

STRENGTH TRAINING: *Developing Leaders*

Crunches, stretches, resistance ... Top medical and therapeutic centers around the world tout strength training as the critical balance in a well-rounded fitness program. On the general entrepreneurial front, preparing staff to assume or enhance leadership roles tends to make a similar difference in business outcomes.

Organizational development experts have long emphasized the core value of boosting team members' executive skills. But, particularly in the small business arena, company heads can easily become preoccupied with pushing to reach the next revenue plateau. Their determination to press toward what's immediately necessary to meet timetables for product delivery can cloud their vision. Often, seeing past daily operational challenges is not a priority. Although they're committed to making strides each day, they usually don't recognize the treadmill effect that many of their efforts are producing. Yes, their activity level suggests forward movement, but, by and large, they're not progressing as they could be.

Research shows that a committed initiative to produce and support leaders grounds success. "Cultivating Tomorrow's Leaders: Comprehensive Development Strategies Ensure Continued Success" (*Healthcare Executive* - Nov/Dec '09) points out the importance of sustained talent pool training at leading companies. It cites an American Society for Training and Development survey finding that 85 percent of the Fortune 500 maintains structured leadership development programs.

Thankfully, this trend isn't a luxury reserved for the elite. Grooming individuals for deeper roles is something any business can do. And doing it well doesn't have to be financially taxing. Besides having candidates for promotion take formal courses, mentoring and experiential learning can effectively enhance administrative and managerial competence. Some executives opt to meet personally with leadership prospects, making time for informal question-and-answer sessions, lunch discussions, or golf outings. Others match a novice with an existing star leader in the company, ensuring that the two regularly interact. Another proven strategy is on-the-job training. From shadowing a great manager to moving horizontally to another department to spearheading a company project, hopefuls are intensively exposed to high-level operations and challenges. Having these sorts of on-site internships allows for dual advantages. The team member has the opportunity to fly higher with a safety net, and the company gets to "test drive" the prospect's know-how and proficiency.

Granted, we're entering this New Year with many of the same atmospheric concerns doming the business realm. Yes, the pressures of economic challenge might have us all laser-focused on the short term. And just as most people, even with the best of intentions of leading a stronger, leaner, healthier life, will not commit to strength training, many small businesses will sidestep or merely render lip service to leadership development.

Nonetheless, in the spirit of the resolutions ritual that annually puts fitness at or near the top of many personal lists, here's a quick-guide endorsement for leadership strength training (correlated with bulleted items from a **Mayo Clinic.com** physical strength training list). Use it to remind you throughout the year why ongoing leadership development is so important.

STRENGTH TRAINING...

- **Preserves and enhances muscle mass** - Shaping up future leaders and toning up current ones can make a significant bottom-line difference.
- **Develops strong bones** - Your company is only as solid as the infrastructure that frames it. Sturdy supervisors, managers, and executives fortify the rank and file.
- **Controls your weight** - Lean times often require trimming down, so well-developed leaders can devise strategies for capably carrying payloads during tough seasons. They can ward off encumbrances as well.
- **Reduces your risk of injury** - Strong departmental heads help maintain flexibility & balance. Being able to quickly recover from missteps differentiates winners and losers.

- **Boosts your stamina** - Ace leaders can heighten your employees' endurance. They can infuse energy into even the most drained members of your team.
- **Improves your sense of well-being** - The fruits of a business with deep guidance roots are evident in its corporate image—internally and externally.
- **Promotes a better night's sleep** - With proactive people in key roles, you're significantly less likely to let "unmanageable" issues interfere with downtime.
- **Helps manage chronic conditions** - Developing leaders who are well acquainted with intervention protocols usually reduces nagging signs and symptoms of trouble.

Finally, even if you choose a less structured way of upgrading your team leaders' skills, be sure to have a written professional development plan for each person. According to experts it should include a career aspirations outline, current level of competency profile, identified skill gaps and advancement action plan. Here's to a strong New Year!

MARTA Business Opportunities

The procurement and contract opportunities noted below can be found on the Internet at www.itsmarta.com. Because dates for noted events are subject to change, you should contact MARTA's Contracts & Procurement and Materials Division at (404) 848-5131 for verification.

NAME OF BID/PROPOSAL	CONTRACT NUMBER	BID/PROPOSAL OPENING/DEADLINE DATE (Eastern Standard Time)
Upgrade & Overhaul of Detroit Diesel Engines	CP B18934	January 14, 2010 at 2:00 PM
Public Address & Telephone System Upgrade	RFI 13873	January 15, 2010 at 3:00 PM
Requests for Qualifications to Design-Build Solar Canopies at the Laredo Bus Maintenance Facility	RFP P19232	January 25, 2010 at 2:00 PM
Disposal of Switch Steel	CP B19122	Pre-bid Conference January 7, 2010 at 10:00 AM; Site Visit immediately following the pre-bid conference
Disposal of Switch Steel	CP B19122	February 2, 2010 at 2:00 PM

Prospective vendors are urged to visit MARTA's web site for weekly updates.

Announcements

WEDA WORKSHOPS

The Women's Economic Development Agency (WEDA) offers various workshops to small business owners. For registration information, contact WEDA at (678) 904-2201 or <http://www.weda-atlanta.org/registration.htm>.

VISION WALK

Sunday, March 14, 2010 at Centennial Olympic Park

Vision Walk is a 5K (3.1 miles) walk designed to raise awareness and dollars for the fight against retinal degenerative diseases. All walk routes are wheelchair and stroller accessible. For more information, please contact Jennifer Assaff, Events Manager, at (919) 781-8014 or via email at JAssaff@FightBlindness.org.

U. S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

DISASTER LOANS - GEORGIA #11886 & #11887 (Disaster #GA-00027)

For the Counties of Bartow, Carroll, Catoosa, Chattooga, Cherokee, Cobb, Coweta, DeKalb, Douglas, Fulton, Gwinnett, Heard, Newton, Paulding, Rockdale, Stephens and Walker; and for Economic Injury Only the contiguous counties of Banks, Barrow, Butts, Clayton, Dade, Dawson, Fayette, Floyd, Forsyth, Franklin, Gordon, Habersham, Hall, Haralson, Henry, Jackson, Jasper, Meriwether, Morgan, Pickens, Polk, Spalding, Troup, Walton and Whitfield in the State of Georgia; contiguous counties of Cherokee, Cleburne, and DeKalb:

Filing Deadline for applications for Economic Injury: June 24, 2010

For More Information, contact SBA at 1-800-659-2955 or www.sba.gov.

MARTA Information

All public events (i.e., bid openings and conferences) are held at the MARTA Headquarters Building, 2424 Piedmont Road, NE, Atlanta, Georgia 30324, unless otherwise indicated.

Most solicitations may be downloaded free of charge and are available via the web at www.itsmarta.com. Solicitations with drawings may be ordered for the above noted contracts via telephone by contacting MARTA's Documentation Control Branch at (404) 848-5580 or other sources as indicated.

The MARTA Connector is published by the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity, 2424 Piedmont Rd., NE, Atlanta, Georgia 30324. All comments and recommendations are welcome.