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Seasons Greetings from our office to yours...

As the holiday season approaches we are reminded of many things. Memories of holidays past, loved ones we have lost and miss, expectations for celebrations, demands on our time and our wallets, time constraints and the desire to enjoy our friends, families and the spirit of the season.

A few suggestions come to mind that will perhaps keep expectations more realistic and our experiences more satisfying.

- Determine a realistic budget for holiday spending from gifts to food to decorations.
- Enlist the support of family and friends. Their “buy in” will be the key to success.
- Keep expectations low key for yourself and others. Remember it is all about the FUN!
- Take time to relax. Use your calendar to “pencil in” a little ME time and hold yourself to it.
- Keep a “Gratitude List” for each day of the season. Review the list often.
- “Random Acts of Kindness” are uplifting to all involved. Talk about the spirit of the season!



It is about the little things...

When I have asked people about their fondest memories of the holidays, the memories seem to revolve around spending time with loved ones. Engaging in family traditions like cookie baking, cooking favorite recipes, telling old stories around the fireplace or bonfire are always high on the list of favorites. Winter sports are also often mentioned, ice skating, skiing, sledding or the good old fashioned snowball fight remind of us fun we had as children and are now able to share with young people in our lives today.

Honestly, the fondest memories mentioned never have much to do with material possessions. Sometimes people do remember a special gift or two in their lifetime, but often those gifts are not the biggest or most expensive ever received. The gifts most cherished are the ones from the heart, chosen with thought and care. Handmade gifts or a family treasure handed down from one generation to the next are meaningful and never forgotten. Writing a letter to a loved one and sharing what you appreciate about them the most or the gift of your time and attention is best of all. Think about reading a story to the little ones, it will be magical and it will be remembered!

Our wish for everyone is that we all can find some time for appreciating our relationships and our lives, especially the little things we often taken for granted.

How important are our communication skills in the workplace and what are companies identifying as important benefits from investing in the development of workforce communication? The article below, taken from the Houston Chronicle outlines some answers to these questions.

What Are the Benefits of Effective Communication in the Workplace?

by Rose Johnson

Effective verbal and nonverbal communication skills are valuable in the workplace. Some companies spend a lot of money to train their employees on how to effectively communicate. Good communication skills go beyond conversations, but employees must know how to communicate well in written reports and emails. Understanding the benefits of effective communication helps companies place a focus on developing a workforce that is able to communicate within the firm and with customers, vendors and international business partners.

Helps with Diversity

Effective workplace communication is important in companies with workplace diversity. Good communication skills help to reduce the barriers erected because of language and cultural differences. Companies that provide communication training to domestic and international employees reap the benefits of effective workplace communication. Companies can avoid cultural confusion and miscommunication by training international employees early in their careers and on a regular basis. Effective communication causes productivity to increase, errors to decrease and operations to run smoother.

Global Business

With global business transactions continually increasing, the need for effective communication to meet global demands is also increasing. Managers and employees must know how to effectively communicate with the company's international counterparts. The difference in cultures requires managers to understand terms commonly used in America that another culture finds offensive. Companies that prepare workers to excel with verbal and nonverbal communications skills find it easier to enter into global marketplaces than companies that do not prepare its employees. Effective communication is important for businesses looking to expand beyond its domestic borders.

For the entire article including information on Team Building and Employee Morale click on the link

<http://smallbusiness.chron.com/benefits-effective-communication-workplace-20198.html>

Holiday Quotes...

"I like to compare the holiday season with the way a child listens to a favorite story. The pleasure is in the familiar way the story begins, the anticipation of familiar turns it takes, the familiar moments of suspense, and the familiar climax and ending." Fred Rogers

"December: a month of lights, snow and feasts; time to make amends and tie loose ends; finish off what you started and hope your wishes come true." Unknown

"How did it get so late so soon? It's night before it's afternoon. December is here before it's June. My goodness how the time has flown. How did it get so late so soon?" Dr. Seuss

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The following advice is taken from the National Safety Council article

"Enjoy a Safe Holiday Season"

Decorating is one of the best ways to get in a holiday mood, but every season emergency rooms see thousands of injuries involving holiday decorating. Some safety tips are listed below.

- * "Angel hair," made from spun glass, can irritate your eyes and skin; always wear gloves or substitute non-flammable cotton
- * Spraying artificial snow can irritate your lungs if inhaled; carefully follow directions
- * Decorate the tree with your kids (and pets) in mind; move ornaments that are breakable or have metal hooks toward the top
- * Always use the proper step ladder; don't stand on chairs or other furniture
- * Lights are among the best parts of holiday decorating; make sure there are no exposed or frayed wires, loose connections or broken sockets, and don't overload your electrical circuits
- * Plants can spruce up your holiday decorating, but keep those that may be poisonous (including some Poinsettias) out of reach of children or pets; the national Poison Control Center can be reached at (800) 222-1222
- * Make sure paths are clear so no one trips on wrapping paper, decorations, toys, etc.; NSC provides tips for older adults on slip, trip and fall protection

www.nsc.org/learn/safety-knowledge/Pages/news-and-resources-holiday-safety.aspx

In previous years we have put the following poem in our Holiday/Winter Newsletter. We believe it expresses some wonderful sentiments worth revisiting during this season of reflection and celebration.

The Gifts

by Author Oren Arnold

"To your enemy, forgiveness.

To an opponent, tolerance.

To a friend, your heart.

To a customer, service.

To all, charity.

To every child, a good example.

To yourself, respect."

