COMPANY CULTURE
FROM 30,000 FEET

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The Entrepreneurs’ Organization Magazine
Celebrating 20 Years of Fueling the Entrepreneurial Engine

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Editor’s Note:
Have an idea for an Octane article? Want to see your name in print?
Send all articles, comments or questions to octane@eonetwork.org.

Unsolicited manuscripts and artwork will not be returned. We reserve the right to edit articles for length.

Upcoming Octane topics:
Technology
Social Responsibility

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Photo: 2007 EO Berlin, University, Mercedes-Benz Financial Headquarters.
EO GUIDING PRINCIPLES

BOLDY GO!
THIRST FOR LEARNING.
MAKE YOUR MARK.
TRUST AND RESPECT.
COOL.

EO ALUMNI CLUB

A special congratulations goes out to several EO chapters who received learning and membership awards at the 2007 EO Berlin University in August.

The learning awards were handed out in recognition of outstanding performance in the pursuit of membership.

The membership awards were given in recognition of substantial membership growth. Winners were announced during the general session, and the awards were distributed at a private reception thereafter.

EO MANAGING DIRECTOR

Respectfully,

Sunjay Kapur
EO Chairman

Shelley Scarbrough
EO President

EO UPDATES

New Addiction and Mental Health Services

In conjunction with the Healthnetwork Foundation, EO has rolled out a new addiction and mental health service for members and their families. If you or a family member suffers from a mental health issue or addiction, Healthnetwork Foundation can put you in touch with accredited treatment and medical facilities, offer consulting support and provide post-treatment recovery management, among other highly customized services. To access these services, call +1.866.968.2467 in the U.S. or +1.440.893.0830 outside the U.S., or email help@healthnetworkfoundation.org today.

Area Director Summit

EO hosted its first Area Director Summit 13-14 September 2007. Held in Los Angeles, CA, USA, this two-day strategic planning session was the first of its kind to host all Area Directors, Regional Directors and key staff. The event gave attendees an opportunity to provide feedback to the EO Global Board of Directors on strategic issues for the Global organization. The meeting focused on identifying priorities for the organization and solicit feedback from various regions.

2007 EO Berlin University

We extend a big thank you to the EO Berlin University committee, led by Marcel “Otto” Von, for their support and generosity before, during and after this amazing event. More than 250 members from around the world visited Berlin, Germany, in August to take part in a memorable University. Highlights include Fiani Johansson’s energetic lecture on groundbreaking innovation; Lou Paget’s eye-opening breakout sessions; a world-renowned cello quartet playing Led Zeppelin at the Mercedes-Benz Financial dinner; and a closing ceremony at the historic 1936 Berlin Olympic Stadium.

Unleash a Billion Opportunities in New Delhi

Have you always wanted to attend an EO University but never found the time? Now you can plan ahead for one of our exciting events! Register today for the 2008 EO New Delhi University—embrace Indian culture, experience al fresco dining and visit historic landmarks. Most importantly, network with hundreds of your EO peers. For more information, visit www.eonetwork.org/universities/newdelhi.

Respectfully,

Sunjay Kapur
EO Chairman

Shelley Scarbrough
EO President

A MESSAGE TO OUR MEMBERS

Sometimes in business, you have to take a giant step back and really look at your company. We do that all the time. Though we come from vastly different industries – and follow alternate business methods – we subscribe to a common goal: We periodically review our company’s values and recruit go-getters to strengthen our company culture.

Have you looked at your company recently? If so, what defines your business? Chances are the answer will stem from your company’s culture. Regardless of industry or location, the heart of any organization centers around one underlying principle: the nourishment of a progressive and pleasant work environment.

At EO, you are our company culture. Your ability to leap-frog adversity, take risks and challenge convention has shaped the identity of this organization. For 20 years, we’ve thrived on your unwavering passion, embraced your expertise and existed for your betterment. Along the way, we saw our message evolve, our brand mature and our company culture strengthen. And we’re only just beginning.

Our goal at EO has always been to foster a fun environment that supports the growth and involvement of members. We do this by listening to your needs, investigating the possibilities and delivering the right tools to help you grow personally and professionally. In short, we do everything we can to ensure your EO experience is a memorable one.

Speaking of memories, in this issue we celebrate a culture born from the hearts and minds of our founding members. We flash back in time to detail the evolution of our core values and visual identity. We also bring you member stories about the perks and pains of everything “company culture.” As always, thank you for your energy and drive. You’re the reason EO’s culture is thriving!

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Respectfully,

Sunjay Kapur
EO Chairman

Shelley Scarbrough
EO President
Establishing a Team-First Mindset

Jonathan Willcocks
EO VANCOUVER

I started my leadership and team-building company, Pinnacle Pursuits, from the back of my truck. I had no capital and no formal business experience. All I had was a heart full of passion, unique skills from working as a wilderness boot camp counselor for young offenders and a vision I couldn’t ignore. Ten years later, my business is one of the leading experiential training companies in the world. What makes us successful? Our team approach. “People – Passion – Performance” acts as our guiding principle. But following these principles isn’t always easy, especially when it comes to developing a productive and inspiring team culture.

Here is what I do to keep my team focused:

Alignment

We continue to excel because our work culture supports listening, teamwork and accountability. I ensure my team is fully aligned in this area, both internally with each other and externally when working with clients. This requires reflexive listening, the ability to understand the situation, ask clarifying questions and be open and curious to possibilities. This strategy ultimately leads to better results when achieving desired outcomes.

Meaning

I know that people love to be a part of something meaningful when everyone is challenged; they have a sense of responsibility, insights are shared, learning occurs and positive change takes place. I do two things to facilitate meaningful engagement with our team. First, each employee is connected to one of our three business units: youth, family and corporate. As a team, they must think critically about their projects when it comes to business strategy and finances. This creates a sense of ownership and empowers them to become more entrepreneurial in their thinking. Second, instead of the traditional hierarchy reporting structure, we have a co-creative working environment where team managers and staff can communicate respectfully, work together and are accountable to the team for their overall performance.

Values

Our values are People, Integrity, Excellence and Innovation. It’s from these values that we base our decision making and our programming standards. When deciding on whether or not we should commit to a project, we do a “Values/Profit” analysis. We call it our Pinnacle Matrix. It is a decision-making model that’s adapted from the original McKinsey Model, though ours places Values over Profit. This has helped us establish a team-first mindset, simplify and focus while keeping us accountable to our values.

What is the Pinnacle Matrix?

We evaluate each of our projects based on the matrix. If a project was high on vision and was profitable, it was a winner. If it was high on vision, but low on profit, we either changed the project so it became a winner or we dumped it. Also, we try to avoid “Time-Waster” and “Widget” projects, those that aren’t really connected to personal vision and value. Using this matrix framework, we managed to reduce our projects and discovered the power of simplifying and focusing.

For me, it was all about my passion for the work we did. I wasn’t thinking about the long-term strain these commitments had on me, the staff and our finances. To effect change, we took the projects we were working on and asked ourselves two questions: “How reflective is the project to our vision?” and “How much money will it make?”

Case in point: In 2001, we proposed to design and manage a large adventure race. We ran this event for several years and, in 2003, it became North America’s largest urban adventure race with more than 440 racers. However, it consumed a great deal of time and resources during a very busy time of year. Using the Pinnacle Matrix, we concluded this project fell into the category of “Hobby”—it was cool, but it had some marketing value, but in the end, it didn’t make us money.

In order to take advantage of our experience and unique expertise, we turned this race concept into a high-profit “Pinnacle Project.” We began to offer customized corporate adventure races around the world, which gave us the revenue we desired.

We continue to use this model to this day. It is simple and objective, saves the team time, keeps us moving forward and upward, and ensures we are in alignment with our values and vision.

At all, maintaining a productive and inspiring team isn’t always easy. Then again, I’ve learned that nothing important comes easy. But when it comes to staff retention, performance, client satisfaction and overall growth, it is well worth it.

Keeping It Cool

Mike Campion
EO ARIZONA

Company culture … who cares? There was a time when a young, strikingly good-looking fellow owned a business. Culture was the last thing on his mind. “Who needs that crap?” he thought. After all, he held meetings, set quarterly goals, introduced marketing plans and had other genius plans.

Three years, a divorce and a new company later, he now believes that culture is the most valuable asset in his company. What’s more, his ability to create and maintain a strong culture is his number one job (perhaps because he isn’t very good at anything else). So, until you get bored and go back to looking at the pretty graphics, here is the story of that guy. If you haven’t guessed, it’s me.

I worked hard in my old company. I read a lot. I tried to do all the right things. We acted professional; the customer was number one and we pretended to be a big, successful company. The only problem? We weren’t. Long story short, I went through a divorce and closed the company.

Being the emotional mess that I was, I didn’t feel like I could do that again. I made a decision that, in our next venture, we would simply be ourselves. Problem was, ourselves is a pretty insane, very politically incorrect bunch of idiots. We figured few people would get our unique personality but the people who did would love us. And if we couldn’t get rich by being a big company, we could at least have fun and pay our bills.

Here’s how it turned out:

Our first year in business, our customers loved us. Contractors, architects and government types came out of the woodwork to buy our products. The second year, we started attracting top talent. I have been a business owner for 10 years now and have always

Mike Campion is the famed Chief Shade Officer of Killer Shade. Founded in 2005, Killer Shade designs, manufactures and installs easy, factory shades, call us at, mail it up and call it a day. Mike has been a member since 2000 and is doing well. He can be reached at mikec@killershade.com.
João Costa Reis

I look at a company’s culture as a distinguishing mark—a personality that defines and separates a company from all the rest. For me, a company is like a country. It has its own people and history, a government, a territory and a particular culture.

My company, Domusvenda, is like a young country. We kicked off in 2003 with less than 20 employees and limited experience in an under-exploited market—the acquisition and servicing of non-performing loans (NPL) in Portugal. We had the determination, the desire and the right amount of team work. We were a country ready to make our global presence felt.

Looking back, I can say that my company’s culture was based on familiarity, drive, youthfulness and an almost absent hierarchy. We were like a single team working toward a common goal. People knew each other and there was a feeling of friendship and confidence. We were energized, talented and anxious to grow. I thought I was prepared for growth. Turns out I had some learning to do.

Handling change

My company grew at a lightning-fast pace. The growth started in 2005, but 2006 was a decisive year. Banks grew more interested in selling NPLs, and we became the most recognized company in the market.

Six years ago, a friend and I started The Student Village, a youth-oriented marketing company. We had just completed a short-term sentence in a stuffy corporate environment and felt we were ready to conquer the world on our own terms.

Coming out of a place that was creatively stifling and riddled with politics, I knew what kind of environment I needed. I wanted to create a cool place of business where my coworkers and I would want to spend time; a place that encouraged creativity, inspiration and fun. A place I could call my own.

I’ve long felt the workplace—any workplace—should be a place where people can thrive as opposed to survive. It’s a place where we have an opportunity to try new things, surprise ourselves, reach new heights and have fun. I took this open-minded approach and applied it to my business. The result: I have maintained a staff retention rate of approximately 95 percent.

How does my company stay humming? Our environment is output focused as opposed to clock focused. There are also basic guidelines for office hours, but they are just that: guidelines. Yes, it is important to have some structure; however, people are encouraged to “get the job done” as efficiently and successfully as possible, not to “sit out” their hours and look busy.

We also have unique incentive programs for each individual. Because of the small environment, we strive to get to know what makes each staff member tick. We do this by tailoring each employee’s incentives to what they are driven by—often times, it’s not cash. For example, we recently rewarded our promotions team with an overseas trip. They felt so appreciated and returned from the trip inspired to strive for even greater heights.

Even though incentives are nice, there’s still work to get done. To ensure tasks are accomplished, we hold weekly team meetings that allow for constant communication and brainstorming. We also talk about our strengths as a company, what needs to be improved and any ideas that could foster growth. For example, we recently introduced a new rule to ensure maximum staff attendance. The doors to the meeting room are locked at 8 a.m. This has had a surprising result—an almost perfect attendance record every time. By looking the door and not allowing latecomers to attend, the meeting has turned into something employees don’t want to miss.

All in all, my company culture has helped keep my retention rate high. I know that if I continue to treat my employees with respect and provide incentives to learn and grow, it will stay that way. I believe that company culture is the DNA of every business. It is bigger than any single staff member and, if strong enough, will decide if someone will thrive or become a casualty in the company.

No matter your industry, if the environment, culture and people are right, the company becomes a platform for people to grow, face their fears and ultimately thrive.

Our dress code is also relaxed. This allows for individual expression through clothing. My aim is to have a staff of “integrated individuals,” people who can be themselves in the workplace. As such, we encourage the “work personality” and the “private time” personality. This adds to the personalization of the work experience, one of the most important factors in my company’s culture.

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Ronen Aires is the Co-Founder of The Student Village, a South African marketing and media company focused on the student market. His website, www.studentvillage.co.za, is a popular online community for international students. Ronen can be reached at ronen@studentvillage.co.za.
It was years ago when I learned of a magical ingredient for company success and survival. Before I started my own business, I was a Marketing Communications Director for a technology company that was the leader in its industry. We were on the brink of going public. I remember the electric atmosphere like it was yesterday.

As the Wall Street suits made their way through our maze-like offices—a floor plan that was the result of exponential growth—they carried portfolios full of common, number-crunching paper: balance sheets, detailed budgets and other documents that decided whether or not a company was worth something.

They awkwardly sidestepped boxes, desks and busy people, looking incredibly out of place. It was as if they were from another world, and busy people, looking incredibly out of place. They were absorbed by what was once a company gone public, the markets cheered and now that I think about it, they sort of were.

It was as if they were from another world, and busy people, looking incredibly out of place. They were absorbed by what was once a company worth something.

documents that decided whether or not a company was worth something. I remember the electric atmosphere like it was yesterday.

It became clear to me that the crunched numbers were virtually meaningless. The true value of the company wasn’t on a spreadsheet. It was in the hearts of the employees. The Wall Street experts missed the company’s most valuable asset, and the leadership simply dismissed it.

When I started my own marketing communications company, IMS, Inc., I did so with my eyes wide open to the perils of careless cultural development. Today, we practice what we preach and break through. Kathy has been an EO CHICAGO JASON BEANS RISING MEDICAL SOLUTIONS. She holds 19 years of managed care experience in the workers’ compensation and auto market fields and has an extensive background in medical bill review, care management and finance administration. Contact Jason at jason.beans@risingms.com.

By that time, I was long gone. So was the edgy-out Founder and his cohorts, people who felt that, after the IPO, the company had lost its heart and the ability to innovate, lead, take risks and win. I was young and impressionable and knew in my heart that the situation was terribly wrong. It wasn’t until many years later that I realized the same scenario is played out over and over in big and small companies around the world. What’s left in the rubble? People, purpose and performance.

They didn’t call what we lost “cultural” or “heart.” They didn’t call it anything. Business simply sputtered until it couldn’t last any longer. Today, I know that what they really lost was an exciting “Yes, we can!” culture. It had been replaced with a purposeless, corporate “me first” environment.

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I established our core values:

I spent seven months with my management team working through our core values, clarifying them, cutting them down to a low number and making them easy to remember. These values had to be versatile enough that they could remain constant in a growing and dynamic company, I then spent months making decisions based on those core values until I verified that the decisions I made were almost always the decisions I would have made otherwise. Once I was satisfied, I released them to the company.

I integrated our core values:

The most challenging was to get employees to begin living by our set of core values. To do so, we promoted them in our internal communications, meetings and company social events. Employees received a framed set of our values to hang at their work stations. We printed t-shirts with our values on them. We created “Rock Star Awards,” whereby employees rewarded each other for applying core values in “rock star-worthy” ways. We even named our conference rooms after them. From time-to-time I would randomly approach employees and ask them to recite the core values—if they could, then they received a $100 bill on the spot.

I embraced our core values:

Our core values became the guiding force our company was lacking, and they were well received by all of the employees. Very quickly, our culture became less restrictive, the more some things need to remain the same. It all starts with the employees. Each new employee should bring talent, value and energy to an organization. They should inject life into the company and complement existing procedures. Your company’s core values have to teach employees how to succeed in your culture. These values must be clear and concise, and the company’s rewards system must enforce them.

How do you know if you have the right core values? Simple. Look around. The people who embody your core values should be the most successful people in your organization. The people who do not embody them should be on their way out the door. That’s the approach I take in my business. After all, change is inevitable, but values are permanent.
WHAT DO EO’S CORE VALUES MEAN TO YOU?

At EO, our core values are more than just words. They represent who we are and what we stand for. Below, a few members tell us what our core values mean to them:

“EO has chosen ambitious words to define the values that represent the organization. I find that almost every experience I have with EO reflects one of these powerful values.”

RUSSELL LUNDSTROM
EO Colorado

“They remind me why, as a 24-year-old, it made perfect sense to jump head first into a venture launched with US$200, and why 12 years later I’m still as passionate as I was at the beginning.”

MICHELLE MENARD
EO Charlotte

“The EO core values are one and the same with my personal life and business values. I believe it sums up my life to date and hopefully will remain a part of my own values in the future.”

JAMES STEVENS
EO Sydney

“To be able to make a mark, be bold, learn, trust, respect and be cool all at the same time is still an aspiration for me. I have extrapolated a set of daily rules from these values and I find that they help me run my life and achieve my objectives with a higher ‘happiness’ quotient.”

NIKHIL NATH
EO New Delhi

“ED has chosen ambitious words to define the values that represent the organization. I find that almost every experience I have with EO reflects one of these powerful values.”

RUSSELL LUNDSTROM
EO Colorado

THE SPIRIT OF EO

A culture is defined as the predominating attitude and behavior that characterizes the functioning of a group or organization. To celebrate our 20th anniversary, we’re highlighting the past, present and future of EO’s culture in this, our third of four installments.

In these pages, you will see how far we’ve come in cultivating and communicating the values and practices central to the EO experience. So take a trip back in time with us and revel in the evolution of EO!
The culture was that of a party atmosphere and the occasional business outing. Today, we’re much more professional and focused. We went from a loose band of high-stakes entrepreneurs to a more serious, growth-oriented community.

NEIL BALTER, EO ARIZONA
Member since 1990

“We were young and full of energy and ideas. We also had a great peer group. Today’s culture is reflective of our personal and professional growth. We’re now more organized, more mature and still full of energy and ideas.”

STEVEN DAGG, EO VICTORIA
Member since 1992

“When I joined, the culture was young, non-judgmental, outgoing and passionate. Now, we have a greater number of members who are parents and the members are generally more seasoned. The culture is still nonjudgmental, outgoing and passionate. However, as an organization, we’re more mature and experienced.”

MATTHEW WEISS, EO NEW YORK
Member since 1984

“The EO culture was more boot-strap when I first joined. Like a new company, you made things up as you went along. Now, like a maturing company, more processes are being put into place and there is a greater emphasis on training and support.”

LAURIE LEONARD, EO CHARLOTTE
Member since 1999

“We were a mom and pop, cash hungry, fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants and pray-for-success startup company. Now, we’re well-funded, well-structured, well-managed company that’s able to attract the talent we need to keep increasing member value.”

MYLES SHERMAN, EO HOUSTON
Member since 2001

As a member, you have access to a wealth of peer knowledge and experience. Driving that experience is the EO Gestalt Language Protocol, a method of learning that impacts the way you talk to your employees, deal with clients and craft your company culture. In this article, EO’s first Forum trainer sounds off on the far-reaching cultural impact of Gestalt and how it’s changed EO over the years.

MO FATHELBAB
FORMER EO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In My Experience, You’re An Idiot!

In the words in the headline, while harsh, were nothing more than a joke. I heard the line after conducting a special Forum training in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 15 years ago. What this joke exemplified was not only a deep understanding of what not to do vis-a-vis the Gestalt Language Protocol, but also the ethos and culture of EO for the following years.

Since then, members have learned that Gestalt affects how they deal with their Forum members, spouses, children and employees. Here are some examples.

GESTALT AT EO LEARNING EVENTS:

Attend an EO University and listen to the beloved speakers set themselves apart from all others—you’ll hear the voice of Gestalt shouting the difference. At the 2007 EO Global Leadership Conference in Dubai, UAE., one of the major learning components was the Learning Forums. These Forums gave members the opportunity to learn from keynote speakers in an intimate setting. As I facilitated sessions, I saw a stark difference between the way that speakers gave real-life stories (Gestalt) and when they spoke in general terms devoid of concrete, real-world examples. The members kept asking the speakers for real examples and they kept speaking hypothetically. It was clear to me that the members expected the benefits of Gestalt and that nothing less would do.

GESTALT AMONG EO FRIENDS:

Just the other night, my wife and I were having dinner with an EO couple. As we were driving home, we noticed that our dinner conversation was in sharp contrast to the one we had with a non-EO couple the week before. My wife said, “I didn’t feel judged and they didn’t give us any advice—they were so great!” I, too, noticed that our conversation had more sharing and more heart-to-heart moments. This strengthened our friendship with the couple and encouraged us to open up our experiences.

GESTALT IN MEMBER BUSINESSES:

I was conducting a retreat for a Forum that was barely a year old. Most of the members were struggling with Gestalt; however, one of them took it to heart. The member shared the following story:

“When I first heard about Gestalt, I was working 70 hours a week and I was the sole employee in my company. Every decision had to go through me. After the Forum training, I changed my approach. When an employee asked me, ‘What should I do about this?’ I instinctively applied what I had learned from EO. Instead of telling them what they should do, I started asking, ‘What do you think you should do?’ One year later, I’ve cut my hours down to 50 hours a week and our company has doubled in size. Of course, other factors contributed to the company’s growth; still, I can’t imagine how much more I’d be working if I continued to control every decision.”

Most EO members have embraced Gestalt not only as a Forum tool, but as a way of life. It’s changed the way we think, the way we speak and the way we connect with people. Learning from shared experiences—and not from advice—is one of the profound gifts that EO members have embraced, and I suspect we will continue to enjoy it for another 20 years.

Mo Fathelbab is the Founder and President of Forum Resources Network, the largest provider of non-traditional experience forums. Mo served as the Associate Director of EO in 1990 and as the Executive Director from 1991 to 1997. As the first Forum trainer in EO history, he authored EO’s growth from a startup organization to a global entity with more than 6,000 members. Mo can be reached at Mo@forumnet.net.

HOW TO DESCRIBE EO’S CULTURE LIKE WHEN YOU JOINED?

WHAT’S IT LIKE NOW?

In my experience, you’re an idiot! The EO culture was more boot-strap when I first joined. Like a new company, you made things up as you went along. Now, like a maturing company, more processes are being put into place and there is a greater emphasis on training and support.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE EO’S CULTURE IN 1997?

“How was the primary public persona in 1997 as we were getting CEO-ed off the ground. Our identity was starting to take shape as the leading organization for entrepreneurs globally. We spent the first 10 years trying to get to critical mass. Around the 2007 timeframe, we achieved that goal, along with gaining a solid financial footing and VC backing to help keep us on the path to 5,000 members.”

HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE EO’S IDENTITY IN 1997?

“When a need to differentiate itself from YPO, YEO’s identity was very, very entrepreneurial. We started as an organization for entrepreneurs, run by entrepreneurs, and it was very young and exclusive. Most of the early members came from the ‘ACE 100’ list of the top young entrepreneurs, age 30 and under. In 1987, the organization was focused on attracting the best young entrepreneurs. We succeeded, since several members of the founding board continue to make international news 20 years later.”

WHAT STEPS WERE WE TAKING TO MARKET TO NEW MEMBERS?

“We raised substantial money through charitable dollars from the Kauffman Foundation and other key sponsorships. In return, we invested in the staff, providing them with the means they needed to grow the chapters and membership. We also used our relationship with YPO and WPO to get mentors to launch new chapters and invested in research to identify prospects in selected cities.”

WHERE WERE SOME OF THE HURDLES WE FACED IN TERMS OF BRANDING?

“We were still pretty small at that time, though we knew we had to build our brand. We had a small staff that was trained to position and execute EO as the leading organization for entrepreneurs.”

WHAT WERE SOME OF THE HURDLES WE FACED IN TERMS OF BRANDING?

“In the future, we have to keep pushing the cultural envelope and keeping the entrepreneurial spirit alive even when we have a large budget and hit the 10,000+ member mark. Furthermore, we have to remember that our members are the lifeblood of another flourishing organization that can take care of entrepreneurs’ needs if we can’t. We have to stay one step ahead of the game.”

LOOKING FORWARD

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Note to Self: Brace for Growth

“Were you young, ambitious and ready to take the world by storm. And then we had a growth spurt.”

The issues we have to work on can be summed up in one word: communication. But how do you give everyone enough information, without overwhelming or boring them? What type of information do you give them to ensure they feel secure in the organization?

These issues are on my list of things to do. I know we’ll succeed, but it’s still tough knowing I can’t fix everything right away. It takes patience, persistence and a lot of understanding. As it stands now, my company is, and will remain for the foreseeable future, a work in progress.

(Joanne Williams is the Co-Founder and Chief Managing Director of Nido Petroleum, an oil and gas exploration and production company whose business activities are focused on the offshore Palawan Basin in the Philippines. She can be reached at jwilliams@nido.com.)
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**ARIZONA UNIVERSITY**
March 2009

* By invitation only.
My Accountability System

CLARITY

The first requirement is clarity. We must understand the objective in order to achieve it. Imagine a world-class archer, an Olympic competitor who barely misses the bull’s-eye. Put a blindfold on him and spin him around a few times. Now ask him to hit the bull’s-eye. In all likelihood, he’ll not only miss the bull’s-eye, he’ll miss the entire target. The analogy is simple: if you don’t know where your target is, how can we hit it? If we don’t have clear goals, how can we possibly reach them?

COMMITMENT

Commitment is about being 100% determined to achieve the goal. It’s far more than just being interested. A good measuring stick is this: if you’re interested in achieving something, you’ll do it when it’s convenient. If you’re committed to something, you’ll do it when it’s not convenient. Review your goals and ask yourself, “Am I interested in achieving these goals or am I committed to achieving them?”

CONSISTENCY

The third requirement is probably the most neglected and probably the most important of the three. Consistency. First, it’s important to write down your goals and share them with others. This holds us accountable to sticking to them. It also gives us a consistent message. People who are constantly changing their goals will have trouble achieving them, at the same time, they are frustrating the people around them. Second, consistently reviewing your goals is important. A regular check-in, like a weekly progress report, will help you achieve the maximum level of consistency.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

If you want to create a culture of accountability, you need to start by becoming crystal clear on what you want to achieve. This could involve a rigorous goal-setting process whereby you set three specific company goals for the next year, and then ask people to define their goals in support of the goals you’ve set. Review their plans and make sure you agree with the alignment. Work with people until everyone is comfortable with their goals.

Next, create an environment that inspires commitment. This could involve motivational training, providing support where it is needed and rewarding results. Ensure people have the tools and resources they need to accomplish their goals. Listen to their needs and concerns, and provide public recognition when they succeed. Consistencies can come in two forms—positive or negative. From my experience, the positive consistencies get far more mileage than the negative ones.

Finally, establish a system that supports ongoing accountability. There are plenty of choices out there. The system you choose isn’t important; what’s important is that you have a system and that you follow through on it. Build the system into your company processes until it becomes a natural extension of your company culture.

AND REMEMBER...

Remember that changing the culture in your company isn’t an event. It’s a process. It will take time and effort, and there will be some painful stops along the way. One thing I have seen repeatedly is that people who are not in alignment with the company culture will leave the company. When they realize that they’re going to be held accountable — publicly accountable — to something they don’t like, they choose the quickest exit and resign. But in the long run, isn’t that better for your organization?

THE INTERNAL <CUSTOMER>

SHEP HYKEN

ED ST. LOUIS

I’ve been lucky enough to speak to hundreds of clients with many different types of audiences. Most of these clients understand that customer service is not a department you call when you have a complaint. It’s a philosophy.

Still, many people believe that customer service training is only for front-line personnel. And these people seem to only want to train the sales people, and of course, that “customer service department.” From my experience, the people who should receive the most attention in terms of customer service are your staff. After all, they’re the face-line of your business. Without them, your external customers won’t receive the attention they deserve.

Customer service must be a total commitment—not just for the front line, but for every employee of any business, from the mail-room attendant to the CEO. Everyone has a customer. If it’s not the outside customer, then it’s the internal customer.

So who is an internal customer? A simple definition of an internal customer is anyone within an organization that, at any time, is dependent on someone else within that organization. This internal customer can be someone you work for as well as someone who works for you.

At first, you might think that because she works for me that I would always be her internal customer. After all, I’m the boss, right? Wrong. Think of it this way: I am dependent on her to help me with my responsibilities, but she is just as dependent on me to get her the right information so that she can do the best job possible. It goes both ways.

The concept is sound and strong. Customer service has to be a total-company effort. It can’t just be the front line who deals with the outside customers, the ones who buy our products and services. The frontline needs the support of everyone within the organization.

The traditional structure of a company has the CEO or President at the top with layers of management underneath, ending with the front-line employee who deals directly with the outside customer. Imagine a triangle or pyramid. The CEO is at the point. The front-line employees are at the base of the pyramid. The chain of command flows down. The responsibility to each level of management and every employee flows down. This is very traditional.

In the 1980s, Jan Carlzon, the former President of Scandinavian Airlines, wrote a best-selling business book called “Moments of Truth.” In his book, he turned the pyramid upside down. He emphasized the importance of dealing with the outside customer. He said that rather than having the lower-level employees serve the higher levels, it should be a two-way street or vice-versa. He flipped the pyramid and put the customers at the top and the upper management at the bottom.

Create a culture of accountability, and you will have consistent results. It’s a process. It will take time and effort, and you will experience some painful stops along the way. One thing I have seen repeatedly is that people who are not in alignment with the company culture will leave the company. When they realize that they’re going to be held accountable — publicly accountable — to something they don’t like, they choose the quickest exit and resign. But in the long run, isn’t that better for your organization?
Please include a 300 dpi headshot with your submission.

Share your news with your EO peers by sending a detailed email to octane@eonetwork.org.

**MAG NATION WINS COVETED INNOVATION AWARD**

EO Melbourne member Sahil Merchant's Mag Nation, Australia's only magazine supermarkets, has been named winner of the prestigious Australian Council of the Mayor's Innovation Award. Mag Nation is the world's first concept store with a range of more than 4,000 magazine titles and a daring approach to revolutionizing a traditional and staid industry.

**CARIIBBEAN PRINTER ANNOUNCES NEW DIVISION**

EO Aruba member Rhiett Gordon's Caribbean Paper & Printed Products announced the arrival of its newest division: CDP Design. As the leading printer in the Caribbean, the company will adopt rapidly advancing technology to ensure short print runs with no drying time. The new addition will help the printing firm continue to achieve the highest level of quality printed products.

**COLORADO MEMBER EARNS SPOT ON PCI “TOP FIVE GROWTH COMPANY” LIST**

Essentialink, EO Colorado member Bill Douglas’ supply chain solution business, was listed in the Private Company Index’s “Top Five Growth Company” slate for the second quarter of 2007. The PCI is a proprietary benchmarking tool used to measure overall performance growth and decline in private companies. It is recognized as the most authoritative source on company growth and private sector performance by practitioners in the financial markets.

**BANGALORE MEMBER RECOGNIZED IN TRADE MAGAZINE**

As Founder and CEO of Vee Technologies Pvt. Ltd., EO Bangalore member Chocko Vallappa has been recognized in Global Service, a magazine that focuses on trends in the services outsourcing and off-shoring space. The article highlights the success of Chocko’s back-office services firm, which processes US$7 billion worth of transactions annually.

**VRX RANKED 38TH ON “PROFIT 100” LIST**

With a revenue growth of 1,570% over the past five years, EO Vancouver member David MacLaren’s VRX Studios was ranked 38th in PROFIT Magazine’s 2007 annual “PROFIT 100 List of Canada’s Fastest-Growing Companies.” The list is Canada’s largest annual celebration of entrepreneurial achievement.

**TECH EXPERT HITS THE AIRWAVES**

EO DC member and EssentiaCo-Owner and President Glennwood Elam had some rare airtime on WNTY 570’s “Business Destiny” radio program. Along with his Co-Owner and Vice President Carl Bristol, Glennwood discussed the company’s philosophy and recent growth to tech-savvy listeners. Essentia is an information technology service provider with offices in New York, NY, USA, and Silver Spring, MD, USA. To hear the radio program or to learn more about Essentia, visit: www.essentialmain.com.

**TIME CAPSULE: 2007**

**MEMORABLE QUOTES FROM EO MEMBERS ON COMPANY CULTURE...**

“Be sensitive to the local culture and rock solid in building your own.” - BOB BOYCE, EO SHANGHAI

“An environment that promotes a great work/life balance is vital to a progressive and successful company culture. As the leader of the company, I have to set the tone.” - KELLY CUTLER, EO CHICAGO

“You can’t love customers if you’re not talking to them. Simply showing up to work on time and answering the phone is the first, most basic step in providing a great customer experience.” - MIKE FAITH, EO SAN FRANCISCO

“By considering what we can learn from and share with others, our industries and company cultures can grow for the greater good.” - BRIAN JUKOFF, EO MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL
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Fast Facts:
Event Dates: 6-10 February 2008
Destination: New Delhi, India
Accommodations: Taj Palace Hotel, New Delhi
Event Website: www.eonetwork.org/universities/newdelhi