

Food for Thought

All Electronic Annual Enrollment for Benefits

The July Annual Enrollment period is rapidly approaching. July 1-31 is your once-a-year opportunity to review your A&M System benefit programs and make any needed changes, which will become effective on September 1, 2007.

This year all active, benefit eligible TAES, TCE and COALS employees will receive Annual Enrollment booklets and make enrollment changes electronically via HRConnect. Employees will receive an email letting them know when the new plan information is available. All retirees and COBRA participants will be mailed a paper Personal Benefit Summary letter and Annual Enrollment booklet to their home address. Retirees also have the option of making their changes via HRConnect.

Annual Enrollment booklets, the meeting schedule and carrier power point presentations will be made available on-line as soon as the premiums have been determined. There are few plan design changes anticipated.

— Jan Kyles

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Lets Say Thanks

If you go to the website at www.lets saythanks.com you can pick out a thank you card and Xerox will print it and it will be sent to a soldier who is currently serving in Iraq. You can't pick out who gets it, but it will go to some member of the armed services.

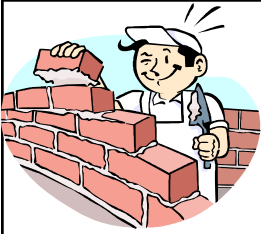
How AMAZING it would be if we could get everyone we know to send one!!!! This is a great site. Please send a card. It is FREE and it will only take a few seconds. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the soldiers received a bunch of these? Whether you are for or against the war, our guys and gals over there need to know we are behind them.

— Gloria Schwind

Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.

— Albert Einstein

Stuck in a Rut?



Stuck in a rut? Have a problem? Don't know where to start?

We have all had times in our lives – at work and personally – when a problem needs to be fixed, a process we are following just isn't working or, a big project looms ahead that we just can't figure out where to start? Perhaps it is time to break it up – if it's got more than three components or steps, there is a solution.



Michael Bungay Stanier, author of the book *Get Unstuck & Get Going* suggests, when faced with a problem of this sort, you try this exercise.

All you need is a pen and paper and these questions (in no particular order):

- What can I eliminate?
- What can I add?
- What can I shrink?
- What can I increase?
- What can I make faster?
- What can I make slower?
- What can I make cheaper?
- What can I make more luxurious?
- What can I reverse?
- What colour or texture or shape can I change?



Here's what to do ...

Think about the problem you need to change in some way.

Break it down in as many specific steps or components as you can articulate. The more distinct and specific you can make each step, the better. You should aim for at least 20 steps – even better, aim for 50-70,100!

Now you get to play with each smaller piece of your problem. You will notice that you are immediately drawn to certain aspects. Start there and apply some of the change questions to that process.

But don't forget to look at the other pieces too. They might be full of potential. For each step, also ask yourself 'Why?' and generate lots of possible changes ...

And then focus on the key changes you would like to make.

Watch out for road blocks – barriers to your progress....

Continued on page 5, see "Stuck"

*Reflect upon your blessings, of which every man has plenty,
not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some.*

— Charles Dickens



All Aboard the Learning Central Line!

TTVN

(Last Tuesday each month, 10:00—12:00)

May 29	HR Skills for Supervisors — Steve Schulze
June 26	Annual Enrollment—Benefits — Jan Kyles
July 10	Annual Enrollment—Benefits — Jan Kyles
July 17	Annual Enrollment—Benefits — Jan Kyles

TTVN sites are listed at <http://ttvn.tamu.edu/schedule/default.htm>. Select the date of the training; the Event is listed as “AG HR Training”.

FRIDAY ONLINE

(Friday mornings, 9:00—10:30)

June 1 Marketing — Elizabeth Gregory

To register, go to <http://eit.tamu.edu/centra.html>

HR CONNECT TRAINING COURSES

<http://sso.tamu.edu>

Position Descriptions *NEW* -- Overview of position descriptions, including what a position description is and how they're used.

Managing Employee Performance

Positive Management of Performance Problems

Using GreatJobs for Position Descriptions and Performance Evaluations

Frequently Asked Questions -- <http://aqhr.tamu.edu/employmentfaq.htm>

Centra Symposium Recordings

Browse to <http://eit.tamu.edu/centra.html>

Click on “Public Recordings”.

Enter the topic for which you are searching (“performance evaluation” or “position description”) and click on the “search” button to the right.

Click on “Playback” to the right of the presentation you would like to view.

Performance Management

Discipline Without Punishment, Dick Grote -- <http://www.groteconsulting.com/resources/books/book-discipline-without-punishment.asp>

Discussing Performance (CRM) 2001 CD, VHS & Guide

Self Esteem & Peak Performance (Career Track) 6 CD's

— Beverley Rose

Helpful Websites

Human Resources - <http://aghr.tamu.edu/>

Ag Program Directory - <http://agdirectory.tamu.edu/>

A&M System Online

The Newsletter for A&M System

Employees and Retirees) - <http://tamus.edu/systemwide/>

Benefits - <http://aghr.tamu.edu/benefits.htm>

Dictionary - <http://dictionary.reference.com/>

Employment

Posters - <http://hrtoolbox.tamu.edu/>

GreatJobs - <http://greatjobs.tamu.edu>

Forms (Alpha List) - <http://agservices.tamu.edu/Forms/forms-alfa.htm>

HR Connect - <http://sso.tamu.edu>

LeaveTraq - <http://sso.tamu.edu>

Online Employee

Processing - <http://aghr.tamu.edu/processing.htm>

Payroll - <http://aghr.tamu.edu/pay.htm>

Policies, Procedures

& Forms - <http://aghr.tamu.edu/pol.htm>

Selective Service Registration

Verification - http://www4.sss.gov/regver/verification_nc.asp

Single Sign On - <http://sso.tamu.edu/>

Zip Code

Did you know...?

The strength of early lasers was measured in Gillettes, the number of blue razor blades a given beam could puncture.

A 'jiffy' is an actual unit of time for 1/100th of a second.



A ten-gallon hat holds less than a gallon of liquid.

Early systems of measurement used body parts to calculate length. A **cubit** ran from elbow to middle fingertip. The distance from fingertip to fingertip of outstretched arms is a **fathom**.

A quart-sized pail holds 8 million grains of sand.



The diameter of the wire in a standard paper clip is 1 millimeter—or about 0.04 inch.

A typical lightning bolt is two to four inches wide and two miles long.



Stuck...

(cont'd. from page 3)

1. Thinking it's too hard (or pointless) – Breaking the process down into as many discrete steps as possible allows you to explore the problem in new ways – often triggering bunches of new ideas, new thoughts and new ways of doing things. Instead of trying to 'boil the ocean', reduce your problem down to something you can manage.

2. A resistance to spending time at each step asking 'what's possible here?' The success of any problem solving comes from understanding that each step we take is a result of the previous step. When you take time to understand every step in the 'problem process', suddenly there may be parts of the process you've overlooked or taken for granted in the past.

Why does it work so well? - By breaking the problem down into as many discrete steps as possible, we get to turn our laser focus on smaller parts of the process, rather than trying to solve the whole thing all at once. The process of writing down each step immediately helps you see where the opportunities for change or new ideas might lie. The questions help expand the possibilities you are considering.

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My Pyramid



Go inside the food pyramid at www.mypyramid.gov/pyramid/grains_tips.html for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to find tips on how to identify healthful grains, figure out portion sizes and work them into your daily diet. Its interactive MyPyramid Tracker can help you choose the foods and amounts that are right for you. You will get advice on smart choices from every food group, how to balance food intake and physical activity and how to get the most nutrition out of your calories.

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® Now Available

The Human Resources Department has a new developmental training program available for Texas A&M Agriculture. We're proud to now be able to administer MBTI Workshops.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI) is the most widely-used personality inventory in the world and gives practical assistance in organizational development and training, as well as personal development and growth. The MBTI Workshop helps participants to identify valuable differences between people that can be a source of much misunderstanding and miscommunication. Taking the MBTI assessment helps you identify your unique gifts and enhance your understanding of yourself, your motivations, your natural strengths, and your potential areas for growth. It will also help you appreciate people who differ from you. The MBTI is self-affirming and encourages cooperation with others.

For more information, contact Jeanette Phillips with HR at (979) 862-1369.

— Jeanette Phillips

The Art of Self-Promotion

Yahoo! Hot Jobs Exclusive,
by Caroline Levchuck

Are you more comfortable reciting your responsibilities than your accomplishments? Worried you'll be perceived as a braggart if you toot your own horn?

Stop worrying and start promoting yourself. There's a big difference between being an obnoxious braggart and showing employers why they should hire you.

Employers are more likely to hire people who can effectively communicate their strengths with confidence.

If you're still nibbling on that piece of humble pie, put it down.

When It's Time to Change

It's one thing to recognize your greatest accomplishments. It's another to express it appropriately.

Communicate your strengths only when they're relevant to the topic at hand.

When an interviewer says, "Lovely weather we're having," you shouldn't reply with "I single-handedly brought in \$1 million in revenue last year." But, when the interviewer mentions that a position requires someone who's assertive and industrious, that's your chance to mention your achievement.

Never change the topic abruptly to relate an accomplishment. Instead, make sure it's relevant to an interviewer's question or current topic of conversation.

Leave Disclaimers in the Dust

How do you express your strengths?

Do you speak in active, direct phrases? Or do you begin statements with "I don't mean to brag but..." or "I was lucky enough to ..."

You're not bragging, and it likely wasn't luck. So practice promoting yourself without the qualifying phrases.

Make a conscious effort to speak using direct statements. Begin sentences with "I did," "I believe," "I accomplished" and the like. And try to look people in the eye when you're speaking to them.

Brand U

There's no one else just like you. So how do you distinguish yourself from the pack?

One word: Branding.

Branding is the perception that others (including employers) have of you. It's the way you present and express yourself that shapes people's opinion of you. Powerful businesspeople and celebrities, like Bill Gates and Oprah Winfrey, often develop a personal brand.

*Continued on page 9, see **Self-Promotion***

But I Did Go to Harvard....What a Great Weekend!

Every couple of months we hear about another high-profile person who misrepresented on a resume to get a job. Now it's Marilee Jones, the dean of admissions at MIT. Her resume shows degrees from three schools – who it appears have no record of her attending there. In fact, she never graduated from any college.

A senior MIT official said that by claiming degrees she had never earned, Jones could no longer lead an admissions office that occasionally rescinds the acceptance letters sent to applicants who are untruthful about their own accomplishments.

I would consider this not only a serious breach of ethics but also a very poor choice of direction. My gosh, to phony your resume for a position at an elite academic institution?? The issue now is that she's been there for 28 years, and has been very respected for her work. She even wrote a very popular book last year, *Less Stress, More Success: A New Approach to Guiding Your Teen Through College Admissions and Beyond.*"

This lady was obviously competent to do her job. So the issue is not that she needed the degree to do the job – the issue is that she misrepresented herself initially and reinforced that misrepresentation many times over the years. Yes, that does devalue everything else she has done.

In a Zogby International poll of college seniors 73% said professors had taught them that right and wrong are not "susceptible to uniform standards," but depend on individual values and cultural norms. And thus we prepare leaders for companies like Enron, WorldCom, Tyco and ImClone – where deceptive accounting practices, looting corporate assets, and other personal indiscretions have devastating results for stock holders and loved ones.

You cannot be unethical in one area of your life and think it doesn't taint the good things you do.

Read the article at this website: <http://www.cnn.com/2007/EDUCATION/04/26/mit.dean.ap/index.html>

— Reprinted from Dan Miller's Weekly e-newsletter,
48 Days, Business Source in Brentwood.
www.48days.com

Resources for Finding On-campus Student Employees

If you need to hire a student employee at the College Station campus, some resources that you might consider are:

- **Jobs For Aggies** (an Internet source of applications maintained by the Student Employment Office. To set up a user name and password, call Student Employment Services at 845-0686. The site is located at: <http://jobsforaggies.tamu.edu>)
- Bulletin Boards — Post a job announcement on the bulletin board at the Kleberg Center, the Heep Center, and the Horticulture Building.
- Check with Pat Onstott in HR (5-7802) to see if student applications are available.

Probation Regulation Change

Revisions made to The Texas A&M University System Regulation 33.99.02, *Probation*, impact some of COALS', TAES' and TCE's long standing procedures for newly hired and for transferred or promoted employees. However, each System member may establish their own procedures where permitted by the revised regulation. Until new procedures are developed, units must comply with the following changes affecting our existing probationary practices:

- Units may not restrict employee transfers during the first three months of probation.
- Probationary periods may not be extended beyond six months for transferred or promoted employees during the initial six month probation period.
- After the initial six month probationary period has been satisfied, units may not set an additional probationary period.
- Conducting probationary performance reviews prior to the end of the fourth month is not longer required, but instead must be conducted by the end of the initial six month probationary period.

Texas A&M Agriculture Human Resources will be evaluating these changes to the system regulation and working to develop procedures that support the best practices for COALS, TAES and TCE. For questions or comments about the probation regulation changes, please contact Texas A&M Agriculture Human Resources Office at (979) 845-2423.

— Linda Edge

Discount Programs Offered by BlueCross/Blue Shield

Did you know that if you are enrolled in one of the A&M Care group health plans administered by BlueCross/BlueShield of Texas you have access to several special discount programs that are included along with your medical coverage? BC/BS offers a vision care discount program through Davis Vision and a hearing care discount program through TruHearing.

Davis Vision Discount Program

You will receive a discount if you use one of their network providers. There is a fee schedule that is used for most services. However if you use the Wal-Mart Vision Center, there will be a 10% discount on frames. This is because their everyday prices are already discounted. You can call Davis Vision at 800-501-1459 to locate a provider. A brochure with more information can be found at:

<http://tamus.edu/offices/shro/benefits/DavisVisionFlier.pdf>

Tru Hearing Discount Program

This discount program is available to BlueCross/BlueShield enrollees as well as their parents and grandparents who are not enrolled in a BlueCross/BlueShield plan. There are three different coverage levels as well as financing available with approved credit. However you must use one of their providers to receive the discount. Please call TruHearing toll free at 877-882-2020 to discuss your options or find a local provider. A brochure with more information can be found at:

<http://tamus.edu/offices/shro/benefits/TruHearingFlier.pdf>

You will need to show your BC/BS ID card to the provider to access these discounts.

— Vicki Welch

Self-Promotion (continued from page 7)

Your brand can make you unique and valuable — and more than just another resume.

Trust Yourself

It may sound cliché, but it's true: You have to believe in yourself for others to believe in you.

To be able to promote yourself believably and sincerely, you need to have confidence in who you are, what you know and what you've accomplished.

Even confidence can be learned if practiced. When you're feeling insecure, practice telling yourself self-affirming statements. Or make a list of your talents and skills. Carry it in your pocket and, when you're feeling unsure of yourself, take a peek at it.

— *Reproduced with permission of Yahoo! Inc.*

Food For Thought Format

For this issue of *Food For Thought* the format was changed from two columns to one column for articles. Do you prefer the new format, or do you prefer the two-column format? If you have a preference, I would appreciate hearing from you at: ponstott@ag.tamu.edu

— Pat Onstott

It is easy to love the people far away. It is not always easy to love those close to us. It is easier to give a cup of rice to relieve hunger than to relieve the and pain of someone unloved in our own home. Bring love into your home for this is where our love for each other must start.

— Mother Teresa



Humor—Job Security

After being laid off from five different jobs in four months, Jim was hired by a warehouse. But on his second day he lost control of the forklift and drove it off the loading dock.

Surveying the damage, the owner shook his head and said he'd have to withhold 10 percent of Jim's wages to pay for the repairs.

"How much will it cost?" asked Jim.

"About \$4,500," said the owner.

"That's great!" exclaimed Jim. "I've finally got job security!"



— Reprinted from Dan Miller's Weekly e-newsletter, 48 Days, Business Source in Brentwood. www.48days.com