful information to help people be even more successful in business and life. Based on that, I make it a priority to write, speak, and teach since these activities give me purpose.

Living with purpose and remembering what’s important applies to the teams we lead and influence, too. For example, recently a staff member had planned to do something that would have been easier for her — but would have been detrimental to customers. The supervisor had to remind her that we are here to serve our customers, not just serve ourselves.

2. Never stop dreaming — but live your dreams now. What dreams do you have? It is good for us to have dreams of *future* accomplishment, but we also need to take concrete actions *now* to make our dreams come true. As a long-time university instructor, I have been inspired by many students over the years who have not only dreamed about completing a

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degree, but have acted on it. For example, I had a student named Bob who had retired from his government job at age 62. Bob had always dreamed about earning an MBA and then becoming a consultant. So at age 62 Bob started his MBA and completed it at age 64! Inspiring ... and shows it's never too late to pursue our dreams!

3. Stop waiting. Start living. Braveheart said, "Every man dies. Not every man really lives." Why wait getting ready to live our best lives instead of living them now? Perhaps our biggest obstacle is procrastination. Procrastination is really the fear to start now, to start living. What have you been waiting for – getting a degree? Joining the board of your local PCC or MSMA chapter? Earning a professional certification? Writing a book? The time to start living is now.

4. Make the time. Charles Buxton observed, "You will never find time for anything. If you want time you must make it." We all have the same 86,400 seconds every day. Truth is, we can make the time to do what is most important if we live intentionally by our purposes and priorities. I really appreciate and try to take to heart Stephen Covey's four time quadrants. We need to maximize our time doing Quadrant Two activities ("not urgent, but important") like learning, relationship building, physical, mental and spiritual exercise, and the like. To find the more time for Quadrant Two activities, we need to scale back on Quadrant Three ("urgent, not important") and Quadrant Four ("not urgent, not important") activities. Quadrant Three and Four activities include thing like watching TV, social media, some emails, online games, etc.

5. Just do it! Nike popularized the motto "Just do it!" and it's one we can take to heart. There is a tendency many of us have to overthink things. Bruce Lee observed, "If you spend too much time thinking about a thing, you'll never get it done." It is wise to do some due diligence before making important decisions, but there comes a point when we need to either move on or move forward.

6. Practice the "5 Second" rule. Popular motivational speaker and writer Mel Robbins promotes what she calls the "5 second rule." She explains, "If you have an impulse to act on a goal, you must physically move within five seconds or your brain will kill the idea." Here is a simple example: I recently had a thought that I should send an appreciation email to a key staff member — like many, I often have these good intentions but don't follow through. In this case, I got up and went to my computer and sent the email within seconds of having the thought.

7. Stop making excuses. It is human nature for us to make excuses why we can't do something. Some of the most commonly heard ones are: I don't have time. I can't afford it. I'm not good enough. The list goes on and on. I suggest that instead of making excuses, we need to take responsibility and pursue what we know in our hearts would be good for us and those we are trying to serve and influence.

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8. Be engaged — and do your best. Corenta Kent advised, “Life is a succession of moments. To live each one is to succeed.” Swami Sivananda adds, “Put your heart, mind, and soul into even the smallest acts. This is the secret of success.” Being engaged and doing our best at our current task is gratifying and rewarding to us; at the same time, other people will benefit from the fruit of our labors.

9. Develop and use your support team. No person is really successful on their own. Helen Keller was right when she said, “Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” Developing a personal support team is important for our long-term success. Who should be on our support team? Mentors, coaches, colleagues, teachers, and friends are all good candidates. I have benefited richly throughout my life from people who have supported and helped me achieve my goals, as I know you have too. I like the perspective shared by Billy Graham when he said, “God has given us two hands, one to *receive* with and the other to *give* with.”

10. Reward yourself. Sometimes we need incentives to help motivate us, and some of those incentives can be self-generated. Sometimes all we need are small incentives, such as enjoying a special food treat (I like dark chocolate!) after we complete the report or other task we need to do but don't really feel like doing. For bigger goals, we may need bigger rewards. For example, I am now teaching the last class of a group of adult students about ready to graduate with their degrees. It's exciting to hear of post-graduation rewards they are planning, such as special trips to fun places like Florida or Hawaii.

Personal Application

Now that you have a deeper understanding of *carpe diem*, what are you going to do about it? Is it time to start a degree program? Pursue a professional certification? Attend a conference like National Postal Forum or MAILCOM? Join your local PCC or MSMA chapter? Start volunteering at a local non-profit? Start a reading program? Lead your team to pursue a new initiative to better serve your customers or save money? Let me close with an inspiring quote from leadership expert John Addison. “Live every day like it's your last. One of those days you're going to be right!” *Carpe Diem: Seize the Day!*

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THE RISE OF THE MILLENNIALS!

BY WES FRIESEN

I am a card-carrying member of the Baby Boomer generation (defined as ages 54-72). Until fairly recently, Baby Boomers (i.e., Boomers) were the largest-sized generation in the history of our country, and we represented the majority of the workforce. Those days are gone. Boomers have been surpassed in numbers and workforce composition by the generation typically known as the Millennials.

Millennials not only are the largest generation working today, they are also starting to take over the key operational and leadership roles once held by Boomers. This trend has been accelerated by the retirement of an average of 10,000 Boomers every day! And with the unemployment rate at 50-year lows, it has become absolutely imperative the contributions of millennials are not only appreciated but maximized. In fact, many executives say the biggest challenge that organizations face is the attraction, retention, and motivation of Millennials, especially given the large on-going exodus of the Boomers. Here are the top 10 tips for ensuring millennials are happy at your organization.

- 1. Provide opportunities to work collaboratively and on teams.** Millennials work well with others and can be great team members that accomplish more than individuals working independently.
- 2. Be a coach and mentor, not merely a "boss."** Millennials appreciate having a positive, supportive relationship with their boss, and they value helpful feedback and encouragement.
- 3. Provide regular appreciation and recognition.** Create regular oppor-

tunities for peer recognition as well as provide ongoing appreciation and recognition from the leadership team.

- 4. Leverage and encourage digital and technical expertise.** Millennials can be a great resource to help us identify and implement digital improvements to our processes and how we work. Millennials can also be the best teachers to help others learn how to use technology well. Also, don't prohibit the use of technology and social media — one survey showed that 56% of Millennials would turn down a job that denied them access to social networks.

Want to know more about how to effectively work with Millennials? Read the full article on MailingSystemsTechnology.com/WorkingwithMillennials.

- 5. Provide a flexible, fun, employee-centered workplace.** Millennials want to enjoy their work and their workplace. They want to have as much flexibility on work hours, dress codes, and other elements of the work as reasonably possible. They also want to make friends at work and have opportunities to have some fun along the way.
- 6. Provide opportunities for learning and development.** Millennials are sharp and quick learners, and they

want to learn new things, develop their skill sets, and broaden their experiences and expertise.

- 7. Listen to the Millennial employee.** Millennials have ideas and opinions and don't take kindly to having their thoughts ignored. They possess valuable perspectives and insights that can add value to our decision-making and operations, so we need to invite them to share what they are thinking.
- 8. Emphasize the value added by the organization.** Communicate how the organization adds value to all of its stakeholders, including the broader community in which it does business. Consider team building times that include volunteering that helps other people (e.g. Habitat for Humanity or helping a food bank).
- 9. Support a life-work balance.** Millennials are used to cramming their lives with multiple activities (such as playing on sports teams, working for multiple causes, and spending time with family and friends). They work hard but are not into the long work weeks practiced by many Boomers.
- 10. Encourage the Millennials' "can-do" attitude.** Millennials desire to make the world a better place, and they have much to offer to make the world (and our workplaces) better than they are today. Let's empower them to go for it! ■

Wes Friesen is a proven leader and developer of high-performing teams and has extensive experience in both the corporate and non-profit worlds. He is also an accomplished university instructor and speaker and is the President of Solomon Training and Development, which provides leadership, management, and team building training. His book, Your Team Can Soar! has 42 valuable lessons that will inspire you and give you practical pointers to help you — and your team — soar to new heights of performance.

WELCOME ABOARD!

BY WES FRIESEN

“Pay attention to your culture and your hires from the very beginning.”

— Reid Hoffman, Co-founder and Executive Chairman of LinkedIn

One of the most important keys to the success of any organization or team is to have a strong onboarding process in place. New employee onboarding is the process of integrating a new employee with a company and its culture, as well as getting a new hire the tools and information necessary to become a productive member of the team.

Why is onboarding so important? Effective onboarding has a measurable return on investment (ROI) not only through decreased turnover costs but by increasing employee productivity and improving customer satisfaction. Furthermore, studies have shown that companies that invest in onboarding experience 2.5 times the revenue growth and 1.9 times the profit margin of companies that don't.

Studies have also shown that 22% of employee turnover occurs during the first 45 days on the job, and approximately 70% of new hires decide whether to stay or leave within the first six months of joining! Given the lowest unemployment rate in 50 years, Baby Boomers retiring at the rate of 10,000 per day, and the willingness of Millennials to leave organizations if not treated well, we need effective onboarding programs!

The importance of effective onboarding is further evidenced by Bureau of Labor stats that show nearly six million hires are being made every month (mostly to replace people leaving, but also due to an increase in overall jobs). This begs the question, what are the best practices for effective onboarding programs?

Suggested Best Practices for Effective Onboarding

A very important principle is to make our new employees feel valued! Maya Angelou wisely said, “I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you make them feel.” Here are some suggestions that will help new employees feel valued and appreciated.

1. Have a structured onboarding program defined in advance. The reality is that a lot of onboarding is done inconsistently and on the fly, versus following a thoughtful pre-planned program. One suggested best practice is to have a structured program with goals, assigned roles (i.e., roles for HR, direct manager, co-workers), checklists, and procedures that cover the key elements listed next. Also,

we should periodically review and refine our onboarding program, but how? One way is to survey new hires after they have become established and ask them what they thought were strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement with the onboarding process.

2. Reach out to new hires before their first day. If new hires are getting the silent treatment between accepting our offer and starting the job, we're already sending the wrong message. Our onboarding program should be welcoming and clarify the process prior to first day — whether it's an email from HR walking through what to expect or a phone call from their new manager welcoming them to the team. Whatever the method, we should reach out to new hires before they begin, so they're not going in completely blind. They need to know we value them!

Also, Kathryn Minshew, CEO of career advice resource The Muse, advises, “Sending them [new hires] benefits information and your employee handbook ahead of the first day gives them a chance to get acquainted with the culture before they step in the door.”

3. Have the new employee set up before they arrive. New hires should arrive with their new workplace and necessary tools and equipment ready to go. They should be set up ahead of time as much as possible on all relevant security, HR, payroll, IT, and other relevant systems. Consider touches like name plates and business cards (or a form to order business cards). Not all jobs require having business cards, but for many, they are a status symbol and are a sign of being appreciated and honored.

4. Make their first day memorable. We only get one chance to make a first impression, so we want to ensure their first day is a positive experience. Ideas for the first day include taking the new employee around for introductions to all relevant co-workers on the team and others the team engages with. Have some team members take out the new person to lunch (and have the entire lunch paid for by management). Consider a welcome package that could include some gifts and/or messages from

team members and management. Have a welcome banner or other decorations to show they are special.

- 5. Set expectations early and check in regularly.** Spend time with the new employee, giving them direction and attainable action items from the beginning. Consider working with them on developing a 90-day plan that outlines key goals and an action plan to help them learn and become an integrated and productive team member. Check in with them regularly, both informally and in regular one-on-ones, to ensure they are feeling comfortable and engaged.
- 6. Assign a team mentor (i.e., a buddy).** One best practice is to assign an experienced team member as a mentor to help show the new person the ropes and serve as a go-to resource person. The mentor can help the new person with simple questions like various lunch options in the area, and they can also help with more difficult tasks, like navigating the corporate culture and

expected norms. The mentor can also play a key role in the training process.

- 7. Create an employee playbook.** This is a creative idea that few have done, but it's worth doing. Develop a playbook that can include a simple overview of your organization or team and show any vision and mission statements, values, and key strategies and initiatives. This can include a copy of your team's latest scorecard and related performance reports. Another idea is to include pictures of all team members, perhaps with a fun fact for each person, to help the new hire become acquainted with the folks he or she will be spending much of his or her time with. Also, consider developing a FAQ list that they can easily refer to.
- 8. Don't overwhelm them early on.** The first few weeks at a new job can be an overwhelming adjustment for an employee (we should remember that we were once the newbies on a team!). "You don't want to overload them with too much work before they

are ready," counsels Deb LaMere, Vice President of Employee Experience at Ceridian. You can't expect an employee to pick up on all nuances, buzzwords, and procedures after one quick run-through. Jack Hill, Director of Talent Acquisition at People Fluent, reminds employers that even new hires with industry experience should be given a chance to digest all the information they have been given.

Our employees are truly our most valuable resource and are the key to success for any team. Hiring good people and onboarding them well sets them — and us — up for success. ■

Wes Friesen is a proven leader and developer of high-performing teams and has extensive experience in both the corporate and non-profit worlds. He is also an award-winning university instructor and speaker, and is the President of Solomon Training and Development, which provides leadership, management, and team building training. Wes can be contacted at wesmfriesen@gmail.com or at 971.806.0812.

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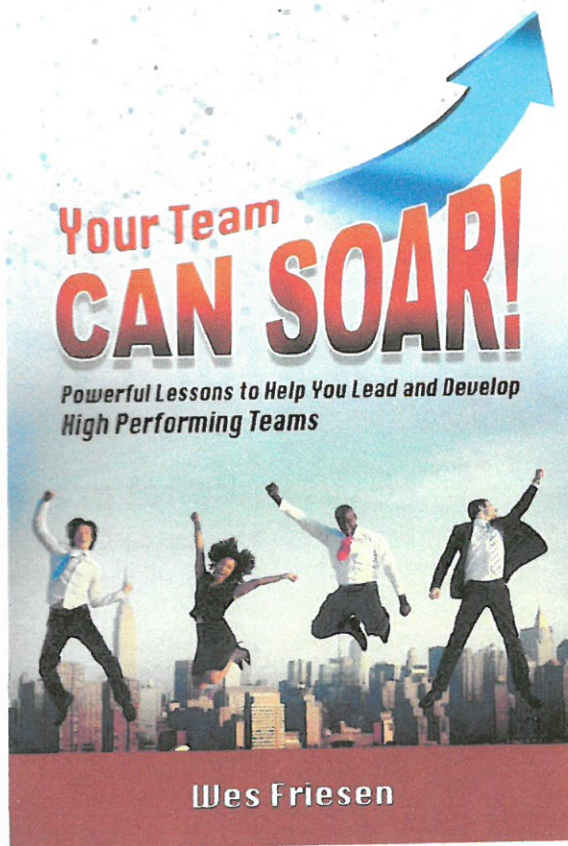
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