

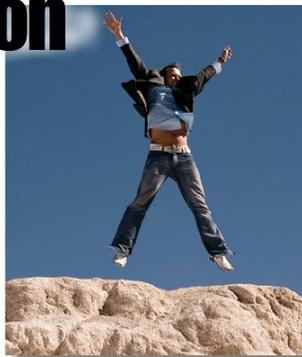
Soft Skill to Know: Business Trend Awareness



What are the hot business trends in your occupation? Don't wait to be told by others. Instead, discover funnels of information that will let you know. Employers pay attention to their employees' awareness of business trends because it demonstrates engagement in your job. Engagement is the hottest topic in employee performance management. Business trend awareness is a soft skill that helps your employer stay ahead, forecast, and compete. It can make your daily interaction with coworkers and management more exciting, and help you be seen as a valuable player in your organization because you are conversant with the key issues in your field. Here's how to do it: Go to USA.gov and search your job or career name + "trends."

Accomplishing Your New Year's Resolution

Here's a hint to help you achieve a New Year's resolution—make it ambitious and specific, well-defined, and achievable. Many studies associated with goal theory and performance improvement consistently show that a harder goal is more likely to be achieved than an easy goal with a vague understanding of the final result. The reason why is simple: Specificity drives and channels your behavior. Establish a timeline and objectives, and measure your progress. With these steps, you may be among the 15% to 16% of the population that actually accomplishes their New Year's resolutions.



Power in Group Psychotherapy

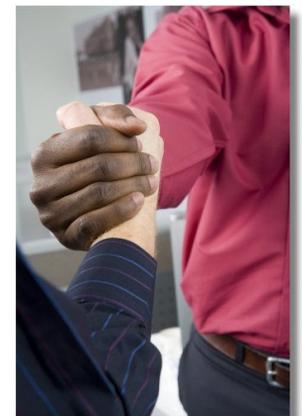


Group therapy employs small-group interaction to help participants address mental health issues and make changes in their lives. Professionally led, group therapy focuses on problems like overcoming life struggles, eliminating self-defeating behaviors, and preventing the repeat of problems experienced in relationships. Don't overlook group psychotherapy as an avenue of help for rapid change. Group therapy members usually bond quickly, and the leverage they create is the collective insight and common past experiences they share. This power is used to supportively confront each other, insist on honesty, and overcome resistance to change—the change you want.

Is Your Team in Trouble?

Work teams can be powerful tools for productivity, but they lose impact when dysfunction affects five critical areas. Diagnose your team's health by examining how well your team performs on each of the following:

- 1) Trust and ability to be vulnerable with one another;
- 2) Ability to share and offer ideas freely, without inhibitions, and with acceptance;
- 3) Forming a consensus, identifying a project, and pursuing it to completion, with each member feeling important to its successful outcome;
- 4) Silence is shunned and speaking up is a group tradition when a member is performing under par;
- 5) Achievements are shared. See any issues above that concern you?



Could Volunteering Add to Your Life?



Why volunteer in your community?

The obvious answer is to help an altruistic, nonprofit organization meet its goals without it incurring extra labor costs. Beyond a loving act of giving, volunteering has powerful personal benefits. Volunteerism can fight depression and anxiety because it offers a positive distraction away from negative “self talk” scripts that often accompany these conditions. The act of giving back serves as a strong counter-punch. The result is you are happier helping others, and you naturally fight for your own mental health. Getting work experience is another benefit of volunteering, but more important it shows “demonstrated interest.” You can’t put a price on this, and you can’t go back in time to get it. It is irrefutable proof to a potential employer that you have passion. This can catapult any resume ahead of the pack. Skill development is another powerful benefit of volunteering, and it can accelerate your transition to another occupation faster. Engaging with people, networking, and increased opportunities come with relationships, and it’s more likely that you may be in the right place to experience sudden opportunity. Volunteering is a love gift, but your time and effort can be returned many fold.

When January’s Bills Come Due

Don’t panic about January’s payment-due notices from your holiday spending. Instead, get deliberate and determined about knocking them off fast. Here’s an idea many money gurus recommend: For now, remove the plastic from your wallet and pay cash. You will be forced to conserve what you have available each day, and you will spend less than you typically do. Next, visit your online bank checking account register. (Most of us have one these days.) Log in and go to the withdrawal/debit column. Sort it by amount paid with the lowest amount at the top. You will notice dozens—possibly hundreds—of expenses under, say, \$25; coffees out, luxury foods, lunches, gifts, nice-to-have purchases, movie rentals, and more. At least 60 to 90 days of these expenses should be visible. Identify purchases you did not really need. Eliminate similar expenses in the near future. Use the additional money you are now saving to attack your holiday splurge.



Breaking Down Cultural Communication Barriers



Knowing how to break down cultural communication barriers in the workplace is essential to maintaining productivity. Fail to tackle this important goal and productivity losses will be almost certain. Thankfully, there are thousands of resources that discuss cross-cultural workplace communication, but just a few tips will make you a pro. Be aware and accept that biases and stereotypes about other cultures affect you—and everyone else. With this awareness, think before you speak, learn about other cultures, respect differences in others, and never be afraid to ask if something you said or did caused offense. This willingness to check yourself, turn around, walk back, poke your head in the door, and ask if something you just said or did was offensive is one foolproof way of heading off conflict, feeling more positive about your workplace, and enjoying your job more.

Hidden Opportunities for Managing Stress

Many factors can contribute to workplace stress. Some may be out of your awareness. Discover them with a guided approach. Consider working with a counselor or an employee assistance program to find interventions in the following areas: Your workload, capabilities, need for resources, techniques, or approaches to the job; discovery of more meaning in the work; finding inspiration; your need to be creative; your role and its modification; being given more responsibility; required time/frequency of work; quantity of work; time pressure; participation in decisions; having more choices in actions taken at work; improved communication with boss/coworkers; improved social interactions; resolution of disputes/coping with others; opportunities for leadership; and examination of work-life balance. Modifying any of these factors could lead to the relief you seek from overwhelming job stress.

