

Employer's Advantage

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How to Fly Safely Through Turbulence

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From Jim Sirbasku's Desk *How to Fly Safely Through Turbulence*

CEOs these days must feel as if they are piloting a plane upside down and backwards through the perfect storm, where all things that can go wrong, do. Following the storm, comes a brief period of misleading calm before the chaos begins again. Everyone on board gets a wild, somersaulting ride and fears what lies ahead. For some organizations, holding on for dear life is all they can do to survive.

In today's economy, surviving the storm has become an organization's main priority. The uncertainty that makes quick changes necessary means organizations must rely on their well-trained employees to carry them through. Strong workers who come to work each day with enthusiasm, focus and creativity make for trusty copilots during times of economic turbulence. They can help navigate above, below or around obstacles while offering solutions that no one else has thought of to help calm everyone aboard.

But, as leaders prevail upon key players to do more with less manpower and fewer resources, we cannot just distribute assignments and walk away hoping they will figure out what to do. Keeping the company steady through tough times requires commitment from the top to stay on course. Now is not the time

to abandon goals, ignore the problems, or adopt an "every person for himself" attitude.

Remember, nothing is more crucial than hiring competent people and helping them develop the skills necessary to help pilot the plane. Making sure your employees have the talent, skill and knowledge to make it through the storm is more important than ever. Here are some key things to do— in good times and bad.

- **If you are not operating under a hiring freeze, count your blessings.** Then treat every new hire as if he or she might be your last. Be sure managers take the important steps of recruiting potential candidates that fit the position and your company. Insist on tools that help recruiters ask the right questions during the job interview and help them make decisions based on science instead of guesswork.
- **Train new workers well, and do not neglect the old guard – the stalwarts who choose to stay with you even when the going gets rough.** Even in a good economy, everyone needs training. Specific training and everyday coaching helps retain workers and makes sure they are ready for current and future challenges. In a down economy, some might covet the training budget with an eye toward making the bottom line look healthier. Repeat this mantra: short-term pain, long-term gain.
- **Do not assume anything about your employees.** Know them better than they know themselves. New tools are available to tell you exactly who is working for you – their competencies, their weaknesses and their goals. Do not decide that you can apply the same management style to everyone and get the same results. A multitude of different faces greet you when you walk into the department. They are likely to include four different generations, both genders, and different races and ethnicities. In the global marketplace, you will find variations even within identifiable groups. It is imperative that you learn what skills your employees have, the skills they are capable of acquiring and what it takes to keep them motivated.

- **Check the pulse of your key leaders.** Are they engaged? A recent study reveals that more than half of senior executives possess "less than ideal emotional connection and alignment" to their organizations. Are any of these your co-pilots? If so, re-coaching, and moving around employees is likely in your future, if you want to be assured of a future.
- **Have a plan and use it.** Do not fear adjusting it as necessary. Traveling through turbulence is much smoother and less alarming if you carefully

map out your flight plan before you proceed, tweak the course as needed, and make sure you have a team of willing and able employees to make the necessary in-flight changes.

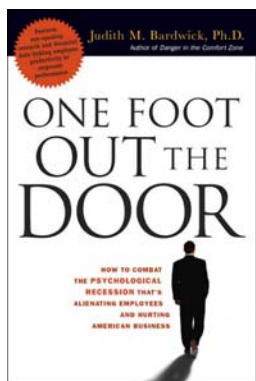
Now, buckle your seatbelts and prepare for takeoff. We may have a bumpy ride ahead.



Jim Sirbasku, CEO
Profiles International

"Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you *can* do" – John Wooden, coach

BOOK REVIEW: 'One Foot Out the Door': Strong Medicine for What Ails Us



Where did we go wrong?

That's the question Judith M. Bardwick asks and answers in, ***One Foot Out the Door: How to Combat the Psychological Recession that's Alienating Employees and Hurting American Business.***

But, unlike so many writers who point out flaws in human behavior and psyche, Bardwick

offers help. Perhaps this is why so many take her words as constructive criticism and why *One Foot Out the Door* earned a coveted award from *Library Journal* as a Best Business Book for 2007.

So what is a psychological recession anyway, and why should organizations care? In Bardwick's view, the two words describe an "emotional state in which people feel extremely vulnerable to economic hardship." This brings about a "dour view" of both current times and the future and "reinforces... perception of the world as a risky place in which they have little or no control." This anxiety plus the feeling of worker powerlessness are a "poisonous mix," the author notes.

Managers should care because if workers expect the worst, they don't perform well. And if workers are not performing, the pressure on an organization's financial health can be devastating – as in companies where only 25 percent of workers are engaged in their jobs. Could that be your business? The Gallup Poll says that is *American* business.

Bardwick uses both history and research to present the facts of how the economic climate used to be, how it is today and what brought us here. She points

out how costly it can be to support bad management. For managers who care, she provides the steps to regaining success. One key to the kingdom is getting rid of the fear that makes for a toxic business climate today. No small task, but crucial to an organization's survival. Others are:

- Customizing working conditions and rewards for individual employees (virtually banishing "one-size-fits-all" solutions)
- Hiring people whose competencies and priorities best fit the organization

Bardwick also authored ***Danger in the Comfort Zone and Psychology of Women.*** Based in California, she is a speaker, consultant, researcher, and writer on psychological aspects of people at work.

"A Psychological Recession is not just an idea; it is a real phenomenon with real consequences, all of them bad," Dr. Bardwick says. "When people are scared and depressed for a long time, despair and fear replace confidence and optimism. In the larger economic picture, it is really dangerous that a psychological recession characterizes most people's views and moods when two-thirds of our gross domestic product is based on consumer spending, which is profoundly affected by consumer confidence."

ABOUT THE BOOK

One Foot Out the Door: How to Combat the Psychological Recession that's Alienating Employees and Hurting American Business

Author: Judith M. Bardwick
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PRODUCT FOCUS: Ending a Vicious Cycle, Reaching Nirvana with Profiles WorkForce Compatibility™

"By working faithfully eight hours a day you may eventually get to be boss and work twelve hours a day." -- Robert Frost

The eloquent American poet's words have a ring of truth to them – but they provide only one view of the boss's job. There are perspectives aplenty, and one in particular does not rely on the chief spending 12 or more hours every day toiling at work. It is this: The boss's goal instead is to develop employees so that everyone enjoys a productive, **enjoyable and fulfilling** workplace.

Let's pay a visit to an imaginary workplace. We will call it The Nirvana Company. Imagine a boss at Nirvana focusing energy and expertise on the quality of his or her relationships with employees. This boss would know, for example, whether an employee's decision-making style matched her own fast-paced method, or whether the worker preferred to ponder situations a while before making decisions. The boss would learn how best to manage that worker to get his very best decisions and the highest productivity. There's more – the boss would do this for **every employee** in the organization.

Does this scenario seem too good to be true? It doesn't have to be. In fact, Profiles offers an assessment that **not only helps the boss work on relationships – it helps employees do the same thing.**

Workplaces do exist in which supervisors and their direct reports know each other's work styles and use that knowledge to their own and the organization's advantage. And studies show that such managers and employees are highly productive and engaged. The reverse is also true: **Managers who are out of step with employees often cause low productivity, low morale and high turnover.** In fact, more people **leave bosses** than they do jobs.

The Profiles assessment that takes on this issue is Profiles WorkForce Compatibility™, and it combines insight into the characteristics that affect the boss-employee relationship with information on how unique individuals can best work together.

The strength of Profiles WorkForce Compatibility™ lies in two key areas: What it measures and what it provides as a result of its measurements. First, the measurements: Profiles WorkForce Compatibility™ examines **seven important characteristics** that define the relationship between an employee and the manager: **self-assurance, self-reliance, conformity, optimism, decisiveness, objectivity and approach to learning.** Once these are measured and analyzed for both boss and worker, each receives a report. The manager's report provides a detailed description of the differences between the two on each characteristic, as well as a "best-practice" working style for both the manager and the employee. A "Working Together" section gives **ideas for managing this unique employee** and a "Next Steps" section offers detailed instructions on how to proceed.

- **Communicate** better
- **Spot conflicts** before they occur
- **Successfully resolve** problems that pop up

This assessment is neither magic nor a fairy tale – nor does it support the view of Robert Frost expressed above. It does require hard work and a commitment to rely more on facts than assumptions. But its strength is in its personalization of management strategy. The one-size-fits-all approach to management is out the window – good riddance.

Bosses who are ready to put their busy workdays to better use should call [Steve Bookout](http://www.profiles.com) at Profiles International (972) 529-6740 or email: steve.bookout@sbcglobal.net and start enjoying more pleasant, productive workdays.

Nothing so conclusively proves a man's ability to lead others as what he does from day to day to lead himself. - Thomas J. Watson

“The relationship with your boss is a partnership. It takes effort to build the relationship and nurture it. You have to communicate well, avoid confrontations and resolve differences in a positive way.”

– Jane Boucher, consultant

POP QUIZ: Test Your Knowledge about Workday Attitudes

Employers, how much do you know about your employees? Test your knowledge here. Circle an answer for each question. Answers appear below each set of questions:

1. What is the most important factor keeping your employees in their jobs right now?

- a. Pay and health insurance
- b. Satisfaction with work
- c. Job security
- d. Satisfaction with co-workers

2. What do employees want most from their jobs?

- a. Feeling valued
- b. Less stress
- c. Being part of a team
- d. Shared vision and values

3. What percentage of employees say they plan to stay in their job for the next year?

- a. 50 percent
- b. 20 percent
- c. 80 percent
- d. 60 percent

4. Half of employees are satisfied with the number of hours they work.

- True
- False

5. More than half of employees believe this is a good time to take on extra work on the job.

- True
- False

Employees, how well do you know your manager? Test your knowledge here. Circle an answer for each question:

1. What percentage of employers plan to stay in their jobs the next 12 months?

- a. 65 percent
- b. 75 percent
- c. 60 percent
- d. 45 percent

2. Which one of these things are employers most satisfied with at work?

- a. Compensation
- b. Flexible hours
- c. Amount of work
- d. Opportunity to learn new things

3. Employers believe fair compensation of employees is more important to employees than surveys indicate.

- True
- False

4. Employees and employers are equally satisfied with the number of hours they work.

- True
- False

ANSWERS courtesy of Randstad's World of Work Survey 2008

- 1. c
- 2. a
- 3. d
- 4. True
- 5. True (in fact, 68% of employees believe this)

ANSWERS for 1, 2 and 4, courtesy of Randstad's World of Work Survey 2008; answers for 3, courtesy of salary.com

- 1. a
- 2. D
- 3. True
- 4. True

“Treat people as if they were what they ought to be, and you will help them become what they are capable of becoming.” – Goethe, poet, playwright, philosopher

SUCCESS STORY: Celebrating Job Fit at John Henry Foster Co.

Editor's Note: The John Henry Foster Company is a full-line fluid power distributor in St. Louis, Mo., founded in 1944. It deals in sales and service of pneumatic and hydraulic equipment. Bob Gau is CEO.

Here, Denise Meyerotto, in human resources, talks about the company's use of ProfileXT®.

Q. Why did you start using ProfileXT®?

When interviewing candidates for our job openings, we needed a reliable method of determining who would best fit in a given position. We decided to use the ProfileXT® assessment as a pre-employment screening tool.

Q. In what ways has ProfileXT® benefited the John Henry Foster Co.?

Because each job receives a benchmark, the ProfileXT® shows a job-match percentage for each candidate's fit within a position. This is a great advantage that aids us in making the right hiring decisions.

Q. What are your results thus far with ProfileXT®?

Since we began using it, we have had success with all of the candidates we have hired. It has helped us identify candidates that will fit the job. We have avoided bad hiring decisions.

Q. What are its strongest features?

Not only is the ProfileXT® easy to administer, almost anyone can determine the results easily. It is extremely helpful. We have never been disappointed by the results.

“A company is only as good as the people it keeps.”

– Mary Kay Ash, cosmetics giant

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