

# BALANCE

Volume 7, Issue 4

## Set Goals to Spur Your Success

Your performance review is a perfect time to set new career-related goals. In addition to your manager establishing goals for you, take the initiative and set some goals for yourself. Prepare by identifying your most and least favorite parts of your job. Think about a goal that enables you to produce better organizational results while doing what you like most. For example: You enjoy interacting with customers, so you commit to making 10 calls a week to survey their satisfaction level. Completing weekly activity reports is not your favorite thing to do, so you propose submitting a streamlined monthly report instead. Discuss what yardsticks you and your manager will use to measure your progress. Make sure you have an accurate and quantifiable way to measure your goal so that there's no question about your progress toward it. Clear, easy-to-track benchmarks might include number of files processed, amount of revenue generated or volume of client inquiries that you handle. Align your goals with your employer's needs by asking your manager three questions:

- 1) What do I need to do over the next six months to exceed your expectations and deliver exceptional performance?
- 2) In what areas would you like me to improve?
- 3) If I deliver consistently superior performance, how can that enhance my career here?

For more help, contact your EAP which could be your best sounding board for deciding upon that next turn in your career.

## Do-It-Yourself Conflict Resolution

Learning some simple conflict resolution techniques can prevent minor conflicts with coworkers, friends or family members from turning into larger disputes. One technique is validation. Validating is acknowledging the feelings of the person with whom you have a disagreement. This technique takes practice because you may feel like you are "giving in" to the other person's point of view. However, validation is not about putting aside your disagreement. Instead, you are acknowledging that the other person's point of view is respected and understood. The more you can zero in on the other person's feelings, the better.

For example, rather than saying, "Forget it! This project can't wait until after the holidays," start with "Are you feeling uneasy about rushing this project to completion before the holidays because it will put too much stress on our team?" This form of communication helps others feel respected and understood, something all of us want from our coworkers. If you practice this technique with your coworkers, the outcome may be higher productivity. Practicing it with your friends and family may reduce stressful encounters, improve communications and strengthen bonds.



## Confidence: Get More!

Everyone wants to feel and look confident, but is there a way to get or build confidence? Yes, there is. Follow these key steps to building your self-confidence:

- 1) Acting self-confident is not being superior to others. It's about feeling competent that you will meet life's challenges successfully.
- 2) Understand that confidence comes from taking action and meeting challenges, refusing to always play it safe and making decisions that put you—not others—in control of your life.
- 3) Accept that everyone lacks self-confidence sometimes, although they may be competent in many areas.
- 4) When you lack self-confidence, stop short of putting yourself down. Remind yourself of past personal accomplishments, if necessary.
- 5) Self-confidence needs to be nurtured. You can gradually build your self-confidence by being willing to make decisions, overcoming your resistance to new challenges and learning from your experiences.
- 6) Think about which successes have created the most excitement and enjoyment in your life. These reflect your values. Consider using these values as guides for future decisions, and your confidence may grow.

## Office Workers & Blood Clots

Stretch, get up and take regular breaks if you tend to sit for long periods of time at your job (technology workers, call center employees, etc.). Like airline travelers, office workers can be at increased risk for blood clots from sitting too long in one spot. It's called deep vein thrombosis (DVT). A study done in New Zealand and recently reported by the Associated Press showed that 34 percent of people admitted to emergency rooms for DVT had been sitting for long periods of time. Only 1 to 2 percent of people admitted for DVT had been traveling.

## Pass on Payday Loans

“Payday lending is a debt trap,” says the national Center for Responsible Lending. Payday lending, sometimes called a “cash advance” is the practice of using a check dated in the future as collateral for a short-term loan and is generally marketed as quick cash for a short-term emergency. To qualify, a borrower needs only an income from a job or government benefits and a bank account. Reportedly, 99 percent of payday loans go to repeat borrowers, and 91 percent of those borrowers get loans five or more times per year, many borrowing from one loan provider to pay off an overdue debt from another. The average customer who goes to a payday loan “store” ends up paying \$800 to pay back a \$325 loan! Payday loans can be a debt trap, and this notorious practice of predatory lending has led 14 states to outlaw payday loan stores.

**What to do:** If you are in debt, ask your EAP professional about helpful resources in your community or contact your local consumer credit counseling center. Avoid the attraction of what appears to be quick relief of debt. If you have a plan, you can eventually find your way out of debt, but payday and cash-advance lenders are not the way to go.

Source: Center for Responsible Lending

## Blood Pressure & Sleep

You might talk to your doctor about your sleep pattern if you have high blood pressure. A report published in 2006, which was not widely reported on, found a strong relationship between high blood pressure and fewer hours of sleep. Sleep apnea (when breathing stops while sleeping) has long been associated with heart health, but this report addresses the actual number of sleep hours. Among participants between the ages of 32 and 59, those who slept fewer than six hours a night had more than double the risk of high blood pressure than those who slept more than six hours a night. Known sleep-zappers include stress, alcohol use before bedtime, caffeine and even pets in the bedroom.

## Depression Inventory

If you wonder how severe your symptoms of depression are, check with your EAP professional. Depression can be assessed using highly reliable screening tests that can score the severity of your symptoms. You can then make an informed decision to get help. The most popular screening instrument is the Beck Depression Inventory. It includes 21 questions that take about five minutes to answer. The EAP can assess your status quickly or can refer you to someone who can use the Beck or a similar screening instrument. Many diseases have clear stages of severity, and depression is one of them. That's good news. As with many other illnesses, it's easier to treat depression when it is recognized in its early stages.

## Cordial Holidays

No doubt you've already had thoughts about the upcoming holiday season and, like many of us, some thoughts are pleasant and some are not. If your holiday get-togethers are at times tense and seem to lead to family squabbles and hurt feelings, plan now to reduce or avoid conflicts. Some tips:

- 1) Include friends at dinner or during social events. When strangers are present, relatives who tend to rehash old stories or have conflicts seem to exercise more self-restraint and remember to use their "company" manners.
- 2) Identify the one or two people in your family who everyone responds to positively, and ask them to help divert conversations or activities that typically lead to conflicts.
- 3) Strive to relate to your adult children as guests, peers or friends rather than as your children. Avoid the impulse to open old wounds or old disappointments. Focus on the healthier part of your relationship.
- 4) If young children are part of the get-together, vow to put their needs first to help you avoid emotional responses to difficult behaviors.
- 5) Take frequent breathers—outdoor walks, errands, five minutes alone—to change your focus and reduce your tension.

## Wow from the Beginning

Here are some good moves for the first month on the job (and beyond):

- 1) Show them you know how to work hard. Do more than what you're being paid to do.
- 2) Establish goals by asking yourself, "Six months from now, what do I want my boss to think about me?"
- 3) Study the work culture and then act and dress to fit within it.
- 4) Take notes and record the names, titles, key players, responsibilities of others, relationships and linkages.
- 5) Ask lots of questions and avoid "over-demonstrating your knowledge—acting like you have all the answers.
- 6) Avoid making lots of personal calls, flirting with staff and correcting peers.

## Do You Have Pre-diabetes?

There are 54 million people in the United States who have a serious medical condition called pre-diabetes—blood glucose levels that are higher than normal but not yet high enough to be diagnosed as diabetes. Recent research has shown that some long-term damage to the body, especially the heart and circulatory system, may already be occurring during pre-diabetes.

Either the fasting plasma glucose test (FPG) or the oral glucose tolerance test (OGTT) can detect pre-diabetes. If you have pre-diabetes, you can delay or prevent type 2 diabetes from developing by making health changes such as changing your diet and increasing your level of physical activity. Talk to your doctor and visit the American Diabetes Association Web site for more information – [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org).



## A Perspective on Respect in the Workplace

Grab a dictionary and you might see a dozen definitions for respect. Do you view respect simply as avoiding saying or doing certain things—like what your parents expected of you when you visited your relatives' home during the holidays?

In the workplace, respectful behavior is more than that. Practiced well, it contributes to improved morale, increased productivity and a happier workplace for everyone. The most important thing to understand is that respect in the workplace is not just about avoiding offensive behavior. It is a process of personal growth by which you recognize the worth of others along with their personal qualities or abilities, and then naturally interact with them from that viewpoint. This can be a difficult challenge if you have come to work with biases that don't make respectful behavior easy to practice. We all have biases, usually about many different things. The challenge is to recognize our own biases, acknowledge the biases of others and understand how those biases interfere with our personal and workplace productivity.

## Promotions: Work vs Responsibility

Decisions to promote employees to the next pay grade almost always hinge on whether more responsibility, not more work, exists. What is the difference between more work and more responsibility? They sound similar, but there are distinctions. Many employees request promotions based on job changes or duties that land more work in their laps. They are then perplexed when they are turned down for pay grade increases. Although there is no guarantee that you can convince the decision makers (who may face tough budget realities) how much you deserve a promotion, identifying your increased responsibilities, rather than just your increased workload, will put you closer to your goal.

To speak with an EAP professional,  
please call: **800.765.0770**

