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“It takes time to build trust.”

JIM GIBSON

HUMAN RESOURCE CONSULTANT

Interviewed by Ken Wilde

Business Administration

Winter 2007

Introduction

Mr Gibson is employed at Saint Lawrence College, primarily with labour arbitrations. Since I have never been involved with unions, I felt this to be the best area to investigate.

Mr Gibson's background

Mr Gibson was educated at Carleton University in Ottawa and Queen's University in Kingston and holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and a Bachelor of Education. In 1981, Mr Gibson began a career in human resources with Celanese, a polyester-manufacturing plant in the

Kingston area. By 1983, he was promoted to manager of human resources. During the 1980s, Mr Gibson dealt with most issues involved in human resources. In the 1990s, he was able to concentrate on his preferred areas of expertise: employee and labour relations.

Mr Gibson's career highlights

During his 23 years with Celanese, Mr. Gibson maintained an excellent rapport with the unions. This rapport led to no work stoppages by the union and only 10 to 12 labour arbitrations over his entire 23 years with Celanese.

One interesting agreement Mr. Gibson made with the union representatives was to limit contract negotiations to the hours of nine to four. "Tired people make mistakes easily," advised Mr. Gibson. The effects of this agreement on the workers came to light after the first contract negotiations ended quickly. The workers criticized their representatives for not staying at the bargaining table longer to get a better deal. During the next round of negotiations, neither side committed to a deal until just before the contract was due. The workers felt the representatives had fought for the best deal possible. This consideration for the opposition built a rapport between the union and Mr Gibson. As Mr Gibson said, "It takes time to build trust."

Mr Gibson told me of an inexperienced negotiator. The smaller of the two plant unions had a new president, and the national representative was unavailable. Mr Gibson suggested a delay and offered to make any deals retroactive. The new president wanted to go ahead, but when all his demands were rejected (a common tactic), he stopped talking.

Days later, the national union representative arrived, and a deal was struck in one day. The moral to the story, Mr Gibson said, was "don't take the bargaining table personally."

In 1993, Celanese had to encourage international investors. Some Americans view unions as a threat. Thoughts of Jimmy Hoffa and "bust your windshield just to get your attention" come to their minds when a union is mentioned. Celanese went to a two-tier pay structure. The union agreed to the pay change, which helped open the international market. Mr Gibson explained the union understood that "you can have a company without a union, but you can't have a union without a company."

Mr Gibson's advice for my career

Knowing some of my background, Mr Gibson suggested I work toward being a generalist in a small company or specialize in health and safety in a larger organization. He also pointed out that Drake International is always looking for recruiters.

Summary

During my discussion with Mr Gibson, I could easily tell that he had enjoyed his career. As he said, Celanese was "very people oriented." Mr. Gibson's description of his career gave me valuable insights into labour relations and human resources in general. I hope my future in human resources will be as successful as Mr. Gibson's history has been.

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ADAM ASHTON

VICE-PRESIDENT OF MARKETING

“It is important to meet as many people as you can because you never know what type of relationship may grow from it.”

Interviewed by Blaine Jeffery

Integrated Marketing Communications

Fall 2006

Introduction

“Deliver the right product, at the right time, for the right price, in the right format, to the right audience in a relevant way... sounds so easy doesn't it?” asks Adam. I have never been intimidated by such simplicity before.

Adam Ashton has a Bachelor of Arts in Management and Economics from the University of Guelph. He is currently the vice-president of marketing for TSN and has 12 years experience in the sports and entertainment industries. He is responsible for leading the overall strategic marketing direction for TSN and the digital channels ESPN

Classic and NHL Network. The ability to work in a variety of business settings at an early age, combined with a genuine passion for learning, has accelerated his rise to the marketing elite. This interview provides us with Adam's unique perspective on marketing communications, success in the workplace, and the future of the industry.

Sales and Marketing

"My industry is in constant change. It can be fast, creative, frustrating, demanding, rewarding, and unpredictable. If you remain passionate about the product, the brand, the challenge at hand...you will often succeed," assures Adam. Passion is the constant message from the V.P., not only when describing an attribute of success but the products he markets as well. Working in the service and entertainment sector involves "passion goods" marketing more so than "packaged goods." The constant is that working with top brands and understanding their impact on consumers is what Adam enjoys. "The brand strategy permeates to everything we do," he explained. "It allows me to deal with and have an impact on so many different areas within a company."

In the future, Mr. Ashton sees his sales and marketing responsibilities continuing to broaden and believes he may be a potential candidate for president in another ten years. Other career paths that would interest him include similar roles with other media companies, sports leagues or teams, media agencies, as a sports marketing consultant, retail management, and other entertainment or service sectors (e.g., tourism, golf, casinos).

Success in the workplace

As a student, I wanted to know what Adam felt were important qualities to focus on in order to be successful in this field. He established the need to be passionate earlier; here is what else he felt was important:

1. Gain as much experience as you can in whatever capacity you can as a student.
2. Networking! It is important to meet as many people as you can because you never know what type of relationship may grow from it.
3. Soft skills. Many skills today are transferable, regardless of job or function. Take the time as a student to understand and learn the importance of "discipline, organization, effective communication (writing and presenting skills), loyalty, attention to detail, and respect for others." These traits are critical in any working environment.

The future of the industry

As students hone the above skills, here are some of the changes Adam said we can expect in our industry: "New media platforms are redefining our business model (e.g. broadband, mobile, high definition). Traditional broadcasting is being challenged." The technological advancements do not just affect the way information travels but contribute to the speed at which consumer consumption changes. The marketing world's expectations are changing as competitive threats and audience fragmentation pose new challenges. Though content is still a critical

part of the equation, it is not the only part. The challenge is to provide convenient entertainment that delivers the pertinent information the consumer desires. Understanding this reality will be extremely important if we hope to maintain and grow our future employer's businesses.

Summary

It has become clear to me that passion for your work is mandatory in order to keep up with this ever-changing world of sales and marketing. With dynamic internal and external factors constantly challenging our way of thinking, this is an industry of perpetual learning. Remember the importance of soft skills as they apply to any working environment and look positively forward. As Adam said, "Marketing as a function will continue to elevate in importance."

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JILL BAKER

PROFESSIONAL INVESTOR

“... offer something no
one else does.”

Interviewed by Christine Dier

Business Administration

Spring 2007

Introduction

Jill Baker owns her own business and operates it from her home. She lives in the small community of Elgin, Ontario, and has built up a very profitable business. This is something that I would like to do after I retire from my government job. After speaking with Mrs Baker, I feel this is something that I can see myself doing and truly enjoying the benefits of working from my home.

Background

Mrs Baker has three children: two are students at Queen's University, and the third child is in high school. Her husband is part of his fa-

ther's family business. Mrs Baker attended Queen's University and St. Lawrence College in Kingston. She is a mutual funds–certified CGA (chartered general accountant).

She has been working in the accounting field for over 25 years. After graduation she worked for Johnston/Cross/Yanosik/Scott in Smiths Falls for four years. She started her own business from home because, after her daughter was born, she couldn't imagine leaving her at home. Starting out small, she did income-tax returns for local people; as awareness of her business grew, the client base grew.

Mrs Baker told me she "made herself special" by taking the certified mutual funds course. She explains, "You always need to keep ahead, look to the future see where you want to be, and decide what you need to do to get there."

Advantages of the job

Working from her home has many advantages; Mrs Baker states she is "able to go to functions at school for her children" and she is close by if she is needed. This is and was a high priority in her life: being there for her children. Working from home also has disadvantages: there is no interaction with co-workers.

Just like any other job, there are good clients, and then there are the clients you wish would not come to you. Ensuring future success, Mrs Baker has continued to take courses and to specialize to keep her customers returning year after year. "The key to making a home business a success and keeping it successful is to keep taking courses, make yourself marketable, and offer something more to your clients," Mrs Baker said.

I asked Mrs Baker if there is anything about her job she would change. "Those clients that don't pay their account," she laughed. Mrs. Baker said she wishes collecting on invoices was not so hard. "If you do work for a client, you have performed a service and should be paid promptly; you should not have to chase people to get paid," she argued. "It does not pay to be nice in business sometimes."

Summary

After the interview, the idea of operating my own business from home seems like a dream job, something that I will strive to achieve. One bit of advice Mrs Baker gave to me was to "offer something no one else does."

On a final note, Mrs. Baker stated that, after 25 years, she is still as happy as she was when she started. This encouraged me—I, too, want to be happy in my job for 25 years plus.