



Bridges A monthly eZine from Meridian Consulting, Inc.,
published January through November

Building Bridges to Success – February/2004

In this issue:

- Coaches Corner: *The Perils of Perfectionism*
- Spotlight on Conflict: *Factors Favoring Mediation*
- Consulting: *Profit Patterns*
- Upcoming Speaking Engagements: *Workplace Conflict: The Cost, The Cause, The Cure*
- Upcoming Training Engagements

Thought for the Month:

"In three words I can sum up everything I've learned about life. It goes on."

Robert Frost

Coaches Corner: *The Perils of Perfectionism*

I believe that everyone really wants to do a good job. However, wanting to do a good job and feeling like everything has to be perfect are two different things. I know from personal experience how hard it can be to get some perspective on this, especially with the driving pace of our work and personal lives.

The differentiator is that the perfectionist is driven to get it right in everything they do. They have a penchant for setting extremely high standards and being displeased with anything less. The perfectionist expends a great deal of time and energy trying to avoid making mistakes, trying to make everything perfect. Perfectionism can also be disguised as procrastination, i.e., failing to follow through until every action is just right.

In addition, the perfectionist will invest a great deal of energy in fixing other people's mistakes. Their standard of perfection is very specific and often applies to everybody and everything around them. There is no room for error.

Nearly everyone has been on the receiving end of the expectations of a perfectionist. The expected perfection is not only costly and time consuming, but diverts resources and energy away from important matters. Often leaving people feeling burned out, resentful, distrustful, and micro-managed, which in turn affects job satisfaction, commitment, and motivation.

The perfectionist leader will defend their behavior by saying, "The customer demands perfection" or "we look bad when things are not perfect." Not realizing that if everything has to be perfect, then everything has the same priority; thus, nothing has a priority and the individuals and the company's ability to achieve results are less than optimal. While quality is important, perfectionism can be deadly; especially when you recognize how much damage it can do to one's piece of mind, and one's relationships with others.

Do you have a streak of the perfectionist in you?

- Do you redo your own and the work others until it is perfect?
- Have you every said "It's easier to just do it myself"?
- Can things only be done one way, and do you feel you are the only one who can "do it right"?
- Do you insist that others do things the way you would do them?
- Do you resist changing your standards or methods?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you are not alone. However, while you may laugh and joke about perfectionism, or explain it away; ask yourself a few more questions:

- How often do I do this?
- What has to be perfect? Why?
- Why do I insist on doing it my way?
- How does my insistence on perfection affect my relationships with others?
- How does it affect my own stress levels and those of others?
- Does perfectionism bring you joy, happiness, peace, delight, nourishment, fun, or enjoyment?

If you have perfectionist tendencies, here are some actions you could take:

- *Establish priorities. Determine what is most important and focus your drive for excellence on those high priority items. This means learning to let go of those things that are not as important.*
- *Establish criteria for acceptable and excellent performance in a given situation. Then apply those standards for the desired outcomes, before the tasks are initiated or delegated.*
- *Set time limits for writing memos and letters, and tasks in general. This way you won't spend unnecessary time "perfecting" the message.*
- *Force yourself to refrain from "correcting" style changes in the work of others.*
- *When reviewing something, ask yourself, "Does my change really matter in the big picture?" Will it really matter 3 years from now?"*
- *Be open to outcomes, not attached to them. Learn to be detached from situations, and safely allow people to learn from their own mistakes.*
- *Give others credit for the effort involved without correcting their work.*
- *Remember that sometimes, 80% is good enough.*

Being *agile, efficient, and productive* are the hallmarks of success in business. The reality of the situation is that, there is never enough time to complete a task perfectly. However, while you may not do things perfectly, you can still do excellent work.

Business Coaching Services: *Building Success Strategies for Working With Others*

Meridian works collaboratively with business people to develop coaching programs that focus on targeted action and tangible results. Corporate executives and business owners alike can benefit from coaching:

- Gain clarity, purpose, and stay on-track
- Build influence without authority
- Deal effectively with difficult people and situations
- Give effective feedback
- Create and maintain boundaries
- Build confidence and credibility
- Get work done effectively through others
- Establish and sustain constructive work relationships
- Increase flexibility in working with others and new situations
- Build and sustain life balance
- Manage yourself for the best results
- Focus on what's important, instead of what's urgent

If you or your organization is looking to *improve performance* and *build capability* of your management team or individual leaders, then we would like to talk with you. Our executive coaches can provide you with *objective, confidential, and knowledgeable* support.

Contact us today for a free consultation to discuss how Meridian Coaching Services can benefit you.

Tel: (925) 258-0304

Email: info@meridiancoaches.com

Visit us on the web at: www.meridianconsultinginc.com

Spotlight on Conflict: *Mediation or Litigation, What Would You Choose?*

Unresolved conflict and disputes in the workplace can spiral out of control, leaving the company and its employees with the feeling that litigation is the only solution. There is another solution. Many organizations are using Mediators to resolve workplace disputes because it's less expensive than litigation or binding

arbitration, and the parties involved are nearly always more satisfied with the outcome. It is significant to note that the American Bar Association recommends *Mediation* and the use of *Alternative Dispute Resolution Programs* as an effective and efficient way to resolve workplace disputes.

Mediation is an intervention that helps overcome traditional barriers in settlement negotiations between the parties. These barriers occur for a variety of reasons, such as opposing positions, conflicting goals, personal antagonism, and hostility that increases the longer the dispute goes unresolved. All of which are more effectively addressed in a mediation.

Mediation is indicated in the following situations, even if there have been failed negotiations in the past or the controversy is the subject of a pending lawsuit:

- Recognition that emotions or hostilities may bar a settlement
- Need for confidentiality
- Desire for speedy resolution
- Preserve a continuing relationship
- Avoid publicity
- Minimize the risk of an imposed outcome
- Reduce the cost of getting to resolution

Using a *Mediator* in the resolution process will:

- Frame the issues and provide focus
- Help parties make a realistic assessment
- Clarify misunderstandings
- Reduce tension
- Ensure fairness in the process
- Explore new areas of resolution

A good resource on mediation in the workplace is, [Mediation Practice Guide, A Handbook for Resolving Business Disputes](#), by Bennett Picker, the American Bar Association.

~~~~~

**Conflict Services:** *Unresolved conflict in the workplace is costly. When issues and differences are not appropriately addressed, they will escalate, and so will the associated costs.*

**Meridian can help your business improve its ability to reduce workplace conflict and limit its negative impact through proactive programs of *Intervention and Prevention*.**

- **Intervention:** Meridian uses *Mediation* and *Integrated Conflict Management Programs* to reduce and resolve internal conflict situations between individuals, teams and business units, and works with external parties to

ensure disputes in important business relationships are resolved in a positive manner.

- **Prevention:** Meridian works with clients to develop ongoing, proactive programs that help build awareness of underlying issues that contribute to conflict, and build skill sets to help people effectively deal with conflict situations through *Training* and *Business Coaching*.

Meridian consultants provide targeted solutions and best practices, from multiple industries, to increase your organization's ability apply appropriate *intervention*, and develop *prevention* programs that are tailored to your business needs.

*Contact us today for a free consultation to discuss how Meridian Conflict Intervention and Prevention Services can benefit you.*

Tel: (925) 258-0304

Email: [info@meridianconsultinginc.com](mailto:info@meridianconsultinginc.com)

Visit us on the web at: [www.meridianconsultinginc.com](http://www.meridianconsultinginc.com)

~~~~~

Consulting: *Profit Patterns—What Are the Patterns in Your Business?*

Profit Patterns by Adrian J. Slywotzky, et al is a quick read that lays out 30 ways to anticipate and profit from the strategic forces reshaping your business. The authors identify marketplace patterns that affect profitability. These patterns are organized into 7 categories: Mega, Value Chain, Customer, Channel, Product, Knowledge and Organizational.

For example, under Customer Patterns the authors note, *“Not all customers are profitable. With declining gross margins and increasing variability in costs, many companies target profitable customers and discourage the unprofitable.”* However, their recommendation is to build a *“customer profitability system”* that segments your customers and use the system to change pricing, service and investment levels, thereby maximizing profitability by segment.

This book provides sound and timeless insight into that core business issue of *profitability*. It is a good read for anyone responsible for bottom line results, whether you are in charge of a profit center, or run the company.

~~~~~

**Consulting Services:** *Competition ensures that only the best will survive for the long-term.*

**The failure to continuously improve your goods and services, your channel of delivery, and the work processes themselves, inevitably leads to the declining quality of goods and services, lost revenue, and reduced customer satisfaction.** However, improving your work processes saves time, reduces costs, and improves the quality of goods and services. We offer three workflow services:

- Cross-functional Process Redesign
- Business Process Redesign
- Process Improvement

*Contact us today for a free consultation to discuss how Meridian Consulting Services can benefit you.*

Tel: (925) 258-0304

Email: [info@meridianconsultinginc.com](mailto:info@meridianconsultinginc.com)

Visit us on the web at: [www.meridianconsultinginc.com](http://www.meridianconsultinginc.com)

-----

**Training for Targeted Action:** *Through our training, Meridian has helped organizations retain valuable talent, improve job satisfaction, and increase productivity by developing needed skill sets.*

**Another Good Reason for Targeted Management Training:**

A top reason for attrition and low productivity is not poor compensation or lack of challenging work, but poor management by those directly above them. The good news is that when organizations invest in targeted training for their leadership team, it is their number one defense against low productivity, attrition, and declining morale.

**A study conducted by the University of Pennsylvania found:**

- A 10% investment in physical assets resulted in a 3.8% rise in employee productivity.
- A 10% investment in employee training created an 8.5% increase in productivity at businesses engaged in manufacturing and an 11% increase in productivity in the service sector.

The study was conducted by Robert Zemsky and Susan Sharman, and was reported on by Dr. Nathaniel Branden in his book [Self-Esteem at Work](#).

-----

**Upcoming Speaking Engagements:** May 20, 2004, Speaker—Richard Cronen

Topic: *Workplace Conflict: The Cost, The Cause, The Cure*

Date: May 20, 2004

Time: 7:30-9:00AM

Sponsor: East Bay Chapter of the Northern California Human Resource Association (NCHRA)

Location: Waterfront Hotel, Jack London Square, Oakland, CA.

Breakfast Registration: [www.nchra.org](http://www.nchra.org)

If you are interested in hearing Richard speak on this topic for your organization, please contact us at:

Tel: (925) 258-0304

Email: [info@meridianconsultinginc.com](mailto:info@meridianconsultinginc.com)

~~~~~

Upcoming Training Engagements:

- Problem Solving & Decision Making, University of the Pacific, April 8, 2004
- Business Ethics, University of the Pacific, May 6, 2004
- The Role of the Supervisor, University of the Pacific, June 3, 2004
- Partnering With Your Boss, University of the Pacific, June 14, 2004
- Business Ethics, University of the Pacific, July 8, 2004
- Problem Solving & Decision Making, University of the Pacific, July 22, 2004

If you are interested in bringing any of these workshops to your workplace, please contact us at:

Tel: (925) 258-0304

Email: info@meridianconsultinginc.com

Visit us on the web at: www.meridianconsultinginc.com

~~~~~

***The Small Print:*** Copyright © Meridian Consulting, Inc., 2004. All Rights reserved. Please feel free to print this eZine, we only ask that you give Meridian credit for the content when you share it.

*If at any time, you would like your name removed from our monthly eZine, simply send an e-mail to [info@meridianconsultinginc.com](mailto:info@meridianconsultinginc.com) with the word "unsubscribe" in the message box. Your address will never be sold, bartered, traded, or in any other way shared with any other person. Honest!*