

## Inside

### STEVE'S UPDATE

Page 1

### 3 DATA POINTS FOR YOUR BUSINESS'S HEALTH

Page 2

### 2 STEPS TO CULTIVATE LEADERSHIP IN YOUR SALES TEAM

Page 2

### THE TRUTH BEHIND THE 21ST NIGHT OF SEPTEMBER

Page 3

### REWARDS PROGRAM

Page 3

### 3 FUN FAMILY ACTIVITIES FOR FALL

Page 4

## Gardening, Gold, and Photo Shoots

### 3 FUN FAMILY ACTIVITIES FOR FALL

It's fall, which means social media will soon be saturated with pictures of your friends enjoying "classic" fall activities. Photos of leaf peeping, apple picking, and the occasional scarecrow run rampant. But rather than following the herd, you can make your family the trendsetter of unique fall activities! Here are a few outdoor endeavors your family will love.

#### GET GARDENING.

Fall is the time for harvest, but if you want to enjoy flowers in the spring, it's also a time for planting. The cooler autumn air is easier on plants, but the soil is still warm enough for roots to grow before the ground freezes for winter. Tulips, daffodils, and hyacinths are all spring bulbs that need to be planted in the fall. Do a little research with your family to determine the best time to start planting in your area.

#### PAN FOR GOLD.

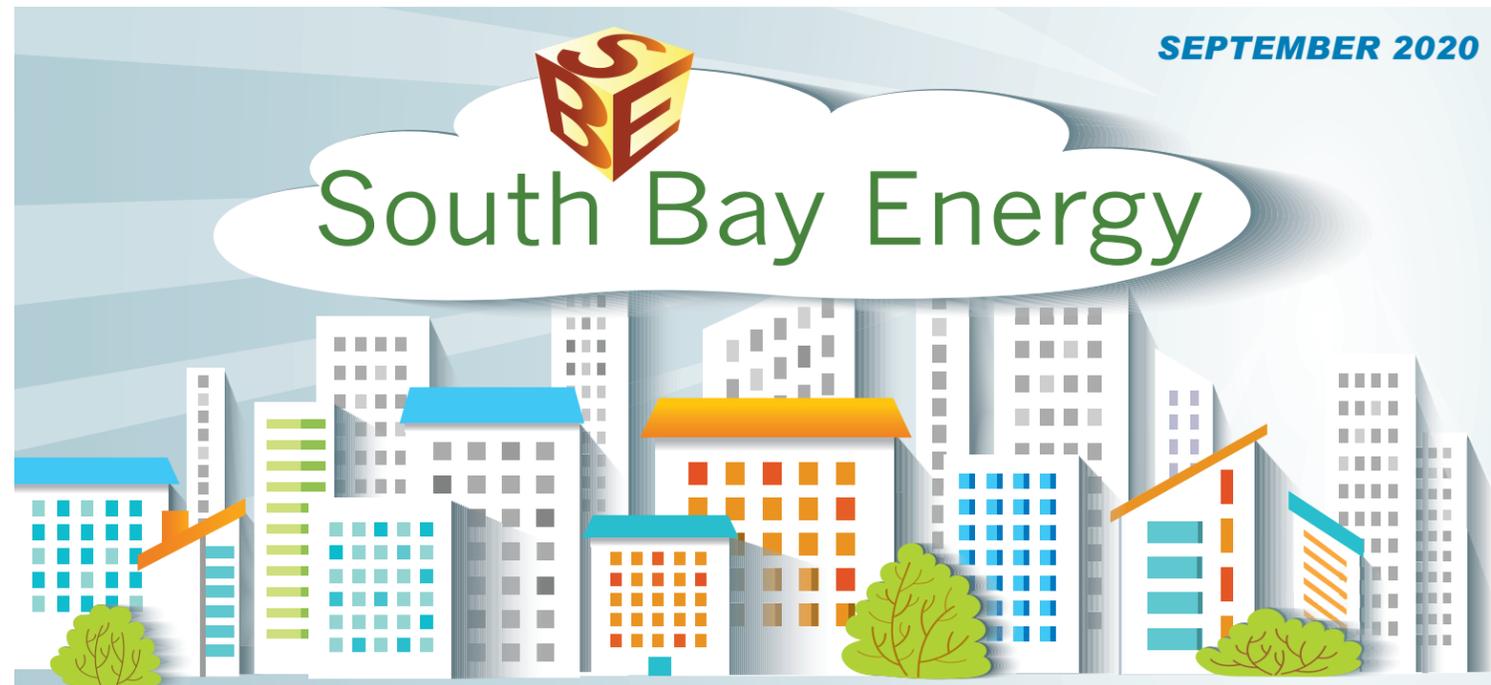
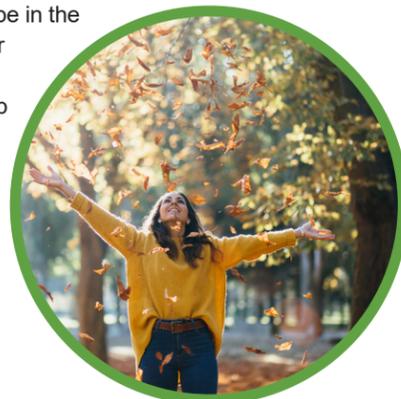
Here's one that's really off the beaten path: Take your family on an adventure panning for gold! Start by planning a road trip out to an old ghost town. Many of them have great tourist attractions that include gold panning. You probably won't get rich, but it will still be a fun story. If you're not able to make the trip, you can always

create a gold panning operation at home! Visit [MessForLess.net/panning-for-gold-activity](http://MessForLess.net/panning-for-gold-activity) for a great step-by-step guide on how to go panning for gold in your own backyard.

#### PLAN A FALL PHOTO SHOOT.

It's time to freshen up those family pictures hanging around the house. The changing leaves provide a beautiful background for any family portrait. Better yet, the cooler temperatures mean that an outdoor photo shoot won't be nearly as uncomfortable as it would be in the summer. You can take your pictures by the trees in the front yard or make a daytrip of it. What about pictures at the corn maze or pumpkin patch? It's never too soon to start planning this year's holiday card.

Spend this fall outdoors and create great new memories with your family!



## Steve's Update

As I write this month's newsletter, it is the end of July. Summer is in full swing, and I wish we all could be enjoying it some more. Most businesses are open, so I hope all you guys have been getting your businesses back on track. This has been a rough last few months. Here in New York and New Jersey, things have been getting better. I can't wait till we get a vaccine so we can all have a mask burning party!

Things here on the homefront have been a little boring but we have been trying to keep ourselves occupied. My 16-year-old twins got their driver's permits, and I have begun to teach them how to drive. It has not been a lot of fun! They are getting better every day, but it is still stressful. I find myself constantly saying, "Don't hit the parked cars!" and "Don't hit the curb!" Teaching teenagers how to drive is not for the faint of heart! I take them out for about 30 minutes just about every day. I have to look into the school to see if they can get driver's ed there.

The vegetable garden this year has been kicking butt. We are getting lots of zucchini, tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, cucumbers, and eggplant. My wife, Renee, has been doing a real good job of farming! Looks like the lady at the nursery where I buy my plants was right. I was watering my tomatoes way too often. I



thought their issues were due to a lack of calcium in the soil, so I added lots of bone meal, blood meal, and lime. I guess it couldn't hurt. The tomatoes have no blossom end rot and look and taste great! That's me in front of the garden! Quite different from the last picture you saw of it!

The weather has been really hot, so we haven't done much outside. When it is not too bad, we have gone on some boat rides and have gone to the neighborhood pool. One thing

that has certainly made things seem somewhat normal is the return of baseball. I can now watch my Yankees play. They have only played a handful of games so far, but they look good.

We still have not called back our staff. In New York, we can't legally start visiting business owners, but we can in New Jersey. These sure are tough days, and I am hoping to get everybody on our staff back to work soon. I am sure most of you are in a similar situation. I look forward to the days when this is all a bad memory. Next month, I hopefully can write about our staff coming back and working again, but here in New York, that is up to the governor.

- Steve Mellis

# Listen to the Numbers

## 3 Data Points You Must Track Immediately to Monitor Your Business's Health

In business, numbers speak louder than anything else. Data provides an analysis of the health of a company. It can be one of the most important factors in decision-making for many entrepreneurs and one of the greatest indicators of growth.

For these reasons and many others, you cannot ignore your numbers. If you're not sure where to start, consider these three top data points to track the health and growth of your business.

**Churn:** New customers provide an opportunity for a new revenue stream, but the startup costs and the timeline to turn a profit should make gathering new customers a second priority. Instead, it's your regulars who can influence your regular cash flow, and when you're having to fill gaps left by previous customers, you're steering a sinking ship. By calculating churn, you can identify how much money is walking out the door each month and year. Once you know how much you're losing, you can effectively establish a plan

to keep your regulars and stop your revenue from leaking.

**Pipeline Revenue:** This is how much money you would acquire if you landed every single sale. So, let's say your pipeline revenue for a single month is \$100,000. You might actually only acquire \$30,000, but you can use the pipeline revenue number to set goals for your sales team and track progress. If pipeline revenue is low, then your true revenue suffers.

**Annual Average Employee Revenue:** You can track data to ensure your greatest resource — your employees — is valuable. This data point is what you get when you average your regular revenue among all your employees. For every employee, you should be making at least \$100,000 in revenue. If your average is below \$100,000, this may be a sign of overstaffing or inadequate use of your resources.

**The Numbers Combined:** If you take these numbers at face value, then you're

not optimizing the usefulness they provide through tracking. For example, if your churn rate on a new product is low after one month of implementation, that data is skewed. You need more time to add more data on churn, satisfaction, and effectiveness before claiming this product is a success. If anything, that low churn rate tells you the implementation of the product was positive. The key is to keep that momentum going to maintain a low churn rate.

Your industry can also influence the numbers you need to analyze. For example, if monitoring the annual average of employee revenue doesn't make sense for your industry, don't include it in your top three. Instead, find a metric that does work for your industry.

The thing you cannot do is ignore the data. That's a formula for disaster. The numbers tell a big part of the story when we contextualize them. With that information, business leaders can make informed decisions to push their companies forward.

## What Happened on the 21st Night of September?

### 4 DECADES OF EARTH, WIND & FIRE'S 'SEPTEMBER'

*"Do you remember the 21st night of September?"*

In 1978, Maurice White of the band Earth, Wind & Fire first asked this question in the song "September," a funky disco song that quickly topped the charts. While disco may be dead today, "September" certainly isn't. The song is still featured in movies, TV shows, and wedding playlists. On Sept. 21, 2019, the funk hit was streamed over 2.5 million times. It's no wonder that the Los Angeles City Council declared Sept. 21 Earth, Wind & Fire Day.

The story behind "September" is almost as enduring as the song itself. It was co-written by White and Allee Willis, who eventually became a Grammy-winning songwriter and Tony nominee. But before any of that, Willis was a struggling songwriter in Los Angeles living off food

stamps. When White reached out and asked Willis to help write the next Earth, Wind & Fire hit, it was truly her big break.

White and Willis proved to be excellent songwriting partners, but they clashed over one key element of the song: the nonsensical phrase "ba-dee-ya," which White included in the chorus. Throughout the songwriting process, Willis begged to change the phrase to real words. At the final vocal session, Willis finally demanded to know what ba-dee-ya meant. White replied, "Who cares?"

"I learned my greatest lesson ever in songwriting from him," Willis recalled in a 2014 interview with NPR, "which was never let the lyric get in the way of the groove."



The groove is why "September" has stood the test of time, right from that very first lyric. For decades, people have asked Willis and members of the band about the significance of Sept. 21. As it turns out, there isn't much beyond the sound.

"We went through all the dates: 'Do you remember the first, the second, the third, the fourth ...' and the one that just felt the best was the 21st," Willis explained.

The truth is that nothing happened on the 21st night of September — except a whole lot of dancing.

# OPTIMIZE YOUR SALES TEAM

## By Enhancing Their Leadership Qualities

Think about the traits of a leader. You may be thinking of someone who can take charge, isn't afraid to fail, communicates clearly, has a passion for helping people, and is extroverted.

Now, think of a successful salesperson. Do you see any overlap in characteristics? The answer is likely yes.

Salespeople are natural leaders. They lead consumers to the best product or service, and they effectively push our economy and businesses forward. However, having multiple leaders on one team can create friction. As an entrepreneur or sales manager, you must create a work environment that nurtures your leaders in the sales department without causing issues. Those with an innate sense of leadership still need the right training and work environment to optimize their skills and excel. When you provide these, the

confidence of your team increases, their ability to sell effectively is boosted, and your sales numbers improve. It's a win-win-win for you, your team, and the company.

You can create a plan for cultivating leadership with these two steps.

### ANALYZE TRAITS

Leaders do have defined traits, but no two leaders are alike. Pinpointing the qualities that make each team member an effective leader — and therefore great at their job — can help you identify sales teams or partners that will function harmoniously. (Coincidentally, this process will also show you who should *not* work together.) The best pairs feed off one another. Maybe you have one salesperson who is the best at explaining the technical aspects of your product, while another is the most empathetic and emotional seller. Together, they're a winning combination.

### PROVIDE LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Learning is an essential part of sales. Salespeople have to understand the demographic, cater to trends, and be the first to admit when a sales tactic is wrong. In addition to learning skills specific to their position, salespeople should also undergo leadership training. Many of these courses and teachings target managers who have employees, but when you encourage your team to apply these concepts to potential clients, they will learn what leadership skills they must nurture within themselves to get more sales. You can also take managerial leadership training and convert it into a program that targets your sales team.



## Word Search

Y L Q W L X M B F B G P K S N  
M E K L A B D V C Y Y X R Y M  
X F T L B G Q Q Q S D E K M U  
T V N H O K A W D E Y T T X T  
F K Z S R H F L W P Y E Q O U  
G L F A A H K J T T H D H L A  
X E U U P P O E W E I U A P R  
G G T Q R Z P C P M U C R N E  
J U C S N D O H P B B A V E T  
T Q Q G L L Y L I E K T E X S  
A V C W O A C L B R M I S P A  
M T T R O X R C H M E O T W A  
O E F F O O T B A L L N K O G  
L U E R I I O J I G X W L N U  
L M W C H I L L Y L Y V I Z J

ASTER  
AUTUMN  
CHILLY  
COLORFUL  
EDUCATION  
FOOTBALL

HARVEST  
LABOR  
LIBRA  
SAPPHIRE  
SEPTEMBER  
SQUASH

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