

Employee FRONTLINE

A newsletter from the WA State Employee Assistance Program

New Year's Resolution: Plan Your Time Off

Here's a switch: For your New Year's resolution this year, commit to planning your time off more effectively and start checking off all those items on your "bucket list."

Avoid the result of not thinking through your time off—often it becomes watching TV, "hanging out," or having time nibbled away only to have Monday morning sneak up on you. You plan your work, so why not your leisure? If your answer is "no way, that's the one part of my life I don't want planned!" think again. Memorable leisure activities become anchors you rely on to feel your life is balanced. We know recreation is beneficial for both your physical and psychological well-being, and this makes you more productive at work. So, start planning more exhilarating weekends and time off, and watch it carry over to make your Monday mornings more cheerful.



Reducing the Risk for Dementia

Research continues making advancements in our understanding of Alzheimer's. The strongest risk factors are age and family history. No sure-fire cure exists, but research supporting suggestions for possibly preventing or at least attempting to delay its onset do exist: 1) Keep your mind active using stimulating activities such as puzzles and word games; 2) Stay physically and socially active; 3) Quit smoking; 4) Lower your blood pressure, since high blood pressure may lead to damaging effects on the brain that increase risk; 5) Keep pursuing education—there is some evidence that a lower incidence rate of dementia exists among persons who have more education; 6) Maintain a healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and omega-3 fatty acids, commonly found in fish and other foods; and 7) Get quality restorative (deep) sleep.



Managing Your Brand

You are probably familiar with Nike shoes' motto "Just Do It," and McDonald's "You Deserve a Break Today." You also have a brand motto. That's right—your reputation. What do you think it might be right now? Think about this: You either control this message or you let it emerge by default. A blind survey might tell you what it is right now, but instead, decide what you want it to be. Your tools are your words and actions as you interact with others on the job. Every time you interact, what you do, say, and produce is an unwitting pitch of your brand. Gain control over this message. What would it take for your work style to communicate the brand you want to start sticking in people's minds?

Responsiveness: A Secret to Customer Service

You won't be able to solve all your customers' problems and deal with their inquiries immediately, but you can reduce their stress (and have a better day yourself) if you do the following: 1) let them know they are heard; 2) let them know that you are concerned as much as they are about an issue; and 3) let them know that you are working on the solution. Nothing feels worse than being ignored. An example is the inattentive host/hostess ignoring your wait at a restaurant. Recall the busy hostess who acknowledged your presence, apologized for the wait, said a table was coming soon, and gave you updates. See the difference?

Frontline Employee

Boosting Self-Confidence to Achieve Goals

No matter what your goals are in 2015, staying pumped and staying energized usually begins at an inspiring moment, but action steps maintain this momentum. Remember this: “Success is attracted to action.” To boost self-confidence, take action with steps, “sub-steps,” and if needed, “sub-sub-steps” so you don’t feel overwhelmed. Expect normal lulls in motivation and you will plateau through them faster instead of giving up. Hang out with like-minded persons pursuing goals like yours. Celebrate each milestone and give yourself deserved rewards that really count.



Get Your 2015 Budget on Track

If getting off on the right foot financially in 2015 sounds good, and you’re determined to start a budget that you will stick with, follow these tips: 1) Forget a crash diet budget. A crash diet budget is one where you decide to give up every bit of fun and extraneous expense. Doing so eventually leads to budget failure, because you’re only human. In a weak moment, you’ll break it, and from there things could possibly fall apart. A better plan is to include in your budget some money for enjoyment, even if it’s only a \$2 park admission. The ability to look forward to something fun is part of balanced living, and attempting to do away with it will undermine your larger goal. There are at least 10 types of budgeting software programs that are easy and fun to use. You can learn more about them by doing an Internet search for the following: 10 Best Personal Budget Software and Online Budgeting Apps.



Supporting a Friend in Grief

A heartfelt “I am sorry for your loss” and offering support remains about the most meaningful gesture to those grieving over the loss of a loved one. Grief is a unique, personal experience. It is not something to fix, but a journey to accept. This is why attempting to go further to “make things better” usually will miss the empathy mark. Statements that are less empathic tend to help others feel better, not the bereaved person. They include the following: “I know how you feel,” “Don’t cry,” “God never gives us more than we can handle,” “At least she (he) is in a better place,” “You’re attractive, you can always remarry,” “Everything happens for a reason,” “At least he (she) lived a long life,” “Try to find closure,” and “Don’t worry—it gets easier after a year.” It’s important to show your support to someone who is grieving a loss, but be mindful of how you express it in words.



Are You Culturally Competent?

The ability to work successfully across cultures is crucial for employers. This is called “cultural competence” (a term coined by social worker Terry Cross, MSW, in 1988). Cultural competency can be applied to an organization or an individual employee. Here is what it means for you: Possessing a set of behaviors and attitudes that allow you to work effectively with people, no matter what their background. When you meet fellow workers or customers, each one has unique thoughts, communication styles, customs, beliefs, biases, and values. For your organization to fulfill its mission, only you can take charge of removing personal barriers that may stand in the way and that lead to ignoring, overlooking, or being “culturally blind” to these dynamics. Cultural competence is not a “one shot, now I know it” idea. It’s an ongoing process of increasing ability and capacity. To learn more, read “[Cultural Competence Continuum](#)” and discover how to have more exciting and fulfilling interactions with others on the job. Use the six levels to discover your current level of cultural competence. Ask, “Where am I right now in my attitudes and beliefs?” And then ask “Where do I need to go?”

