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ANDERSEN ALUMNI™

Straight Thoughts, Straight Talk

"Serving Andersen Alumni Worldwide"

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Editorial

As if today's CEO did not have enough on their plate, they now have to decide if they will involve their company, their employees, their shareholders and their customers in the white-hot social issues of the day. These are not easy decisions. They have serious moral as well as economic consequences.

I live in Georgia and we have been the center of the US political universe these last few months. After a razor-thin presidential vote, we had an unprecedented dual senate race that would determine the control of the US Senate. Once the dust settled on that race, we became the focal point of election reform or voter discrimination, depending on your perspective. Our local industry titans, Delta Airlines and Coca-Cola, waded into the debate and the blowback was severe.

Were they brave to take a stand, or did they overstep their relationship with their stakeholders? Reasonable people could and should be able to discuss this issue. What is an authentic response and what is merely virtue signaling? These issues will be debated in board rooms the world over the next few years, if not longer.

I have no idea what the right answer is. However, I think it hinges on a company's mission. One CEO said, "Companies today with great intentions can sometimes create division and unwelcoming environment internally by engaging some of these issues." He went on to argue that the company's engagement on social issues should be tied to the company's mission. Companies should pick something big to solve in the world (their mission) and when a social issue intersects with that mission, it would be authentic to have a response.

There is a role for business to play in shaping our society, just as there is a role for government, faith communities, families and others. Each group brings a unique perspective and responsibility. It seems to me that a well-run company is usually executing on a clearly defined mission. That is the primary role of any business. This framework seems like a logical extension for a defining how a business should engage in these social issues.

If today's leaders truly want to make a difference they should simply adhere to the Golden Rule, treating others the same way they want to be treated. Think Straight, Talk Straight.

As always, we need your help to further strengthen and maintain our Andersen Alumni network. Please leverage our Social Media Presence and LIKE our Facebook page and JOIN our LinkedIn network, and lastly you can FOLLOW us on LinkedIn as well.

Sincerely,
Kirk Hancock
Editor

On the Move

[**+ Follow**] us on our LinkedIn Company Page for the latest information on fellow alumni on the move.

If you have recently changed jobs and would like to share your good news with other Alumni, please email details to Admin@andersenalumni.com

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Jason Ramey	Adam Contino	Jim Purcell	Kash Sheikh
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Avoiding Common Data Security Pitfalls

By Jason Norred, *Senior Director, Security Solutions II, Inc., friend of Andersen Alumni*

In continuing with the theme of "Complexity is the Enemy of Good in Cybersecurity" from the last newsletter, organizations can reduce risk and improve security posture by focusing security efforts on what matters the most, securing your data. This includes maintaining the integrity of your data from unintentional or unauthorized changes, maintaining the confidentiality of your data, and maintaining access and availability to your data. This is commonly referred to as the CIA triad (Confidentiality, Integrity, and Availability).

There are some key questions that should be asked as you consider your data security. Do you know **what** your most sensitive data is? Do you know **where** your most sensitive data is? **Who** has access to that data? How vulnerable is that data? Is that data protected using an enterprise approach, including immutable and highly available copies of your data?

Many of the above questions can be answered if you develop and implement a data governance process. Still, there are some foundational building blocks that can be leveraged to get you and your organization started. Additionally, there are some pitfalls you certainly want to avoid as well. IBM recently published the following pitfalls along with the solutions that you can consider and implement today. These pitfalls include the following:

1. Failure to move beyond compliance.
2. Failure to recognize the need for centralized data security.
3. Failure to define who owns responsibility for the data.
4. Failure to address known vulnerabilities.
5. Failure to prioritize and leverage data activity monitoring.

Solutions II also helps you avoid complications through a framework for change called the Adaptable Data Center® ("ADC") that simplifies the complexity while decreasing technical debt with IT investments. The ADC framework takes security into consideration and all of your priorities and creates an actionable roadmap to take you from your current state to your future state. This can be a game-changer not only in your security approach to 2021 but in all of your IT priorities.

Expert Elevation: How Marketing Can Use Personal Brands to Build Sales

By Nathan A. Ulery, *Arthur Andersen Business Consulting 1998-2002*

Last year, we all experienced a dramatic change in the professional services sales process when our ability to jump on a plane disappeared overnight. We worried about how we'd create and build relationships with prospects without informal means of developing rapport, but we adapted to Zoom connections and continued to sell. We all long for a return to normalcy, where we can have face-to-face meetings and join a client for dinner. Those encounters are starting to come back slowly, and hopefully will become a regular part of business again relatively soon. But I think we all can see that there's no going back to exactly the way things used to be.

That's partly because our clients' buying behaviors were changing even before the pandemic. Digital natives were already starting to become significant buyers of professional services. We all need to adapt our methods of interfacing with the market to meet their expectations and align with their buying behaviors.

In the retail sector, buyers conduct research, narrow choices, and select companies before picking up the phone or buying online. Buyers follow the same path in the B2B world. They use a self-service model to evaluate the market, understand your value propositions and determine how your services fit their needs. This doesn't just mean you should provide digital content that allows buyers to self-serve. It means you should provide digital content that makes a personal connection. Buyers don't want marketing materials; they want expertise from people they know.

In effect, buyers qualify sellers before they invest their time in you. If you don't provide content that helps them with this process, they'll pass you by.

The Change Is Real, and Permanent

The prediction of a lasting change in the art of sales isn't just based on anecdotal evidence. Research backs it up. Check out a few recent statistics:

- 20-to-30% of B2B buyers want to never interact with reps in person even in their ideal / post-COVID-19 model. (McKinsey study)
- 90% of B2B decision makers expect the remote and digital model to stick around for the long run. (McKinsey study)
- Three out of four buyers believe the new model is as effective or more effective than before COVID-19 (for both existing customers and prospects). (McKinsey study)
- 80% of B2B sales interactions between suppliers and buyers will occur in digital channels by 2025. (Gartner)

What do Self-Service Expectations Mean for Professional Services?

It's difficult to sell via self-service when your offering is intangible. In the professional services industry, people buy results, people, and trust. And there just isn't an e-commerce widget for that. With that said, customers do expect digital access to more information than ever before. They want more proof points, more case studies, and a better understanding of your service offerings. This is how they help themselves to the information they need to make business decisions.

That means you need to invest in your subject matter experts (SMEs) to make sure you're getting your expertise out there in a high-quality way. Your customers can smell marketing-speak sales pitches from a mile away, but SMEs can offer the keen insights your customers crave.

During this virtual / hybrid era we're living in, many professional services firms are focusing on existing customers to fuel growth. Helping SMEs within your organization build their visibility will kick-start your trust-building efforts so that when some organizations begin to welcome in-person interactions again, you'll get a priority appointment and make an impact. You'll be better positioned to get in the door both with existing clients and new prospects — and you'll keep lines of communication open with those who continue to primarily conduct business through digital channels.

Of course, trust is earned over time, so this isn't a quick fix. But building your executives' visibility can be a big win to help deepen existing relationships and replace the gains you used to glean from in-person connections. At The Mx Group, we're calling this idea "Expert Elevation."

How Expert Elevation Works

The idea of personal brands isn't new. Most people know that what they do and how they do it becomes a part of their individual identity, or brand. But what *is* fairly new — and becoming more and more successful — is the process of using personal brands to help the companies that the people work for.

In a recent *Forbes* article, Caroline Castrillon states, “Companies should encourage employees to build strong personal brands because it’s good business. When employees are allowed to represent their company at conferences or events, they are not only developing themselves but also providing the organization more exposure.”

All companies could benefit from increased exposure, as well as more meaningful connections with their prospects and clients.

It’s worth noting that trust in general information sources — such as search engines and social media — has drastically dropped in the past two years, according to the Edelman Trust Barometer 2021. Plus, only 40% of people trust CEOs as a source of information about a company, while 53% trust “a person like yourself.” Likewise, a recent Research World article states that “a client will go to an individual in a company to discuss an opportunity, not necessarily the business first.”

These insights point to a great opportunity for marketing teams to amplify trust-building insights from their SMEs and executives, which in turn can help support sales efforts.

10 Tips for Expert Elevation Success
So, how can you start working to elevate your experts and sell in a new way? Here are some ideas:

1. Identify leading in-house experts with unique insights to build business relationships and corporate brand awareness.
2. Meet with those experts, individually and as a group, to get their buy-in on your expert elevation plan. Explain how it can benefit their business and get their commitment to work with you.
3. Always use your experts’ time wisely to build content and messaging. This how-to guide goes into detail on how to hold effective ideation sessions with SMEs.
4. Build trust by putting technical experts and SMEs front and center in your marketing and sales materials.
5. Allow your SMEs to sell alongside sales professionals.
6. Embrace selling via video conference, but remember that Zoom fatigue is real. Find the right balance and defer to client preferences.
7. Whenever possible, elevate your SMEs’ expertise to help them gain visibility and expand their connections on social media.
8. When your marketing team is working on your SMEs’ behalf, ensure they use the experts’ lexicon (i.e., don’t “dumb-down” the content).
9. Provide SMEs (and salespeople who need it) with coaching on presentation skills, video conferencing etiquette and virtual presence.
10. Don’t be afraid to include details in your corporate bios that represent employees as real people with broad interests. Share how your experts are making an impact not just in your organization, but in the wider world.

COVID-19 accelerated a change to digital marketing and sales in the professional services space that was already happening. Now is the time to double down on those investments by highlighting your executives and SMEs and by elevating them to build affinity and preference for your organization. Their voice is the company's voice. Their personal brand benefits the corporate brand. Making those voices available across your digital channels builds credibility so that the trust is already there when those efforts result in a first meeting — whether it's virtual or in person.

Nathan A. Ulery After starting his career at Arthur Andersen, Nate joined West Monroe Partners, an Andersen-Alumni founded firm. During his time at West Monroe, Nate helped grow the firm from 12 to 1,200 people while leading three different technology practices and serving on the Executive Leadership Team and Board of Directors. Nate is now the Chief Operating Officer at The Mx Group (www.themxgroup.com), a leading B2B marketing agency with a 30-year history of solving complex marketing challenges. The company accomplishes this by identifying the unique combination of services and solutions that significantly impact a client's revenue and growth. The Mx Group is ranked among the top 5 integrated B2B agencies in the country. Nate can be reached at nulery@themxgroup.com

Business Process Assessment: Transforming Relationships

By Erin Koss, *CPA is an Andersen Business Consulting Alumni (1993-1999), and CEO of Syte Consulting Group, Inc.*

Transformation is one of my favorite words. To me it means big changes that result in meaningful impact.

For a manufacturing company today, successful digital transformation — which often involves implementing a new ERP solution or upgrading an outdated one — results in more than gaining a competitive edge. It results in optimized workflows, more engaged employees, streamlined operations, and a firmer foundation for growth both now and into the future.

To do a big transformation as fast and efficiently as possible, though, requires a different approach than more traditional organizations are often used to.

Though the end result may revolve around technological solutions, the place the Syte team starts in order to deliver a successful project is … less technical.

For an ERP initiative, the place we start to ensure success is a business process assessment — and we take a collaborative, cross functional, relationship-focused approach to this for good reason.

- An ERP implementation isn't just about installing new software — it's about **enabling growth**. As your company grows and tries to scale, it's important to understand what is slowing it down, what are the challenges in the existing processes, and where are the gaps and bottlenecks.

- A successful transformational change initiative transforms *everything* — your technology, your people *and* your processes — and it's important that as the project is planned and implemented, none of these things get left out or short changed. This requires **teamwork** to accomplish.

- As the technology is leveled up, so should the existing team and processes be leveled up to ensure long-term success. As we transform the organization, we **empower it** for greater success going forward.

Business process assessment and relationship-building go hand in hand. Successful transformational change — one that builds a better future for the company — is collaborative rather than prescriptive.

Let's take a closer look at how relationships are important in doing a thorough assessment of your business processes, and how engaging your team members in this way strengthens those working relationships in return.

Collaboration Breaks Down Silos and Builds Up Collaborative Organizations

In some ways, the traditional organizational structure of many manufacturing companies is set up for division — different business units carry out specialized tasks and the lines of responsibility are clear. For highly regulated industries like manufacturing, this makes sense: Everyone knows what they're accountable for, and outcomes are fairly predictable.

The problem with this operational model is that it often leads to operational silos. Individual departments focus on their own functions and processes, with little exposure to other areas of the business.

To get a full picture of your end-to-end business processes, you need to break down those silos and bring your stakeholders together. **When you get the right people in the room, they share their knowledge and expertise with each other.** This two-way communication can quickly expose gaps or inefficiencies in your existing processes — *before* you codify those same processes into your ERP.

At the same time, you're also laying the groundwork for a smoother transition when it's time for implementation. Because they've been invited to participate in the business process assessment, team members have more awareness of the company's critical business processes and will be in a better position to help move the ERP implementation forward.

Business Process Assessments Build New Relationships

The interplay between broad organizational initiatives and strong working relationships is often a bit of a chicken-and-egg scenario. Good working relationships make for a much stronger and more thorough business process assessment, but the exercise itself actually strengthens the relationships between employees who don't normally work alongside each other.

When we work with our clients on their business process assessments, we start by identifying the right people and bringing them together. In fact, we've found that involving key stakeholders upfront creates strong collaborative relationships where they might not have existed before.

There are a couple ways to approach this. There's the collaboration between different business functions — say, Procurement and Finance — to get an end-to-end picture of a particular business process. But there's also the relationship between the "business" side of the organization and the "technology" side — the team that provides the software and systems to employees so they can get the work done.

Historically, there hasn't always been a lot of direct collaboration between the business and technical parts of the business in the manufacturing world. Technology is usually selected by IT in a relative vacuum and then signed-off on by leadership without a cross-functional look at all the requirements. Finally, IT tests and deploys it to the organization, and business units are told to use it. I believe this approach represents a missed opportunity. There is so much expertise on each side of the house, bringing them together leads to better solutions for everyone.

Building better internal relationships during the business process assessment sets the stage for longer-term collaboration within the organization. Employees become more invested when they see their input reflected in the software they use, and the IT people can see how their contribution impacts the functioning and well-being of the business. Ideally, the communication and responsiveness on both sides will encourage employee-driven innovation long after the ERP implementation is complete.

This is where bringing in an outside team is a huge advantage. Outside experts aren't subject to existing internal silos, and they can help you pull the right people into the right rooms to do things better and faster. Outside experts do more than just deliver a better technical solution — they **connect your people** while bringing in capabilities and capacity to support change at a more rapid pace.

Relationships Are Key to Growth and Scale

When you engage stakeholders across all of your organizational functions for a business process assessment, you're building more than a bigger picture. You're building a team of knowledgeable allies who will ultimately drive the success of your business.

Are you planning a business process assessment for your organization? We'd love to help and facilitate the right conversations with your team. Schedule your complimentary consultation right here.

Erin Koss, CPA is an Andersen Business Consulting Alumni (1993-1999), and CEO of Syte Consulting Group, Inc. She is known for helping family-owned manufacturing companies scale with vision and integrity. Taking a people-first, process and technology readiness approach, Erin and the team at Syte ensure companies are ready to take on big change initiatives like ERP before diving in headfirst. A native to the Pacific Northwest, she enjoys traveling, being outdoors, hiking, biking, rowing, and supporting local culinary scene. Talk to Erin about preparing your company for sustainable growth.

Groundhog Day

By Ed Maier, *Former Andersen Partner*

You remember Groundhog Day. No, I do not mean the day celebrated every February 2 when Punxsutawney Phil emerges from his burrow to tell us whether we will have another six weeks of winter. I mean the 1993 film in which Bill Murray plays a cynical television weatherman. He is sent to cover the annual Groundhog Day event in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania. His character becomes trapped in a time loop forcing him to relive February 2nd over and over. That is what I have felt like over the past sixteen months. It seems like every day is my own personal Groundhog Day.

It started in January when politicians, medical personnel and newscasters began talking about a new virus that appeared in different places around the world. And so, the cycle began. Every day we would be peppered with news about it. We would hear about something new called "social distancing". We were encouraged to wear a mask outdoors. We were told it would last a few more weeks, then a few more months, then perhaps into the next year. We were regularly informed that there were no known vaccinations and that we would have to social distance a little longer and wear masks more regularly. Then we were told vaccinations would be developed. But then later we heard that more people were contracting the virus than expected and we had to be even more careful. Businesses started limiting hours, even closing. Public venues like theatres, movie houses and sporting arenas closed. We were told that these were going to be eliminated from our lives more permanently. They would return after we developed successful vaccines and achieved something called "herd immunity". Several global companies announced that they were developing vaccines and gave timelines related to the development. First the timelines were going to be more spectacularly successful than ever in the "history of vaccine development". Then a few "ooops" incidents occurred! There were fits and starts in vaccine development, but eventually, different vaccines became available vaccine distribution began. Reports surfaced that the distribution process wasn't going all that well, but then it was, but then it wasn't. In some cases, waiting lines for vaccinations were longer than the wait to get tickets at the box office of Hamilton.

Thankfully, vaccination processes now appear to be progressing somewhat smoothly. Venues are re-opening. Children may, or may not, be back in school this fall. People are beginning to gather for social and athletic events. Businesses are re-opening; people are being encouraged to come back to their "office" offices. Only time will tell if additional surges develop and the impact that will have on re-starting. As one of my favorite prognosticators, Yogi Berra, said: "It ain't over 'til it's over." And it still ain't over. But it feels like it is getting better.

The back-and-forth and ups-and-downs of this pandemic has affected all of us in many ways. We feel like our stay-at-home days have become repetitively consistent or consistently repetitive. Though we have made significant changes in the way we do things, it often feels like we are in our own personal groundhog cycles.

How has the pandemic affected your lives? What changes have you made? How have you avoided falling into your own Groundhog Day patterns? Are the changes for the worse, or for the better? What have you given up or how have you altered your lifestyle—either temporarily or permanently? I would like you to share your experiences.

I share some of my own experiences in the following paragraphs. Read through my list, think about your own lifestyle, or habit changes and send them to me. With your permission, I will share them with our audience in a future newsletter.

First, here is a bit about my pre-Covid life. Those of you who know me, know that I am in the "senior" category of the population. At this stage, I have pretty much planted both of my feet in the retirement chapter of my life. As a result, I have not been affected by workplace impacts as much as many of you. Here are some of the adapt-to-Covid changes I have experienced.

- I have not been in a movie theatre in almost two years. I cannot even remember the last movie I saw in a theatre. And there was a time when I would see 60-75 movies a year.
- As children of the 50's, Carol and I have been avid TV watchers all of our lives. With the advent of Covid, we have splurged on Netflix, Amazon, and other streaming options. It is amazing how many British, Polish, Italian, Spanish, French and other crime dramas we have found—and enjoyed!
- We used to subscribe to three different playhouses. The theatrical companies we supported have closed, or switched to video presentations, and are just beginning to talk about re-opening. I have no idea when, or if, we will return to this form of entertainment.
- Pre-Covid, as a part of expanding my personal exercise program, I decided to take up swimming. I enjoyed it and made some progress in this new skill but have not gone back to the aquatic center since March of last year. I am, however, walking or using our elliptical machine much more.

- I have never been a sports fanatic, but I did enjoy an occasional baseball, football, or basketball game. Covid has killed my interest in returning to any of these, except for my grandson's basketball games.
- In the past several years, Carol and I have taken numerous vacation trips, including river cruises which became a favorite. We had to cancel two of those last year and we are not likely to resume taking any until—at the earliest—next year or even 2023—assuming we continue to stay healthy and are comfortable with cruise-ship and foreign country Covid-related protocols.
- I began to participate in a brain performance research project through one of our local universities. I have taken brain-performance assessments, had periodic meetings with a "brain coach", performed certain test challenges and practiced certain training exercises to enhance brain performance and development. It continues to be a remarkably interesting project and challenges me to change certain behaviors.
- The Brain Performance project also encourages me to try new things, to alter scheduled routines or to do some regular things differently. Recently, Carol and I responded to this idea by bringing a new member into our household. His name is Barkley, and he is a five-month-old miniature Schnauzer. Without a doubt, he has altered our scheduled routines and challenged us to do several things differently.
- Covid has limited the opportunity to work directly with our personal trainer but to his credit he has begun using Zoom to help us keep up our physical training regimen alive.
- Volunteer organizations we work with have also resorted mostly to Zoom-type contact to share their messages, describe their alternative plans and conduct fund-raising projects.
- I have developed an amateur interest in geopolitics and subscribe to three newsletters and participate in periodic Zoom sessions to expand my understanding of what is going in the world.
- I continue to participate in the programs of OneDay University, which now offers their professorial lectures via Zoom. I can listen to lectures by college professors from universities around the country on topics related to business, arts, science, music, world affairs, politics, history, human behavior, and others. We have also just started viewing a lecture program called MasterClass. It provides lectures and personal development on a variety of subjects including writing, sports, cooking, politics, economics, and even video game design. MasterClass programs are often delivered by celebrities in their respective fields such as Ken Burns, Penn & Teller, Dan Brown, Neil deGrasse Tyson and many others.
- Meditation is another activity my brain coach suggested. I use an app called ***Headspace*** to assist me in this effort. I would love to hear from those of you who do some form of meditation. I do not think that I am doing so well in this area and would like to learn from other's experiences.

- Prior to Covid, Carol and I began to subscribe to a dinner program called HelloFresh. There are several like it in the marketplace. We both enjoy cooking but found that we had fallen into a predictable routine of dinner offerings. Our subscription provides us with three two-person meals every week that we participate. It has helped us vary our meal selection and try different choices that are not just the traditional meat-and-potatoes. In the past year, I have probably had more purely vegetarian meals than I have had in my lifetime. In addition, it has also stimulated my interest in cooking and creating my own version of meals.
- Oh, and finally, there is my Hoverboard. An important part of our personal training as we age is to work on maintaining physical balance. I convinced myself that in addition to the exercises our trainer promotes, I could work on my balance with a Hoverboard (and have some fun in the process). I am still in the early stages of this effort, so the jury is still out on this idea.

Each of our personal, professional, and social lives have been impacted differently by Covid. I would love to hear about your experiences. Have they been positive or negative? Permanent or temporary. Write to me at ed@thinkstraighttalkstraight.com and permit me to share them.

Stay safe, stay healthy, stay well!

The Secret to Great Teams

By Todd Dewett, *Andersen Alumnus, author and speaker*

It's not a secret, but more like a secret sauce with a few essential ingredients. If your goal is to help a team grow from good to great, this is for you. The answer is not high pay, abundant resources, or hiring certain personality types. Instead, over time as you hire, train, coach, and manage performance, be mindful about how you support these three key ingredients.

Purpose Over Paycheck

Sure, money is important, but it's only a minimal foundation for building a high performing team. Purpose is far more essential. That's a feeling that the work matters because it serves worthy causes and helps you feel connected to something special. It comes from quality role alignment, clear goals and expectations, positive supportive relationships, and an appreciation of the impact created by the team.

Chemistry Over Talent

Strong talent is essential, but not enough. A lot of talent never lives up to its potential. Chemistry is about knowing how to work together effectively to harness and leverage talent. That means people know and respect each other's roles, are willing and able to help others when needed, and have a healthy respect for everyone's unique abilities and how to use them to achieve shared goals.

Belief in Possibilities

Great teams know that more is always possible. They see current standards and the status quo as places to begin, not limits to what's possible. They feel safe enough to speak up, take smart risks, and fail and learn something new. For great teams, creativity and innovation aren't ideals, they are energizing lived values.

Great clients, employee superstars, and superior market positions come and go. The shifting of situational factors will force typical teams to fall, and many go down for the count. Great teams endure. They add a little persistence and perspective on top of the three qualities above and continue evolving and creating.

What about your team? How would they react to these ideas? Don't guess – make this a topic for at your next team discussion. Check the defensiveness and remember that growth often begins where comfort ends. Good luck!

Dr. Todd Dewett is one of the world's most watched leadership personalities: a thought leader, an authenticity expert, best-selling author, top global instructor at LinkedIn Learning, a TEDx speaker, and an Inc. Magazine Top 100 leadership speaker. He has been quoted in the New York Times, TIME, Businessweek, Forbes, and many other outlets. After beginning his career with Andersen Consulting and Ernst & Young he completed his PhD in Organizational Behavior at Texas A&M University and enjoyed a career as an award-winning professor. Todd has delivered over 1,000 speeches to audiences at Microsoft, ExxonMobil, Pepsi, Boeing, General Electric, IBM, Kraft Heinz, Caterpillar, and hundreds more. His educational library at LinkedIn Learning has been enjoyed by over 30,000,000 professionals in more than one hundred countries in eight languages. Visit his home online at www.drdewett.com or connect with Todd on LinkedIn. He can be reached at todd@drdewett.com

Nothing New About Normal

By John Blumberg, *Andersen Alumnus and author of Return On Integrity (www.BlumbergROI.com)*

Recently, there seems to be an increased longing to arrive at a "new normal." And I personally "get" that longing. It even has a tinge of feeling progressive on the surface – so much more insightful than just wanting to get "back to normal." Yet is it?

No doubt, this has been quite a year. Heartbreaking. Demanding. Confusing. And for so very many – an unimaginable deep loss. Anything, but what conventional wisdom would consider to be normal.

At the same time, this past year has been enlightening. Which is what makes me suspect of most any form of normal.

Normal, in itself, is an interesting term. It raises a lot of fair questions:

- Normal for who?
- Normal on whose terms?
- Normal by which measures?
- Normal in what way?

Could it be that "normal" is a code word for comfortable?

Normal has all kinds of connotations of "good." Yet, by definition, it means *standard, common type – usual state, amount or level*.

Some have referred to this pandemic as the great reset. It seems that resets come with a great cost if "normal" is one's standard. Even if it is a "new normal." With a greater vision, one might reset their perspective and turn the pandemic into a meaningful investment. The question becomes … an investment in what?

I'd propose there is nothing new about normal.

Normal isn't good enough. It has a comforting addiction that often leads to mindless addition. The donation lines at most any Goodwill store, over the past year, might be tangible evidence. I sat in one of those myself for almost an hour.

No question for many, a natural tendency would be to take the safe route to normal … even if we disguise the backward tendency of it by adding the adjective of "new." It appears to be without risk.

Yet this natural tendency may risk everything.

Especially the missed opportunity of a new way forward. Every government, every business, every educational institution, every church, every family and every individual are vulnerable to missing (or even worse yet, avoiding) this opportunity – especially if we are not willing to be vulnerable enough to explore a creative new path forward.

Recently, I had the opportunity to share a presentation on exploring the paradoxical blessings of 2020 with 20/20 clarity. One of my presentations explored how this pandemic has brought the opportunity to focus on simplicity. In preparation for my presentation, I stumbled across a good bit of insightful information on barnacles. It proved to be a good metaphor. It said this:

Of the more than 1,400 species of barnacles, found in the world's waterways, the most common ones are called acorn barnacles. Removing barnacles requires some elbow grease (or a pressure washer). These barnacles secrete a fast-curing cement that is *among the most powerful natural glues known – an adhesive so strong that researchers are trying to figure out how it can be used commercially.*

Barnacles like places with lots of activity – like underwater volcanos and inter-tidal zones, where they reside on sturdy objects like rocks, pilings, and buoys. Moving objects, like boat and ship hulls and whales, are particularly vulnerable to the pesky critters. Large barnacle colonies cause ships to drag and burn more fuel, leading to significant economic and environmental costs. The U.S. Navy estimates that heavy barnacle growth on ships increases weight and drag by as much as 60 percent … resulting in as much as a 40 percent increase in fuel consumption.

The *barnacle-like objects* in our lives … activities, commitments, expectations and the entitlements we add to our lives … are often attachments that are connected with an adhesive any barnacle would be proud of. They can create their own form of drag …

And in so many ways take-on the essence of normal.

This pandemic will be talked about for decades, if not centuries, to come. Instead of setting our sights on getting to a "new" normal, what if we began to creatively explore, with great wonder, *a new way forward*.

Instead of the chatter of future generations being focused on the great cost of this pandemic, what if it was filled with awe of the great transformation that followed? Not a new normal … but rather something *really new*. And wonderful.

What would be one element of a new way forward that you would love to see? We could all benefit, if you would be so kind to share your thoughts email me at John@BlumbergROI.com!

6 Unbelievable but Hard-to-Find Free LinkedIn Features

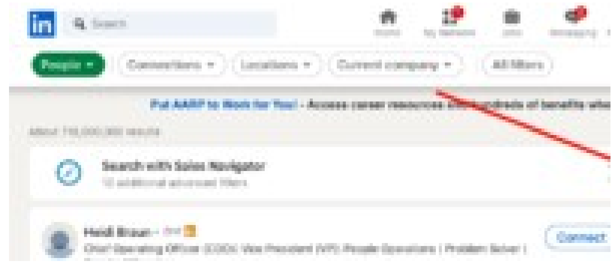
By Wayne Breitbarth, *Andersen Alumnus and CEO-Power Formula LLC (Author of "The Power Formula for LinkedIn Success: Kick-Start Your Business, Brand and Job Search')*

Most LinkedIn users (61 percent according to the most recent statistics) are not paying anything to use the site. That's why most of what I teach in my book, public workshops, corporate training sessions, and personal consultations focuses on becoming a skillful user of the free account.

Here are six simple ways you can capitalize on powerful, hard-to-find LinkedIn features without spending a cent.

1. Create Search Alerts for Advanced People Searches.

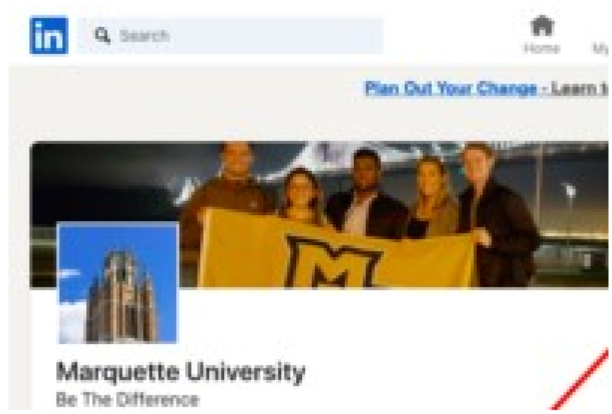
This is like having a 24/7 virtual assistant who's always looking for the right people. Once you've completed an [Advanced People Search]() that gives you a list of just the right folks, click the words *Create search alert* (top right corner).



Then each week LinkedIn will automatically show you new people who meet your defined search criteria. This is absolutely priceless.

2. Find fellow alumni.

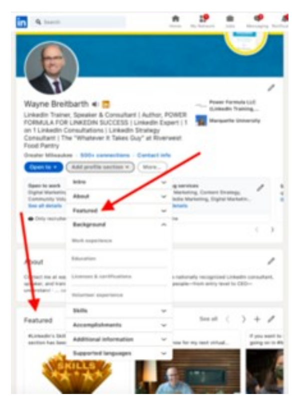
It's hard to explain the warm, fuzzy feelings fellow alumni have for each other, but LinkedIn makes it very easy to find and contact your fellow alumni—and many times they'll be quite willing to do business with you.



Type the name of the school you attended in the top search box. Then choose your school when it appears in the drop-down menu. Next, select *Alumni*. Choose your filter columns or keywords, and LinkedIn magically shows you just the right fellow alums—smiling faces and all. Ka-ching! Learn more about the Alumni feature [here.]()

3. Add media to your profile in your brand new Featured section.

To create a compelling profile, you need to strategically tell your professional story. A simple way to enhance your written story is to add links to important websites and upload media or other files.



Click the down arrow in the *Add profile section* button, and then choose *Featured* in the drop-down menu. Viewers will then be able to watch, download, and read your most important work samples, company information, personal testimonials and recommendations, and so much more. Learn more about adding media to your Featured section [here.]()

4. Download your connections database. Who wouldn't want a spreadsheet of their first-level connections' first and last names, current companies and titles, and the dates you connected with them?

Simply select *Me* on your top toolbar, and choose *Settings & Privacy*. Then you will be taken to the *How LinkedIn uses your data* page, where you can click *Get a copy of your data.* Next, check the *Connections* box, and then click the blue *Request archive* button. You will then have to enter your password. Within minutes, LinkedIn will send you a file with that information in a helpful spreadsheet.

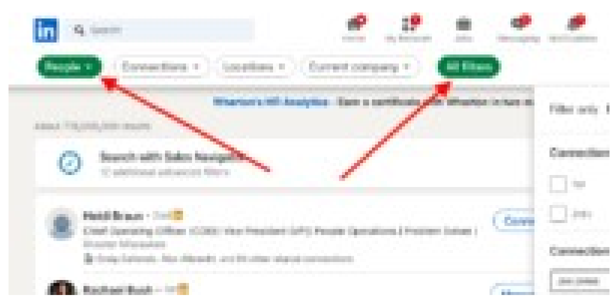
5. Send messages to fellow group members.

Unless you have a premium account, you cannot send a direct message to people who are outside your first-level network without incurring an InMail fee—with one exception. Each month LinkedIn gives you 15 free direct messages you can send to people who have agreed to accept messages from fellow group members. InMails typically cost $10 each, so this is a $150 gift from LinkedIn.

You can join a group just long enough to send someone a free InMail. From the specific LinkedIn group page, click *See all* in the top right corner. Then enter the person's name in the *Search members* box. Next, select the *Message* button to the right of the person's name.

6. Search your connections' connections.

This is an easy way to look for potential customers, employers, etc. whom your connection can introduce you to. This is like having each of your connection's Rolodex on your computer, phone or tablet, which you can easily filter and search through.



To perform this search, put your cursor in the big, light blue search box in the top toolbar, and select the *People* button from the list of searches you can do here (Posts, People, Jobs, etc.). Next, select the *All Filters* button in the white toolbar that appears on the far right.

Then go to the *Connections of* box and type in your connection's name. Choose his or her name when it appears in the drop-down menu, and then click the blue *Show results* button.

Now use any of the other filters to narrow the search to people at the right company, location, school attended, title, etc.

There you have it—six features that would certainly be worth paying for, but they're totally free. Thank you, LinkedIn!|

SPECIAL OFFER FOR ALUMNI

If you'd like me to demo these LinkedIn features as part of a specially priced $197 one-on-one LinkedIn consultation, you can book your session **here**. I will share my computer screen with you during the call and send you a marked-up copy of your profile prior to the call.

Whether you're using LinkedIn to find your next high-impact customer, raise your organization's profile, or land the job of your dreams, this session is for you.

There are limited spots available, so don't delay. Book your session today by clicking **here.**

Getting Culture Right is Key Lessons Learned on What's Key to a Successful Hire

By J. James O'Malley, *Andersen Alumnus and Managing Director and Executive Search Practice Leader at Felix Global*

Culture is defined as shared values that drive behavior. It is so powerful that Peter Drucker wrote *"culture eats strategy and vision for breakfast"*. As a headhunter, job number one for me is getting the right person hired. My clients count on it and my candidates place their trust in me. So why do so many companies, candidates and headhunters fail in getting that right person in the right seat at the right company? It's pretty simple: we don't spend enough time on **culture**!

Culture really matters - and in an environment where demand outstrips supply for many jobs - culture exerts an increasingly enormous impact on your ability to hire and retain people. But most companies do a lousy job building authentically engaging cultures. The evidence is everywhere. In a recent Forbes article, Deloitte shares research showing that culture, engagement, and employee retention are now the top talent challenges facing business leaders. The same article also cites data from Gallup showing that that 51% of us are disengaged at work while 17.5% are actively ***disengaged***.

Few of us are fortunate enough to have had the opportunity to work within great cultures. For me, working for Arthur Andersen's business consulting practice taught me a lot about what makes a culture great. In fact, at an alumni retreat a few years back it connected me with dozens of colleagues who shared that experience. What prompted 70 former colleagues, 13-plus years later to give up a precious weekend? **Culture**.

Using my experience as a lens, I've come to two conclusions about great workplace cultures. First, great cultures really do stand out - the culture is tangible, and you can feel it. Secondly, I firmly believe that culture must be real, actionable and honest. Closing the gap between what you say and what you do at Andersen was called "Think straight, Talk straight". Hypocrisy kills culture.

So, what does all of this have to do with recruiting and assessing for the right culture? Well, a few things:

- Companies need to begin to openly share their values and live by them. Additionally, consider another dimension of corporate culture: it's often aspirational, rather than a reflection of current reality. Need objective proof? Pick a large corporation and take a look at the way culture is described on the website's pages devoted to HR. Then, ask a friend who works there what it's really like. Every culture has positives and negatives. That's why employers need to stop speaking aspirationally about culture when hiring, so as not to confuse the candidate and/or themselves.
- Look in the mirror objectively to see how others perceive your culture. Monitor postings about your company on sites such as glassdoor.com or vault.com to understand what employees and job applicants are saying about your culture and why. Granted, a portion of these may be generated by disgruntled employees but, nonetheless, we all know that perceptions count.
- Make sure everyone on your leadership team walks the talk on culture. Culture starts at the top and, too often, we hear executives make comments to the effect that "HR owns culture". Wrong - everyone shapes the culture in your organization,
- Companies need to devote time and training to make sure that those doing the hiring are truly assessing the job candidate's values - rather than some other characteristics - and that those values are consistent with the values of the company.
- If your company decides to hire an individual whose values are not aligned with those of the company, you must be prepared to lose them. Turnover is so often grounded in cultural mismatches.

An interesting thing about a good culture is that it can be difficult to quantify but you can feel it when it's there. There are a few special occasions in life - family events or class reunions, for example - where you can enter a room and immediately feel a connection to others at the gathering. There is a sense of community and, even if years have passed, a strong camaraderie that allows you to pick up a conversation if you'd just seen the other person a few days ago. That, in a nutshell, pretty much summarizes the atmosphere at the Andersen retreat I attended and makes the best case, in my opinion, for developing and nurturing a strong culture that lives on long after the company is gone.

About J. James O'Malley
O'Malley leads Felix Global's Executive Search Practice and brings with him 30 years of talent acquisition solutions. In 2018, he co-founded a retained search firm focused on recruitment in the private equity, professional services and financial services sectors. Previously, he was a partner and executive search practice leader at TalentRISE, a recruitment solutions firm in Chicago. Prior to that, he was senior vice president in the human resource function of Fifth Third Bancorp. O'Malley has also worked for several professional service firms, including Arthur Andersen, Deloitte, Huron Consulting and Lante. He can be reached at jomalley@felixglobal.com

Interested in becoming a Sponsor?

Andersen Alumni Association is proud not to charge annual alumni dues and relies rather on strategic sponsorship to fund operations. Given advances in technology and alumni mobility Andersen Alumni Association is seeking a few additional qualified sponsors. If you think your company may benefit from a strategic partnership with the Association, please email Admin@andersenalumni.com for more information.

ALUMNI BENEFITS:

Message from LinkedIn – Update Feature
Reprint: Communication received by Andersen Alumni Association

Thank you for your continued dedication to your Groups! (Andersen Alumni Association Group Page)

Based on member feedback, we have invested in improving the ways that our members can engage in meaningful conversations within safe and healthy communities like yours.

In our latest update to Groups, members will be able to easily message anyone in the group without message limits and will have the flexibility to control which messages they accept or privately decline. Members will receive a notification about their message requests just like they would with a regular message and continue the conversation with a single click of "accept".

Thank you for your commitment to keeping your community safe and productive. To learn more about this update, visit our help center.

Sincerely,

The LinkedIn Team

NEW Medicare Medical Savings Accounts (MSA)

Andersen Alumni Association has partnered with Medicare Caddy to provide our members with a NO COST TO YOU Medicare insurance expert to help you optimize the Medicare benefits available - wherever you live. Medicare Caddy, LLC is a licensed insurance agency that only works with existing or soon-to-be Medicare beneficiaries. Medicare Caddy KNOWS the Medicare course and is a leader in providing educational programs about the unique benefits of Medicare Medical Savings Accounts (MSAs) as well as other Medicare Advantage, Medigap and Part D Prescription Drug Plans.
Greg O'Brien is Managing Principal of Medicare Caddy, LLC. Based in Atlanta, GA, Medicare Caddy is a licensed insurance agency specializing in all forms of Medicare related insurance. Medicare Caddy has helped hundreds of people evaluate Medicare options and enroll in the plans that optimize their Medicare benefits.
Greg can be reached by email at greg.obrien@medicarecaddy.com , phone 404.821.1886 or visit https://www.medicarecaddy.com/medicare-msa/AndersenAlumni

Mortgage – Wintrust Mortgage
Andersen Alumni Association is has partnered with Jennifer Sobocienski, *(alumnus from our Andersen Chicago office)* Senior Mortgage Consultant, NMLS 755995, and Wintrust Mortgage, the 11th largest bank-owned retail mortgage originator in the country with more than 200 lending offices across the United States, to offer our members a preferred lending partner and mortgage benefit. This program offers a dedicated team of mortgage professionals to serve our members and provides a $500 Visa gift card after closing a residential loan with Jennifer at Wintrust Mortgage. For more information about the program and Jennifer's contact information visit www.wintrustmortgage.com/andersenalumni.

Long Term Care – Insurance Coverage
70% of Americans over 65 will need some form of long-term care. And that care will be expensive. According to a recent survey, the cost for long term care can currently range from $48,000 a year for home care to $98,000 a year for a private room in a nursing home; and costs are increasing every day. Planning for these expenses with long term care insurance can help you maintain your lifestyle, protect your assets and savings, and give you the options necessary to receive care and services.

BPB Associates of Atlanta has been helping families like yours with their extended health care planning needs for 33 years and has negotiated special discount carrier pricing for Andersen Alumni members. Click here for more information: www.bpbassociates.com/andersenalumni/LTC

International Travel – Medjet Assist
Medjet provides reduced annual rates for its Air Medical Transfer membership program on a voluntary purchase basis to North American members affiliated with ***Andersen Alumni Association***. Medjet provides single point coordination for the safety and protection of organizational clients and individuals/families as they travel for personal or business reasons - domestically and abroad. Zero cost beyond the membership fee for services coordinated by Medjet in medically transporting a member back to a home country hospital of their choice in time of need.

Medjet also offers an optional membership upgrade branded as Medjet Horizon that provides (among multiple membership benefits) a 24/7 Crisis Response Center for **Travel Security and Crisis Response** consultation and coordinated in-country services.

Learn More/Enroll? Persons from the U.S., Canada or Mexico can visit Medjet at **www.Medjet.com/Andersen** or call Medjet at 1.800.527.7478 or 1.205.595.6626. Reference Andersen Alumni if calling. Enroll prior to travel.
Reduced Medjet annual membership rates for persons from North America under age 75 start at $250. Multi-year and short-term rates are also available. Rules and Regulations available online and provided with Member ID cards.

Social Media: Association's LinkedIn Group (Join), Company (Follow) and Facebook Fan Page (Like)

Follow

Social Media is a great way for us to stay connected. To request the Association Status be added to your LinkedIin Profile click on the following URL to JOIN:
http://www.linkedin.com/e/gis/38306/6E0CB25BC94E
Additionally, you can "FOLLOW" the Association by clicking on the following URL:
http://www.linkedin.com/company/andersen-alumni-association?trk=tabs_biz_home
To "JOIN" our new Facebook fan page simply click on the following:
http://www.facebook.com/pages/Andersen-Alumni/182112725168442