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strategies, ideas and tips for managing yourself and others

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Cyber Espionage: Protecting Your Company's Most Valuable Assets

by James Pooley

We've become used to news reports of companies and government agencies being breached by anonymous foreign hackers. But most people were shocked to learn that employees of the St. Louis Cardinals baseball team allegedly compromised the secret database of the Houston Astros, gaining access to scouting reports, player assessments and game strategies. With industrial espionage affecting "America's Pastime," we have to pay attention! As it turns out, there are some good takeaways here for everyone that has to supervise employees in the modern enterprise.

The Importance of Information

First, this story is a great example of how much value there is in information itself. Research proves what we suspect from looking at today's businesses; increasingly they rely on "intangible" assets like data analytics for their competitive advantage. The most common form of protection for those assets isn't traditional intellectual property like patents or copyrights, but trade secrets. The main reason is because the law is incredibly broad, protecting not just famous formulas like Coca-Cola's, but any secret information that you wouldn't want the competition to know, including strategic plans, customer preferences and unannounced products.

Technology Can Make Information Vulnerable

Second, this increasingly crucial business asset has never been more vulnerable or exposed to more threats. In part, this is because of the Internet and other technologies like smartphones and USB thumb drives that make it easier to take data where it's not supposed to go. In part, it's also about global competition, which leads many companies to partner with outsiders

on the development of new products, increasing the risk of exposure. But one thing that hasn't changed with the arrival of these new challenges: the single greatest threat to information security has always been, and remains, the company employee.

That's not to say that workers are being recruited as industrial spies. Deliberate espionage — despite the headlines — is relatively uncommon within private companies. But carelessness isn't, and that is the way that most proprietary information is lost. This is why the supervisor plays such a key role in protecting today's most important corporate property. Good management can make all the difference. Here are some suggestions for specific steps that you can take to improve your own performance in this critical area.

"Increasingly crucial [information] has never been more vulnerable [to cyber espionage]."

- **Understand what the company owns, and how it's different than an employee's skills.** If you're going to help the company protect its sensitive data, you have to be familiar with what it is and why it's valuable. Of course, focus on what your own department deals with, but also learn what's important in other parts of the enterprise. Leaks don't always happen locally inside an organization. Also, keep in mind that it's the company's secrets that have to be protected, not the skills and general information that employees need to do their job. If you teach someone how to be a more efficient programmer or analyst or salesperson, they are entitled to put that knowledge in their personal "tool kit" and take it with them to their next job. In managing their

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work, you should show that you know the difference; it will help them to respect what belongs to the company.

- **Understand the kind of threats faced in your industry, but focus on the “insider” threat.**

Managing trade secrets is just ordinary risk management applied to a specific subject. To help prevent loss, you need to know what the threats are. In some industries that are mainly customer-facing, you may have concerns about the sort of cyberhacking that has hit Target, Home Depot, Anthem and JP Morgan. The same kind of external threat looms for companies that perform a lot of research in new technologies or therapies; in fact, even the results of failed experiments can be useful to a competitor, to save them time and risk in pursuing their own development. Most businesses meet these external risks with sophisticated software tools for detecting and reacting to IT system breaches. (Even with the best tools, however, you still need good management of the people that operate them and act on their output.)

But no matter how much damage might be done by outside entities, a lot more can be caused by those working for the organization. This is the “insider threat” that security experts agree is the most common source of information loss. In plain terms, this means that we all make mistakes from time to time, but carelessness when handling secret data can have catastrophic consequences. That’s because trade secrets are like a gas in a container: once you open the lid and it gets out, you can’t put it back. So while with external threats you can (and often must) rely on breach detection as much as breach prevention, where human behavior is concerned, prevention is paramount. Operationally, this means that your impact on corporate security can be measured by how well you supervise the people in your area, to keep them aware and informed.

- **Promote good password hygiene and other IT security.** Some people have speculated that the Cardinals/Astros hack happened because a former Cardinals executive who joined the Astros set up the same passwords to get system access at the new job as he had used at the old one. Most of us can identify with the inconvenience of having to remember a lot of passwords, but we also know that changing your passwords frequently is just smart practice. This is only one example of the many IT-related practices that, when followed regularly, can dramatically reduce risks. But since those practices are implemented (or not) by the people who work for you, it’s up to you to make sure that they are doing their best.
- **Follow through on training and information protection policies.** The same idea — that people management matters most — requires that you pay special attention to how you follow up on the security training that staff receive. Time and again, training is shown to be the most cost-effective way to prevent data loss, because it raises awareness and

reduces careless behavior. But that works only if you reinforce the messages that workers have received by periodically measuring their compliance and understanding and finding ways to weave information security into your feedback sessions and performance reviews. And on a daily basis, set the example on compliance with company information policies, for example, by counseling with staff who leave sensitive information open in their work area. Your active demonstration that you care about these policies can do more than any refresher seminar.

- **Hire smart.** It’s not just the loss of the company’s own secrets that keeps executives awake at night; it’s also the risk that its information will become infected with unwanted data from the outside. Many recruits mistakenly believe that they are doing their new employer a favor by keeping records from their previous jobs. So you have to make it clear from the initial interview that the company respects the intellectual property rights of others, and that unauthorized introduction of someone else’s secret information — whether physically or from memory — can result in termination. This especially applies to consultants who often promote their value based on what they know about the competition.
- **Pay attention to confidentiality obligations.** Nondisclosure agreements, or NDAs, are common, but people don’t pay enough attention to managing their obligations. For example, if you have a meeting where some sensitive company information is shared orally, a written confirmation has to be sent within a certain number of days. Keeping records of who gets access to what information will also help you avoid problems. Most importantly, watch out for the requirement to return or destroy shared information at the end of a project, since even keeping it stuffed in a cabinet can get you in trouble.
- **Handle terminations with care.** Once you learn that someone intends to go, the focus of your supervision has to shift. Have they been downloading an unusual amount of documents? Are they meeting with other employees and possibly recruiting for their next employer? If that happens, be prepared for the exit interview, in order to (a) learn where they are going to work and what they will be doing and (b) impress upon them the seriousness of their obligations not to use or disclose any company secrets. ■

about the author

James Pooley is a Silicon Valley lawyer and author of the recent book Secrets: Managing Information Assets in the Age of Cyberespionage. (www.veruspress.com) He provides strategic and management advice in patent and trade secret matters and consults on information security programs. He recently completed a term as Deputy Director General of the World Intellectual Property Organization, where he was responsible for running the international patent system. ■

Tips for Reducing Employee Burnout

Question: This time of year is always busy in my industry and my workers have been under a lot of stress. Is there anything I can do to ease the stress?

Answer: A little stress can be a good thing. It motivates workers to produce and helps keep their energy levels high. A lot of stress, however, can be destructive and can take away the urge to work at all. In fact, some people respond to too much stress by just shutting down. Before you know it, burnout occurs.

Here are some ways you can ease stress and still get quality work done:

- **Give employees some control.** Studies have shown that workers who have the power to make decisions on the job are less likely to have stress-related illnesses than workers who are told exactly what to do and how to do it.
- **Don't give contradictory commands.** One of the greatest sources of stress in the workplace occurs when employees feel torn between conflicting commands. For example, employees are often urged to follow safety rules, but, at the same time, are required to work faster. While it is possible to have a safer and faster workplace, this goal must be undertaken carefully, otherwise, a worker is likely to feel pressured. This will result in neither a safer nor more productive work force.
- **Encourage de-stressing time.** A job's physical requirements, as well as the mental ones, can contribute to stress. Whether workers are sitting at desks or standing at workstations, they need a periodic change of scenery. Even if it only means getting up and walking the perimeter of the work area, it can make the worker feel refreshed. Encourage workers to exercise or spend time doing something they love. I guarantee you'll see a difference.
- **Flexibility is key.** Assign an appropriate amount of work that is challenging, but not overwhelming. If you assign a deadline or goal and it becomes apparent that the goal is unrealistic, change it so that the goal is attainable. In addition, if the task is too much work for one person, assign them a partner to help achieve the goal.
- **Work/life balance.** Don't overload your employees. A good supervisor makes sure that employees don't have too many projects going on simultaneously.



In addition, make sure they are keeping reasonable working hours. If your employees are working 90-hour weeks, chances are, they have too much on their plates. Allow your employees to take their vacation days, sick days and paid time off without making them feel guilty about not being in the office.

- **Encourage team building and socialization.** Socialization and feeling connected to one's coworkers and peers is a vital part of feeling connected to a company. In order to allow for team bonding to occur, allow for your employees to freely socialize during their breaks, at lunch or after work. To try and boost morale, think about organizing a get together, such as a company lunch, bike ride or softball game. ■

Don't Wait for Performance Reviews

Question: It's time for performance reviews at my company and I was wondering if you had any advice on how to make these reviews easier?

Answer: If you want to make performance reviews a little easier on everyone — including yourself — try to do mini reviews throughout the year. This way, there won't be any big surprises for the performance review itself.

Conducting a mini review is easy. Here are the steps:

1. Tell your staff that you are going to have short meetings every month to go over their performances. Explain that these meetings will help ensure that everyone is on the same page.
2. You don't need a checklist and form, and you don't need the worker to sign anything. These mini reviews should be very informal. But take advantage of this opportunity to give feedback. Don't just tell the worker that "everything is fine."
3. Include a review of how the worker has improved, based on what you discussed in the last mini review.
4. Do not use the mini reviews as an excuse to bring up some new fault. If you do this, the mini reviews will quickly become demoralizing. Instead, try to focus on the last formal performance review and discuss how the worker is doing with that as a baseline.

If you haven't been doing mini reviews and a yearly review is due for a worker who has been having some problems, it's not too late to give him or her a chance to improve. Let the staffer know what isn't up to par. This will result in a better performance from that worker, which, after all, is the point of performance reviews. ■

How You Can Prevent a Communication Breakdown

When communication breaks down, productivity declines. It's pretty easy to tell when your message isn't getting through to someone at work. Maybe your words sound hollow or maybe you don't realize there was a misunderstanding until a deadline is missed.

Sooner or later, you find out that a communication issue has caused even more problems with productivity. How can you make sure you are communicating effectively?

First of all, listen to yourself. Do you understand what you're saying? Would you understand it if someone else said it to you? If the answer to both of these questions is "yes," you're on the right track. If your answers are "no," you need to work on speaking clearly and controlling the volume of your voice.

Look at the way you deliver your words. Are you clear and concise? Remember, for effective communication, you need people to listen to you and retain the information they receive.

A good way to make sure the other person is listening is to concentrate on his or her eyes when you speak. This technique ensures direct delivery of your message.

Use Emphasis to Get Your Message Across

You can convey the importance of what you're saying by putting some emphasis into your tone of voice. You can do this simply by allowing your voice to rise and fall, instead of speaking in a constant monotone. A message with emphasis gives the listener a sense of urgency and lets him or her know that the message should be taken seriously.

After you finish talking, ask the employee to repeat what you said. If your employee can tell you what you just told him or her, you probably got your message across. However, handle this step with a little tact. If you're too much like a drill sergeant when communicating with workers, you'll just turn them off. This is not the best way to foster good communication with your staff.

The best way to make sure your message is clear is to ask the person if he or she understands everything you have just said. Let the individual know that he or she can contact you later if any questions should arise. ■

When Should Employees Receive Raises?

Supervisors are usually the first lines of authority that employees approach when seeking pay raises because, in many cases, they carry enough influence to channel those recommendations to higher management. However, constant pressure from an employee should not be a reason to rally or hide from the request.

Experts say there are several critical factors that should

enter into the assessment process when doling out pay raises, including the employee's pay history as it corresponds to his or her seniority, customer feedback regarding the employee (if applicable) and the worker's attendance and work history.

The most important factor when considering giving an employee a raise is the worker's contributions to the department, which might not appear so obvious if the supervisor has "lost touch" with individual team members over the passage of time.

Standard Ingredients

Before fully supporting or dismissing requests for pay raises, help groom the employee for a raise that is commensurate with his or her performance.

Take a little extra time to work with employees in gathering up any certificates or customer feedback reports that pertain to their performances. The goal is to help workers make credible cases for themselves so that your time isn't wasted and their chance of a pay raise is increased.

Consider taking the following steps on behalf of your employees after they request promotions or raises:

1. Ask other team members about the employee's ability to help co-workers through difficult projects.
2. Allow the employee to discuss his or her work achievements that may have gone unnoticed by the company.
3. Provide training opportunities to those employees who might require additional skills before the company approves a raise.
4. Review the employee's absenteeism and punctuality records.
5. Allot a period of time in which you can document measurable performance results should you find the employee's work record questionable. ■

Staying Alert in Meetings

Here are some quick tips on how to make sure you are paying attention during company meetings:

- **Take it personally.** Check the meeting agenda to see how topics affect you and your department.
- **Ask questions.** Be a participant instead of an observer. If the speaker asks you to hold all questions, write them down so that you don't forget them.
- **Sit near an overachiever.** Alertness can be contagious. Sit near someone who you know will be involved in the agenda of the meeting.
- **Stand up.** Sometimes we get so comfortable sitting that we find ourselves dozing off. Stand up straight, don't lean and don't slouch. ■

Process Employee Feedback Like a Pro

Supervisors give feedback to their employees on a daily basis. However, some leaders have problems receiving feedback when the tables are turned.

“The more authority we’re given, the harder it becomes to remain open to feedback,” says Joanne Homer, a management consultant in Long Island, N.Y. “Many supervisors and managers I’ve worked with perceive feedback as a form of criticism. They become threatened by it because it underscores their merits as leaders. It’s basically a direct attack to their egos.”

Don’t Wait for Feedback

Homer admits that feedback is “harder to swallow” when it comes out of the blue, without solicitation. But supervisors who actively seek feedback from their employees will feel more complimented by it. “Feedback then becomes an ego stroke because it’s exactly what the supervisor asked for,” says Homer.

Homer also suggests that supervisors not wait until errors occur to ask for solutions and ideas because this “limits the potential of communication between supervisors and their employees.”

Feedback, Homer adds, isn’t something that should be given or received in passing. Supervisors should set aside time for regular feedback discussions. They should also create systems that allow employees to put their thoughts in writing, perhaps anonymously, and submit them to supervisors without feeling intimidated.

Regardless of how employees offer feedback, Homer adds that workers should always be given a “receipt of communication” after they offer constructive ideas. “And it must go beyond a superficial ‘thank you,’” she says.

Put Employee Ideas to the Test

When workers offer good suggestions, supervisors should discover where the suggestions came from and determine whether or not to implement them.

For example, if an employee offers a suggestion for reducing waste or speeding up cycle times, the supervisor should physically join the worker at his or her work space to document the problems that led to the suggestion in the first place.

“This puts you on the right track as a capable supervisor

because it clearly demonstrates to the employee that you are interested in the feedback, and it provides you with an opportunity to see firsthand any problems that fall under your jurisdiction,” Homer says.

Other workplace experts have long emphasized the importance of accepting employee feedback as a way of improving workflow and camaraderie within all types of industries.

How to Handle Feedback

Here are three things to keep in mind when receiving feedback from employees:

- Don’t reject or deny the feedback you receive.
- Discuss with employees the suggestions they offer before deferring them to other supervisors or managers.
- Do not ignore employees who commonly offer you feedback.



Five Benefits for Supervisors

Homer explains that despite the many forms of feedback supervisors might receive from their workers, the benefits outweigh the hassle of having to collect and listen to it.

“An employee who whines all the time about the zillion hoops he or she must go through to finish an ordinary task may actually have some clear ideas about how the process can be perfectly streamlined. Feedback comes in all shades of colors,” says Homer.

The benefits that employee feedback brings to supervisors include:

1. Recognition from managers after they see the improvements made in your department because of employee feedback
2. Increased morale among workers, which results from your frequent interaction with them through feedback discussions
3. An improvement in negotiating skills that develops from handling feedback regularly
4. A more polished reputation as someone who knows how to listen to and respect the viewpoints and opinions of others
5. Better opportunities for getting to know the strengths and weaknesses of your employees

So take the time to listen to your employees. If you have to, specifically ask for their thoughts, suggestions and ideas. You’ll be building better relationships with employees and creating a more positive working atmosphere for everyone. ■

Are You Keeping Subpar Employees on Staff?

Why You Must Avoid Hanging on to Poor Performers

Do you have one or two workers who drag down the performance of your entire team? If so, your department, maybe even your company, is not functioning at its peak. After all, a company is only as good as its employees, so hanging on to mediocre or poor performers is a great disservice to the bottom line.

But what do you do if you have an employee who just isn't working out? The answer is simple: you fire the employee.

Unfortunately, firing workers is one of the most distasteful parts of a supervisor's job. So much so, that many supervisors continue allowing poor performers to cling to their jobs even as they drag down departmental performance. This is one of the biggest management mistakes a supervisor can make.

Take a good look at your staff. Are you hanging on to anyone who really isn't working out? If so, a termination meeting may be your best bet. And, as distasteful as it is, you should be handling the firing. You are the one who hired the worker and the one who has maintained performance and disciplinary records. This puts you in the best position to fire the employee.

The Importance of Documentation

Speaking of performance and disciplinary records, a paper trail is very important when it comes to terminating an employee. In the event that things go poorly and the employee sues the company for some kind of unfair termination practice, a paper trail is your best defense. The employee's file should contain documentation of every written or verbal warning, as well as any information that will support the termination. These things might include:

- Notes detailing any complaints about the employee from co-workers, customers or vendors
- Documentation of any meetings you had with the employee to discuss problems
- Acknowledgement by the employee that he or she is not meeting expectations. Each time you meet with a poor performer, you should lay out very clear expectations and put them in writing. Have the employee sign a statement saying that he or she understands the expectations and will meet the goals you have laid out within a specific time period
- Any other documentation that supports a decision to terminate. This may include time sheets, records of missed deadlines, etc.

Tell the Employee Why

Telling an employee that he or she is failing to meet expectations is another dreaded task for supervisors. However, failing to communicate means you are

probably ignoring a problem that won't just go away on its own. The employee needs to know:

- What the problem is
- What needs to be done to demonstrate that the problem is being taken care of
- Exactly what your expectations are, including specific deadlines for meeting them

Firing should never be done out of anger or some other emotion. It should simply be the inevitable next step when all else fails. Take the time to review all documentation and carry out the termination only after some careful thought.

"Firing should never be done out of anger or some other emotion. It should simply be the inevitable next step when all else fails."

Following Through on Firing an Employee

When it comes time to actually fire an employee, make sure you are fully prepared. In addition to having supporting documentation, think carefully about when you will meet with the employee and make sure you know exactly what you are going to say. Trying to "wing it" can land you in legal trouble.

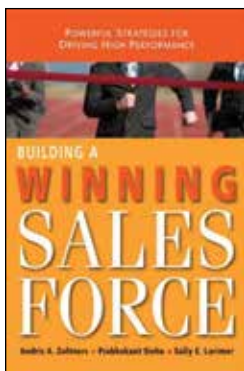
Some supervisors take a script into the meeting to prevent any missteps. This can help ensure that the meeting is short, direct and very clear. The employee should not be left wondering why he or she is being fired or even whether he or she actually was fired. Being vague and beating around the bush will only cloud the communication.

Another step you can take to avoid legal problems is to have a human resources representative or another manager present at the meeting. This individual can serve as a witness and objective third party.

Do not get into an argument or debate with the employee. Stick to the business at hand. Calmly and decisively spell out why the employee is being terminated. Avoid getting personal. You may not like the employee, but there is no need to make it a personal attack.

Supervisors who are reluctant to fire an employee may come off as wishy-washy and may make promises that should not be made. Do not tell the employee that you will provide a favorable reference for him or her unless you truly mean it and company policy allows you to do so. Gestures like this can come back to bite you in the form of a lawsuit.

Firing an employee is never easy. However, it is often necessary. Today's business world is too competitive to hang on to subpar workers. Every employee must be a solid performer — a contributor to your company's success. Hanging on to dead weight is not doing anyone any favors. ■



Building a Winning Sales Force

BUILDING A WINNING SALES FORCE begins by identifying the top 12 sales effectiveness drivers — from the features that define and shape salesperson roles, such as organizational structure and hiring practices; to the factors that enlighten salespeople by giving them valuable customer knowledge and excite them and keep them

motivated; to aspects that control direct sales force tasks and behavior. After shedding light on how different drivers work together and how sales leaders can pinpoint and prioritize which drivers need adjustment, Zoltners, Sinha, and Lorimer offer innovative strategies for getting maximum impact from each of the keys to sales force excellence. With in-depth discussions and real-world examples to guide them, sales leaders will learn what it takes to:

- Develop sales strategies that demonstrate value to each targeted customer segment.
- Size and structure their sales force to efficiently respond to market opportunities, adapt to competitive and economic challenges and protect the best salespeople.
- Recruit and retain the right high-quality salespeople for the company's products, customers and culture.
- Design and implement a compensation and

incentive plan that motivates high levels of sales effort from veteran team members as well as recent recruits.

- Set territory-level goals that are fair, realistic, motivating and achievable.
- Establish learning and development (L&D) programs that not only arm salespeople with the best tools and information but also continuously strengthen their capabilities.
- Leverage the power of information technology to enhance sales.
- Align the entire sales system around company objectives and provide benchmarks against which sales force activity can be measured, controlled and rewarded.

The authors tackle some of the most urgent sales management challenges, such as sales force complacency — the silent killer of sales effectiveness. Sales leaders will get welcome advice, backed by instructive case studies, on how to adapt a sales strategy to unwelcome changes, such as recessionary periods, and how to maximize results by redirecting sales resources and efforts to the right customers, products and activities. Readers will also discover insights for retaining successful salespeople with an emphasis on nurturing tomorrow's sales leaders. The book also provides unique and innovative frameworks for aligning sales and marketing functions to form an effective customer facing organization. ■

Turn a “Griper” Into a Professional

No matter how well they do their jobs, chronic complainers can quickly get out of hand. And the negativity they bring to the workplace may have an undesired effect on the productivity of other employees. Here are a few steps you can take to get a “griper” on the road to better behavior:

1. Make sure you have clear, concise and current policies, practices and procedures. Most gripes have to do with how business is conducted. If you can refer to a given rule, regulation or procedure that needs to be followed, the griper may realize that he or she doesn't have much ground to stand on.
2. Take the complaints seriously and urge the griping staffer to present a solution. Make sure the staffer takes an active role in finding the solution. Not only will this empower the employee and make him or her feel more valued, it may also educate the employee on how tough it can be to get a

procedural change enacted. By going through this, the griper may be more respectful of your efforts in the future.

3. Set aside time at your regular staff meetings for employees to voice concerns and irritations without fear of reprisal. Give each employee no longer than one minute to voice concerns and then make sure the same worker suggests a solution. This is a proactive way to get problems and concerns out in the open, instead of having them grow and fester beneath the surface.
4. If the griping continues, make it clear to the employee that all workers are measured in terms of performance, attendance and behavior. Point out that there are outlets for voicing constructive complaints and concerns. Also point out that griping about a perceived problem does not lend itself to finding a solution. Encourage the staffer to be part of the solution. ■

Build Employee Morale with these Tactics

Some workers have good attitudes by nature. But sometimes it takes a little encouragement from a supervisor to make good attitudes blossom. Here are some morale-building tips to consider:

- ❑ **Be professional.** When you interact with your subordinates, treat them as the professionals they are. This helps workers feel pride in being connected with you and the company.
- ❑ **Be demanding.** Workers aren't usually happy doing the bare minimum. They need the challenge of difficult tasks. A good supervisor assigns employees to the jobs that best suit them. When these matches are well made, the result is higher productivity. A worker should never feel that a job is too easy.
- ❑ **Be genuine.** Show that you have a sense of humor. This not only lightens the atmosphere, it energizes your employees. If you can make a funny, off-the-cuff remark, your workers will view you as a real person, not just as the boss. But remember to keep your levity limited or it will lose its value.
- ❑ **Be a cheerleader.** Supervisors need to lead the way when it comes to championing the company, and employees need someone to model their behavior after. Never speak badly about anyone in the company or anything the company is doing.
- ❑ **Empower employees.** When workers have a sense of control over what they do, their attitudes improve tremendously. You will see a much greater willingness to work if you give employees choices, decision-making authority and the right to communicate for themselves.
- ❑ **Respect individuality.** Even though you may have a clear internal picture of what an employee with a good attitude looks like, remember that each worker is an individual. One person's good attitude may not carry the same behavior patterns as another person's. Encourage each employee to capitalize on his or her strengths, characteristics and ideas. ■

Tips for Getting Your Numbers in Line

If you've been put in charge of cutting your department's budget, you may find yourself feeling overwhelmed and at a loss regarding where to start.

Here are some tips you can use to evaluate and cut your budget:

- ❑ **Talk to your suppliers.** Tell your suppliers that you are in the midst of a budgetary crisis. You may be surprised how much they are willing to work with you to keep you happy — and to keep your business.
- ❑ **Get on top of phone calls.** Although cell phones have dramatically reduced the number of long distance phone calls your employees make on the company line, the expense of phone calls has not gone away. Set a clear policy on personal calls and stick to it. Even if employees are making local calls or using their own personal cell phones, the amount of time they are wasting on the phone can eat away at productivity.
- ❑ **Review your mailing costs.** Many items that are sent overnight may not actually require a speedy delivery. Look into switching to second- or third-class mail. You may also want to look into bulk rates, if appropriate.
- ❑ **Consider personnel options.** Although most companies assume they are running at peak efficiency, many of them have more employees than they need. Look at each employees' job responsibilities and how much time they have to deliver on them. Could you be getting the same amount of work done with fewer people?
- ❑ **Eliminate extra inventory.** Unnecessary inventory is an unnecessary expense. Conduct an audit, making sure to check every inch of your department, and look for ways to reduce stockpiling. Review how much and how often you use various items. Then figure out the minimum amount of inventory you need to keep on hand without affecting efficiency. ■

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