

market watch

BY JUDITH M. GUIDO / GUEST COLUMNIST

All business owners face challenges or pain points they must overcome and resolve.



Face and conquer the pain

Almost one million people, competitors and spectators, attended Special Olympic World Games in Ireland this year. This extraordinary event meant a great deal to me. My 13-year-old nephew Nicholas, who's challenged by autism, swam for Team USA and brought home two silver medals. He anchored a relay team and also came within .05 of a second of winning the gold medal in the 25-meter freestyle. He finished second by what amounted to the width of a thumbnail.

Most importantly, the Special Olympics' creed, "Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt," speaks to the issue of how we identify, face and plan to resolve and overcome our challenges.

Challenges for everyone

All business owners and managers face challenges or pain points. Yet some owners and managers always seem to be in a state of flux, and they're never able to solve problems that repeatedly occur. There are many reasons for the lack of resolution, but they include:

- ▶ Inability to identify the source of the pain
- ▶ Avoiding and ignoring the problem
- ▶ Lack of resources and processes to solve the problem
- ▶ Temporary fixes and solutions (the Band-Aid approach)
- ▶ Incorrect solutions or doing the wrong thing

How do you as a business owner identify your problems or your pain points? Challenges? Obstacles in your company?

Do you have a proactive process that allows you to segment your business by function and analyze

each business unit for its areas of pain? Or are you reactive and, when a problem arises, try to solve it on the spot?

Involve your staff

Start by analyzing your company by function and getting the proper team members involved in the process.

For example, the shop or garage handles some of your most expensive assets — your trucks, trailers and mowers. Get your mechanics and other appropriate employees involved, and identify the two or three greatest challenges they face in the shop. Get them to identify what generates the most pain for them in their day-to-day maintenance and repair of your equipment.

Next, ask them to prioritize the problems, and have them work as a team to create a resolution plan. Take one step at a time and work toward solutions that lessen this "pain":

- ▶ Identify tasks
- ▶ Identify person(s) responsible and accountable for executing tasks
- ▶ Set timelines
- ▶ Itemize costs
- ▶ Identify expected outcome

Finally, have the team present its problem identification and resolution plan and collectively decide which ideas have merit. Take action!

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