

269

MAGAZINE™

inside:

JON GORDON
WANTS YOU TO
**GET ON THE
ENERGY BUS**



HUMAN CAPITAL

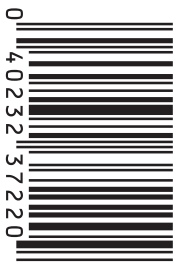
WHAT *Talent Strategies* MEAN FOR OUR FUTURE

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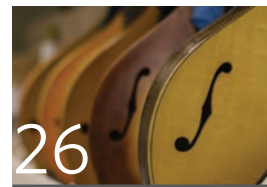


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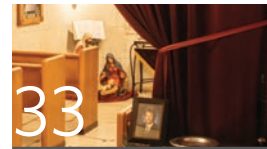
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"Cleaned horses and stalls."
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"Picked up trash and swept school halls."
Shelton Public Schools,
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*Everyone starts somewhere.
What was your first job?*



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*Corn detasseler at age 13.
"Pulled out corn tassels to allow
cross-pollination."
Fairgrove Farms, Sturgis, Michigan*

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My Woeful Tale of Woo

How Selling a Box of Cookies Predicted my Talent Profile



I knew something was up when my troop leader handed me the Girl Scout Cookie form in second grade. While I wanted to run home and knock on every door offering the cookie selections to my neighbors, the thought of actually hawking a box of Thin Mints® when someone opened the door made me nauseous.

That same feeling came over me when asked to sell wrapping paper door-to-door later in high school and when I arrived on campus in the fall of my freshman year in college.

There had to be something wrong that was prohibiting me from walking up to others and introducing myself. I declared myself “incredibly shy.” Others declared me “stuck up.” Luckily for me, it since has been proven “scientifically” that both descriptions were wrong. The scientific diagnosis didn’t come from the medical profession; rather, it came from the world of business.

Serving as editor in chief of 269 MAGAZINE™ is one of my responsibilities at Southwest Michigan First, the company where I spend the working hours of my day. In order to become a team member here, I was put through their talent-based hiring process.

Before candidates even meet their team champion who leads them through the hiring process, a candidate, like me, is asked to take two assessments to determine fit. The first, the Gallup StrengthsFinder (www.gallupstrengthscenter.com), assesses an individual’s talents within 34 themes to “discover” their top five talents and how they fit within the team’s overall profile. The second, known around our office as the behavioral talent interview, measures an individual’s aptitude to do a particular job and intensity of his or her strengths. Using statistical analysis, this interview scientifically analyzes an individual’s behaviors, thoughts and feelings to predict if he or she would be a successful team member. Because Southwest Michigan First hires based on talent, not experience or education, team members then have the responsibility to share and impart knowledge and skills that new hires need to be successful in their job.

For me, both assessment tools were invaluable in shaping my future from that point on. For one, they determined I was

I declared myself “incredibly shy.” Others declared me “stuck up.” Luckily for me, it since has been proven “scientifically” that both descriptions were wrong. The scientific diagnosis didn’t come from the medical profession; rather, it came from the world of business.

ultimately a fit within the Southwest Michigan First team, following a series of in-person interviews with each member of the team before I was given the green light to come on



STORY HEATHER BAKER

IMAGES BARRY ELZ,
APITER1977

ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

board. Second, the Gallup StrengthsFinder results bestowed on me an “ah-ha” moment: My top five strengths were identified as Achiever, Learner, Command, Competition, and Responsibility.

I now knew why I love being busy and productive and despise meetings that last longer than fifteen minutes. It’s the “Achiever” in me. I want to get things done, not sit still. And, the fact that I felt the need to triple check my kids’ backpacks after they zipped them shut was tied to the weight of responsibility “hanging around my neck.”

Lastly, I found the reason for all those unsold boxes of cookies: it was Woo—or rather my lack of it. Out of 34 talents, Woo was dead last on my talent profile. I felt instantly better! No way could I ever have convinced someone to empty their wallet to fill a cupboard with cookies. Well, not by using my Woo. In order to be successful in any networking situation, the Gallup StrengthsFinder helped me draw on other strengths to forge relationships, like Empathy and Individualization, which appeared in my top ten strengths. I had always enjoyed meeting new people when their uniqueness and feelings were shared with me; now I pursued forming relationships from that perspective.

When companies hire using these tools and communities incorporate the same into their educational systems from K-12 to university, both can and do realize tremendous

advantages. Take Lincoln, Nebraska, a place where these strategies are fully embraced. Lincoln enjoyed a 2.5% unemployment rate, not seasonally adjusted in May 2016, compared to our region at 4.0% and the nation’s rate of 4.5%.

In order to be successful in any networking situation, the Gallup StrengthsFinder helped me draw on other strengths to forge relationships, like Empathy and Individualization, which appeared in my top ten strengths. I had always enjoyed meeting new people when their uniqueness and feelings were shared with me; now I pursued forming relationships from that perspective.

I am a total believer in hiring people for talent after my personal journey and watching the results of Southwest Michigan First’s hiring process play out over time. Our hiring process has proven to be good for our mission, bottom line and mental health. It also makes it a lot more fun and enjoyable to come to work. By sharing our Gallup StrengthsFinder results with each other, our team members have a better understanding of each other and talents that can be brought to a project.

Today, I don’t have to sell boxes of cookies. I have to sell grown-up things like magazines. While Woo isn’t on my personal sell sheet, tools like the Gallup StrengthFinder have armed me with the knowledge of my other selling “talents” and the potential of those held by other members of my team.

If you haven’t taken the Gallup StrengthsFinder yet, do it.

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How Do an Individual's Strengths Correlate to Successful Outcomes in the Workplace?



KEN BARR, JR.

Director of Student Strengths Development,
Kalamazoo Valley Community College

When people have the opportunity to use their strengths in the workplace, they are more engaged in the work. Engagement is a critical driving factor in workplace performance (outcomes). Think of the way you feel when doing something that is energizing, versus something that is draining for you. The way you feel when doing a given task, project, or activity will impact the way that you perform in that task, project, or activity. Great leaders should be intentional about identifying the strengths of their teammates and aiming those strengths at the important work that needs to be done.

And, if you prefer a tweet-sized message: Individuals and organizations will experience more success when business outcomes are aligned with the strengths of individuals and teams.



NANCY STEFANICK

Human Resources Manager,
Stryker Corporation

Howard Thurman said, “Don’t ask what the world needs; ask what makes you come alive, and go do it because what the world needs is people who have come alive.” What makes you come alive? To what activities are you naturally drawn? The answers to those questions are clues to your talents; clues to what makes you come alive. Too many people are sleepwalking through their lives. Gallup research shows that turning sleepwalkers into engaged employees has a significant impact on workplace success—a 22% increase in profitability and a 21% increase in productivity. Statistics aside, I have personally seen the power of living in one’s strengths. These individuals are present, they engage, they contribute and they have energy to spare for their families, friends, and hobbies at the end of the day. More engaged employees are more alive human beings, which is precisely what this world needs more of.



SHAWN PREMER

Chief Human Resources Officer,
Consumers Credit Union

At Consumers Credit Union we hire for culture first. This is a non-negotiable commitment that we never veer away from. Once we have determined we have found a strong culture fit, we then look at each candidate’s strengths and level of talent to determine where he or she will fit in our organization. Each team member brings a unique set of strengths to the table, and it is important we leverage those strengths on the right team to ensure long success. When we find we have placed someone in the wrong seat, we work quickly to find him or her the right one. When you focus on putting people in positions where they can do what they do best, you spend less time coaching to their weaknesses and more time celebrating success. Consumers’ success is driven by our high performing team of engaged employees whose skills are being leveraged in the right way.



THE
HUMAN CAPITAL
WHAT A SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN REGION-WIDE
Talent Strategy
WOULD MEAN FOR THE FUTURE

BusinessDictionary.com defines talent as (1) a natural ability to excel at a duty or action or (2) a group of people who have a particular aptitude for certain tasks.

STORY RON KITCHENS
& HEATHER BAKER
WITH TED ROELOFS
IMAGES BARRY ELZ
& BRIDGE MAGAZINE

Albert Einstein spoke to talent in a more plain-spoken way, "Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid."

However you describe talent, it will be the defining factor in determining which regions globally grow and which cease to be relevant. As Jim Clifton, Chairman of Gallup, unveils in his bestseller, *The Coming Jobs War*, "that of the seven billion people in the world, there are five billion adults of working age, of which more than three billion say the most important desire in their lives, above food, shelter, and safety is the desire for a full-time job."

Gallup defines a good job as "30+ hours a week for a paycheck." The quandary that presents itself is that when the Gallup World Poll asked how many people have a "good job" as defined this way, only 1.3 billion do. So, the world is currently short about 1.9 billion real jobs—or "good jobs." The U.S. comes up short when it comes to "good jobs" as that metric is in stark contrast to official unemployment figures. In May 2016, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported seasonally unadjusted unemployment at 4.5 percent. Gallup's Good Jobs rate for the same period, the highest it's ever been, was just 45.5 percent. That means 54.5 percent of adult workers in the U.S. do not have a "good job."

It is those cities, states, and regions that focus on building and engaging talent that will be those that earn the right to compete in the global economy; those places will be where people go to find "good" jobs. Those that fail to embrace the future are doomed to irrelevance.

Clearly Gallup's polling shows that Americans agree. Gallup asked respondents to think about talent as "the knowledge

or skills people develop or obtain through education, work, or other life experiences." Nearly eight in 10, or 78 percent, of U.S. adults agree: "If the U.S. fails to develop a more talented workforce, it will fall behind other countries." An overwhelming majority, or 87 percent, agree that "the federal government should make it a high priority to increase the talent of our nation's workforce." Eighty-nine percent agree with the statement: "Cities that commit to increasing talent among their citizens are more likely to have stronger economies, better quality of life, and greater prosperity than cities that do not."

It even becomes clearer when the data for cities is considered. When asked whether "they agree that cities committing to increasing talent among their citizens are more likely to have stronger economies," the polling audience showed unmistakable consensus of all respondents with 91 percent of whites and 88 percent of nonwhites agreeing, and 90 percent of Democrats and 89 percent of Republicans agreeing.

People clearly understand that the jobs war is not between nations or continents, but will be fought and won or lost on the local level: Chicago versus London; New York City versus Amsterdam; Southwest Michigan versus Stuttgart; Rhode Island versus Utah; and so on.

While Americans clearly understand that developing a strong and engaged talent pool is critical, there is little understanding of what is required to make this a reality. One example of execution



JIM CLIFTON
CHAIRMAN OF GALLUP

It is those cities, states and regions that focus on building and engaging talent that will be those that earn the right to compete in the global economy; those places will be where people go to find "good" jobs. Those that fail to embrace the future are doomed to irrelevance.

is the state of Rhode Island, which is focusing on becoming the first Strengths-Based State, by launching "Make RI Stronger," a multi-year initiative to dramatically improve both the Rhode Island workplace and the Rhode Island psychic.

After discovering that "one out of every five Rhode Islanders

Bridge

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www.bridgemi.com

The Talent Journey

People are not your greatest asset.
Talented people are!

When your company or organization is ready to face the “talent” issue, you must decide whether you are building a house, doing an extreme makeover or putting on an addition—meaning you have something great in “one room” and are ready to expand to another “room,” department or location.

Brad Black, President and CEO of HUMANeX Ventures, offers some “direction” before you start what his company calls “The Journey Circle.” A Gallup Hall of Fame recipient for his work in designing and building a world-class leadership and human resources model, Black has advised corporate leadership at companies like Berkshire Hathaway, Stryker Corporation, The Walt Disney Company, Southwest Airlines, Ritz Carlton, and Whirlpool Corporation on discovering and developing the talents of individuals for more than three decades.

What’s the theory behind The Journey Circle?

Building a culture around human excellence is a never-ending journey. As you set off, you need to recognize that in every profession, there is a range of performance. That range is not affected by a resume, meaning someone’s skills or knowledge, but rather by their innate talents. Everybody was born with a “seed” of talent, what some call “hardwiring.” But it is how that “seed” is nurtured throughout a person’s life, that determines what motivates a person to perform certain roles with varying levels of success. Motivation comes from a person’s drives and values and is shown in his or her work style. Drives and values can be thought of as a person’s “engine,” or what supplies their power to do work. A person’s work style, or how productive and qualitative they are in performing tasks, is their “transmission” or what makes them go.



BRAD BLACK
PRESIDENT AND CEO OF
HUMANeX VENTURES

did not like his or her job” and that “only 18 percent of its residents regarded it as one of the best places to live” in Gallup’s 2013 State of the American Workplace Report, Leadership Rhode Island swung into action. The nationally renowned leadership development organization developed strategies to focus on helping Rhode Islanders discover their innate talents and to show them how to develop and use these unique talents in their workplace and in their lives.

“With a history of poor civic leadership and corruption, Rhode Island found itself with the poorest engaged workforce in the nation, which has created a fatalistic view of the future and driven people and investment away from the state,”

explains
Mike Ritz,
Executive
Director of
Leadership
Rhode
Island.

Companies
looking
for new
locations or
considering
expansions
tend to shy
away from a
disengaged

workforce. Why? Unhappy workers are more likely to call in sick and max out their vacation days. They tend to turn in resignations more often. Even worse, they deliberately act in ways that are harmful to their employer. Gallup points out that this is not “an employee problem;” it’s “a leadership problem” and it’s costly. According to Gallup, this behavior “is costing companies and organizations approximately \$3,400 per \$10,000 in wages. That’s \$17,000 for each full-time employee earning \$50,000 per year who is actively disengaged.”

How is Rhode Island responding? Rhode Island’s strategy includes hundreds of organizations representing business, education, government, not-for-profit, and the faith-based community—all working to stop

the state’s brain drain. The first obvious target is soon-to-be-graduates. College Leadership Rhode Island sets out “to turn emerging leaders into stewards of change on their campuses, in their communities and for Rhode Island. They learn from and engage with local leaders who are committed to making the state a better place to work and live.” Class sizes range from 25 to 35 college students in their sophomore, junior, and senior years as well as graduate students and graduates less than a year out of school. Colleges too are getting in the game. For instance, Providence College will begin providing talent coaching and evaluation to its entire student body in fall 2016.

“What type of degree they have really doesn’t matter. It’s about the person. What we look for is servant leadership—someone who is definitely focused on their own goals and development, but yet someone who will also go out of their way to grow and develop others.”

“I see the strengths in myself and in others. That inspiration is what gets people to work together more effectively and to reach their dreams,” Ritz says. “If we could get everyone in the state, all one million of us—to know and use their strengths, how powerful that becomes. Incredibly powerful.”

Companies that harness that power see their bottom lines trend upward. At April 2016’s Oracle HCM World conference in Chicago, Oracle CEO Mark Hurd shared his confidence that a company’s employee engagement is the key to productivity. At the technology conference, Hurd skipped the IT talk. “Engaged employees are the key to success,” he says. Don’t cut expenses when it comes to employees’ happiness.

“Instead of cutting expenses ... It’s

engagement that drives productivity,” he said. “It’s sound business. A higher engaged employee will do more work, better work, care more about the business, and more about your customers. Engagement is the key to productivity. The higher engagement I have, the better.”

Hurd continues, “If the baseline of employee engagement is 70 percent and that improves by just a few percentage points, that higher productivity turns into millions of dollars.” Companies can drive real growth by empowering employees to do what is right for their customers. Gallup agrees, “The moment an employee connects emotionally with a customer is a source of untapped power that has profound implications for a company’s productivity and profitability. When organizations know how to prepare front-line employees to make the most of these moments, they engage customers—who in turn spend more, visit more often, resist competitive overtures, promote their brand to others, and forgive the occasional service blunder.”

Gallup has been able to quantify the results: When organizations successfully engage their customers and their employees, they experience a 240 percent boost in performance-related business outcomes compared with an organization with neither engaged employees nor engaged customers.



MIKE VAN RYN
DIRECTOR OF TALENT
DEVELOPMENT,
ZEIGLER AUTO GROUP

You can’t just hire people. “Last year, Oracle hired 20,000 ‘good’ people,” corrects Hurd. Oracle’s dedicated hiring team sorted through 500,000 resumes and performed 60,000

interviews to get down to those 20,000. The Redwood City, California-based company, specializing in developing and marketing database software and technology, cloud engineered systems, and enterprise software

with \$38.23 billion in revenue in 2015, has to get those 20,000 people to work quickly to keep its internal engine moving. “We have to train them, onboard them, and prepare them to go to battle. We have to do it well and do it fast. Integrate them into the machine and get them to perform,” says Hurd.

Getting to where Oracle is with respect to human capital doesn’t happen overnight. It starts with a commitment to investing in human capital, then putting procedures and policies in place supporting that commitment. Partners who understand how to unleash the power of talent can support the journey, like Gallup, Talent Plus, Scanlon Leadership Network, and HUMANeX Ventures, and offer consulting services starting with employee hiring. Companies like Consumers Credit Union and Zeigler Auto Group, both headquartered in Kalamazoo, Michigan, agree employee engagement starts with what Hurd calls finding the “good” people.

At Kalamazoo-based Consumers Credit Union, Chief Human Resources Officer Shawn Premer doesn’t always seek the most impressive degree or resume in her quest for talent. She’s looking for passion and leadership material.

“What type of degree they have really doesn’t matter. It’s about the person. What we look for is servant leadership—someone who is definitely focused on their own goals and development, but yet someone who will also go out of their way to grow and develop others.”

As a result, Premer says the firm has employees among its 18 credit unions in Southwest Michigan with degrees in music, the arts, several with teaching degrees, working their way up the jobs ladder. Its director of training doesn’t yet have a college degree.

“We will hire for our culture 100 percent of the time,” Premer states. “We find that’s the best way to grow and develop talent is to develop it within.”

And at Zeigler Auto Group, Director of Talent Development Mike Van Ryn runs on a similar philosophy. “We are looking at attitude and whether they are going to fit our organization and values, more than what it says in their resume,” says Van Ryn, who was a teacher

If select is the starting point of the Circle, how do you get going?

Before you start selecting people for your team, study your very best performers and measure their behaviors. You will find that they perform in similar ways. Then, look at the behaviors of best performers in similar roles across industries. For example if you want to increase the performance of your sales representatives, look at how the best performers in sales behave in the medical device, automotive, retail and consumer products industries. Once you recognize what drives this high performance, you can predict with a high probability who will be your high performers. Other things to quantify include how these people build and keep relationships, influence others, and think. Does their thought process include finding solutions beyond finding problems?

When you are ready to begin the interview process, ask structured questions to get at these behaviors and how well a person fits within your organization. If you don’t go in with structured questions, you will be like a Little Leaguer trying to hit off the Los Angeles Dodgers’ Clayton Kershaw or Jake Arrieta of the Chicago Cubs. Select the individuals who answer the questions just like your top performers. Select the ones who fit within your organization. If you are looking to staff an emergency room, you need someone with ethical standards and who has the ability to make life-saving decisions on the spot. You can’t hire someone who wants to run through all possibilities before admitting someone; that individual is more suited for primary care.

It’s the difference between batting .250 or .850. Once you get really good at predicting, turnover goes down and engagement goes way up.

If sales is the area in which you are currently struggling, start there. But, don’t stop there. The best organizations study how the best performers in all roles within their organization behave—from frontline to sales to functional professionals serving accounting and marketing to managers, supervisors, and leaders. If you build a fully integrated model, you will see phenomenal results.

How do you help people grow once hired?

Once people are selected to be part of your team, you have to help them understand what they came to do and where they can go. Give them focused challenges that grow their abilities in a

way that makes the overall team improve. If you don't help them grow, you will just keep filling the same role over and over.

Company leadership should intentionally spend time with every employee every ninety days to discuss questions like, 'How do we set you up for success?' and 'How do we grow you to your potential?' These can be coaching discussions, coaching decisions, or even repositioning for those who might be on the wrong seat on the bus or wrong bus altogether. It's okay to come to the conclusion that someone is on the wrong bus. Do it professionally and let them off to find the right bus for them.

How do you multiply the effects of talent?

When you select and grow talented people, it creates high engagement within your organization. You just can't measure talent before it comes in the door. You have to keep measuring it continuously after it enters. Use tools, like HUMANeX Ventures' InsighteX Cultural Assessment, to determine if your culture is working.

To determine the characteristics of a high performance culture, we measured cultures much like we measured individual performance. We assessed high performance cultures by department, company, and industry. Our tool identifies the places where a culture is working and where it is not. Results can help you systematically make performance improving changes in places like talent and fit; support; relationships; quality; communication; recognition; performance planning; training and development; career development; ability to engage and inspire; satisfaction; mission-consciousness; pride; continuous improvement; and innovation.

Companies that are committed to engagement measure culture about two times per year. In average cultures, about 35 percent of an organization's team members are engaged. When a company makes engagement a priority, we've seen numbers hit the 70 percent, 80 percent, even 90 percent marks.

Can communities make The Journey Circle work for them?

When you get multiple organizations within a community participating in this model, the

and principal himself before making the jump to the corporate world. "You might have someone that doesn't have the degree and they can come in and have tons of talent."

He points to Ariaah Wilburn, 26, who graduated in 2012 with a bachelor's degree in dental hygiene. It was long her intent to pursue that vocational path. She worked part-time for Zeigler as a cashier in high school. And when she initially had trouble finding a job in dental hygiene, Zeigler offered her a full-time job as a business development representative. She was promoted a couple more times after that, then again to her current job as a recruiter for nine dealerships.

Van Ryn says a talent-first, values-first model has helped the firm manage its rapid growth from nine dealerships in two states in 2012 to 23 dealerships in four states today and from 400 employees to 1,200.

Consistent monitoring of internal systems augments overall team engagement. Monitoring can be done with help of consulting firms like those mentioned above or through internal assessments designed to raise awareness of quality management policies and systems. As employers enter what some view as competitions and others more aptly recognize as self-improvement tools, the process of responding to questions analyzing human resources policies and implementation help employers self-reflect on their own workforce and provide them with a reality-check from confidential employee surveys administered by the sponsoring entity.

Types of assessments include the Malcolm Balridge National Quality Award, American Business Awards also known as the Stevies, Best and Brightest, Michigan Performance Excellence, Working Mother, 100 Best Companies and Outsides' Best Places to Work. Some programs even begin the assessment process at the regional level like the National Association for Business Resources' Best and Brightest program which accepts nominations through these geographic areas—Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas/Fort Worth, Detroit, Houston, Milwaukee, San Francisco. and West Michigan—and then elevate elite winners for consideration nationally.

Jennifer Kluge, president and CEO of the Michigan Business and Professional Association and president and CEO of the 101 Best and Brightest Companies, notes that companies recognized for their exceptional practices have several things in common, "Strong cultures are driven by the C-suite down. The CEO usually is personally driving culture and engagement of employees and it's their mission to



JENNIFER KLUGE

PRESIDENT AND CEO OF THE MICHIGAN BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION & CEO OF 101 BEST AND BRIGHTEST COMPANIES

appreciate employees for work well done. As a result, human resources has a seat at the strategic planning table and employees' needs are addressed in all corporate strategy. They treat the employee as a "whole" person, concerned about their overall wellbeing versus their experience on the job. They look at data/survey results to ensure they move the needle."

Kluge points to a few notables. "FONA International (creators of sweet and savory flavors for the food and beverage industry) out of Chicago has high employee engagement scores and retention scores given its family culture driven by its CEO. They have an on-site chaplain. ABIS Inc. (a software provider) out of Houston has a very engaged CEO who ensures a culture of positive energy with customized work stations, on-site food delivery, and a lounge for music and dancing. United Shore Mortgage in Detroit has a fabulous work environment with ping pong, basketball courts, and valet car service which is especially nice during winters. The trick here is they engage employees to actually use these perks instead of collecting dust." It should be noted that Consumers Credit Union and Zeigler were ranked among West Michigan's 101 Best and Brightest Companies to Work For in 2016.

With companies like Consumers Credit Union and Zeigler Auto Group dedicated to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 44

HAPPINESS is HOMEMADE



For more than 30 years, AmeriFirst Home Mortgage has helped make homemade happiness by offering trusted mortgage financing options. Honesty & integrity as a core value means leadership at AmeriFirst avoided gimmicky “too good to be true” mortgages (sub-prime, no-income-no-asset, interest only) other lenders and brokers used to make fast-and-easy money.

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We pride ourselves on establishing quality relationships with our customers and are proud to have team members that share this same core value. It is our belief that people really do care and given the right opportunity with other like minded people, great things can and do happen. You see, at AmeriFirst Home Mortgage, people are our most unique and prized resource. We believe that it isn't as much about what business you are in, but about how you do it.

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COVER STORY VIEWPOINT

KAREN A. BALDWIN

VICE PRESIDENT & DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES, GREENLEAF TRUST
KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN

DAN J. RINZEMA

CHIEF CLIENT OFFICER, GREENLEAF TRUST
KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN

At Greenleaf Trust, we believe culture wins. We also know that an intentional business culture, combined with a strong workplace culture and great talent, multiplies the opportunities to win on behalf of our clients. As such, the pillars of our core culture purposefully defy conventional business structure to put the client first, the employee second and the shareholder last.

Our business culture demands we sit on the same side of the desk as our clients with absolutely no conflicts of interest. It invites us to take the collective wisdom of the team and put it to bear on the work that we do for our clients. Furthermore, our workplace culture is not focused on maximizing shareholder value, but instead on serving others. This others-focused workplace culture creates a magnetic community to which those of like-minded character are drawn.

We believe, however, that great organizations are not just built upon strong cultures, they are also talent-driven. They focus on selecting, growing, and multiplying talent. We seek to select talented professionals that fit our culture, cultivate in them a wise heart of service and then multiply the iron in their cores. One more like our best is our mantra.

Since we opened our doors in 1998, we have grown from a handful to 100 talented teammates. We've come to recognize those that make an impact do so because of the talents they have, bring, learn, and share. Most hiring managers revere resume virtues such as degrees from prestigious institutions, high status assignments, and years of experience. While these advantages certainly help, we believe talent and fit trump advantage every time. We have all met people who supposedly have 20 years of experience, but in reality have one year of experience twenty times over. Instead, we judge candidates not just by their resumes, but also by their character. We still review resumes, but more importantly, we are looking for evidence that provides insight into the applicant and their intrinsic values.

The noise of resume advantages, though, makes it difficult to hear the quieter sounds that emanate from the depths. So by partnering with a behavioral science expert, we intentionally select those that embody deep talent and inner character in addition to technical expertise. Among other specific position talents required, we seek candidates of integrity, grit, resiliency, and humility—those that put client care above personal prestige. Professionals with the heart of a servant that fit within our others focused business and workplace culture.

We do this by discovering an individual's unique talents—the innate DNA that makes them tick. Personal purpose is explored first as it sets the foundation on which all other talent themes are built. We then understand how teammates experience an individual's impact. From here, we assess how people build relationships; their

ability to guide others down an appropriate path and feel confident doing so; and how they learn, apply, and share knowledge. Taken together, this information aids our selection process to ensure talent possessed matches talent required. To give you an idea of what this amounts to in numbers, we have reviewed 320 resumes this year, interviewed 103 candidates, had 51 interviews with our behavioral sciences partner, brought 30 onsite, and extended 14 job offers.

Selecting talent, however, is only the first step. It must be developed by drawing out latent potential. We do this through strength-based coaching that builds people up and creates an environment where success is the default option. This struggle towards maturity means running growth-based plays that force an individual to stretch. It is like giving someone a shoe that is one size too big so they can grow into it. If weaknesses cannot be mitigated, they must be addressed for improved performance, but we believe a leader's first duty as a coach should be to play to strengths. As leaders, it is our responsibility to discover and build upon the strengths of those we lead and create the conditions for peak performance—get the environment right and things just work.

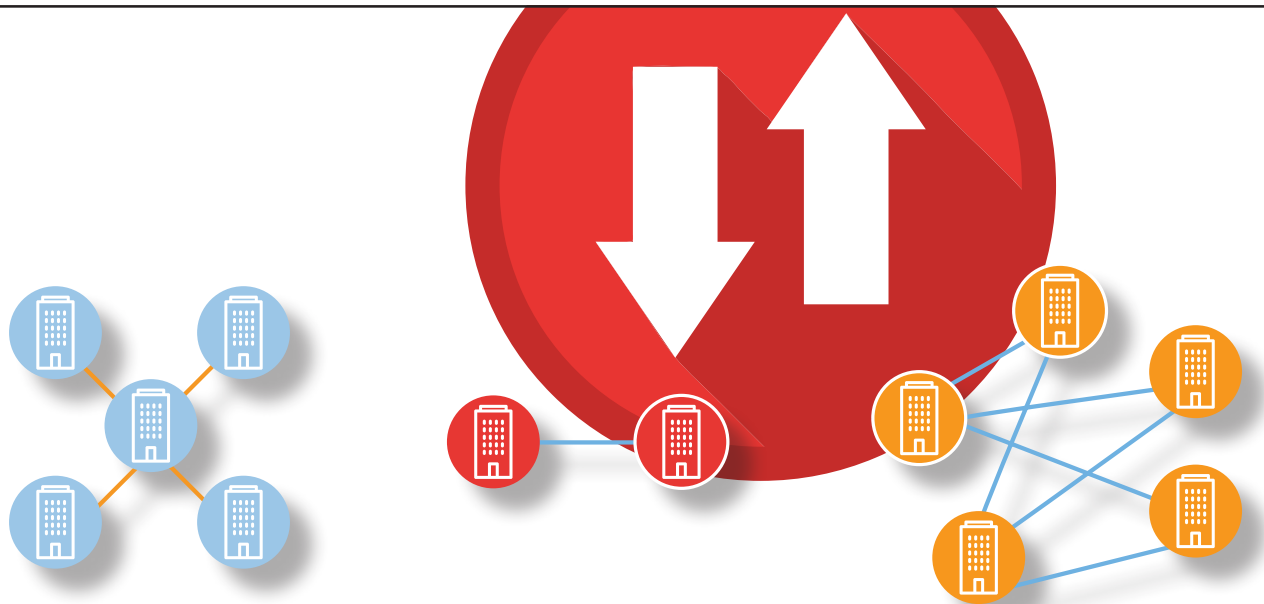
Lastly, multiplying talent creates a community of impact. Orrin Woodward said,

We believe, however, that great organizations are not just built upon strong cultures, they are also talent-driven. They focus on selecting, growing, and multiplying talent.

“Average leaders raise the bar on themselves; good leaders raise the bar for others; great leaders inspire others to raise their own bar.” Multiplied talent gets things done by performing modest acts of service. They are not thinking about the remarkable work they are doing. They just recognize the work that needs doing and they do it. They don't wait to be asked and they would never say “that is not my job.” They simply see a heavy bucket of water that needs to be moved and move it. This low drama, high impact workplace community elevates the needs of clients and peers. Everyone is looking out for someone else as we shoot for something higher than happiness—purpose.

As a talent-based organization, our stringent selection, growth, and multiplication process combined with a client-focused culture creates a framework that enables us to attract and find the most talented, knowledgeable, and dedicated people to serve our clients. A vibrant culture is extremely important to our mission because at Greenleaf Trust, we know that culture wins—and experience tells us that culture with a great workplace environment and great talent multiplies the opportunities to win on behalf of our clients.

Learn about **Greenleaf Trust** at www.greenleafttrust.com.



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AARON ZEIGLER
PRESIDENT, ZEIGLER AUTO GROUP
KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN

COVER STORY VIEWPOINT

Zeigler Auto Group has experienced tremendous growth over the years, growing from a modest-sized dealer group in Southwest Michigan to what we are today with 23 locations, 79 franchises, and over 1,300 employees located throughout Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and New York. I have had many people ask me how we have been able to grow so quickly and to what I attribute that growth. I believe that it comes from having a talented team of dedicated people with laser focus on our future. What we sell is a commodity ... you can get the same product for the same price at many of our competitors. What differentiates us is the customer experience. In order to have a world-class customer experience, we had to have employees that are passionate about creating an amazing experience.

I knew early on that recruiting great people to our industry would be instrumental to our growth. We needed to source and select the right people who fit our values as an organization and would give our loyal customers the experience they deserve. Our reputation is important to us as an organization, especially as we grew the operations to new areas.

Recruiting at Zeigler began as one person years ago and now has grown to a team of full-time recruiters that recruit through conventional and non-conventional means. They go out and build pipelines to find great talent both inside and outside our industry. For example, we've built pipelines with college coaches, junior military officers, tech schools, and college professors. We learned to look at an individual's talents, and not necessarily their pedigree or resume. Once we discover an individual's talents, we place them in a position that fits those talents. They may have no automotive sales experience, but we can train and develop them to sell for us if they have the natural talents for sales.

We have been very successful over the years with these efforts. I believe each person who is hired at Zeigler either brings our culture up or down; it doesn't remain at the same level.

Our team is trained to look for people that fit our team values of PRIDE (Passion, Reputation, Integrity, Drive, and Execution). When hiring, we are looking for someone to fill, or fit into a specific position, but also to see if they have potential to move beyond that one position with us and grow. Herb Brooks, coach of the 1980 USA Olympic gold medal hockey team said, "We don't have all the best players. We have the right ones." I believe that this is so true. Recruiting the right people is essential. When you really look at it, our entire company is always recruiting. Current employees recommend friends, family, and others to join the organization because they are proud of where they work. That says a lot for us. It's the ultimate compliment.

Our Training and Development has changed tremendously over the years as

well. I wanted to be competitive with the development programs offered by other great companies. As a result, we created Zeigler University, an umbrella under which our training and development programs fall. All new employees start out at an orientation to ensure they understand what we are about as a company. We have daily online training for our managers, sales consultants, and service advisors, and we offer courses on customer service training, sales training, and manager training to continue our development and grow our team.

We also run what we call our "Performance Groups" to grow and develop top performers who want to advance in the organization. We have three such groups in the areas of general management, finance, and office administration. In addition to these, we started the Zeigler University Guest Speaker Series. Six to eight times a year, we bring in speakers from all walks of life. Anyone in our organization can come to hear these speakers. Through our latest technology and state-of-the-art training centers, we videoconference the speakers to our entire company. Some of the favorites over the years have been Jim Craig, Kirk Cousins, Matt DeLaCruz, Eric Thomas, Coach Bill Lam, Colonel and Space Shuttle Captain Rick Searfoss, Coach P.J. Fleck, Captain Mike Abrashoff and Bill Rancie. I love seeing our employees engage in these sessions ... oftentimes bringing their children to work with them to hear a favorite speaker! These

We learned that a typical organization has approximately 35 percent of its workforce highly engaged and highly satisfied. When we first ran the survey, the results indicated that 62 percent of our employees were highly engaged and highly satisfied. Not bad at first glance.

outside influences have allowed our team to learn things that may not be job specific, but overall enhance their performance, which also has positive impacts on their personal lives! That is what it is all about!

Culture is another buzz word today ... but you cannot underestimate the importance culture has on your success. I never thought about "managing our culture" until we started to measure it. About eight years ago, we began measuring our culture through confidential employee surveys that focused on identifying how many of our employees are highly engaged and highly satisfied. We also use the surveys to identify our strengths and weaknesses as an organization. We survey our employees regularly and pay close attention to what our employees are telling us and the movement in our results. We are either improving, or we are not improving. We learned that a typical organization has approximately 35 percent of its workforce highly engaged and highly satisfied. When we first ran the survey, the results indicated that 62 percent of our employees were highly

CONTINUED ON PAGE 45

Working together to create talent solutions for your business.



To compete in today's economy, Michigan businesses must find and keep skilled talent. Michigan Works! Southwest can help identify the skilled workers your business needs to thrive and grow. For more than 40 years, we have combined hands-on experience finding, training and retaining talent with the world-class research capabilities of the W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.

The roots of this relationship trace back to the Great Depression, when Dr. W.E. Upjohn began a grand experiment to help displaced workers in his community. Today, nearly 85 years later, Michigan Works! Southwest continues this commitment by leading innovative talent investment solutions that meet the current and emerging needs of your business.

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Branch, Calhoun, Kalamazoo & St. Joseph Counties

michiganworkssouthwest.org

9,791 Jobs Available in Southwest Michigan

Source: Pure Michigan Talent Connect, May 31, 2016

TOP DETAILED OCCUPATIONS IN MANUFACTURING IN SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN

1	Mechanical Engineers
2	Managers, All Other
3	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General
4	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand
5	Production Workers, All Other
6	Manufacturing Engineers
7	Electrical Engineers
8	Marketing Managers
9	Architectural and Engineering Managers
10	First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers

Source: Labor Insight Jobs (Burning Glass Technologies), May 2016

WORK FORCE TRENDS

SKILLS IN GREATEST DEMAND IN SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN

1	Customer Service
2	Sales
3	Supervisory Skills
4	Scheduling
5	Retail Setting
6	Inspection
7	Repair
8	Merchandising
9	Budgeting
10	Store Management
11	Customer Contact
12	Project Management
13	Cash Handling
14	Scanners
15	Mathematics
16	Cleaning
17	Customer Checkout
18	Calculation
19	Cash Control
20	Data Entry
21	Packaging
22	Product Sales
23	Product Development

Source: Labor Insight Jobs (Burning Glass Technologies), May 2016

UNEMPLOYMENT

Area	Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment	Jobless Rate
Berrien	75,714	72,446	3,268	4.3%
Branch	19,397	18,539	858	4.4%
Calhoun	65,790	63,005	2,785	4.2%
Cass	24,656	23,685	971	3.9%
Kalamazoo	132,866	128,032	4,834	3.6%
St. Joseph	29,831	28,752	1,079	3.6%
Van Buren	35,932	34,183	1,749	4.9%
Southwest Michigan	384,186	368,642	15,544	4.0%
Michigan	4,861,000	4,643,000	218,000	4.5%
USA	158,800,000	151,594,000	7,207,000	4.5%

Source: Michigan Department of Technology, Management & Budget, May 2016, Not Seasonally Adjusted



2 Getaways

1. The Inn at Harbor Shores

Relax and enjoy elegance during your stay at The Inn at Harbor Shores on the St. Joseph River and Lake Michigan waterfront.
www.innatharborshores.com/
 St. Joseph | (269) 983-1111

2. Yelton Manor Bed & Breakfast

Step into wrap-around gardens a stone's throw from the sands of South Haven beach at the Yelton Manor Bed & Breakfast, the perfect blend of elegance and period charm.
www.yeltonmanor.com
 South Haven | (269) 637-5220

6 Ice Cream

3. The Big Dipper

Whether you're craving for a classic scoop or something with a twist, The Big Dipper serves up delicious ice cream any day of the week.
www.facebook.com/The-Big-Dipper-113770661985158/
 Schoolcraft | (269) 679-4525

4. Treat Street

A longtime local favorite, Treat Street offers ice cream flavors galore in banana splits, turtle sundaes, shakes, or cones in an old-fashioned parlor!
www.ema-enterprises.com/Restaurants/Treat-Street-Oakwood-Plaza-Kalamazoo-MI
 Kalamazoo | (269) 388-5505

5. Plainwell Ice Cream

Plainwell Ice Cream ties together its infamous homemade ice cream with an incredible sense of community.
www.facebook.com/Plainwell-Ice-Cream-Co-322629069131/
 Plainwell | (269) 685-8586

6. Sherman Dairy Bar

Vendors share tips for cooking or planting as you browse jams, fine pastries and cut flowers at what has become St. Joseph's Saturday tradition.
www.shermanicecream.com/
 South Haven | (269) 637-8251

7. Captain Nemo's

Stroll down to the South Haven pier with a cone from Captain Nemo's to complete your day at the beach!
www.captain-nemos.com/
 South Haven | (269) 637-5372

8. Apple Knockers Ice Cream Parlor

Parlor scoops up authentic and homemade desserts from basic ice cream cones to The Apple Knocker sundae.
appleknockers.com/
 Vicksburg | (269) 649-1880



9 Outdoor Dining

9. Fisher Lake Inn

Family-owned Fisher Lake Inn features patio dining on the waterfront, accompanied by surf and turf.
www.cjsfisherlakeinn.com/
 Three Rivers | (269) 279-7984





10. The Idler Riverboat
A beloved South Haven attraction, The Idler Riverboat invites guests to board for a bite of summer on its docked Lake Michigan setting.
www.millenniumrestaurants.com/idlerriver/index.php
South Haven | (269) 637-8435



11. La Cantina
From a patio above the water, savor Italian cuisine as kayakers paddle by on warm days on Overlook Ismonds Pond and Maple Lake.
www.lacantinapawpaw.com/
Paw Paw | (269) 657-7033

12. Clementine's Too
A spinoff of the infamous South Haven Clementine's restaurant, Clementine's Too seats guests with a view of yachts driving by on the St. Joseph River.
www.ohmydarling.com/
South Haven | (269) 637-5171

13. Clara's on the River
Clara's on the River loves bringing people together over lunch and dinner. Boasting a 17-page menu and summer patio entertainment, Clara's has something for everyone!
www.claras.com/
Battle Creek | (269) 963-0966

14. RyeBelles Restaurant & Bar
Guests on the RyeBelles' rooftop devour stone fired pizza, seafood, and live music—not to mention summer sunsets.
www.ryebelles.com/
St. Joseph | (269) 281-0318

15. The Waterfront Restaurant
The Waterfront Restaurant welcomes you to Paw Paw Lake for a seafood dinner or Sunday morning brunch with a view.
www.waterfrontcoloma.tumblr.com/
Coloma | (269) 468-7777

16. The Union Cabaret & Grille
Imagine the Lovin' Spoonfuls hit Summer in the City playing as you watch people "walking on the sidewalk" from the Union's patio.
www.millenniumrestaurants.com/union/Kalamazoo | (269) 384-6756

17. Arcadia Ales
Located on the Kalamazoo River, Arcadia Ales invites guests out to its beer garden for some BBQ, brews and riverside lawn games!
arcadiaales.com/
Kalamazoo | (269) 276-0458



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CATALYST EDUCATION AWARDS

The Catalyst Education Awards' mission is to make Southwest Michigan globally recognized for preparing people to thrive in education and employment.

Many say that teaching is a calling. And because we couldn't agree more, we proudly support the outstanding educators who have dedicated themselves to making a difference in our children's lives — a difference that positively impacts our community. In solidarity with these teachers, principals, and schools, we proudly support education efforts in Southwest Michigan. From classroom to community, we are working to create a strong Southwest Michigan.

CATALYST TEACHER AWARD

Recognizes teachers for their passion and commitment to their profession through innovation and creativity in the classroom, and professional growth and development.

This award is for K-12th grade classroom teachers and includes \$2,500 given to the teacher and \$2,500 awarded to fund a project at the winning teacher's school.

CATALYST PRINCIPAL AWARD

Honors principals for their leadership in establishing a positive campus climate, in instructional innovation and management, and in communication and community relations.

This award is for current K-12th grade principals and includes \$2,500 to fund a project at the principal's school.

CATALYST SCHOOL OF THE YEAR AWARD

Commends a school community for commitment to student achievement enhanced by innovative programs, parent and community involvement, and professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators.

This award is for a building that serves one or more K-12th grade levels and includes \$5,000 to fund a project at the school.

Submit at www.catalystuniversity.me/recognition/education



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MADE IN (269)

COMPANY

Northfield Musical
Products

WEBSITE

northfieldinstruments.com

LOCATION

130 W. Michigan Avenue
Marshall, MI 49068

COUNTY

Calhoun

LOCAL FOOTPRINT

3,000 square feet

EMPLOYEES

10, in Marshall and
Qingdao, China

EXECUTIVE

Adrian Bagale

YEAR FOUNDED

2008

ANNUAL SALES

\$500,000

MARKETS

Professional musicians
Festivals
Performances

GLOBAL REACH

United States
China
Japan
(and more)

PRODUCT LINES

Mandolins

STRUMMING THE MODERN DAY
AMERICAN
stradivarius

STORY KEITH KEHLBECK
PHOTOS MATT CARUSO



“We came back, like most people who come back to Marshall, for family. My wife grew up here, and we like the quality of life in this picturesque little American town.”



Walking by a restored historic building in downtown Marshall, Michigan, you just might hear a few mandolin chords coming from behind the closed doors of Northfield Musical Products.

Its storefront on W. Michigan Avenue is home to the company’s Marshall headquarters, which features a workshop area and showroom. This is no ordinary music store. Here you will find racks of specialty woods for use when master grade mandolins are commissioned, a full selection of instruments for trying out the various Northfield lines, and lots of charm and history to soak in while sitting in the front room.

Northfield is developing and building mandolins right on site, and if you come by on the right day, you may be able to check out one or more of its latest creations. Why Marshall? “We came back, like most people who come back to Marshall, for family. My wife grew up here, and we like the quality of life in this picturesque little American town,” says Adrian Bagale, founder and owner of Northfield Musical Products. It probably doesn’t hurt that Michigan is home to plentiful hard and soft woods, like the types used for veneer, and that it has accessible tool, lathe, and machinist equipment used in the manufacture of parts.

Michigan also enjoys a rich history with instruments classified as strings. In the late 1800s, Orville Gibson started the Gibson Mandolin-Guitar Manufacturing Company in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Gibson was a mandolin player whose Eastern European forbears brought mandolins to America and he had the idea to make mandolins right here in the Midwest. Then, in the 1920s, an acoustical engineer, Lloyd Loar—a composer, player and inventor—designed a mandolin that was more like a violin. Northfield Musical Products was formed in 2008 with the goal of making the best possible mandolins, influenced by Lloyd Loar and the Gibson brands of the 1920s. Its product is essentially the equivalent of a modern day American Stradivarius and is sought out by a multi-national, multi-lingual group of musical enthusiasts.

Northfield may be based in Marshall, but it’s not a local business: it’s global. This international company has employees from Japan, China and the United States. The company staffs two shops—one in Qingdao, China, for the primary building of the instruments and this one in Michigan for design, testing, set up, and final detailing. As a result, someone is literally working on a Northfield mandolin nearly 24 hours each day.

Northfield produces several different body shapes at four levels of price points, including the teardrop-shaped one made from scratch in Marshall and called the Model M—M is for Marshall. The Model M is a \$2,000 instrument, but other price points can go as high as \$6,000 per unit.

One thing that really distinguishes Northfield is its use of technology. Among other approaches, Northfield has worked with hospital radiology departments to put mandolin components through a CT scanner so that it can

CONTINUED ON PAGE 44



A C U L T U R E O F
EXCELLENCE

FROM CREATING MINDSETS
TO SUSTAINABILITY —
THE WORK IS NEVER DONE

STORY HEATHER BAKER
IMAGE IVANMIKHAYLOV, ISTOCKPHOTO.COM



Every executive and business owner sets out to achieve immediate results for accelerated performance and lasting change. A few make it big, some lose what they gain, and some never even come close to achieving desired results.

Culture is the key to moving an organization from a state of toleration for the status quo to an expectation of excellence where performance and change are maximized. Culture is the difference between someone showing up for work at 7:30 a.m. or 8:01 a.m. It's not an easy ride, but when a culture of excellence is built within an organization or company, the executive or business owner creates capacity and a structure that empowers, engages and energizes his or her people.

Companies like Airbnb, Bain & Company, Guidewire, HubSpot, and Facebook get it right, according to the 2016 Best Places to Work list compiled by Glassdoor. This business-focused website annually honors companies across North America and parts of Europe; its honorees are voted by the people who know the companies best—their employees.

“Best culture.” “Incredible place to work.”
“Amazing collaborative experience.”

That's how employees at the companies, noted for their excellence on the list above, describe their place of work.

How would you describe yours?

If you find yourself not quite “there” yet—meaning that you are not ready to shout affirmative cheers from a megaphone in front of your company or organization's main entrance—don't give up.

Michele Serbenski, Associate Dean, Planning and Performance Excellence, for Western Michigan University Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine, offers insight on how to establish a

culture of excellence. Her background includes service as an alumna Baldrige examiner and former Judge for Michigan Performance Excellence. Both roles stemmed in part from her experience with the leadership team at Bronson Methodist Hospital that not only pursued, but also achieved the 2005 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. As of July 2011, in addition to strategy development and execution, Michele assumed oversight of the medical school's accreditation and continuous quality improvement processes.

CREATE MINDSETS FOR EXCELLENCE

“A work environment is a lot like a society, a little microcosm. It's just the way of life in your little society,” says Serbenski.

The difference between a high performing culture and a low performing one is a culture that is intentionally created versus one that is accidentally created. “The key thing for leaders to think about if they want the institution to be a certain way, is that they need to make culture intentional, and understand that it's their job to create the culture and foster it. Great leaders don't just wake up one day, and go, ‘Oh, that's the way we are,’” explains Serbenski.

The first step in building a corporate culture is to engage and align your people—lots of them, not just those at the C-level—in the process. “We did this at the medical school. To define what we wanted our culture to be, we engaged with

our mission? What should be our vision? What should be our values?’ We did these input sessions where we gathered all this information, and then from there we synthesized the information down. Next, we brought our leadership group, which at that time was about 40 people, and anybody who supervises anybody else altogether in a series of retreats over a year. People had said so many different ‘words’ in the process, but we boiled them down and clustered them together. From those ‘words,’ we ended up developing our mission, vision, and values,” shares Serbenski.



MICHELE SERBENSKI
ASSOCIATE DEAN, PLANNING & PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE,
WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
HOMER STRYKER M.D. SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Communication is the next step. It's not enough to simply say that you have a mission, vision, and values. It's not enough to write it down. It's not enough to say it. Everyone must live the culture and understand what their roles and responsibilities are to achieve the organization's collective goals. Michele encourages companies to communicate shared convictions in ways “that people can grab onto and understand it” whether



IF YOU FIND YOURSELF NOT QUITE “THERE” YET—MEANING THAT YOU ARE NOT READY TO SHOUT AFFIRMATIVE CHEERS FROM A MEGAPHONE IN FRONT OF YOUR COMPANY OR ORGANIZATION'S MAIN ENTRANCE—DON'T GIVE UP.

employees, students, customers, and others that we identified to be part of our world.” Figure out who you want in the room, invite them, and start the dialogue. Depending upon how geographically accessible your target audience is, you may need to supplement the process with surveys or field trips or even studies of companies that you want to emulate to get the job done.

“We didn't go in and say, ‘What should be

it's on the walls, a company handbook, or little cards that people can stick into their wallets or position on their desks as reminders.

CREATE STRATEGIES FOR EXCELLENCE

Your hiring process can set you up for success if you identify candidate talents that support your culture early in the process. Existing employees can be strong supporters of the culture



COMMUNICATING A CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE

EXPLAIN YOUR CULTURE

Clearly outline how your culture enables your business strategy and why it matters.

SET BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS

Lead by example and show how you want people to work together.

EDUCATE YOUR TEAM

Make your culture part of new hire orientation, and offer training that supports the culture to all employees year-round.

WEAVE CULTURE INTO EVERYTHING YOU DO

From how you greet customers to complete reports, reflect your culture in all actions and communications internally and externally.

SET ACCOUNTABILITY AND METRICS

Establish goals and a reporting structure that keep your team aligned and accountable for performance.

ENABLE CULTURE AMBASSADORS

Recognize your champions and let them inspire others.

CREATE OPPORTUNITIES

Let employees participate in your culture and reward innovators who take your culture boldly where it hasn't gone before.

too—especially if they were part of the process that put the mindset of excellence in place.

Once you have your team and you have your defined culture, success becomes about building skills and proficiencies to grow your business. Encouraging collaboration and rewarding flexibility helps to ward off distractions that can cloud focus on organizational vision and goals. Paying particular attention to performance also promotes clarity.

As you build your culture, put your “focus on high and middle performers, but don't ignore the low because, when you do, sometimes it frustrates the high and middle that others can get away with things,” warns Serbenski. Set high performance expectations. Then support, encourage, and reward those who master their areas. In high performance cultures, there is no place for low performers. “If low performers don't step it up, and you've tried everything as an institution to work with them or move them to the right position,” Serbenski says it's time for both the employer and employee to realize that “it's a wrong fit.” Such individuals might be low performers in your organization, but “they're going to be happier if they go someplace else where they can increase performance and possibly become middle or high performers.”

CREATE SUSTAINABILITY FOR EXCELLENCE

Once you start seeing your team deliver excellence consistently, it's time to hunker down for the long haul. Continually making excellence happen, as evidenced by “achieving desired sales, making accreditation happen, and winning awards,” takes an unwavering amount of energy and tenacity from a leader, cautions Serbenski.

Serbenski concludes, “You are never done. Hopefully, you're not always working over and over on the same things, but you're never done. Just because you worked hard for two years doesn't mean you can just let it ride on autopilot. Some people may think, ‘Hey, we got those (things) down pat, everything's good. We're a well-oiled machine here,’ but things (in the world) are changing too much. You always have to continue to ‘raise the bar.’ Competition, change in the industry, cycles of improvement, and the right thing to do, all keep you on your toes. A leader's job is never done.”

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Inside 269 MAGAZINE is content that builds our region up and strengthens our voice.

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A CONVERSATION WITH **DAN MOYLE**, CREATIVE DIRECTOR OF MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

WHAT THEY DO The space is home to the corporate offices of AmeriFirst Home Mortgage, a full-service, residential mortgage lender based in Kalamazoo and licensed in 15 states.

LOCATION 950 Trade Center Way, Kalamazoo, Michigan 49002

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES 140 employees locally. AmeriFirst employs a workforce totaling 470.

THE VIBE Looking out our windows, you may glimpse a deer or other wildlife dancing among the trees or on the surrounding greensward. This building is modern, but with an open, comfortable, welcoming feel—appropriate for space that serves as both our world headquarters for multi-state lending offices and the Kalamazoo branch.

SIZE 25,000 square feet on one floor of an 110,000-square-foot Class A+ office building, located within the Trade Centre development. We have highway visibility and access, plentiful parking, and peaceful views of natural wetlands.

BACKSTORY AmeriFirst began back in 1983 with Mark Jones and Dave Gahm and a vision. Mark and Dave wanted to do business the right way, and help turn renters into homeowners. Thirty years later, we're still working closely with first-time home buyers from throughout the Midwest and beyond. We service loans ourselves, as well as work with other financial institutions.

STORY HEATHER BAKER
IMAGES COURTESY WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

THE SPACE SAYS From the time you approach the front desk, the personal service aspect of AmeriFirst is apparent. A live receptionist greets you, and there is not a phone tree in sight. Real trees are readily apparent, as nature presents itself in views from almost any window. Immediately behind the reception desk, is our conference room, which is available for selected community meetings and by request from our staff. AmeriFirst is a “community mortgage bank.” To be helpful, we are approachable. People can come here to get a loan or even actually pay their loan. Whether they call or walk in, customers will find someone here to help them.

WE'RE NOT GOOGLE BUT... With our open space and modular cubicles, we have the opportunity to collaborate with each other and to be together as a team, no matter our respective roles. Our staff has several nice break rooms where they can decompress. We even have what we call a “quiet room” for new mothers, which is an expanding part of our workforce. When we moved here two years ago, my personal request was to have an actual studio—a controlled environment where we can produce professional videos on everything from 60-second mortgage tips to “fun” videos that help home buyers understand the process. We're not Google—we don't have ping pong tables—but the space lends itself to collaboration and a healthy work environment.

A photograph of two women sitting at a wooden table, looking at a laptop and papers. The woman on the left has dark curly hair and is wearing a yellow cardigan over a colorful patterned shirt. The woman on the right has blonde hair and is wearing glasses and a denim jacket. The image is overlaid with a vibrant watercolor splash in shades of red, orange, and purple. The word 'MIX' is written in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the image.

MIX

POWERED BY SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN FIRST

MIX Southwest Michigan believes in the **POWER OF CREATIVITY** in our community.

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Learn about upcoming mixers, seminars, workshops, and more at mixswmi.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS

September 8 Design Day

September 16 PARK(ing) Day

October 27 Stryker Tour and Reception

LET'S MIX TOGETHER to grow the **creative future of Southwest Michigan.**



PUTTING MORE THAN *a little faith* IN SUCCESS

ARMSTRONG INTERNATIONAL IS A TRUE BELIEVER

STORY CATHY KNAPP
IMAGES MATT CARUSO

Greater good. Greater profits. For many company leaders, those two pursuits are not often found down the same path, but rather present themselves to leaders when they are at a crossroads trying to outperform competition. While the path to greater profits is the one more traveled, it has more and more led to failed careers, corporate bankruptcies and global financial crises.

Now, it's the virtuous path that seems to be picking up corporate travelers.

"As companies work to reposition themselves in the global marketplace, more leaders are looking to enrich their mission and re-evaluate the ways in which they do business. In turn, they are dedicating themselves to cultivating a corporate culture rooted in virtue, character and ethics," opens the PBS documentary *Doing Virtuous Business*.

The film is based on Theodore Roosevelt Malloch's book,

Spiritual Enterprise. In his book, Malloch, a research professor for the Spiritual Capital Initiative at Yale University, examines how management strategies centered on time-tested virtues can strengthen a company's relationships both internally and externally and improve its bottom line. The virtues Malloch extolls include compassion, courage, discipline, faith, forgiveness, generosity, gratitude, honesty, and more. Leaders at companies like Chick-fil-A, Tyson Foods, ServiceMaster, and Whole Foods are true believers that following these virtues contributed to their respective companies' successes.

Though not featured in this documentary, Armstrong International in Three Rivers, Michigan has its own unique story to tell about a company practicing the virtue of faith.

Do Unto Others as You Would Have Them Do Unto You

The late David M. Armstrong, former CEO and President of Armstrong Global Holdings, was quoted as saying, "Armstrong is a faith-based business. Period. No debates, no apologies, and no second guessing." He added, "If the company conducts itself according to the dictates of an unwavering faith in God, family, and job, and if we observe the Golden Rule in

our dealings with all those we encounter, it follows that doing business with Armstrong will be an enjoyable experience. That is our goal.”

Founded in Three Rivers in 1900, Armstrong International is a private, fifth-generation family-owned company. Armstrong manufactures steam, liquid, and air products that optimize utility systems for the higher education, healthcare, hospitality, refinery, food and beverage, pharmaceutical, and power industries. Armstrong’s global enterprise now has more than 2,000 employees serving the world from manufacturing, sales, and seminar centers located throughout North America, Europe, Asia, and the subcontinent of India.

With the growth it has experienced, the company still remains a family culture rooted in faith. It proudly communicates its list of core values: honesty, fairness,



respect, trust, loyalty, dignity, hard work, kindness, and fearlessness.

“We believe both the employee and the company have a crucial need to know themselves and each other and to live each day in accordance with these core values,” David Armstrong said.

Current CEO and President Patrick B. Armstrong says, “The steadfast commitment and practice of our core values by our employees have guided Armstrong through difficult times and prosperous times spanning more than a century. I pledge to uphold these values and continue the legacy of leadership that will serve as a lasting foundation for centuries to come.”

Just how serious is the company about being a faith-based business? It is so serious that it created the full-time position of Corporate Chaplain. While Armstrong’s Human Resources department can provide traditional employee assistance programs that offer counseling for challenges involving financial, legal, substance abuse, and other issues, they are also offered the additional benefit of working in conjunction with the Chaplaincy program.

“Ours is an employee care program,” says Corporate Chaplain Dan Lane. “It’s on hand. We’re here. It’s a ministry of presence.”

Lane explains that at any given time, fifteen percent of the people in any corporation are in a crisis. He recounts a couple who mourned a failed pregnancy, a man who suffered a heart attack, and a father who lost his young daughter to cancer. Lane helps and supports all through these difficult times so they can emerge on the other side and be productive again. “The company is going to benefit from that,” Lane says.

Through the Chaplain’s office, the company operates a benevolence fund that helps existing workers, their families, and retirees. Likewise, this spirit of generosity has become ingrained in the employees. Individuals have donated their own vacation time to other employees who need to take time away from work

during a family crisis. The work family cares about and looks out for each other.

“It’s an ‘us’ company not a ‘me’ company,” says Lane.

Armstrong’s Three Rivers’ facility is also home to a peaceful chapel complete with a cross, simple altar, and three rows of wooden pews flanking a center aisle.

“The workers can go to it at any time,” says Lane. “They can leave their machines or their offices if they’re stressed. I can meet them here or they can sit here alone. They can sit and gather their thoughts before they go back to work.”

Lane leads an active Bible study group here every Wednesday that fills up the small space. His assistant also heads up a women’s ministry with one of the manager’s wives. Four marriages have taken place in the chapel so far. “I had 46 people in there at one time for a wedding,” Lane chuckles fondly remembering the occasion. Sensing the need for more space to accommodate these types of activities, the Armstrong family has purchased property down the road that was once the site of an old apple orchard. It’s a serene, park-like setting and they plan to someday build a stone chapel there for the employees.

A Faith-based Business Advantage

A faith-based culture fosters dedication not only with employees. Armstrong’s company leaders say being faith-based has translated into a business advantage with its clients, too. It comes down to trust. Companies want to do business with companies they can trust and with whom they have strong relationships.

Lane shares a story about Fred Kemp, a retired Armstrong employee with whom the company had made a promise. In short, Kemp’s house was adjacent to the manufacturing facility. He’d sold the house to the company for its future growth plans with the handshake understanding that he could remain living there as long as he liked. As the company grew and needed to expand, an efficiency expert recommended to the president that the house be torn down to accommodate the expansion. The president vetoed the plan. Kemp was not yet ready to leave his home.

Company leaders told this story to executives at a Fortune 100 corporation with whom they were negotiating a contract. Upon hearing this example of integrity, the prospects asked where they could sign. They wanted to do business with Armstrong.


Building a Culture of Ethics

How did Armstrong achieve the culture that it has today and how does the company maintain it?

Lane says, “It takes one agent of change to start building a culture. It takes one person to stand up. And it takes that one agent of change that asks are you going to join me? Then, you’ve got two agents of change and then it keeps growing like that. But it does take that one champion.”

David Armstrong once said, “No, you don’t have to be a Christian to thrive at Armstrong. But, you must have faith. You must devote yourself to what we believe in and the principles on which we stand. Surviving and thriving at Armstrong depends on it.”

Approaching business from the viewpoint of the greater good, Armstrong has proven that taking the virtuous path in its business pursuits has yielded a culture characterized by both strong ethics and bonding in its workplace. That culture has in turn positively impacted its bottom line to drive success for more than a century. It’s good to be good.

A woman with short blonde hair, wearing a teal lace top, is seen from the side, speaking at a podium in a church. The background features a white altar cloth and a chandelier. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

“If the company conducts itself according to the dictates of an unwavering faith in God, family, and job, and if we observe the Golden Rule in our dealings with all those we encounter, it follows that doing business with Armstrong will be an enjoyable experience. That is our goal.”



ENJOY

STORY HEATHER BAKER
IMAGE COURTESY OF JON
GORDON & NATALY-NETE
ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

THE SCIENCE OF PHYSICS EXPLAINS ENERGY AS THE CAPACITY OR POWER TO DO WORK. IT CAN BE SEEN BY THE HUMAN EYE WHEN ONE OBJECT MAKES ANOTHER MOVE OR CHANGE WITH THE APPLICATION OF FORCE. ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED OR DESTROYED AS SIR ISAAC NEWTON POINTED OUT FOR US, BUT IT CAN BE TRANSFORMED FROM ONE TYPE TO ANOTHER.

Energy exists in many forms. Kinetic energy moves objects. Thermal energy transfers heat. The movement of electrons causes electrical energy. Chemical energy brings change through interaction. Light carries radiant energy. Moving air produces sound energy. Changing atoms emit nuclear energy.

There's also potential energy. Think of a copy of *War and Peace* lying on a table. It has potential energy. If a person walks by and knocks it off the table, the interaction between the book's weight and its acceleration towards the floor because of gravity gives the volume kinetic energy. Energy from one object, the book, was transformed because of the action of another, the person.

Leaders take advantage of potential energy. The great ones have both the ability to take the potential of a team or group and put it into motion to achieve a specific purpose or goal, as

Camp, and *The Carpenter*, offers a different metaphor for living a life of energy and positivity—a life with purpose. “You are the driver of your bus, and therefore the most qualified to get that bus moving from where it is now to where you want it to go. No one else can drive it for you.” “Your bus” can be a project at work or home, a relationship or even a personal passion or hobby.

GET OUT THE MAP

When leaders know where they are going, they can get their bus headed in the right direction. It starts with desire and knowing what you want. Putting your hands on the wheel, turning the ignition on, and stepping on the gas is not enough. Vision, too, is critical in getting there. Vision is more than seeing the end destination; it is seeing all the steps that you need to take to get where you want to go.

Gordon penned *The Energy Bus* to get people moving in the right direction. He wrote it in three and a half weeks of what he calls, “God-inspired words.” When it was finished, he brought it to an agent, who took it to over 30 publishers—and every one rejected it. “I couldn't give up. I had a vision and I kept on working towards it. Finally, John Wiley & Sons agreed to publish the book. Sometimes we have to step out and make our vision happen. So I went on a self-funded 28-city book tour.”

Gordon's dream, or desire, was to share his energy through his book. And that's what happened. “People began sharing the book, passing it around. Coaches shared it with other coaches. I started working with school districts, and teachers started

HOP ON BOARD JON GORDON'S “ENERGY BUS”

THE RIDE

well as spur others into action with their words and actions. Leadership motivates people and activates them to achieve a worthwhile purpose. Leaders such as Nelson Mandela, Winston Churchill, Eva Perón, and Martin Luther King Jr. had purpose and energy. Purpose gives leaders energy, and their energy makes teams deliver results.

Bestselling author Jon Gordon, whose works include *The Energy Bus*, *Soup*, *The No Complaining Rule*, *Training*

using it in their schools. Then it caught on with businesses, and I started working with them.”

He is a real-life example of someone transferring their own energy. Riding alone can be lonely. You need to share your energy with others and bring them along on your journey. Energy attracts others and energizes them during the ride. Gordon should know. And, he's had a lot of “riders.” Today, the impressive list of clientele seeking out his business

consulting practice includes the Atlanta Falcons, LA Clippers, Pittsburgh Pirates, Campbell Soup, Wells Fargo, Northwestern Mutual, Publix, Southwest Airlines, Bayer, and West Point Academy. Gordon and his tips have been featured on The Today Show, CNN, Fox and Friends, and in numerous magazines and newspapers.

NO HITCHHIKERS ALLOWED

Gordon warns not to let everyone on the bus. “Not everyone is going to share your vision, and they will suck your energy—be ‘energy vampires’—if you let them. As a leader, your positive energy must be greater than all the negativity. Your certainty, belief, and faith must be greater than all the negativity and doubt.”

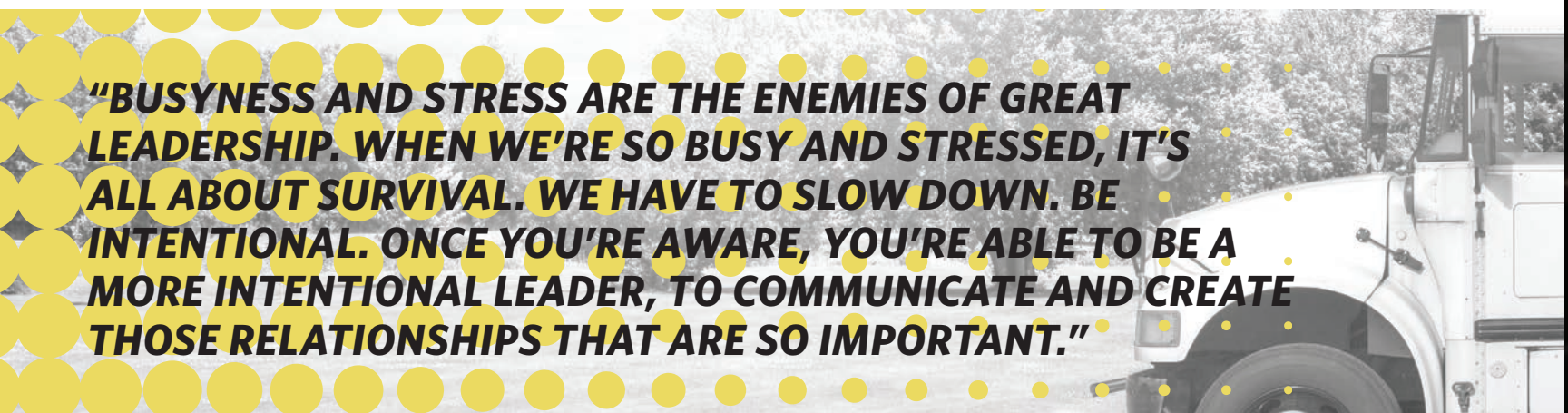
“We live in a world that loves to focus on the fruit of the tree—outcomes and numbers and stock-prices and wins and losses. But if we focus on the fruit and we ignore the root, what happens? The tree dies. If we invest in that root and we make it our number one priority, then we always have a great supply of fruit. So culture is your root. As leaders, you have to build this culture by what you

communication, negativity fills the gap. Use your horns and signals.

“Busyness and stress are the enemies of great leadership. When we’re so busy and stressed, it’s all about survival. We have to slow down. Be intentional. Once you’re aware, you’re able to be a more intentional leader, to communicate and create those relationships that are so important. Even more important, you’re able to connect. Connection is everything. Positive relationships are the difference between an average team and a great team. Then as part of those relationships, the next word that leaders live and breathe is that they serve. We have to serve. You don’t have to be great to serve, but you have to serve to be great. This is something I’ve had to learn, honestly, in my own life.”

SO WHAT IS YOUR PURPOSE?

While you’re driving your bus, what drives you? “Purpose is the ultimate fuel for your life and career,” says Gordon. “When you and your bus are driven by purpose, you find the extraordinary in the ordinary, the passion in the mundane and the excitement in the everyday.” Purpose keeps your personal



“BUSYNESS AND STRESS ARE THE ENEMIES OF GREAT LEADERSHIP. WHEN WE’RE SO BUSY AND STRESSED, IT’S ALL ABOUT SURVIVAL. WE HAVE TO SLOW DOWN. BE INTENTIONAL. ONCE YOU’RE AWARE, YOU’RE ABLE TO BE A MORE INTENTIONAL LEADER, TO COMMUNICATE AND CREATE THOSE RELATIONSHIPS THAT ARE SO IMPORTANT.”

think, by what you say, and by what you do on a daily basis. Culture drives expectations and beliefs. Expectations and beliefs drive behaviors. Behaviors drive habits, and habits ultimately create the future.”

Too much time spent looking in rearview mirrors will veer your bus off course. Don’t be afraid to let off “passengers” who are slowing you down. Don’t be afraid of bumps in the road, either.

Returning to his fruit tree analogy, Gordon explains, “As you’re growing as a leader, you will be pruned. If you’ve ever seen a bush that’s been pruned, it looks like it’s been destroyed, but it hasn’t. The pruning helps it grow more fully. It’s the same with us. We look like our life has been destroyed by a mistake, failure, or setback. It looks like we’re done, but no. It’s not meant to destroy us, it’s meant to help us grow more fully. Our perspective during the growth stage—and pruning—determines whether we move to the harvest stage, the final stage where we receive the fruit of our efforts. Most people don’t come back from the pruning because they think they’ve been destroyed. But that challenge is not just a challenge; it’s an opportunity to learn, grow, improve, and get better.”

Gordon notes that teams that have great relationships have great resilience. Most teams break down because of poor communication, and when there’s no

gas tank filled and gets you to the next station when you are running on empty. Purpose helps you get through that important client presentation when you’ve been up all night with your new baby. Purpose is what ultimately gets you to your destination.

ENJOY THE RIDE

One of Gordon’s favorite words is “meraki” which roughly in Greek translates as: to do something with love, to do something with soul, to do something with creativity, to leave a piece of yourself in your work, to leave something behind. Don’t drive the bus like you’re in “white knuckle” traffic on Interstate 405 in Southern California at 5:00 pm on Friday. He asks, “What are you leaving behind with your leadership? What legacy are you leaving? Knowing how you want to be remembered helps you decide how to live today.”

“Just think about it. What if everyone said, ‘I’m going to care more?’ What if every leader were driven by purpose, sharing their vision, leading with optimism, loving, serving, and caring with a greater purpose? Think about the impact that they will have. Think about the difference that they will make. Great leaders, that’s what they do differently.”

Smile. And don’t forget to enjoy the scenery.

(269) How did I get here?

The early years and the Boy Scouts

“Growing up in Virginia and the Washington D.C. area, I worked in Bethesda, Maryland, at the regional Boy Scouts of America headquarters. I didn’t make very much money, but it was important to have something as I went through school. Later, having worked and volunteered for the Boy Scouts, I received a distinguished service award from them. That was quite an honor, and I’ll never forget how much value I received over the years from the Scouts. I learned more from them than from anything in my younger years.”

1971-1974 | Attended and graduated from George Mason University

“Two wonderful things happened to me at George Mason University. After getting my undergraduate diploma, I stayed with George Mason to get my MBA. The second great thing was meeting my future wife, Donna. We married in 1976, and that is one of the luckiest things in my life.”

1977 | Began career at Ford Motor Company

“I love cars. So, it was fortunate that I ended up working at Ford, in various capacities, for 22 years. I started out in product development finance in the research center. That doesn’t sound very exciting, and it wasn’t, but despite a frugal work setting, I fell in love with Ford right away. Eventually, I had a mixture of corporate assignments throughout the company.”

1996-1999 | Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer at Visteon

“Working at Ford’s Visteon unit culminated in Visteon being spun off in 2000. Instead of going with the public Visteon, however, I stayed at Ford.”

1999-2002 | The Kellogg Company

“I loved Ford and never thought I’d leave. In 1999, however, I had an opportunity to join The Kellogg Company as their CFO. With stock prices dropping and changing consumer demographics, the team set about making change, introducing new products like Special K with Red Berries, adding research and development capabilities, improving processes,

TOM WEBB

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT & CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER OF CMS ENERGY

and diversifying the company’s portfolio with the acquisition of Keebler. At the time, it was the largest acquisition ever in the food industry.”

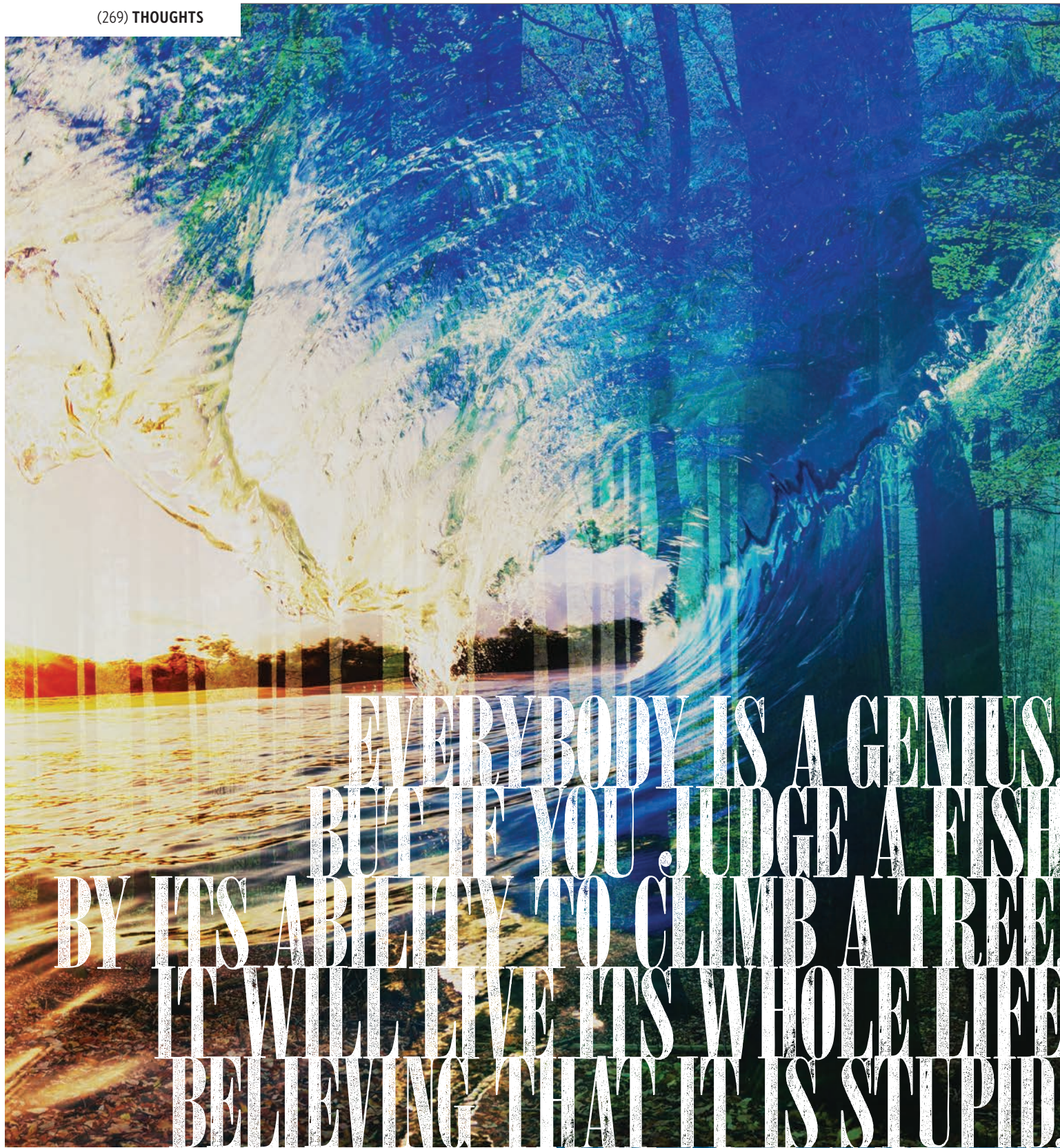
2002 | Joined CMS Energy as Executive Vice President and CFO:

“In the spring of 2002, CMS went through a change in leadership, and its new board chair reached out to me. What I thought was merely a request for advice and ideas turned out to be an offer to help CMS get back on track. By 2005, CMS sold off all of its international operations and the bulk of its U.S. operations that weren’t helpful to the utility. Since then, the company has been on the path of trying to do a lot better for its customers and its investors, improving liquidity, reducing debt, and bringing value through improved dividends and increased competitiveness.”

Better than we found it

“One of our employee values at CMS is that we try every day to leave our communities better than we found them. That’s a little bit of a theme that has been present throughout my life. I would never have predicted any of this. I ended up having a career at four Fortune 500 companies—Ford, Visteon, Kellogg, and CMS—all in a small area of Michigan. Ultimately, however, it’s not really about me. The strength and beauty of Michigan and its people are what really motivate me each day. For that, I’m truly thankful.”

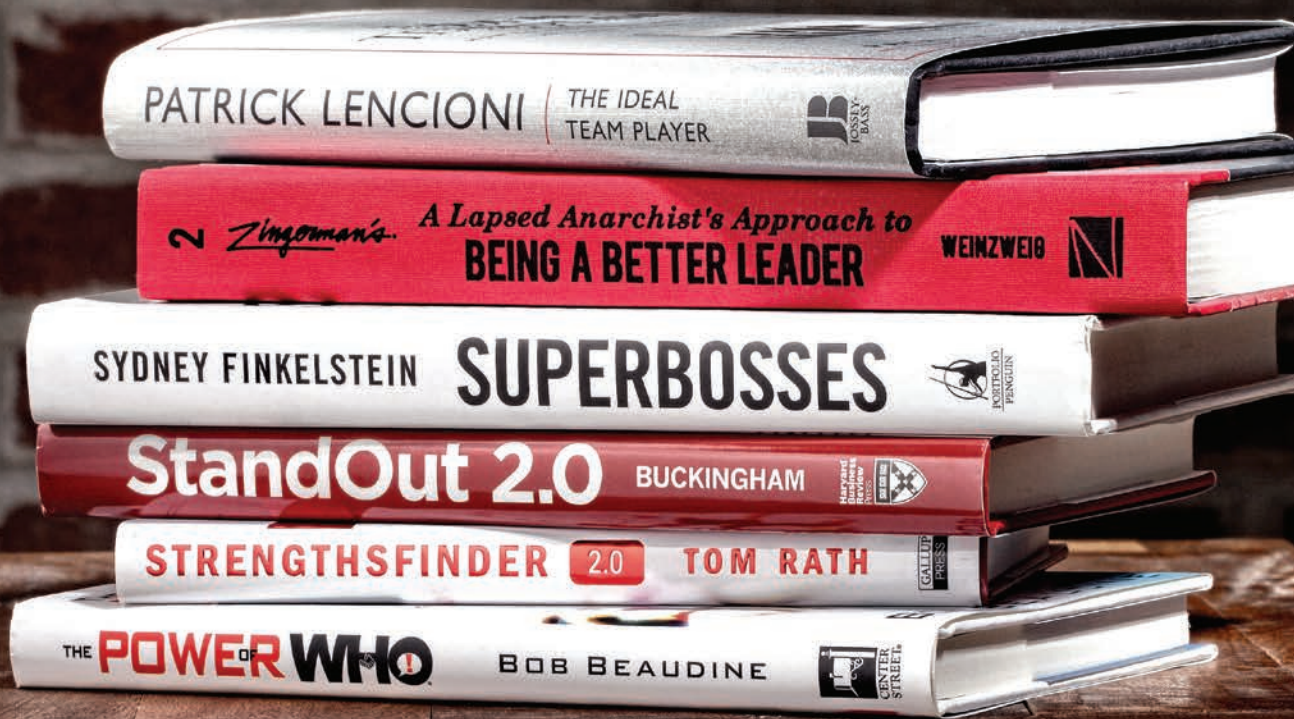
STORY KEITH KEHLBECK
IMAGE MATT CARUSO



EVERYBODY IS A GENIUS.
BUT IF YOU JUDGE A FISH
BY ITS ABILITY TO CLIMB A TREE,
IT WILL LIVE ITS WHOLE LIFE
BELIEVING THAT IT IS STUPID.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

(269) Reads



The Ideal Team Player:
How to Recognize and
Cultivate the Three
Essentials Virtues
Patrick Lencioni

**A Lapsed Anarchist's
Approach to Being a
Better Leader**
Ari Weinzwieg

**Superbosses: How
Exceptional Leaders
Master the Flow of Talent**
Sydney Finkelstein

**StandOut 2.0: Assess
Your Strengths. Find
Your Edge. Win at Work.**
Marcus Buckingham

StrengthsFinder 2.0
Tom Rath

The Power of Who
Bob Beaudine

Selecting Great Players

THE BOARDROOM IS A LONG WAY FROM THE KICKBALL DIAMOND

Remember how team captains selected kickball teams during recess?

Taking the next player available with the strongest kick might have worked on the playground but not in today's boardroom. Whether you are looking to identify a new teammate or be on a new team, you will be ready to take on that next interview with this batch of good reads. Bob Beaudine's *The Power of Who* has the potential to unleash your dream and the job to go with it. For those who like a good story, Patrick Lencioni never disappoints with his realistic fable of a corporate team in its desperate quest to survive. Grab a copy to uncover

how the leadership team at fictional Valley Builders systematically identifies three virtues held by their very best employees to guide their search for candidates that "fit." If you're looking to double impact, then *StandOut 2.0* and *StrengthsFinder 2.0* unveil how to get the most out of talents to multiply the power of both an individual and a team. Already got your team together? Then Sydney Finkelstein's *Superbosses* or Ari Weinzwieg's *Being a Better Leader* lay the groundwork for improving your leadership. Our reads promise a little motivational kick! The rest is up to you.

IMAGE BARRY ELZ

Around (269)



What 'SUP? Grab a paddle and find out!

THIRD COAST PADDLING
241 E. MAIN STREET
BENTON HARBOR, MI 49022



IMAGES COURTESY OF
THIRD COAST PADDLING

The paddleboard phenomenon is making waves on Michigan's rivers and lakes. The doors of Third Coast Paddling, located on East Main Street in Benton Harbor, are wide open to help enthusiasts get up on a board and glide around Southwest Michigan's waterways.

Its owner Ryan Gerard, who also operates Third Coast Surf Shop with locations in St. Joseph and New Buffalo, aims to enable the growing number of paddlers in our region.

Stand-up Paddleboards (SUPs) are oversized, beginner-friendly boards used with long, canoe-like paddles. They are ideal for any age or skill level, and, like kayaks, allow paddlers to explore any body of water at their own pace.

"Stand-up paddleboarding comes from Hawaii, from surfing, where the surfers and the local beach boys would take tourists out on these giant surf boards and paddle them around. It progressed from there, as these guys were out cruising around on boards made specifically for stand-up paddling. Now, you can fish off of them; people race them; people go on camping trips off the boards. It's very similar to kayaking in

that sense," says Gerard.

Third Coast opened its first surf shop in New Buffalo in 2005, renting surf boards and kayaks. "I learned to surf on the Great Lakes in 1998 and fell in love with it. I moved to California, worked in the surf industry out there, and then came back to Michigan for school. I stayed and eventually, opened the surf shop." Today, Third Coast operates four locations, including the paddling store in Benton Harbor, which opened this spring.

You don't have to be a surfer to paddle. "People of all ages can paddle. My four-year-old is already up on a board. It's really cool in the sense that it's easy for most people to do, assuming they're on the right equipment, the right board. Just basic paddling is a nice core workout, but you can still go at an easy pace, or you can really get into it and push harder and get a true workout." Group events are popular, and Third Coast can outfit groups of up to 70 people like Boy Scout troops to church groups or office outings.

Gerard advises, "Try it, you'll like it. For me, I think it's simple things like my wife and I going on the river, with just the calmness and the tranquility. It's peaceful, it's fun." Start paddling.

All Hands on Deck!

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Three Rivers | St. Joseph County

10 NEW JOBS

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Sturgis | St. Joseph County

12 NEW JOBS

Clark Logic

clarklogic.com

White Pigeon | St. Joseph County

8 NEW JOBS

IMAGE STEVENZZ
ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

The competition for available workers is heating up as Southwest Michigan sails into late summer! “Jobless rates in both the metro and non-metro counties of Southwest Michigan are below 2015 levels in April 2016 by 0.6 and 0.7 percentage points, respectively,” says Dr. Leonidas Murembya, State Coordinator of Regional Economic Research for the Michigan Department of Technology Management & Budget. With more people employed that means companies are competing to attract workers to meet increased consumer demands.

This is great news for the regional economy as more residents are headed to work in recently created jobs across the seven counties in Southwest Michigan. Local economic development organizations—Branch County Economic Growth Alliance, Southwest Michigan Economic Growth Alliance, Kinexus, and Southwest Michigan First—helped these regional communities sail to the finish line in their quest to bring more jobs to the region.



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THE HUMAN CAPITAL

innovative talent development in Southwest Michigan, the region's potential for becoming a talent-focused region is there with post-secondary schools testing the talent waters. At the Kalamazoo Valley Community College Student Success Center, students tap into layered and customized talent improvement tools designed to help them find and develop their strength and then match that to the work place. Piloted in 2007, its foundation is a 177-question test administered early in school to gauge strengths and interests. Students also link to a comprehensive website with portals to help them further grow and apply their talent. They are supported along the way by counselors and advisers to guide their journey through school toward the work place.



KEN BARR JR
DIRECTOR OF STUDENT STRENGTHS DEVELOPMENT, KALAMAZOO VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

“That’s the most important part,” says Ken Barr, Jr., Director of Student Strengths Development for the center. “If you never had that dialogue, it would be like reading the Spanish book, the first chapter and never interacting with anyone. Students have support throughout their entire academic career. Students discover in a very specific way what their natural gifts are. It’s transformational in the way students see themselves.”

Places that focus on the talent of their population in conjunction with the economic prosperity of the region can impact the quality of life of the citizens. And according to Gallup, communities and regions that focus on employee engagement withstand, even thrive in, tough economic times. While the social and community impact are critical for the long term viability of the region, a focus on engaged talent affects the bottom line of those that participate. According to Ann Arbor-based researcher John Baldoni, who is a consultant, coach, author, speaker and global practice chair of Leadership Development at N2 Growth, talent-focused regions can expect:

- 22 percent productivity increase
- 65 percent lower turnover
- 25 percent fewer sick days
- 48 percent fewer accidents

- 41 percent safer for hospital patents
- 10 percent more profitability

The global quest for brain power leaves regions like Southwest Michigan with the challenge to produce talent for the future if they want to sustain and grow. And the recent evidence is clear: other regions, even states like Rhode Island, are developing dynamic, talent-driven economies at a pace that is out of the gates ahead of Southwest Michigan.

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result is what we call “Community Excellence.” Schools, law enforcement, hospitals, and companies can put a community on the path of sustained excellence by identifying high performance in all roles across organizations within their communities. Some create shared employment search banks with interview results or hold best practice sessions. Ideally, there is a “bus” that’s the right fit for everyone. If you have companies with great cultures working together, you get great communities.



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STRUMMING THE MODERN DAY STRADIVARIUS

measure the density of the wood, as you would normally measure bone density. The result is a product that has a reputation for quality and consistency—hallmarks of the Northfield brand.

“Imagine you buy this ‘thing’ for \$6,000. You live in Switzerland. You pay us. You’ve never even held that mandolin in your hand. It’s got to show up. It’s got to be awesome. And, it’s got to be like the sound reference that you got off of our website,” observes Bagale.

The proof may, in fact, be “in the pudding.” There are many players using Northfield instruments throughout the country. Some of them are multiple Grammy award winners; some of them are just good pickers who have come across the instruments at festivals and performances. The list of players using Northfield mandolins is growing, as is the affinity for acoustic music, perhaps because it’s accessible in the same ways that microbrews have become. People are attracted to craft and interested in the way things are made.

Quality, not quantity, is definitely the approach taken by Northfield. “We want our company to be known for our quality and consistency. Each instrument is built with an exacting approach. We feel like we’ve developed our instruments to the point that they have a character in tone and aesthetics, and we want to maintain that in each instrument. We aspire to make the best instruments, not the most,” continues Bagale.

By creatively incorporating place, tradition, technology and craft, Northfield is essentially building a better “old world” instrument. It’s just made “new world” here in Southwest Michigan.



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COVER STORY VIEWPOINT

engaged and highly satisfied. Not bad at first glance. But what has been important to me is that we continually improve on this and that we use the data to make us better. And to that end,

we have seen continually improvement with our most recent survey reaching 80 percent. Great progress and it wouldn't be possible without the input from our employees and the engagement of our culture.

And to support continuous culture building, we run a "Champion Task Force" with representatives from all of our locations to oversee and come up with new culture-building ideas. As example, every employee is equipped with a pad of "Diamond Drops" that have our value statement printed on them. Employees utilize these to recognize someone doing something great with a handwritten note. Anyone can write a "Diamond Drop" to anyone else to recognize extraordinary effort. Peer-nominated "Champion of Excellence PRIDE Awards" are presented throughout the company on a quarterly basis. In many cases, family members join in for these awards at employee luncheons to surprise the winners. It is important for our employees to feel in on things happening across the group. We communicate with a monthly video where I highlight things happening across

the organization. We recognize individuals, dealership accomplishments, and more in these videos. We run competitions for our service advisors, service technicians, and sales consultants to hit the status of the "President's Club," and have fun competitions for our finance managers and other departments as well. Throughout the year, you will find our dealership doing many after work activities as a team such as baseball games, golf outings, sporting events, casino nights, bowling, and many more. And at the end of the year, we reward our employees with a first class Zeigler holiday party at the Radisson Plaza Hotel complete with dinner, fun events, a DJ, and live band.

We have many examples of people who have taken on more responsibilities and been promoted from within. Why? We attribute this to their individual talent, training, and development and our commitment to building the right culture. The opportunities we are able to give our team members are what makes it all worthwhile for me. It's why I do what I do. It's why we keep growing!

More about the **Zeigler Auto Group** services and story can be found at www.zeigler.com.

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WHY DOES TALENT MATTER?

*Because people matter
more than anything else.*



IMAGES

BARRY ELZ, GARY SHOOK

This time of the year college football coaches scour the nation and now the globe looking for the most talented players, the people that will give their teams the greatest chance of winning.

Coaches travel from small town to big city, from rich and poor neighborhoods. They simply want the best regardless of heritage, family, religious preference, or looks. Great coaches and great programs understand that it is about talent not about where the person starts from.

The same holds true for the best businesses, churches, charities, and governments. They understand that for people, organizations, and communities to be successful they must be a meritocracy. They must seek and secure the best people for their teams.

Here is the secret, everybody has talents. Everyone has strengths. The difference between athletes and the rest of us is that athletes have measures that clearly highlight their strengths

“Here is the secret, everybody has talents. Everyone has strengths.”

and understand how those measures compare to the best. Athletes have

coaches who understand the measures and know what actions to take to enhance the player’s performance and inversely what measures are so low that they preclude that person from ever excelling at that sport—not from excelling at life, not from excelling at another sport, but what the talent bar looks like for their sport, their business, their organization.

What if every person knew what their strengths were? What if they knew what they were hardwired to excel at but for the lack of coaching could be incredible at? What if every man, woman, and child understood how they were hardwired and how they could succeed and thrive. What if we as a region made a decision that the people in our region were too precious

to waste their talents? What if we as a community searched in our region for the best talent regardless of neighborhood or school or background?

We can do all of those. It will not be easy. It is not a short term fix. But as we have read in this issue, it can be done. The state of Rhode Island—a place larger in population and geography, a place with economic disparity and diversity similar to ours, a place that lacks many of the advantages that we embrace in Southwest Michigan—is well on its way to becoming the first state in our nation to focus on discovering and developing the strengths and talents of all of its people. We can be the first region in the nation to do the same.

I believe it is our only choice. Our people are our most precious resource and we cannot take it for granted. We would never plant a forest of trees and then only water and feed part of it. That would be insane. But we do this with people every day. As we read in the June issue of *269 MAGAZINE*, we are in a people crisis. The Southwest Michigan region has a shortage of working age people, and we have fewer Millennials coming into the workforce than our peers. Simply said, we will not be able to compete in the future if we do not find a way for more people to participate in our economy in positions that match their strengths and talents.

Let me ask you this: as we approach the kick off of another college football season, do you want the players selected to play based on where they went to school, or who their parents were, or what their major is? Or do you want them selected on who gives the team the highest chance to win? Now ask yourself: are you holding your business, church, government, or charity to the same standards?

Why not?

Ron Kitchens, Publisher

AT A CROSSROADS?
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