

Focus on Small Business



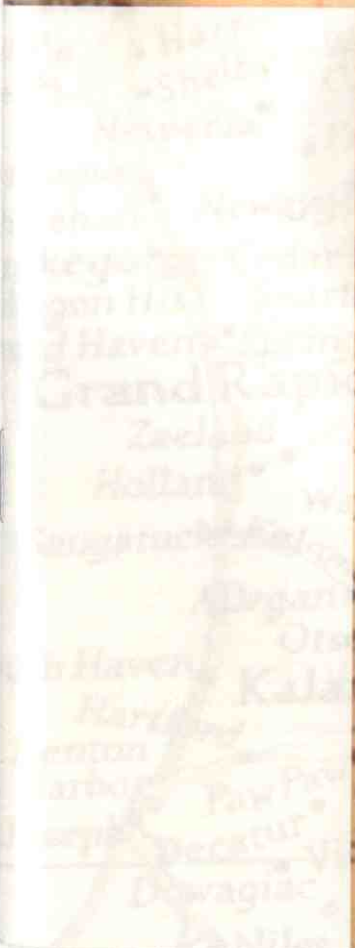
HR Problems Can Hit You from Any Direction

Avoid Headaches:
Outsource Benefits

Payroll Problems?
Here's a Solution

Know Your Employees:
Personality Assessments

What About Company Culture?



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Getting Along


By Paul Hense

One problem seldom addressed in small businesses is the tension in organizations due to personality types.

Sales teams think accounting is made up of a bunch of bean counters. Accounting thinks that the sales team is a bunch of blow-hards who spend their work hours being with anyone who will listen. Human resources people are viewed as soft science at best and useless overhead at worst. Everybody thinks the CEO is a descendent of Napoleon if he is short and Charles DeGaul if he is tall. Who hasn't described the CEO as a person suffering from delusions of adequacy?

But let's look at reality. If there are no sales there are no jobs. How's that for a reality check? Without a human resources department, a multitude of government bureaucracies would descend upon your company like 10th century Viking raiders. Without the accounting department's function there would be no payroll checks and no matter what the sales, the organization would probably fail due to a lack of cost control. What if there was no CEO? We all know the headless horseman was a fake because without a head he would continuously run into trees. The same is true of companies. Without someone to set the pattern and see that it is followed, collisions would be inevitable.

It is a fact that all these people are needed to succeed. In a small business they are often outsourced services, but the function is still required. It is the natural predisposition that some of these groups will clash. As an expressive who has lived my business life among CPAs who are analytical, I can testify to the misery of living with these conflicts. I spent my early years in public accounting working for CPA firms feeling like a rooster at a Tyson Foods picnic. There is very little in life that is more uncomfortable than going to work every day in an environment that feels alien. That being said, businesses still need a variety of personality types to excel. Failure to recognize that reality means that talented people will be forced out of organizations that need their skills. A business made up of all analytical people will fail for a lack of sales. An organization made up of all expressive people will fail due to a lack of follow through.

There are two elements to the solution. Both are your responsibility. First, you can only change yourself. You must understand that you cannot change other people. Be aware of your capacity to annoy other people. Modify as best you can the annoying aspects of your personality when dealing with a conflicting personality type. Second, unfortunately, you are going to have to accept them the way they are. Acknowledge the fact that you have differing opinions and then go about the business of being successful together, each using your unique skills to the maximum. You don't have to like each other but you do need to respect each other. If your heart hated your liver and decided to not co-operate with it, you know what would happen. The same is true of your business. Get along or perish. 

Paul Hense is a Grand Rapids-based CPA and chairs the Focus on Small Business editorial committee.

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