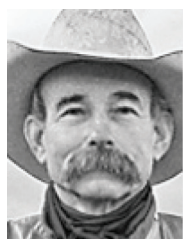


COMMENTARY



ON THE EDGE OF COMMON SENSE

By Baxter Black, DVM

It was a party for the record books

(From the archives of Baxter's former life)

We all have great memories of "the best party."

I had a party. It lasted 48 hours. I lost my socks, my dignity, two days of my life, six ping-pong balls and four pounds. I broke my G-string, achieved a new "personal best" and learned to dog paddle in a bathtub full of beer.

The occasion for this all-out, climb the walls, cowboy shindig was in celebration of my new book.

The party honored the world's best cowboy cartoonists who contributed cartoons for the book. We gathered under one roof some of the most unique individuals in the world of Western philosophy and art. Every one of them is a crossbred maverick of the finest kind.

Jerry Palen from Cheyenne showed up and spent Friday night tryin' to sell everybody a Shetland pony, sight unseen. The price went up Saturday after a phone call from his vet: it looked like the pony was gonna live.

In certain circles I am considered a pretty fair guitar picker (places like the 5th Amendment Bar and the Society for the Tone Deaf). But I was relegated to playing second fiddle by my brothers, Steve and Bob, Jim Schafer, and my new wife.

Under the right circumstances I can be coerced into singin' a few ditties. (As Champ Gross would say, "He'll sing to anyone who'll listen.")

"First," I said modestly, "Let Herb Mignery sing one."

He wound up singin' all night to the delight of the crowd.

Finally Herb said, "Let ol' Bax sing one!"

I did and everybody went to the bathroom.

I thought I could hold my own in story-telling. But then Dick Spencer started tellin' about adobe submarines and his Indian relative. Running Bare.

Pretty soon Ace Reid was spinnin' yarns about Lady Bird, Slim Pickins, Hondo Crouch and his old Daddy who claimed to be the best cattle thief in Texas. Todd, Tink and Andy each had more wild cow tales to fill in the empty spaces.

All in all, it was windier than a sack full of whistlin' lips.

The only event left that I felt qualified in was drinking. But two Idaho renegades, Don Gill and Garry Penny, were already walking on the window ledges and abusing the potted plants so I conceded.

They came from all over, Don from Idaho, Radonna from Texas, and Jack from Greenly, Champ from Wyoming, Mike from Longmont and my mother from New Mexico.

Being among this kind of people was a blue-ribbon treat. We did our best to make your own cowboy cartoonist feel special. But it's hard because they're all just plain common decent folks like most of us and won't let you treat 'em different.

Besides, I have to pay for the carpet in Don Gill's hotel room. Dick Spencer's check bounced, Herb Mignery's wife has a warrant out for my arrest, my brother Bob is changing his name, Jay Dusard is sending me his chiropractor's bill, the pony I bought from Jerry Palen didn't make it, and the ring Ace Reid sold me is turnin' my finger green.

Help us thank them for making a difference

Across Malheur County, people step up in important ways to make life better here.

As the year comes to a close, we want to put a spotlight on these Malheur Movers and you can help.

We want to do profiles and tell the stories of individuals who give of themselves, often in ways that few people know. They act from compassion, not for glory.

Who made a difference in the past year?

Was it a volunteer driver for a local group?

Was it a mentor for needy children?

Was it a craftsman who did fixes and repairs?

Was it someone who organized an event to help local people?

Share with us the name and a bit about the person. You can do so confidentially – they'll never know!

Send an email by Monday, Nov. 25, to editor Les Zaitz (les@malheuren-terprise.com) and let us know who you think warrants attention as a Malheur Mover.

BUSINESS BEAT

Communication, Planning Critical to Family Business

By Andrea Testi
For the Enterprise

When most people hear the words "family business," they get this picture of everyone working together in harmony and achieving amazing things. And while this is achievable, being in business with your family whom you know and love is far from easy.

Family businesses are unique, at the core lies an important dynamic connecting the family and the business through the family's ownership, which offers both opportunities and challenges. Surrounding each decision you may take are strong family values and a purpose that helps you navigate the journey ahead.

Running a small business is hard. Running a family business is harder. Family members bring an existing personal relationship into a business setting that rarely works in business. My advice to all family businesses is that the family relationship comes first. It's forever and because of this important family relationship, whether you are going into business with a family member or part of a family succession plan, all family members need to go in with eyes wide open.

Here are some tips for making family business work.

Communicate, communicate, communicate. The emotional relationships between family members can make it hard to make objective decisions. Having a communication plan is critical.

Schedule meeting times to brief and debrief the daily operations, weekly to communicate and identify areas of the business that need help and support, and monthly to review goals and make sure everyone is on track. Manage family



tension by agreeing on a process for settling disputes before they occur and don't waiver.

Separate responsibilities. Be clear on the responsibilities and who does what to avoid duplication of effort. Who works with customers, answers questions, does the bookkeeping, handles ordering, public relations, marketing and general business operations tasks.

By communicating and maintaining roles each person knows their responsibilities and nothing slips through the cracks - plus it's a lot more fun at family gatherings.

Market as a family business. If a picture is worth a thousand words, then life is a thousand stories. Your family's business is not just a series of balance sheets and key performance indicators. Rather, the customer's experience with your family brand is an extension of your company's story, and that story can be and is inherently personal.

Leverage content marketing and weave story-telling to create a distinct marketing that leads to a deeper, engaged community of customers.

Know your customer. It's easy to assume that you know your customers, especially if your family business has been in business in your town for several generations. But times are changing, and people are changing.

You may know your customer's names, but do you know their shopping habits and buying process? Do you know which marketing forms are most effective

with your target audience? Some prefer social media, others email and yet others prefer flyers. Bring all generations of your family together to identify what your customer wants and needs, their concerns, questions, and ancillary needs.

Assemble your team. Any thriving business has a strong team behind it. Be-ing clear on what that looks like in your business can solve a multitude of problems before they ever have a chance to get started.

One of the most common issues in a family business is the pressure to hire a relative. The emotional aspect of family relationships can make it difficult to refuse the request. Try to make the decision based on what is best for the business and not on emotional connections.

Grow strategically. Be clear on the vision and goals for your business and the responsibility each person has in achieving the vision and goals. When presenting new ideas for business improvement, particularly where spending is involved, base your information on facts to provide objective perspective of what is best for the company. Family members can then make informed decisions based on concrete information.

Plan in advance for succession. A strong succession plan can guide the business through a change in management or ownership, and can help avoid conflict. When families have a plan in place, it's easier to follow an agreed upon order of operations instead of trying to pick up the pieces of the family business in a rush.

Succession planning should begin at least 10 years in advance of retirement or sale; with careful consideration given to tax consequences and family dynamics that the changes will create.

Family business has a unique element that no other business has – the aspect of family. As with your family, your business doesn't stand still – it evolves. Remember, running a successful family business requires that you treat the business like a business. You want to make decisions in the best interest of the business and keep your family relationships strong.

Andrea Testi, Director of the Treasure Valley Community College Small Business Development Center, can be reached at SBDC@tvcc.cc

Letters Policy

The Enterprise welcomes your letters to the editor. Please be concise and avoid personal attacks. No anonymous letters will be published. Letters may be abridged for length. Please send letters, with name, address and a phone number for verification purposes to:

Malheur Enterprise, PO Box 310, Vale OR 97918, or les@malheuren-terprise.com. Deadline: 10 a.m. Mondays. For more information, call the Enterprise, 541-473-3377.

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