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Leaders understand that your role is to set vision, inspire performance and remove roadblocks that impede results. A coach hones your skills to increase your value to the organization. Email me to take the first step toward enhancing your personal development.



Please feel free to send Fast:Forward to a friend. Since 2004, I have shared ideas on how to be a better leader and have a more fulfilled life. There are 143 issues on our website under Insight, plus articles that appeared in other publications. You'll find even more viewpoints by visiting my blog.

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Dollar Costs

Ideas For Success | December

Each December I share '10 Things I Learned' during the previous 365 days. It's my favorite issue to write. So, in the spirit of the season, here is our annual 'Thank You' for taking a few minutes on the third Tuesday of every month to read these thoughts and ideas.



Word Games – Everybody knows what an acronym is: SCUBA, ASAP and OPEC are common ones. How about a backronym? That's constructed by taking an existing word and retrofitting it into a new phrase. Earlier this year, NASA (another acronym) saluted David Letterman's replacement. Thus, an exercise machine on the International Space Station shall henceforth be known as COLBERT (Combined Operational Load-Bearing External Resistance Treadmill).

Backhanded Bonus – A few weeks ago, we received a postcard from DirecTV. Thinking it was an offer for new subscribers – and since we've been a customer for a decade – I skimmed past. Kathy picked it up and realized the satellite provider actually was gifting us NFL Sunday Ticket through the end of the regular season. That's a nice gesture... until you read the fine print. Seems if we 'fail to cancel' before the first game of 2016, our credit card will be charged the full price for next season. Talk about having strings attached.

Poor Decision – Blue Bell ice cream is a legendary Texas product made for more than a century at the 'little creamery in Brenham,' a town of 16,000 about an hour from our house. In April, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention linked a listeria outbreak – including three deaths – to the family-owned company. Blue Bell was slow to respond, choosing a limited recall before ultimately being forced to shut down all production. One of my clients is a cheese manufacturer in Wisconsin. When I told the head of product safety about the approach by the nation's third largest ice cream maker, he shared the *Farmer's Rule*: "Your first loss is the cheapest. Do the right thing and fix it today."

Force Awakens – During our coaching sessions, one of my longtime clients inevitably finds solutions to his challenges by verbalizing options and making a decision. A few months ago he laughed and said, "There you go again, David, sitting silent and using that Jedi mind trick ability of yours to help me find the elusive obvious." Actually, an essential element of a coaching relationship is for the coach to ask probing questions that challenge ingrained assumptions. Or, as Yoda said, the

From 2008-'10, I shared results here of the PNC Wealth Management index for gifting your loved one with every present in the '12 Days of Christmas'. It's a three-decade tradition the firm utilizes to teach about price changes... of which there have been little the past two years.

With inflation in check, the next place to look to make your dollar go farther is to reduce expenses. We had two experiences this year where a few minutes of time led to major savings.

The battery kept draining on the '01 Toyota Camry that I drove for five years before bequeathing to our kids to utilize during high school. We took it to our long-time auto shop and they suggested more than \$1,000 in repairs. I drove a mile to get a second opinion and received a different analysis at \$800.

So I called my buddy who continually tells me about his neighbor that does repairs when he has time off from his job as a fireman. Let him have the car for a day... and \$200 later, it runs like new.

The second savings came when I had a run-in with a kidney stone. Being self-employed, we have high deductible health insurance, so the first \$10,000 is ours to cover. Although the stone passed within an hour of my ER arrival, the doctor – who I saw for 10 minutes – sent a bill for \$1,050.

I understand physicians are highly educated and deserve to be paid, yet that is some kind of hourly rate.

person being coached "must unlearn what you have learned."

Dunking Machine – Twice this year I journeyed to the world's largest oil platform 150 miles off the coast of Newfoundland to provide coaching for the leadership team. Preparation required multiple days of classroom certification – including survival maneuvers should the Sikorsky helicopter encounter problems during the 90-minute flight. Atlantic Ocean temperatures there are beyond cold, so training includes donning a neoprene flight suit, boarding a mock fuselage, being fully submerged, getting flipped upside down, and escaping by knocking out a window and floating to the surface... in 20 seconds. Of course, you do this four times. Spending eight days with the 270 hearty souls on *Hibernia* is one of my proudest career achievements... and I get to return for more adventures in 2016.



Mentoring Skills – I spent so much time coaching leaders in Canada this year that my accent may have changed. On a trip to Ft. McMurray in far north Alberta, I was the last person sitting in the hotel banquet room after our group breakfast... watching the service manager work with a new employee: "Remember yesterday when I showed you how to place the salt and pepper shakers on each table? Let's do it together right now." That's a tasty recipe for effective delegation: show someone how to do it; do it with her; watch her do it; let her do it. As this training unfolded, I got up to put my plate on the dirty dishes cart. The new employee rushed over and said, "Please allow me, sir. It's my job." That young lady is going to be a good one.

Interviewing Success – I keep an active Word document to share questions clients might want to ask potential employees – and there are more than 50 entries. Based on that Ft. McMurray interaction, the three latest additions are: "What is your experience with being coached by your boss?" "How do you react when your supervisor or a peer provides candid feedback to you?" "What is your most recent example of taking feedback and doing something with it?"

Environmental Marketing – Some creative types are encouraging clients to start advertising at people's feet – and not just the colorful printed ones you see in grocery stores. With 'clean graffiti,' power washing sidewalks around a stencil removes the dirt and leaves behind an ad. Still too early to know if this approach drives major sales; however, it definitely would freshen up the front of your building.

Clear Foresight – Two years ago in this same issue, I advised you to keep an eye on a talented youngster who might become golf's next superstar. In 2015, that young athlete far surpassed the future I envisioned – winning two Majors, becoming world number one and being named PGA Player of the Year. Of the many accolades announcers use to describe Jordan Spieth – tough competitor, incredible putter, humble person – the best I heard is the 22-year-old has an amazing ability to put the last hole behind him. That's a skill of great business leaders, too: Let yesterday pass. Focus on the now.

Gift Giving – The true spirit of the holidays comes from sharing with others – and there are many worthy charitable causes to support. Here is one helping those who risked their lives to protect ours:

Remembering The 22 – Each day, 22 men and women who served in

So Kathy called and talked to his office... and 15 minutes later, they reduced our charges to \$750.

The moral of these stories:
If you expect to receive,
you gotta ask.

We will never release, sell or give your name or email address to any other party or organization. Our subscribers will only receive email messages that contain requested information, articles or service announcements.

the U.S. military take their own lives due to untreated combat-related stressors and injuries. [Warriors for Freedom Foundation](#) is dedicated to supporting mental, physical and holistic services for veterans and their families through outdoor activities, scholarships, and promoting mental health and wellness awareness.

This completes 12 years and 144 issues of *Fast:Forward*. I leave you with this reflection from the late inspirational author Roy L. Smith: "He who has not Christmas in his heart will never find it under a tree."

Happy Holidays, Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, Safe Journeys... and continued success in all things during 2016.



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