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Groups Beat Smartest Individual



People say there is strength in numbers. It is especially true when solving problems in the workplace. "Groups of three, four, or five perform better on complex problem solving than the smartest equivalent number of individuals apart," according to a new study from the American Psychological Association's (*APA Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*). "We ... attribute this performance to the ability of people to work together to generate and adopt correct responses, reject erroneous responses, and effectively process information," said Patrick Laughlin, Ph.D., of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Bouncing ideas off coworkers and receiving input allows the opportunity to tap into an increased knowledge base and greater experience when tackling a particularly difficult problem.

Source: American Psychological Association, April 23, 2006, Press Release

What's the "Scoop" on Coffee?



Excited about recent research touting the benefits of drinking coffee? Many studies contradict each other. Recent articles in clinical nutrition journals have praised coffee's benefits, but others aren't so glowing. If you do drink coffee, moderation is a good rule to follow. Recent findings include coffee's benefit of improving reaction time, mental acuity, alertness, and mood, as well as its extra benefit of possessing antioxidants that help prevent deterioration of your body's cells.

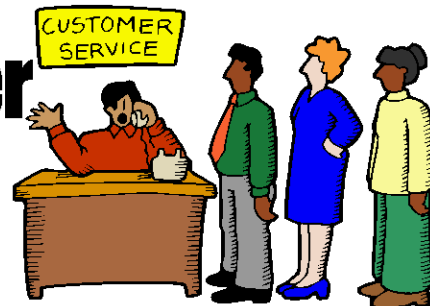
Could You Benefit from Al-Anon?

It is estimated that an alcoholic affects the lives of at least four other



people, which is why it is often called a "family disease." Al-Anon is a 12-step, self-help group created more than 50 years ago, not long after Alcoholics Anonymous began. Could Al-Anon help you? Learn more from the EAP. Three types of people can potentially benefit greatly from Al-Anon: those troubled by someone else's drinking, those who grew up with a problem drinker, and those whose lives have been affected by someone else's drinking.

Making Customer Service a Cinch



There will always be upset customers. And it's common knowledge that they repeat their stories of disappointment to other potential customers, costing businesses millions of dollars. So, if you deal with customers, and practically all of us do, consider learning the art of an apology so you can have the best shot at not losing business. The formula: 1) start with an explanation of what happened; 2) make assurances—then act to make sure the customer will be taken care of; and 3) acknowledge the error or bad experience and express regret for its occurrence.

Confidence: Get More of It



Having confidence is like a boomerang: the more you project it, the more life's opportunities come your way. Everyone wants to feel and look confident, but is there a way to acquire or build confidence to improve its benefits if you're a bit lacking? Follow these key steps to building self-confidence, and watch opportunities come your way: 1) Get past the "superior" or "stuck-up" myth. Acting self-confident is not being superior to others. It's about feeling competent that you will meet life's challenges successfully. 2) Understand that confidence comes from taking action and meeting challenges, refusing to always play it safe, and making decisions that put you—not others—in control of your life. 3) Accept that everyone lacks self-confidence sometimes, although they may be competent in many areas. 4) When you feel lacking in self-confidence, stop short of putting yourself down. If necessary, remind yourself of past personal accomplishments, drawn from your memory, when you demonstrated confidence. 5) Like a garden, self-confidence is nurtured. Being willing to make decisions, overcome resistance to new challenges, learn from life's experiences, and steer your life in a direction that matches your values will build self-confidence. 6) Think about which successes in your life have created the most excitement and enjoyment. These reflect your values. Consider using these values as guides for other decisions going forward, and your confidence may grow rapidly.

The Art of Conference Going



Meeting others and networking is a highly touted benefit of attending professional conferences. However, one of the most unsung benefits is the new and exciting ideas that will pop into your head as others speak. They can be worth a fortune. These ideas can improve your productivity and solve major problems for your employer. Great ideas can last but a second, so create a system to capture them on paper—in a journal or diary. Stay energized (awake), particularly in the afternoon, by sitting up front in meeting rooms. Even boring presentations can sound more exciting the closer you are to them. Exciting presentations will be twice as stimulating in the front of the room. Don't fill every mid-day and evening break with social activity. Use some of it for "alone time" to consider what you are learning and experiencing.

Winning with Performance Improvement



If you have received a performance improvement plan (PIP) from management, you are undoubtedly concerned about ensuring that its requirements are met. Certainly it is an anxious time, but the following attitude and action guidelines can help: 1) The PIP is not a disciplinary action. It is an opportunity for you to demonstrate acceptable performance commensurate with your duties and responsibilities. 2) Get going. The PIP has a time frame, and many employees put it aside, never attending to the plan's requirements until it is too late. 3) Contact the EAP for support. Seek its advice on what personal issues to consider and on work strategies to help you be successful with the plan. 4) Be proactive in seeking out feedback, asking for help, and using organizational resources available to employees. 5) Never wonder what your boss is thinking about your performance—instead, ask. 6) If your supervisor has not told you what he or she thinks contributes to your work-related difficulties, ask. 7) Do an honest assessment of your attitude and behavior. If issues contribute to your performance problems, face them head-on.

Nixing a Nursing Home Admission

Are you doing things now that predict whether you will be admitted to a nursing home someday? Many people know that lifestyle choices such as smoking, obesity, and even inactivity can contribute to the risk of disease, hospitalization, and even death. Other risk factors include elevated blood pressure, elevated cholesterol levels, and diabetes. Research shows that these lifestyle factors also can significantly predict the chances of being admitted to a nursing home later in life. Modifying your lifestyle, even in middle age, may reduce the risk of nursing home admission.