



## Ask SCORE for Business Advice

Green Bay Press Gazette Thur., April 29, 2010

### **Tips from a Success Coach by Tina Dettman-Bielefeldt**

In last week's column, Barbara Jordan, a new SCORE counselor, talked about the goals and advantages of coaching. She said that entrepreneurs benefit by learning how to juggle the myriad of different tasks that face small business owners. This week, she focuses on three specific areas with suggestions on stress management, leadership, and employee relations.

To manage stress, Jordan recommends slowing down. "The solution to a rapid pace, constant change, and impatience is to take deep breathes, slow down and simplify, and focus on routines and tradition."

Stress can be further managed by physical exercise, conversation, letting go, accepting, getting enough sleep and nutrition, helping someone else, being honest, focusing on the present, asking for help, practicing patience and flexibility, and learning to laugh at yourself and life's problems.

Dealing with stress will naturally flow into better leadership skills. Jordan says that leaders are motivators and coaches. She recommends, "Motivate individual employees through principles of motivational psychology. Helping people feel good about themselves is a key to improving productivity."

She finds that the best leaders express empathy and, instead of demanding, employee coaching to improve performance. "Negotiate mutual, flexible, and collaborative goals and methods," she advised. "Goals begin behavior and feedback and consequences maintain it."

Leadership naturally flows into employee relations, and Jordan feels that employee apathy caused by stress is a major issue for business owners. If this isn't addressed, employees can become distracted, confused, or needy. The stress may be caused by emotional baggage outside of work, but when employees bring it to work, the result is a loss of productivity.

Entrepreneurs may not want to deal with these issues, but failure to do so can have a negative affect on the business. Jordan recommends listening and providing support and encouragement.

“With understanding comes encouragement,” she said. “That means our role as a leader must change to include elements of coaching. So, rather than arguing, say something like, ‘I understand how you feel about that’ or ‘I hear what you’re saying’.”

As leaders, Jordan says that it’s imperative that employees feel understood because, when they are upset, they cannot learn or perform. She recommends using a softer approach to improve performance.

“Repeat the employee’s message in your own words to show empathy. It should sound something like, ‘So, you feel frustrated with this policy because it requires you to re-submit your paperwork’ or ‘It sounds like you’re angry that others on the team are not doing their fair share of the work’,” she stated.

Listen carefully to the employee’s response to verify that you have correctly stated the issue. After that, the employee’s concerns should be summarized and the manager should make a decision or take the appropriate action, having earned respect as a leader

If you’d like to learn more, contact the Green Bay Chapter of SCORE. Visit [www.greenbayscore.org](http://www.greenbayscore.org) or call Cindy Gokey at 920-496-8930 for information.

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