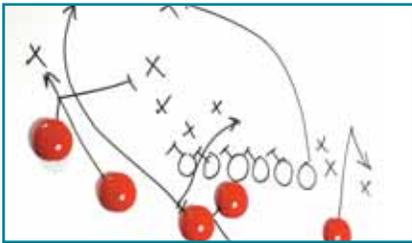


EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE REPORT

Volume 11, No. 3
March 2008

supporting EAP professionals

Tips for Building a Championship Business



By Isaac Cheifetz

During every National Football League off-season, the coaches and general managers of the league's 32 franchises face crucial decisions about what new player personnel they should acquire from the collegiate draft, free agency, and via trades with other teams. The selection of the right players — adding the best “pieces to the puzzle” — might mean the difference between a Super Bowl victory in February and a losing season that's over in December.

Whether it's a NFL team or a business, bringing in the right people is crucial to success. Employing individuals with strong character values, for example, is important, although assessing a person's character isn't always as easy as it sounds.

Michael Vick's Woes

Let's take the example of Atlanta Falcons star quarterback Michael Vick and his imprisonment for running a dog-fighting operation. Vick's problems sprung up in mid-career in March 2005, when a woman who

claimed she had contracted a sexually transmitted disease from Vick sued him.

In January 2007, he was briefly accused of attempting to carry a water bottle with a hidden compartment for marijuana onto an airplane, although Vick was cleared of any wrongdoing based on tests of the bottle. These two incidents, along with Vick making an obscene gesture to Atlanta fans following a November 2006 loss, marked him as a problem child in the making.

The April 2007 police raids and July federal indictment of elaborate dog-fighting operations on Vick's Virginia estate moved him from a problem child to a moral monster. But did Falcons' owner Arthur Blank know about it? Almost certainly not, given his concern for his and the Falcons' public image in Atlanta.

Should Blank have made it his business to know that Vick was running an illegal interstate dog-fighting ring? How would that conversation have gone? What checklist of felonies and infamies would Blank have had to review with his employees to satisfy himself that they were not criminals? Organizations that tolerate superstars who are personally productive but organizationally disruptive rarely attain world-class performance. But as with any risk, the best you can do is to minimize exposure, not eliminate it.

More Effective Recruiting

While no one can eliminate exposure to high-risk employees, one helpful strategy involves implementing a more proactive approach to recruiting and hiring. For example, are references being checked for their “fit to scheme”? Checking references has too often become a routine exercise that precedes a job offer — few references are likely to say anything negative about the prospective hire.

But, if the recruiter and organization positions the conversation as being primarily to seek information to better manage the individual once he/she is hired, the individual providing the reference is much more likely to provide useful information.

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In this way, you are giving them a reason to be candid, which is helpful to the candidate.

Another important task for the recruiter is to identify the “true-musts” of the position. For example, while great speed is a desirable trait for an NFL receiver, having great hands and being a disciplined route runner are “true-musts.” “When I was playing, I never worried about a guy that ran a 4.4-forty [yard dash], if I watched the film and saw that he had 5.2 hands,” said Herm Edwards, head coach of the Kansas City Chiefs.

In business too, there is a true-must for nearly every role, without which success is unlikely, regardless of the individual’s ability. Any organization must be able to determine the “true-musts” that a candidate must possess for a position. Key intangibles such as discipline and motivation is not discussed here, on the assumption that all roles in football and business require them.

Sportsmanlike Conduct

Organizations that tolerate superstars who are personally productive but organizationally disruptive rarely attain championship performance. In his book *Million Dollar Habits*, author Robert Ringer describes “drain people” as those “who drain you of time, energy, peace of mind, relaxation, comfort, and/or money.” A wide range of these drain people, or “teamwreckers” as I call them, populate the corporate world. The following are a few of them:

- *The morally challenged* — Morally challenged individuals are likely to act on their worst instincts at some point. Even if they miraculously don’t negatively influence others, can they be watched every moment of the day? How much time and energy will that take?

Moreover, an organization led by an amoral leader may succeed for a time, but in the long term it will be seriously damaged when challenged by unforeseen events. It’s preferable to establish an ethical business culture and demand that ethical and legal standards be upheld from the beginning. It’s much more difficult to reform an unethical employee later on. (Editor’s note: See also Frank Bucaro’s article on page 5 in this month’s newsletter.)

- *The backstabber* — Backstabbers are competent, but they put significant energy into subverting their peers. In a corporate setting, a skilled backstabber can cut with the dexterity of a surgeon. A company can make its culture less hospitable to backstabbers, even if it can’t realistically screen them all out in the hiring process. Putting results above all else will provide less cover to individuals who compete politically. Backstabbers then will tend to migrate to companies whose cultures are more receptive to their machinations.
- *The situational teamwrecker* — The situational teamwrecker will act badly in a culture that is used to losing, but will be productive and loyal if transferred to a *stable* winning organization. An example of this is Corey Dillon, whose moodiness as a star running back on a terrible Cincinnati Bengals team disappeared once he was traded to the New England Patriots, where he helped them win another Super Bowl. But beware — in business or in football, situational teamwreckers love to portray themselves as victims of a dys-

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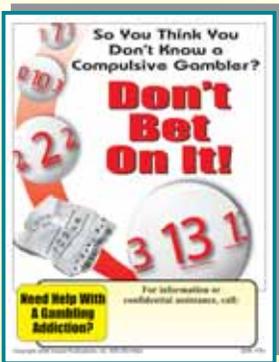
Editor - Mike Jacquart
Publisher - Jennifer Heisler
Circulation - Scott Kolpien

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functional environment. If the organization is not currently dysfunctional, they will rock the boat until it is — to prove their point. Situational teamwreckers should be presumed guilty until proven innocent. Even if they are well intentioned, they are expressing themselves childishly and are not going to lead the organization from losing to winning. To succeed, they require an already *stable* organization.

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Editor's Notebook

In response to subscribers whose clients have a direct-deposit payroll, at press time we were working on an electronic version of our Payroll Stuffers insert. As always, call or email us with any questions you may have.

Moving on — this month's cover story explains how hiring managers, EAPs, and others can learn from the experiences of their pro football counterparts when it comes to selecting talent for their organizations, and when dealing with the fallout from personal transgressions. Thoughts to ponder:

— In football and in business, employees' legal and personal troubles in their private lives can affect their at-work performance

and that of the team as a whole.
— In football and in business, character matters in all new hires.
— Finally, in football and in business, consider productivity over potential. Scouts lament athletes who "look like Tarzan but play like Jane," and the same is true in business. Be realistic about an individual's potential.

Thanks to *EAR* subscriber Bernie Kirsch for his story suggestion on this topic, and thanks to Jared Sharpe for providing a copy of *Hiring Secrets of the NFL*. Until next month! ■

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Jacquart".

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Championship continued from Page 2

Teamwreckers are Costly

Avoiding teamwreckers is more easily said than done. The temptation to keep them around springs from their incredible talent, especially since they are often driven and hardworking. Companies are sometimes afraid to rein in disruptive stars. But a superachiever who demeans and manipulates his/her peers can disrupt the output of the entire department.

One strategy is to tie a firm's success to organizational, not individual, output. In one company, no single individual was as gifted or productive as "Albert," but he was reducing the total output of dozens of sales reps by a significant margin. The company successfully expanded *only* with a sales model that emphasized performance and alignment with product strategy over a "star rep" strategy. (Albert was eventually sent packing and started his own successful firm.)

(Editor's note: See also the October 2007 Brown Bagger, "Curbing Performance Issues Before they Poison the Work Culture.")

Eccentrics vs. Teamwreckers

It is critical not to confuse eccentricity with dysfunction. Teamwreckers often project an impressive image, but become less attractive the more you are exposed to them. They are motivated by financial rewards and formal recognition (e.g. what benefits them financially or strokes their big egos).

Eccentrics should be assessed relative to their function and industry. For instance, creative jobs that reward abstract thinking will attract individuals with more intellectual, than social skills. Eccentrics are ridiculed from a distance, but gain respect the more you know them. Their surface social awkwardness eventually pales against the light of

their considerable inner qualities, such as being honorable and ethical. When hiring an eccentric, do not compromise standards of reliability, motivation, or production. An eccentric should be all these things, albeit in an alternative fashion.

Summary

While using football as a metaphor for business has its limitations, to sum it up, it's about how to build champions, and that's true in football *and* in business. ■

Excerpted with permission from "Hiring Secrets of the NFL: How Your Company can Select Talent Like a Champion," by Isaac Cheifetz, \$22.95 retail, Davies-Black Publishing (www.daviesblack.com). Isaac Cheifetz is the president and founder of Open Technologies Consulting (www.opentechnologies.com), and a frequent speaker nationwide. He developed a set of practical skills around hiring and retaining key executives. Isaac lives in Minneapolis with his wife, stepdaughter, and a cast of dogs. (Editor's Note: For more tips, see article on page 4.)

More 'Hiring Secrets'

The following is an outline of some of the many hiring secrets described in greater detail in Isaac Cheifetz's new book, *Hiring Secrets of the NFL* — tips that will enable a company or other organization to:

- ✓ Identify organizational needs;
- ✓ Determine the "true-musts" the ideal candidate for a position must possess;
- ✓ Handle "superstars" who become disruptive to their organization;
- ✓ Find and manage "eccentrics," whose creativity might create powerful competitive advantages;
- ✓ Think outside of standard assessment systems to find potential stars who don't fit the quantitative mold;
- ✓ Select candidates with good talent and great will over unmotivated great talent;
- ✓ Always pay for production, and not potential;
- ✓ Avoid trying to fix all of an organization's problems with just one hire; and
- ✓ Streamline the hiring process by systematically asking key questions related to the position. ■

Source: "Hiring Secrets of the NFL."

@ Look ahead

UPCOMING EAR FEATURES...

- Protecting privacy
- Military issues
- Workplace violence

Clinical Perspective

Alcohol, Energy Drinks are Dangerous Combination

College students who drink alcohol mixed with so-called "energy" drinks are at dramatically higher risk for injury and other alcohol-related consequences, compared to students who drink alcohol without energy drinks, according to new research from the Wake Forest University School of Medicine.

The researchers found that students who consumed alcohol mixed with energy drinks were:

- Twice as likely to be hurt or injured;
- Twice as likely to require medical attention;
- Twice as likely to ride with an intoxicated driver, compared to students who did not consume alcohol mixed with energy drinks; and
- More than twice as likely to take advantage of someone else sexually, and almost twice as likely to be taken advantage of sexually.

"We knew that college students mixed energy drinks and alcohol in order to drink more, and to drink longer," said Mary Claire O'Brien, M.D., lead researcher on the study. "But we were surprised that the risk of serious and potentially deadly consequences is so much higher for those who mixed energy drinks with alcohol, even when we adjusted for the amount of alcohol."

The main ingredient in energy drinks is caffeine. O'Brien uses

"...energy drinks...can contain as much as 300 milligrams of caffeine in a single serving."

the analogy that mixing caffeine (a stimulant) with alcohol (a depressant), is like getting into a car

and stepping on the gas pedal and the brake at the same time.

"Students whose motor skills, visual reaction times, and judgment are impaired by alcohol may not perceive that they are intoxicated as readily when they're also ingesting a stimulant," said O'Brien. "Only the symptoms of drunkenness are reduced — but not the drunkenness. They can't tell if they're drunk; they can't tell if someone else is drunk. So they get hurt, or they hurt someone else."

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) limits caffeine to 65 milligrams per serving of a food or beverage. Since energy drinks are currently not regulated by the FDA, they can contain as much as 300 milligrams of caffeine in a single serving.

"We believe the FDA has a responsibility to investigate the health risks of energy drink cocktails, and to make that information available to consumers," said O'Brien. "Students should be informed about the risks of mixing alcohol with energy drinks, as part of an overall program to reduce high-risk drinking and its consequences. And colleges should reconsider the free distribution of energy drinks at campus-sponsored events." ■

Source: Reprinted with permission from the Employee Assistance Professionals Association (www.eapassn.org).

Ethics: What Matters Most is NOT Your Bottom Line

By Frank Bucaro

It's hard to argue that good ethics is good business. What many organizations struggle with is how to support ethical behavior, communicate the values of good ethics both within and outside company walls, and deal swiftly and justly with unethical misconduct.

Stewardship is an important part of developing an ethically sound company. Basically, stewardship may be defined as "what you do" after saying that you believe in your mission statement, code of conduct, etc.

The outdoor specialty firm Patagonia may be the greatest example of stewardship in today's marketplace. *Ethisphere Magazine*™ ranked Patagonia among the most ethical apparel companies in 2007. Founder Yvon Chouinard melded a natural partnership between ethics and business success. He began mountain climbing in the 1950s, which led to a passion toward improving the environment.

1. Your actions must support what you say! It wasn't until 1970 that Chouinard discovered that the pitons his equipment company produced were destroying the rock in mountains. Chouinard's pitons were the mainstay of his business and with mountain climbing growing in popularity, he was extremely concerned.

But during a routine climb, Chouinard and a business associate decided to phase out of the piton business when they saw firsthand the damaged rock that

their pitons caused. They did not think twice about their decision.

One of their core beliefs was to "strive to do no harm," so when they realized a product of theirs was hurting the earth, they stopped selling it. They found an alternative material to serve the same purpose without causing such damage. Their actions served as an excellent example of stewardship.

2. Remember, it's not about you! Chouinard states that he never set out to be a businessman, but he enjoyed the environment and he wanted to help others do the same. What is *your* passion? How can *you* help others? The second core value of stewardship is how to help others. Life will go on after you are gone.

In Patagonia's case, they wish to leave a legacy full of ethically and environmentally responsible people that use their passions to sustain natural resources and take care of the earth. Their core values led them to create the "One Percent for the Planet" organization.

Chouinard has partnered with hundreds of other organizations to "donate at least 1% of our net revenues to efforts that protect and restore our natural environment."

3. Is it the right thing for the customer? To be a good corporate steward, ask yourself two questions: "Is this in line with company objectives?" and, "Will this decision result in the right thing for the customer?"

If the answer is "no" to either question, don't do it. A code of ethics is comparable to the rules

for playing a game. You must be certain that employees (the players of the game) know the rules (the code of ethics/conduct) before they begin to play (work for your company).

Patagonia created a checklist of quality measures for their designers: all products must be multi-functional, durable, and fit their core customers. Designers begin with the functionality of the product asking questions like, "Is this product going to be used in a hot or cold climate?" or, "Should it keep moisture out or does it also need to breathe?" Then, they find the materials to accomplish that function.

For example, they sought to make one piece of clothing with two uses (multi-functional) — a jacket that wicks away moisture but that also allows for a full range of arm movement.

Patagonia builds their products and services with their customers in mind, and they concentrate on their core customers' desires. In return, they are a multi-million-dollar company sustaining profitability for the long haul.

Summary

You can hardly consider a company ethical if they are not a good steward. How does *your* organization fare? Strive to model the behavior you expect, based on the values you profess. If you do this, and do it continually, brace yourself for great success. ■

Frank Bucaro is an author, speaker, and consultant. His latest book, "Trust Me! Insights Into Ethical Leadership," highlights the unique role of ethics in leadership today. For more information, visit www.frankbucaro.com.

Watch Your 'Grammer'!

Despite the availability of spelling and grammar checkers, 60% of all business correspondence STILL gets sent containing one or more grammar or spelling errors, according to a study recently released by WhiteSmoke, developers of writing software solutions.

According to the survey, the most prevalent error type is missing words, with 32% of writers failing to use all the words needed for a grammatically correct sentence. Common words omitted include be, have, do, a, an, and the. For example, "I would happy to meet you," instead of, "I would be happy to meet you."

Further data shows that 28% of mistakes relate to improper punctuation. Agreement between sentence elements comes up next, in 8% of the data. For instance, "One of the guy turned around" instead of, "One of the guys turned around."

In general, problems areas involve spelling, using the wrong word, repeating words, and misusing verb tenses.

"As part of raising the writing standards in organizations every email or memo sent by a staff member should be proofed beforehand. Correct language shows customers and colleagues that you value them," states Amit Greener, vice president of marketing and sales with WhiteSmoke. ■

Source: WhiteSmoke (www.whitesmoke.com).

It's Not Just the Money!

News flash to employers — employees' concerns extend beyond their paychecks. In fact, according to a recent poll, health insurance and security are more important to workers than money!

The national poll, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates for the Center for State and Local Government Excellence, surveyed 1,200 adults age 18 and older.

Whether security comes from health insurance, job security, the promise of a retirement income, or clear work policies, Americans want a lot more than just a paycheck from employment. From a list of 15 benefits and characteristics in choosing a job:

- 84% ranked health insurance at the top;
- Job security and clear policies and procedures (82% each) were ranked next in importance;

- A retirement or pension plan ranked next (76%);
- A flexible, family-friendly workplace was also important (71%).

Pay ranked only 65%, trailing such matters as getting quick decisions on workplace issues (69%); working with talented managers (68%); and having the potential for promotions, and being creative and intellectually stimulated (66% each).

In another key set of findings, respondents say that state and local government jobs offer better benefits, job security, and a chance to contribute to society, while jobs in the private sector offer better opportunities for innovation, greater chances to work with the best people, and better opportunities for promotion. They are divided on which sector offers the best compensation. ■

Source: The Center for State and Local Government Excellence (www.slge.org).

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Changes to Health Benefits on the Way?

Some associations representing employers' interests are suggesting fundamental reforms in the current system of employment-based health insurance, as rapidly rising health costs are forcing many employers to reconsider offering health benefits.

"An evaluation of recent data does not suggest that the end of employment-based health benefits is upon us," writes the study's author, Paul Fronstin with the nonpartisan Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI). "However, the message from some associations representing employers is that the existing employment-based system must be reformed because the status quo is unsustainable."

The study's key points include:

- **Employment-based health coverage has fallen, but not sharply.** Between 1994 and 2000, the percentage of workers

with health benefits held steady at between 73% and 75%. Since 2000, the percentage of employees with health benefits has fallen to about 71%.

- **Workers' health costs are mixed.** The average deductible among workers with health coverage in a preferred provider organization (PPO) increased 75% from 2000 to 2006. However, employees' out-of-pocket costs as a percentage of total consumer spending declined to 26% over the same period — down from more than 30% in the mid-1990s.

A number of employer organizations are positioning themselves for a health care debate tied to a new presidency in 2009, the study says. These include the HR Policy Association, representing the chief

human resource officers in the largest U.S. corporations; the Committee for Economic Development, an organization of business leaders and educators; and the ERISA Industry Committee, an organization representing the employee benefit plans of the largest U.S. corporations.

The study also notes that the Business Roundtable and the National Federation of Independent Business have joined with AARP and the Service Employees International Union to urge change.

The significance of these organizations' proposals is that all "have a common message that employers have reached a tipping point with health benefits and are either proposing alternatives to the status quo or are on the verge of releasing such a proposal," Fronstin writes. ■
Source: *Employee Benefit Research Institute* (www.ebri.org).

Health and Fitness

Workplace is No Place to be Sick

Colds and flu wreak havoc in the workplace this time of year. More than 58 million sick days a year are lost to colds alone.

While the flu is more serious, even the common cold can have far-reaching implications such as decreased productivity, as well as staffing issues and lost wages.

Unfortunately, there is no vaccine, no antibiotic, and no surefire solution. Every precaution can be taken, and people can still get colds. However, there *are* measures you can take to decrease the likelihood of getting sick. The following are a

few of them:

- **Wash your hands.** This sounds basic enough, but washing your hands is still the single most effective way to keep from catching a cold or the flu, or spreading it to someone else.
- **Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.** Using a handkerchief or tissue as a barrier will help keep germs contained.
- **Practice healthy habits.** Eating a balanced diet, getting enough sleep, and exercising can help

you maintain a strong immune system to keep illness at bay.

- **Avoid sharing with people who are sick.** Sharing food, drinks, utensils, dishes, or cups with anyone who has a cold or flu will greatly increase your chance of getting sick.
- **Stay home!** It may not be realistic to stay home when you have a case of the sniffles, but going to work when you're truly ill not only hurts you, it affects co-workers as well. ■

Sources: *Knight Ridder Newspapers*, and Dr. Mark Roberts, occupational medicine specialist.

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Get out There, and Raise Awareness of Your EAP

By Thomas McNulty

School shootings. Bombings. Terrorists. Child abductions. To say that we live in an anxious society is the understatement of the new millennium. However, as EAP professionals, it creates an opportunity to demonstrate the value of behavioral consultative work.

I advise my clients to always be aware of how our environment will be shaped by daily events. While there are core competencies that every EAP professional must have, the ability to adapt to meet new workforce needs is more critical than ever before.

In the purest sense, marketing is understanding your customer needs and how to best deliver them. To gain market position, you must be able to quickly respond to emerging needs. It's important to note that preparedness is vital — whether the issue is one of homeland security, or corporate survival.

What does this mean for EAPs? It means you must be more diversified, visible, and constantly raising the profile of the role of EAPs in the workplace. With all the tension we wake up to each morning, we should be hearing from EAPs more than we are today. The “behavioral factor” in the workplace has more economic impact than most CEOs would care to admit.

But the majority of EAP professionals need to become better marketers. The following are some tips:

- **Learn how you can become an expert on a workplace issue(s).**

Media love having area professionals they can contact to localize stories on important workplace, behavioral, and related topics. Meet with local media and let them know you are available for an interview, comment, or quote when your area of interest hits the press. Perhaps you can even write a regular column in a local newspaper. Whatever the media, free exposure will raise awareness of the EAP profession and your individual EAP. It's a win-win for everybody.

- **Get on a local speaker circuit.**

Don't get pigeonholed into hanging out only with EAP colleagues. Utilize Chamber of Commerce, civic groups (Lions, Rotary, etc.), and others to raise awareness of an issue(s). You can capture a great deal of attention by being seen as a reliable source of credible information.

- **Network everywhere and with everyone.**

The opportunities to make new contacts are endless. People frequently think of networking only at events such as Chamber of Commerce meetings and professional associations. But some of the most productive business contacts come from chance encounters — at the grocery store, at ball games, at doctor's and dentist's offices, and the list goes on. Whenever and wherever there is another human being, there is an opportunity to network. Be alert

to these possibilities, and be ready to explain the services that you offer.

- **Set a networking goal.**

Set a goal each week for the number of new contacts you want to make. Don't be afraid to start with only one or two until your confidence grows. You can increase the goal later.

The morale of the story: get out there, and let folks know who you are, and what you do. The EAP profession is simply too important for people to not be aware of us! ■

Thomas McNulty is the president of Success Stories, Inc. (www.success-stories-inc.com). Additional source: Visit www.selfgrowth.com.

Resources

- ☎ **Tax Relief Hotline,** (877) 283-8580
- ☎ **Wisconsin Council on Problem Gamblers,** (800) GAMBLE-5
- ☎ **Child-Support Enforcement Hotline,** (877) 696-6775
- ☎ **Mortgage Payment Assistance,** (800) 750-8956
- ☎ **National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Referral Service,** (800) 662-4357
- 📄 **PreRetirementLife.com** (www.pretirementlife.com) is an online, comprehensive resource that can help EA professionals who are increasingly asked by their Baby Boomer clients how to prepare for retirement. ■