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thecornerstone

Introduction

WE'RE HALFWAY THROUGH THE YEAR ALREADY AND IT'S BEEN A PRODUCTIVE ONE THUS FAR. RGM CONTINUES TO MAKE PROGRESS WITH THE CONSTRUCTION OF SAVANNAH EAST, OUR NEWEST SIGNATURE PROPERTY. PROSPECTIVE TENANTS HAVE GIVEN US VALUABLE FEEDBACK WHICH WE ARE USING TO AUGMENT THE DESIGN, AND WHILE THIS HAS CONTRIBUTED TO A MINOR DELAY, WE ARE SCHEDULED TO COMPLETE CONSTRUCTION ON SAVANNAH EAST IN THE THIRD QUARTER OF 2015.

As we strive to create the ultimate workspace in Savannah East, which is aiming for LEED certification as Trinidad and Tobago's first green building, we decided to explore other key elements that can help to create a better work environment. We've also delved into the ways in which Emotional Intelligence can serve you in good stead professionally.

In July and August, many of us travel overseas – even if it's between our beautiful twin islands – so there's a timely article about safe travel, whether it's for business or pleasure. Finally, we've rounded up a few inspirational quotations to help you enjoy your time at the office a little more.

Here's to the next six months of 2015!

Better Environment, Better Productivity

ONE OF THE REASONS THAT RGM HAS DECIDED THAT ITS NEWEST DEVELOPMENT, SAVANNAH EAST, SHOULD BE A GREEN BUILDING, IS THAT IT HAS BEEN PROVEN THAT PEOPLE WORK MORE PRODUCTIVELY IN SPACES THAT ARE UPLIFTING, COMFORTABLE AND CREATIVE. EMPLOYEES TAKE FEWER SICK DAYS, THERE IS LESS STAFF TURNOVER AND PROFITABILITY TRENDS UPWARD.



Still, even in buildings that are not LEED certified, there are ways in which to shape workspaces so that they offer a sense of calm and well-being...

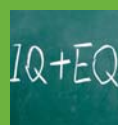
- 1. Bring in the green.** Just because a building may not be certified green doesn't mean that you can't introduce a little green indoors! It's common knowledge that office plants help to soften a space and offer a range of health benefits, including lowering stress levels and filtering the air, thereby reducing pollution levels. This natural air filtering is an often overlooked benefit of indoor foliage, but it truly delivers a surprising effect, both visually and physiologically.

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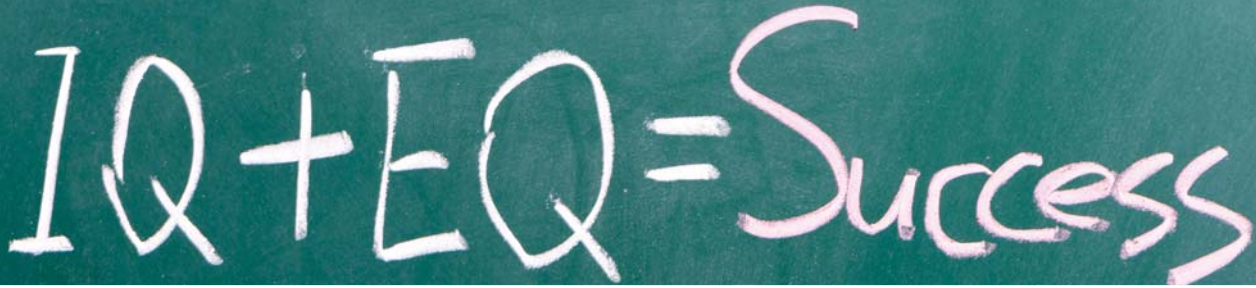
Better Environment...(cont'd.)

- 2. Open things up.** Open workspaces, complete with common areas where staff can have coffee and take breaks, have been found to improve communication and lessen the perception of a hierarchical workplace.
- 3. Close the door.** Wait – didn't we just advocate an open-plan workspace? Yes, but too much of one thing can also be good for nothing. Not everyone is an extrovert; some people think and work best when they have solitary time. Companies should ensure that their staff has a choice. When employees need privacy for certain tasks or meetings, one option is to use "huddle rooms" – areas that allow for quiet work or private discussions, free from noise and distractions. This also leads to a much more efficient use of space.
- 4. Find the right balance.** Balance is everything in life. Everyone is different, but in a workspace, it's important to take everyone's needs into consideration. Take the air conditioning, for example: chilly temperatures don't bother some people, while other folks are practically donning winter coats just to make it through the day. A compromise of about 23 degrees Celsius is probably a good one, since a 2004 study at Cornell University recently discovered that colder temperatures increased worker errors. If you have cold and hot zones in your office, consider relocating staff based on their preferences.
- 5. Sit back and relax.** Ergonomic chairs are worth the investment for staff, who will naturally perform better when they're not battling back and neck aches caused by sub-par furniture. Companies should also ensure that the right measurements for optimum desk, keyboard and computer monitor height are in place.
- 6. Get moving.** Even with ergonomic furniture options, it's unhealthy for people to be sitting at desks for long periods of time. Employees should be encouraged to get up and stretch their legs – sometimes, the best ideas come when people aren't chained to their computers.
- 7. Let in the light.** Natural light is obviously better for human health than artificial (particularly fluorescent) light. If your workplace can allow for windows that let in light – and inspirational views – do it! Your employees will be much happier, and so will your bottom line. If this is not possible, consider murals or green artwork.
- 8. Let the music play.** Not all employees can work while music is being played, but others thrive on it. Besides, different people have different tastes in music – so while piping music through an office-wide sound system might not be the best plan, it is sometimes a good idea to allow staff to use their iPods while at work – with their headsets on, of course.
- 9. Live and let live.** Some employees like their workspaces neat and organised. Others do better with creative disorganisation. Once the work is getting done efficiently, try not to impose your own preferences on your staff.
- 10. Keep one step ahead.** Always ask for feedback from your employees on how their work experience can be improved. Never get too comfortable; that's where complacency can set in. A productive workspace is always responsive, not reactive or restrictive.

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IQ + EQ = Success

Emotional Intelligence (EQ) and Why You Need It At Work

YOU CANNOT TALK ABOUT SUCCESS IN THE WORKPLACE – OR IN LIFE, FOR THAT MATTER – WITHOUT DISCUSSING THE CONCEPT OF COGNITIVE AND NON-COGNITIVE SKILLS. COGNITIVE SKILLS INVOLVE THE INTELLECT – POWERS OF REASONING, INDEPENDENT THOUGHT, MEMORY.

Non-cognitive skills, also referred to as “soft” skills, take into consideration values like integrity, people skills, motivation and determination. In his book *How Children Succeed*, Paul Tough examines “grit, curiosity, and the hidden power of character” to set out a case for the importance of emotional intelligence for long-term success. These two different skill sets – IQ and EQ – are useful to employers, as they can yield valuable information about what strengths prospective employees can bring to a company, other than their academic qualifications.

If you think emotional intelligence doesn’t matter, consider the salesperson who just has a knack for connecting with people and understanding what clients want. Or the customer service representative who always manages to soothe an irritated consumer. The folks who get ahead in their professional lives are often the ones who possess the kind of perseverance and people skills to create networks that open doors of opportunity. There is a growing school of thought that says non-cognitive skills can actually be developed later in life – that youth who did not have emotionally supportive environments growing up could actually learn to be emotionally intelligent as adults, but it involves being open to change by un-learning old habits and replacing them with new, more productive ones. Here are a few ways to develop EQ in your workplace...

1. Listen. You may think you understand what a co-worker is trying to say, but what we hear is often clouded by our own

opinions, perspectives and agendas. Cast aside any preconceived notions and be open to what is being said. If you need clarification, ask questions in a non-combative way.

- 2. Connect.** People with low EQ may avoid social interaction at the office, but bonding over coffee breaks or lunch can really build morale and boost team spirit.
- 3. Pay attention.** To what exactly? To if a co-worker seems to having a bad day. To when someone on your team does a good job. Empathy and praise go a long way to building strong, trusted work relationships.
- 4. Go the extra mile.** Is a colleague up to his neck in deadlines? Struggling with a work assignment? Why not help out if you can? Emotionally intelligent people understand that for them to succeed, others do not have to fail.
- 5. Embrace diversity.** Life – in and out of the work environment – would be excessively dull if everyone were the same. People are different. There are inherent strengths and challenges in that; learn to work with them.
- 6. Take responsibility.** Emotionally intelligent people don’t just take credit when things are going well – they hold themselves accountable during tough times too. In a society like ours that is used to passing the buck, this is a hallmark of the emotionally evolved.
- 7. Follow the Golden Rule.** Simple: if you wouldn’t like something to be done to you, don’t do it to others. Workplace nirvana achieved.

It’s that Time of Year Again

THE WISE DALAI LAMA ONCE SAID, “ONCE A YEAR, GO SOMEPLACE YOU’VE NEVER BEEN BEFORE.”

Many of us regularly follow his advice – the August holidays, which have curiously come to be known in Trinidad and Tobago as “Summer”, is a time when Trinbagonians travel in droves to places near and far. For some, this may be a much-anticipated family trip, for others, routine business travel. Either way, here are some handy tips to help you travel smartly – and safely.

Business Travel

- 1. Prevention is better than cure.** Frequent business travellers are all too familiar with the higher incidence of germs on airplanes, so be prepared. Walk with vitamins and useful medications, such as cold and allergy relief, motion sickness and diarrhoea prevention. Antibacterial wipes and hand sanitisers also come in...well...handy.



- 2. Connectivity is key.** The last thing you want when you land at your destination is to be incommunicado. Make sure your cell phone is fully charged and that your service provider knows you will be out of the country and can ensure that your data roaming is accessible.
- 3. Lighten up.** If you travel light, you probably won't even need to check in a bag, which means less waiting time and more productive time spent working and recharging. Always keep your carry-on in sight – at security check points, never place it on the conveyor belt to be scanned until the person ahead of you clears security. To beat the lines if you travel frequently, sign up for Global Entry, a U.S. Customs and Border Protection incentive that allows faster clearance for pre-approved travellers to the United States.
- 4. Snag jet lag.** If you're changing time zones, there are many useful methods for battling the effects of jet lag. Choose an overnight flight so you can sleep on the plane – or alternatively, start getting yourself into the habit of only sleeping when it's night at your destination. Avoid caffeinated drinks; instead, drink lots of water to keep you hydrated. There are also several homeopathic remedies, like the "No Jet Lag" brand developed in New Zealand, which many frequent travellers swear by.
- 5. Don't let down your guard.** Even at your hotel, which is where travellers naturally relax and unwind, stay alert. Find out the number for hotel security in case of emergencies, ask room service to call before they deliver meals, leave the "Do Not Disturb" sign up, even if you're not in the room, and use the hotel safe to store valuables.

Family Travel

- 1. Be prepared.** From knowing details about your destination, to knowing what to do in case anyone gets sick or separated, always have a plan. Pack any essentials, such as medication, snacks and entertainment, in your carry-ons. If your children are still young, ensure that you have the requisite car seats and that everyone wears seat belts.
- 2. Be serious.** Family trips are supposed to be fun, but in today's world, it is sometimes better to save the tricks and jokes for when you've left the airport; immigration and customs officials can't always afford to have a sense of humour.
- 3. Be vigilant.** Always supervise your kids, especially when you are in crowded places like malls or amusement parks, and when you are near the water. It's a good idea to have them wear bright coloured clothing so you can spot them easily. Ensure that your family has a plan of where to meet should anyone get separated, and that kids know essential contact information.
- 4. Be prudent.** Unless you're specifically making a trip to shop, lots of bags and trinkets can alert pickpockets and other swindlers. Before you know it, you're missing shopping bags, or even worse, your wallet. Always keep passports in the hotel safe and keep track of your credit card if you are using it frequently to pay for purchases.
- 5. Have fun.** Don't spend your entire vacation being the safety police. The point of going abroad and discovering new places is to have a good time and create new memories. So relax and enjoy!

Get Inspired!

We spend so much of our time at work that we might as well be inspired by it...



Individual commitment to a group effort – that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work." – Vince Lombardi



Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work." – Thomas Edison



Choose a job you love and you will never have to work a day in your life." – Confucius