

## A Bigger Bang for Your Buck

By Jeffrey Mayer

What are a few extra seconds worth if you can shorten your customer's wait time? I read a recent article in the Wall Street Journal that told the story of how Starbucks tries to shorten the wait time for its customers by improving their processes.

For example, if you've got a customer who waits in line for only two minutes to order a hot chocolate, but misses her bus, you've got an unhappy customer.

But, how long is too long to wait? "The question is a key one for the world's largest chain of coffee shops. In a survey last year by market-research firm Mintel International Group Ltd., 64 percent of Americans said they pick a restaurant based on how much time they have," said the Journal.

"This is a game of seconds," says Silvia Peterson, Starbucks Director of Store Operations and Engineering, adding that she and her team of ten engineers are constantly asking themselves: "How can we shave time off this?"

For example, engineers noticed that "baristas," the Starbucks employees who

prepare drinks, had to dig into ice bins twice to scoop up enough ice for a venti-size cold beverage, Starbucks' biggest.

The old scoop didn't hold enough, so Starbucks' engineers designed larger scoops, helping cut fourteen seconds off the average preparation time for blended beverages.



What's efficiency worth? "The average yearly volume of Starbucks has increased by nearly \$200,000 to roughly \$940,000 since 1999," reported the Journal.

What other ways has Starbucks reduced their customers' wait time?

They don't require credit card signatures for orders under \$25. Processing credit cards used to take 30 seconds per transaction. Without the signature, it now takes about 8 seconds.

Starbucks even created a new type of employee, a "floater" who is a behind-the-scenes quarterback, directing the team of employees to improve productivity.

During busy times, the floater takes customer orders (continued on page 2)

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### We Moved!

As of September 1, 2005, Quality Process Consultants, Inc. has moved to Alexandria, Virginia. Our new address is:

6589 Cypress Point Road,  
Alexandria, VA 22312-3124

Our new contact information is  
800.589.4733

or 703.256.TEAM (8326)

Fax: 703.256.4281

We also recently changed our email address & domain name:  
kristin@extraordinaryteam.com;  
www.extraordinaryteam.com

Please make a note of it!



## Measuring Return on Objectives

By Kristin Arnold

Every team meeting you have is an investment in the time, resources and energy of those involved. So, how do you measure your return on that investment (ROI)?

For years, meeting planners have been calculating the costs, but rarely tied it to revenues or cost reductions. Unfortunately, the influence of team work doesn't necessarily translate dollar-for-dollar into company revenue.

Instead of calculating success based on revenues, try measuring returns based on whether the objectives are met. Completion of these objectives, rather than dollars earned (or saved) determines team success.

To create a Return on Objectives (ROO) for your next meeting,

**Talk with Key Stakeholders.** Meet with organization executives or sponsors to get their perspective. Ask key ROO questions such as:

- ♦ Purpose: Why are you having this event?
- ♦ Outcomes: What do you want to get out of this event?
- ♦ Talent: Who will be in attendance? Are they the right people?

## Starbucks (continued from page 1)

when standing in line so their Iced Caffe Latte can be made by the baristas even before they arrive at the cash register. Floaters have enabled Starbucks to shave 20 seconds from the overall service time.

So, let me ask you: What are you doing to increase your revenues, improve your efficiencies, cut your costs so you can dramatically increase your profits?

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*Jeffrey J. Mayer, 55, died suddenly on April 28, 2005. A fellow member of the National Speakers Association (NSA) and a generous soul, he will be sorely missed.*



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A newsletter designed to facilitate discussion and share tips and techniques to help your teams to be extraordinary.

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**The Extraordinary Team** is a quarterly publication distributed to clients, friends and partners of Quality Process Consultants, Inc. Articles are welcome and encouraged. We sincerely would like to know what you are doing.

**Quality Process Consultants, Inc.** helps your teams to be extraordinary.

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## Return on Objectives (ROO) (continued from page 1)

- ◆ Vision: What would be “success” at the end of the day?
- ◆ Uniqueness: What makes this event so special, unique or different?
- ◆ Process: How do you see the day progressing?
- ◆ Context: Is there something going on individually or organizationally that could affect the outcome or skew the process (e.g. impending reduction in force, restructuring, pay reduction, appraisal recalibration, or personal issues)?
- ◆ Prevention: If something could go wrong, what would it be?
- ◆ Skeleton: Is there something you *don't* want to see happen or brought up?

**Define the Objectives.** Translate stakeholder comments into a few succinct objectives.

Make sure the objectives are measurable and results oriented. For many, it is easier to focus on the successful completion of meeting tasks such as measuring meeting attendance or “smilie sheets”. Rather, focus on the results the meeting will generate, usually expressed as a “deliverable” such as a decision, an implementation plan, or increased commitment to a strategic decision.

**Value the Objectives.** Figure out the monetary returns your deliverables will deliver. The more business-related your objectives and deliverables are, the easier they will be to translate into dollars. You may have to “stretch” a bit, but the objectives should be tied to the eventual ROI of increasing revenues or decreasing expenses. Then, present this dollar figure to the stakeholders and use it to create a budget for the meeting.

**Align the Process.** Each activity within the meeting environment should contribute to achieving the objectives and deliverables.

**Spend to Objectives.** Every dollar spent on the meeting should help accomplish the objectives. Don't forget the hidden costs of office overhead and opportunity costs of having team members attend the meeting rather than do their daily work. Most planners omit this step to take a leap of faith and consider the event to be “worth it.” Do the math; you might be surprised at what you discover!

**Measure Success.** From the objectives, set up a simple, consistent measurement for success, collect the data and report the results. Use similar questionnaires and the same criteria so you can compare results.

"The Executive Team Advantage Profile was extremely helpful in confirming many of the assumptions that I had made on our strengths, but was also invaluable in identifying areas where we need to work on at getting all of the staff on the same page when it comes to various aspects of our business and improving team communications. It has given me a clear roadmap as to what I need to do to make our already strong team, the best team in our industry."

Rich Fanelli, Partner, Fanelli McClain Design Studios

## What's New at QPC Inc.

I am convinced the only constant in life is change. After thirteen years in Hampton, Virginia and three years in Fairfax, I just moved to Alexandria. At least I've stayed in the same state (or "Commonwealth" as Virginians prefer to call it).

In addition to moving closer to my daughter's high school, I have been busy working with some wonderful new clients including Asset Management Advisors, Marathon Oil Company, VHA New England, US Department of Justice and Sygma Networks. I also want to thank some of my recurring clients who asked me to facilitate and train their teams: Pyramid Mouldings, Chief Executive Network, Caterpillar, and Farm Credit System Insurance Corporation.

Notwithstanding the move, I continue to refine our Executive Team Profile which assesses the characteristics of a high performing executive team.

I have been asked by several of my clients to offer a public seminar on basic facilitation skills. So, in addition to the Executive Team Advantage Program, I am now offering "Facilitation Techniques for Project and Team-Based Environments." Hope you or one of your colleagues can join us.

Enjoy the autumn leaves...they only last for a short time!

Kristin

## Public Seminars

### Executive Team Advantage Program starts January 25, 2006, McLean, VA

*Designed for executives who want to push well beyond satisfactory results.*

One full-day workshop approximately every 90 days for a total of four workshops in the year. Each session includes diagnostic tools, skill building, best practices and a focused action plan for team success.

*For more information, call 800.589.4733  
or see [www.ExecutiveTeamAdvantage.com](http://www.ExecutiveTeamAdvantage.com)*

### February 28 to March 1, 2006, McLean, VA Facilitation Techniques for Project & Team-Based Environments

*A specialized workshop for those who manage complex projects and business teams.*

This workshop will provide you with the skills and knowledge to facilitate *any* team meeting:

- ♦ Increase the quality of group decisions
- ♦ Increase group commitment to decisions
- ♦ Enhance relationships among team mates
- ♦ Decrease time of effective implementation

*For more information, call 800.589.4733*

## Practical Team Activities: Exercise Your Listening Muscle

### Exercise Your Listening Muscle

*To create a discipline for listening actively*

**Time:** 1 minute

**Nr. of Participants:** Two or more

**Materials:** None

When traveling, I always haul all the magazines and email newsletters (like this one) that are important to read, but not urgent. While I peruse my reading pile, I usually trip upon an article that strikes my fancy. Sometimes they even lead to developing a practical team activity!

This last trip was no different. This activity is atypical in that you don't need to have your "team" with you, but you and your team will have tremendous payoffs!

Marshall Goldsmith writes a column "Playbook" in Fast Company magazine. The July 2005 column focused on "The One Skill That Separates," and that skill is to listen actively. So try this:

Close your eyes. Count slowly to 50 with one simple goal: You can't let another thought intrude into your mind. You must concentrate on maintaining the count.

Sounds simple, but more than half of Goldsmith's clients can't do it. "Somewhere around 20 or 30, nagging thoughts invade their brain. They think about a problem at work, or their kids, or how much they ate for dinner the night before."

Goldsmith warns that this activity is not a concentration test, but is really a listening exercise.

"Once you can complete the exercise without in-

you're ready for a test drive. Make your next interpersonal encounter—whether it's with your spouse or a colleague or a stranger—an exercise in treating the other person like a million bucks. Employ these tiny tactics: Listen. Don't interrupt. Don't finish the other person's sentences. Don't say, "I knew that." Don't even agree with the other person. If she praises you, just say thank you. Don't use the words "no," "but," and "however." Don't let your eyes wander elsewhere while the other person is talking. Maintain your end of the dialogue by asking intelligent questions that show you're paying attention, move the conversation forward, and require the person to talk (while you listen)."

Your only aim is to let the other person - your team mate - feel that he or she is important.

"Deliberate thinking is a wonderful tool when we have the luxury of time, the help of a computer, and a clearly defined task, and the fruits of that type of analysis can set the stage for rapid cognition."

Malcolm Gladwell

*Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*

## ▶ From the Bookshelf: **Blink** **The Power of Thinking Without Thinking**



In our last issue of this newsletter, I mentioned Malcolm Gladwell's latest book, *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking* (ISBN 0-316-17232). Since then, *Blink* has skyrocketed to the New York Times nonfiction best-seller's list. And for good reason. Gladwell serves up some interesting perspectives on how we make decisions.

He asserts that decisions made quickly and without a lot of analysis can be just as good as, if not better than, carefully researched ones. Gladwell says it's because almost all of us possess the ability to "thin slice" a situation. We are able to unconsciously pick up on cues that allow us to make decisions intuitively. We can make good decisions without knowing all the information.

Conversely, we can also make some poor decisions based on prior associations and impressions!

Through compelling stories and significant research, Glad-

well encourages his readers to be more self-aware of the power of rapid cognition and how subtle influences can alter or bias the product of our unconscious. The more sensitive we are to that fact, the more we can control the environment in which they occur and prevent making decisions based on prejudices.

Personally, I took away three important lessons: The first is that truly successful decision making relies on a balance between deliberate and instinctive thinking. Secondly, if you are truly an expert, trust your instincts. You may not consciously know the rationale, but your subconscious does.

The third lesson is that in good decision making, frugality matters. Take complex problems and reduce it to its simplest elements. Even the most complicated of relationships and problems have a simple, identifiable, underlying pattern.

Makes you blink twice before you make a decision!

## ▶ **Mr. Downtown** *By Jim Ball*

Out of financial necessity, at the beginning of my career I parked at the cheapest lot I could find. Early in the ten-block trek to my office, I would pass a man who yelled at me as soon as he saw me walking his way. Thinking he was a bit crazy, I'd cross the street to avoid him.

But before too many days, my nerves calmed and I began to listen to what he was saying. He wasn't crazy at all. He shouted greetings, and to my delight, compliments!

From the moment he spotted me until I was out of his sight he'd shout, "Good morning, Mr. Downtown! You're looking good, my man. Look at the shine on those shoes! Ladies and gentlemen, check out the man's five hundred dollar suit!"

I never wore a five hundred dollar suit and there never was anyone else on the street to check me out. But my cheerleader would go on encouraging me as if there were large crowds passing by just to hear him.

It wasn't too long before I felt it was appropriate to tip my newfound friend, whom I started referring to as "Mr. Downtown."

Each day I'd flip him a quarter, and in return he'd give me the biggest smile you have ever seen. Then tipping his worn hat, he'd whisper a gentle, "Thank you, my good man."

I started talking about Mr. Downtown at the office. Soon, several friends were parking at my parking lot, just so Mr. Downtown could cheer them up the way he did me. You couldn't help but smile and laugh the moment he started his routine.

Then one day when I rounded the corner, Mr. Downtown was gone. I was surprised at the impact his absence had on me. I thought about him many times that day wondering where he was and what had happened to him. I hoped he would be there the next day, but he was not.

He never returned.

I'm not sure what the moral of this story is, but I do know two things. I know that laughter and joy are free. A strange man who lived on the street used to make my day and all he asked in return was a smile. I also learned that to flip even a quarter into the air to the awaiting palm of a street caller named Mr. Downtown made me feel good about myself.

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