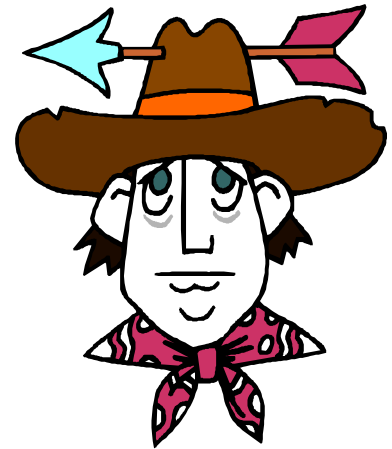


# You Might be a No-Neck if...



Some of the neatest people just don't have the huevos to be really good managers. Sadly, these great people couldn't pull the trigger if they suffered a sudden attack of palsy on the Monday morning of a murderous mutiny.

This causes a loss of respect. Lose that, and your integrity is all but down the drain. People hate to be managed by jerks with ballistic tempers or evil natures, but they don't respond well to mamby pambly inaction, either. Good managers MUST know when to stick their necks out and take charge; to show decisive, prompt action, no matter how uncomfortable.

Worrying about the consequences of disciplining or firing someone is counterproductive. Not asking for the best possible result is ridiculous. Settling for what exists instead of what is really needed is bad, weak, and ineffective. If an infraction warrants tough repercussion and only a slap on the hand ensues, the manager has just sent a message that might as well be posted on a billboard heralding "I am a wimp—hear me squeak!" Leaders like this might as well try to stop a train with a Kleenex.

When a boss allows outright disregard for rules, laws, procedures, etc., it is an invitation for the inmates to run the asylum. It doesn't work in the military, it doesn't work in public service, and it sure as heck doesn't work in a company either.

## Case Study #1:

Let's say you have a complete nimrod on staff who everybody likes but who couldn't make change for a dime without a cell phone to call someone with a calculator, effectively tying up 5 of the fingers he would otherwise have used to count.

One day, Mr. Rod blunders largely, stupidly and blatantly—for the third time. It costs the company a modest sum of money, but also affects the relationship with a prominent client who threatens to leave for a provider who hires people with IQs of at least three digits. In this scenario, Nick Noneck, the manager, sighs and takes Mr. Rod aside to inform him that he has to be more careful in the future. Instead of showing him the door, Nick then holds a department meeting to remind everyone of cor-

rect procedures and adds the promise of professional disaster for the next perpetrator. The meeting is fine—it is always good to clarify risks for staff— but there was no real action taken to resolve the problem, was there? You know everyone knows what inspired the meeting, and that nothing happened to him...how seriously will they take the edict?

## Case Study #2

A department head treats his employees and peers with disregard. Unless a voicemail or email to him comes from his boss or another higher-up-type, he feels free to ignore it. He has been overheard saying that if it's really important, people will try again. Further, he doesn't stand up for his folks when they are involved in contentious issues involving the department, because he doesn't really understand and/or care what their problems are. His boss, a mucky muck, likes to think that things have a way of working themselves out and, although aware, lets things continue. The unhappy bunch reporting to Mr. Head now resent Mr. Muck as well. Some of the best ones are looking for other jobs.

## Tough but True Solutions:

Yeah, you're busy and don't have time to rock the boat. Just be assured if *you* don't make the waves, the perfect storm is brewing—and *you* generated the weather conditions that might spell doom for you, not them.

Thinking in terms of "let's just get through today" means setting yourself up for a whole bunch of iffy tomorrows. Sure, its hard to do the tough thing, and work may get worse before it gets better, but the key here is IT WILL GET BETTER if you assert your responsibilities as a leader. Putting things off makes managers what we call No-Necks. Bosses, beware:

## You might be a No-Neck Manager if...

- ✧ Nobody even *tries* to kiss your butt.
- ✧ People seem to do what you ask but never offer to help with other things.
- ✧ Someone gives you a tie like a noose with a chin guard for your birthday.
- ✧ Nobody asks about your weekend because nobody really cares.
- ✧ Your face is imposed on a piñata and is brought to the company picnic.
- ✧ A sign appears in your office that reads "The

faulty interface lies between the chair and the keyboard".

- ✧ A bottle of aspirin and barf bags make for the centerpiece on the conference table for the meeting you called.
- ✧ There is no humor during any gatherings between you and your staff.
- ✧ Few seek you out at networking events.
- ✧ Employees have listed you just above electrocution and just below colonoscopy on their Fun Scale.
- ✧ Staffers patronize you by listening and then do what they would have done anyway.
- ✧ People find out when you plan on being on vacation and look forward coming to work while you're gone.

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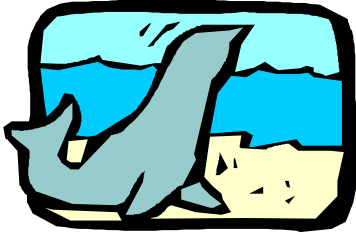
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We just don't understand why companies employ *trainers*. Yeah, yeah—we know it is a term used for people who have to do presentations that hopefully impart information that the audience needs. But if you were to look up “trainer”, you'd see it really means *one who trains, especially one who coaches athletes, racehorses or show animals*. It also denotes *a member of a naval gun crew who trains cannons horizontally* (we know some people who do this verbally—see the Telltale Tongue).

Ever been in a group of people and the person doing all of the talking asks a general question and throws a mini Snickers bar to the person who first answered correctly? That's *training*. If we were all seals, this would be appropriate: bark on cue and get a reward.

Here are some other things trainers do that an accomplished facilitator would *never* consider:

- ✧ Read what is on the screen or what you have on paper in front of you.
- ✧ Tend to hide behind tables or podiums without moving much.
- ✧ Spout company rhetoric without really knowing how it applies to the audience.
- ✧ Are not flexible with the agenda because they don't recognize when to elaborate or pull back on the topics.
- ✧ Tend to toss out the names of mucky mucks to solidify their point because they don't have the confidence to support it on their own.
- ✧ Don't prepare adequately so that the material is comfortable to deliver. When the leader is not comfy, the participants don't have confidence in the material.
- ✧ Use annoying lingo like “are you tracking with me?”

Facilitators, on the other hand, know how to work with a group, intimidating or otherwise. They relish the connection with their audi-

ence instead of dreading questions they may not be able to answer. A good facilitator:

- ✧ Finds out who will be in the audience and what they do, sometimes calling around in advance to learn of their challenges.
- ✧ Loves to share information and finds ways to mix it up so that it is interesting and entertaining at the same time.
- ✧ Looks for clues for opportunities to tweak the materials or his/her approach.
- ✧ Does not lecture, but uses a “we” approach with lots of interaction.
- ✧ Is completely honest, without compromising confidentiality.
- ✧ Finds analogies that everyone can relate to in describing how something works.
- ✧ Moves and keeps it moving: involves participants without putting them on the spot.
- ✧ Manages hecklers by skillfully engaging them in the solution instead of the problem.
- ✧ Makes the program genuine.

\* \* \* \* \*

## BIG DESK / LITTLE CUBE:

(a look at the varied perspectives of managers and employees)

### The Telltale Tongue—Who Benefits?

Sometimes, nothing promises greater satisfaction than letting loose a few expletives or exclamations when nobody seems to be getting the point. We know: we've done it. It is *really* hard to sit there in silence when an idiot has the floor. But now that we are older, wiser and more expendable, we have had to learn to bite it. Short of one or two near-misses with spontaneous combustion, we've done pretty well. You'd be so proud of the things we've never said!

But this is about you and how you can hold onto words you'll never get back. The first rule is to constantly ask yourself, “Who

benefits?” This is something that needs to be practiced. On a scale of 1—10, with relative calm being a “5”, you need to be ready for times when irritants get your blood pressure up to a 7 or higher. You can't wait until you are frustrated to try and remember rule #1—you're too emotional. Instead, try asking yourself “Who benefits?” on the “5” days before you say *anything*. Or, try screaming your thoughts at yourself and see how they feel. You will be surprised at how much of what you say is self-serving versus genuinely helpful/beneficial to others. The idea is to get used to expressing yourself for the good of the company, not to combat others or be defensive.

The second rule of tongue control is lip compression. Try to keep those suckers together for longer than you are accustomed—it is not as easy as you might think. Take a pass on an opportunity to make a wry or negative comment a few times. Commit to waiting until the next day. We daresay your opinion of yourself will go up! You can even have some fun—write down

what you would have liked to have said and read it later—who would have benefited? Just you? Keep practicing...We have to, too.

#### BIG DESK PEOPLE

We all know that the bigger your digs, the more freedom you feel you have to say what you'd like—especially to subordinates. Like there was some unwritten rule that the larger your office space, the wider your mouth can open. Stop right there. If there is something you'd say to your staff or a peer that is not beneficial for them to hear and it is something you'd *never* say to a boss, you need to get over yourself. Last time we checked, bosses and employees were all humans—none more deserving of respect than another. If you slip, though—we all do—an apology shows you at least think about your actions and have the decency to stick your neck out a bit.

#### Little Cube Dwellers:

The truth of the matter is, humans will be humans, and we can't fix mouthy mean people in high (or low) places. You can, however, diminish their power by NOT reacting in any way. When someone rants or just goes off, the absolute best course is to ignore it. This essentially leaves the offender in a silent room with nobody but themselves to emote with. YOU will benefit by abstaining from participation in a tirade. And *benefit* is what it's all about.

\* \* \* \* \*



# Light Touches

Service Extras That Linger Long After the Experience

## A Salute to Security Officers

Wherever you go, there are men and women on the lookout for your well being. They are not highly paid, and their jobs can be boring, uncomfortable and, thanks to a rude element of humans, downright ugly. They have protocols they are obliged to follow that are sometimes construed as intentional acts of inconvenience. People tend to regard them with less respect than police, firefighters or military. Yet unlike these other authorities, they have several bosses—the security firm for which they work, the client at which they are located, and the customers who patronize those clients. They rarely have weapons for their own—or your—defense. Instead, they have only their wits and their personalities with which to balance safety and service. Unless one stops to think about it, their jobs are much tougher than they appear. They are, after all, the first responders to any emergency.

There are not many fringe benefits to being among the vast army of security personnel,

unless you count the gray suit and the occasional ability to view people groping each other in elevators or hallways on surveillance monitors. Yet these dedicated people do their jobs, day in and day out, with little appreciation.

We think this should change, and you can help. Bring some cookies or buy a cup of coffee for the security officers where you work. Write them a note of thanks for their role in making you safer. At least remember to wish them a good morning or evening, for Pete's sake! If a security officer does something extra nice, tell his/her boss.

There are 5 **extraordinary** security officers where we work and we'd like to thank them: **Jhony, Raul, Art, Alex and Norman**. You gentlemen make everything pleasant yet secure. You put up with a lot of guff from people with too-big britches and do it with great patience and professionalism. We are grateful for your alertness and diligence. Thank you very, very much. \* \* \* \* \*

Anyway, we were just about as sick, anticipating another bout of being ignored while left waiting, racked with worry, in ugly facilities. To our complete surprise, despite the fact it was a Saturday and the place was hopping, we were acknowledged immediately upon arrival, escorted to a beautiful room to wait for the doctor, visited by the doc within 10 minutes and then given updates every so often during the performance of the tests we were sent for. It did take a long while, but we didn't have an appointment, and we were treated as if Bailey (dog) was the most important animal on the face of the earth (which, by the way, she is). On top of that, a wonderful woman named Debbie kept checking on all of the waiting humans to offer refreshments and assurances. Wow.

These two places are run by the same company—Veterinary Care America (VCA)—yet have vastly different practices. We will now make the horrible drive to get the best treatment (VCA All Care in Fountain Valley), which starts when you walk in the door and someone greets you. Shame on VCA Rossmoor El Dorado Animal Hospital—they're now a pet peeve.

\* \* \* \* \*



## Bright Ideas

### MIC Can Make You Sick

We are not alarmists, but according to recent news reports, we are headed for big trouble because of things **Made In China**. Highly publicized unsafe **MIC** products were as pet food, toothpaste, tires and toys. Less reported but also hazardous recalls included hammocks, gas grills, car seats, saws, candles, stationery, bicycle frames and lamps. If this isn't enough to arouse suspicion that MIC means sick, we don't know what is.

According to the US Consumer Product Safety Commission, as quoted in the Washington Times, "two thirds of the products recalled in the United States so far this year were manufactured in China." Of the total number of recalls this year, only 18% were produced within the U.S.

In the same article, readers were advised that food and drugs are the only imported goods that the government inspects for safety when they enter the United States. "Most products that are traded are not inspected, at least not for (consumer) safety reasons."

Currently, US distributors, such as Mattel Toys, have the option of issuing recalls on a voluntary basis. Mattel did the right thing, but we don't believe that all companies exercise this level of integrity.

The bottom line is that without tighter restrictions at the government level, we are on our own for quality control. The easiest thing to do is to read labels and factor into any buying decision whether malfunction or toxicity is worth the cost savings of a MIC product.

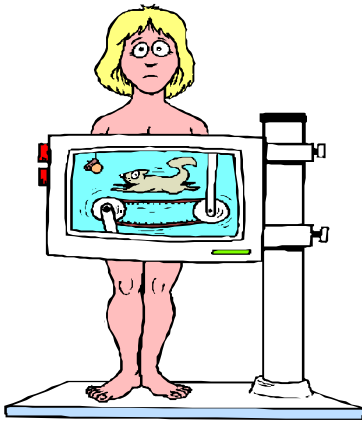
In-sourcing is another approach. The almighty dollar *not* spent up front that drove manufacturers to China, India, etc. is being paid on the back end. Sound logic tells us its time to take back control instead of being sitting Peking ducks. \* \* \* \* \*

## pArticle Piques

Irksome iotas that cost:  
**Same Bunch; Different Locations**

We are dog lovers. Being so, we have to make occasional trips to the veterinarian. One we have long patronized but always hated visiting is located close by. Most of the vets themselves are very, very good with animals. But the place is completely inefficient. Even with an appointment you can plan on spending a minimum of 90 minutes there—80 of those waiting for a room or waiting in the room. The only reason we hadn't switched was that we didn't know there was any place better.

Recently, a serious medical condition arose that the local vet could not handle (we suspect because of their abbreviated weekend hours), so we were referred to one of their affiliates some 20 miles away...down the horrible 405 freeway, where 20 miles equals one hour (minimum) of driving. If you have never spent any length of time in a car with a nervous dog slobbering all over the place and on the brink of heaving, you just haven't lived.



**Your Investment Broker/Brokerage**

Information is power, and thanks to the National Association of Securities Dealers (NASD), now the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA), you can find out if your broker and the brokerage in which he or she works has been cited by the SEC and other regulators for unsound, unsafe or unsavory practices or has been involved in client disputes. By logging on to [www.finra.org](http://www.finra.org), investors can do a query regarding a specific individual or brokerage.

**Broker Check**

While you won't learn dirty little details, you will see whether there have been complaints and can also view the extent to which a broker has been licensed and where he or she has previously worked. This is valuable because your money is in the hands of someone who has to know a ton of information and comply with countless rules and regulations. Too, if you note a pattern of job-hopping, you may not want to entrust your assets with someone who will soon be leaving you for greener pastures. After all, it can cost a lot of money to move

**Insider Insights**  
*Thoughts and Information We Felt Like Sharing*

from one brokerage to another—you may not want to follow your guy/gal in every move. There are links to this from the SEC website as well—[www.sec.gov](http://www.sec.gov). Also included is a link to Form ADV, which pertains to Investment Advisors and lists any problems and outlines the adviser's services, fees and investment strategies. There is a difference between Brokers and Investment Advisors, so be sure to know which you are dealing with.

**Other Cool Information**

On both the SEC and FINRA websites you will find up-to-date information about changes to the industry that affect consumers and contains the results of studies that reveal issues you should know. There are features such as "Get the Facts on Saving and Investing" that are actually quite helpful.

Most people don't know that **not all brokerages are SIPC-insured**. The SIPC (Securities Investor Protection Corporation), formed in 1970, is not the FDIC. "The SIPC is the first line of defense when a brokerage firm fails owing customers cash and securities that are missing from customer accounts. Only cash and securities—such as stocks and bonds—held by a customer at a financially troubled brokerage firm are protected by SIPC." Whereas the FDIC insures deposits, the SIPC does not insure investors against loss due to market ups and downs, but covers losses involving **missing** stocks or securities.

If nothing else, make sure your brokerage is SIPC-insured or you could find yourself SOL.

\* \* \* \* \*



**Beacon Bits**

Quotations to cast rays of humanity across everyday business life

"Genius may have its limitations, but stupidity is not thus handicapped."

- Elbert Hubbard

"Without courage, wisdom bears no fruit."

- Baltasar Gracian

"There are two kinds of fools. One says, 'This is old, therefore it is good.' The other says, 'This is new, therefore it is better'."

- William Ralph Inge

"if you say what you think, don't expect to hear only what you'd like."

- Malcolm Forbes

"A fool is his own informer."

- Yiddish proverb

**Last Laughs:  
Proper Placement**

Many thanks to friend Susan Garrett for forwarding this to us:

**How to Properly Place Employees:**

1. Put 400 bricks in a closed room.
  2. Put your new hires in the room and close the door.
  3. Leave them alone and come back after 6 hours.
  4. Then analyze the situation:
- ◇ If they are counting the bricks, put them

- ◇ in the Accounting Department.
- ◇ If they are recounting them, put them in the Audit department.
- ◇ If they have messed up the whole place with bricks, put them in Engineering.
- ◇ If they are arranging the bricks in some strange order, put them in Planning.
- ◇ If they are throwing bricks at each other, put them in Operations.
- ◇ If they are sleeping, put them in Security.
- ◇ If they have broken the bricks into pieces, put them in Information Technology.
- ◇ If they are sitting idle, put them in Human Resources.
- ◇ If they say they have tried different combinations and are looking for more, yet not a brick has been moved, put them in Sales.
- ◇ If they have already left for the day, put them in Marketing.

- ◇ If they are staring out of the window, put them in Strategic Planning.
- ◇ If they are talking to each other, and not a single brick has been moved, congratulate them and put them in Top Management.
- ◇ Finally, if they have surrounded themselves with bricks in such a way that they can neither be seen nor heard from, put them in Congress.

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