

30 May 2010

Today's Tabbloid

PERSONAL NEWS FOR steveboese@gmail.com

STEVE BOESE'S HR TECHNOLOGY

Open Door Policy?

MAY 28, 2010 10:04A.M.

Come by any time, you know I have an '**Open Door**' policy.

I mean, unless I am in one of my 8 standing weekly meetings, or 10-12 ad-hoc meetings that pop up every week.

Or if I am on the phone.

Or if I am intently responding to one of the 79 e-mails in my inbox marked 'Urgent'.

Aside - if you send e-mails and mark them as 'urgent' and the subject matter does not involve bodily injury, hospitalization, or natural disaster, then you are half a jerk.

Or if I am setting the roster for my fantasy sports team.

Or if I am actively monitoring our employer brand on the Social Networks playing Mafia Wars.

Come to think of it, I am not sure I really have an '**Open Door**' policy after all.

In fact, I had better close the door and enact a new policy :



Sign outside Frank Sinatra's residence circa 1965

If that is the 'true' policy, better to be upfront about it, don't you think?



STEVE BOESE'S HR TECHNOLOGY

The Vernon Farm Calculator

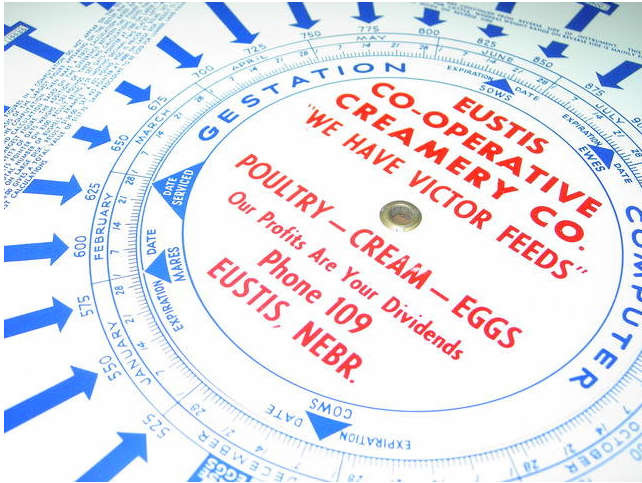
MAY 27, 2010 09:02A.M.

For the last few years there has been much said and written about the importance of accurate, timely, and relevant workforce data to support and guide managerial decision making and to ensure that human capital strategy is aligned with and can enable the execution of business strategy.

It is an easy argument to make, but certainly a much more difficult promise to deliver. In large organizations workforce data tends to be scattered across a wide set of disparate systems, from ERP, to ATS, to possibly Talent Management tools. Not to mention the scores of offline spreadsheets and databases maintained by HR and and line managers.

How many mid-size to large organizations out there are still calculating and processing employee annual salary updates on a slew of manually distributed Excel spreadsheets? Go ahead and admit it, you are certainly not alone.

And even if the organization does have the technical capacity to collect and begin to analyze this information, it can be a challenge to present, communicate, and deliver the data in a meaningful way to the people that the information benefits the most - the line managers, supervisors, and front-line in the trenches folks. Their need to make better informed decisions about how to leverage existing capability and how they may need to develop new capability to deliver customer service, create opportunities, engage employees is essential, and all the best data collection and and analysis tools will fail if the delivery mechanism does not resonate with these key users.



The image at right is something called The Vernon Farm Calculator. It was manufactured in the 1940s as a tool to provide farmer's with ready access to important information about crop sizes, unit of measurement conversions, yield calculations, and a host of other important data points that the average out in the trenches farmer would need to analyze, assess, and then execute his or her strategies to arrive at the best possible outcome. Sounds a bit like what today's managers need to do as well, just substitute mares, bushels of corn, and the combine's last service date with employees with a certain skill, production schedules, and historical sales data.

I think as designers and implementers of information systems we can learn a few things about the delivery of essential intelligence to our users from the design of the Vernon Farm Calculator.

Portable

The calculator is designed to be a portable, carry along with you or toss it on the front seat of the truck kind of tool. When the farmer is out at the barn or in the fields and needed to do a quick calculation about pigs, or wheat or whatever, he or she did not need to stop what they were doing, drive back to 'Farm HQ' or even worse, put in a request to the Farm's HR or IT department to run a report. And as an added bonus, the calculator was made of tin, not cardboard, which ensured it would stand up to the rigors of the farm environment, and not need to be 'upgraded' or 'maintained' all that often.

Multi-use

The calculator did not just serve one purpose, it informed the farmer across a wide range of important data types that all taken together were going to be critical to the overall success of his enterprise. He or she did not need to carry around one 'tool' for assessing crop amounts and another tool to calculate the expected marketplace value of the new set of pigs. The folks at Vernon had to have consulted with real farmers and gotten to know the wide range of information that they would need to make the calculator a useful and practical resource.

Simple



The Vernon Farm Calculator came with a one-page user guide. Sure, the print was kind of small, but all the essential information for the average farmer to be able to get information and insight to help run the farm was on one page. And better still, important operational instructions for some of the more complex features of the tool were printed directly on the face of the tool itself. So in many instances there was no need to refer back to the one-page guide. I think that this kind of simplicity in operation, the ability to distill the important features and instructions to their base level, and the capacity to put the most needed 'help' information in plain sight are all lessons in design that can be taken from the farm calculator.

Relevant

The farm calculator was only about one thing, providing the farmer with easy access to information that would help him or her have a better chance at succeeding in their business. That's it. There is no extraneous functionality, no clutter, nothing that detracts from the design and the ultimate delivery. I think we can also take a lesson here, it the information or the hot new feature that we think, as designers or implementers think is wonderful, if it truly does not directly assist the managers in making decisions needed to execute their business, then it surely is superfluous.

That's it - the end of a too long post about a 1948 Farmer's tool. Those farmer's were on to something for sure.

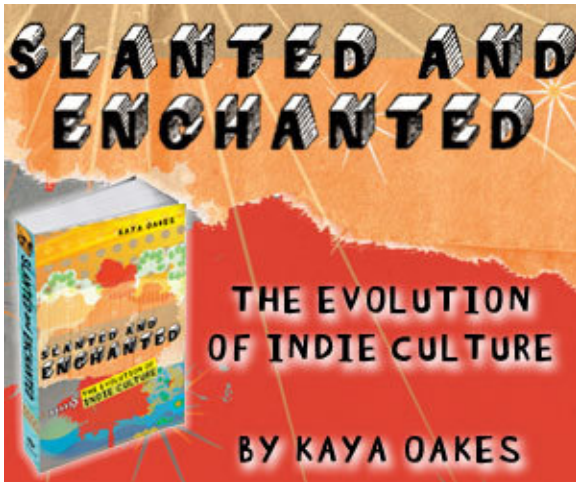


Note - The Vernon Farm Calculator is an example of what is called a **Volvelle**. Volvelles have been around for hundreds of years, you can learn a bit more about them [here](#).

STEVE BOESE'S HR TECHNOLOGY

The best side of who we are

MAY 26, 2010 01:26P.M.



Tomorrow on the HR Happy Hour show we will welcome Kaya Oakes, the author of *Slanted and Enchanted: The Evolution of Indie Culture*, and a writing instructor at the University of California, Berkley to the big show.

Kaya also writes a cool blog at her site - [Oakestown](#).

The show can be heard live from the HR Happy Hour show page, or via the call in line at 646-378-1086.

I picked up 'Slanted and Enchanted' a few months ago and once I had finished the book, I knew I wanted to try and book Kaya on the show. I wrote a blog post referring

When I told Kaya a little bit about the HR Happy Hour and asked her to appear on the show, she graciously accepted but had to wonder, I think, why a show that (allegedly) focuses on Human Resources and Talent Management would want to talk about indie culture.

A good question, but after thinking about the topic some more, I thought there were some really interesting and relevant parallels from the development and evolution of indie, and what is happening in the workplace and especially in the changes in traditional views of work and employment.

Networking - The pioneering indie artists relied on their strong personal networks of peers, fans, and friends in adjacent fields for support, promotion, and even basic survival at times. Indie and punk bands relied on each other to such an extent, and there was a strong

culture of reciprocity that developed.

What is every recent graduate, job seeker, or for that matter experienced professional told these days? Networking, giving to your community of peers, and promoting the good work done by others are all seen as absolutely essential for long-term career and professional stability and success.

Entrepreneurship - A frequent theme of the book, and perhaps the single most important driver of indie culture is the belief that art that is created independently, for its own sake, and representing the personality of the artist alone while having little to no regard for its commercial viability possesses a purity and value that elevates it from mass produced and mass consumed junk. Kaya observes that *'art that evolves outside corporate America can and does make a difference in the way people think.'*

Who hasn't been touched in a personal way by the deterioration of the American economy in the last two years? The traditional bonds between corporations and employees have probably never been weaker. In an economic climate that smacks of 'it's every man/woman for themselves', the idea of collecting your ideas, talents, and personal drive and trying to package, promote, and sell them to the marketplace has become so much more resonant and important. So maybe you are not out there 'selling' two-minute songs and T-shirts, but the mindset and drive needed to make it as a professional entrepreneur are not at all unlike what is needed to pack up the van with instruments and amps and hit the road.

Creativity - The indie artists, mostly by virtue of the lack of restrictions and influence of outside interests like big record companies or major publishing houses, were free to unleash their creativity and passion as they saw fit. Exploration into new sounds, sources, and inspirations were all common, they did not ever feel compelled to follow the rules and stay within the lines. It values the contribution and creativity of each individual.

This week the results of an IBM study were released that indicated the most important leadership quality for success in business is **creativity**. More important than integrity or global perspectives, creativity is seen by CEO's themselves as essential for their own, and their organization's success. How does the organization find more creative people, and encourage the development of more creativity from it's existing ranks? Could it be that a better understanding of indie and the people that are motivated to create would be high on any executive or HR leader's list?

I hope I have made the case for the link of indie to HR and the workplace. I hope you can join us on the show tomorrow night at 8PM EDT.

Note - The title of this post comes from the below video, where Dale Dougherty of Make Magazine describes the Maker Faire festival, and talks about this culture of creativity as demonstrating 'The best side of who we are'.



STEVE BOESE'S HR TECHNOLOGY

Jobvite Share

MAY 25, 2010 08:10A.M.

Today Jobvite released its latest offering in the increasingly important market for solutions that assist and enable more effective social recruiting.



The new service, called Jobvite Share, provides corporate recruiters, third party staffing pros, or internal human resources professionals several new capabilities for more efficient sharing of advertised open positions on the popular social networks, Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.

The solution offers an easy way for anyone, from recruiters to hiring managers to CEOs, to distribute and target any job openings on social networks, increase employee referrals, and track in real-time the value of any job advertisement or placement on-line. Jobvite Share makes it quick and easy for any employer to harness the power of the social web to find the right talent at no additional cost.

From the Jobvite press release:

With Jobvite Share, anyone with a position to fill can easily enter a job URL, and Jobvite will create a custom, trackable listing for that job, regardless of where distributed on the web. It can then automatically be sent to targeted contacts in email, Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn and shared anywhere on the Web. Jobvite Share puts powerful, real-time metrics in the hands of employers of all sizes to see what works – and what doesn't work – in their job marketing and distribution –

all free of charge.

Users start on the Jobvite Share launch page, then enter the URL of the online job advertisement on their corporate job site, and quickly generate up to 5 unique trackable links that can be shared on the social web, via Facebook, LinkedIn, or Twitter.



From there, recruiters can track and label multiple links to see results for each source in real-time. Jobvite Share provides the metrics needed to see what works – and what does not – in job marketing and distribution, including views, clicks, forwards and clicks to apply; all metrics are tracked by individual channel (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, email) and can follow referrals as they spread across the web

In addition to helping manage the promotion and facilitated sharing of job openings to recruiters and employees social networks, Jobvite Share also provides a matching algorithm between the job description content and the characteristics of one's social network contacts that can be applied to more closely and precisely identify the best potential referrals for the position. Basically, you have 794 Facebook friends, but Jobvite Share is smart enough to suggest the three that are a close match to the job description.

And the best thing about Jobvite Share? , the cost - **free**. Yes, you read that correctly, free. Five trackable unique URLs, automated contact matching criteria, and simple yet informative metrics on your social sharing efforts, all for free? Yep. And that is pretty cool.

Look, it is dirt simple to post your open jobs on LinkedIn or Facebook or Twitter. But once you post the jobs out on the social networks you start to wonder about the effectiveness and the impact of those efforts. With this new offering from Jobvite, you can not only easily post your openings on the social web, but you can additionally monitor what channels are working and what ones are not. And with metrics, contact matching capability, and visibility to which channels are working, Jobvite Share seems like a natural fit for both those organizations that are just starting out in social recruiting and those that have been experimenting for some time, but have not yet figured out the sweet spot.

For more information about Jobvite Share - check out their site - Jobvite

Share.



STEVE BOESE'S HR TECHNOLOGY

Missing Lost

MAY 24, 2010 06:30A.M.



The season finale of the TV series 'Lost' was aired last evening. Long time fans of the show, and there seemed to be more and more of them in this the final season, would finally learn the secrets of the mysterious island where the survivors of an air crash had been stranded. Lost - ABC.com

I hope that description was more or less accurate, as I admit I have never seen the show, and the last episode did not seem like a good starting point.

I am certainly not alone in never having seen '**Lost**', I took notice of numerous Facebook updates and Tweets yesterday along the lines of '**I have never seen Lost and I am not sorry about that**' or '**I can't wait until Lost is over so I don't have to see so many irritating Tweets**'.

But just as many smart folks that I admire and respect were almost gloating with a kind of smug superiority that they never watched the show, I also noticed equal numbers of intelligent and successful folks that were clearly and fully immersed in the show, and in the kind of collective experience that social networks can provide as any popular or important event unfolds. Last night some occasional checks of my Twitter stream revealed the anticipation, excitement, and temporary bonding as they watched and tweeted as the program played out in their living rooms.

So as I said, I did not watch the final episode of '**Lost**', I never watched any episode in the series, and I am not at all happy about that. I certainly don't feel any kind of superiority to any of the show's dedicated fans. As I write this I am also wasting yet another three hours of my life watching a bunch of millionaires run about trying to put a ball through a hoop. So my tastes in pop culture certainly can be questioned.

Sports, TV, movies, music - they are all parts of our culture, the culture that we live in, that we help create, that our friends and colleagues participate in shaping, and that our companies have to navigate in order to survive and succeed. I know not all 'culture' carries the same weight, or relative importance, but when I see people getting so openly dismissive of one type of culture, be it a TV show, a band or style of music, or whatever I can't help but wonder why they would care enough to publicly denigrate it, and by extension the other people that are its passionate fans.

Melodramatic TV shows, boy bands, 80s hair band reunion tours, American Idol, Karate Kid remakes, Stephen King's 163rd book, or even the NBA, what makes any of these better or inherently more interesting than any other art form or supposedly higher culture?

I wish that I had seen some of '**Lost**'. I wish that I had the time to stay on top of all the interesting books, movies, and music that passes by every day. I am curious. I think by having some appreciation and understanding of a phenomenon like 'Lost', we can develop a better appreciation of understanding of the people in our lives, organizations, and communities.

Being interested in 'Lost' is not really about caring whether or not the marooned passengers ever get off of the island, it is much more about understanding and empathizing with the millions of people that collectively do care about that island and who tomorrow will be at work, school, and in shops and restaurants. I may not have thought the show was interesting enough to ever watch it, but I know those people **are** interesting enough, all in their unique way.

I missed 'Lost' last night, and that was indeed my loss.



STEVE BOESE'S HR TECHNOLOGY

Weekly Wrap Up - May 17-23, 2010

MAY 23, 2010 10:00A.M.

Still in keeping with the recurring theme of trying to break out of the echo chamber and making online content (like this blog) more easily accessible and consumable for those people that will never find their way here to read the blog (see the following crude pie chart below analyzing these populations).

I thought I would start posting each Sunday the summary of the week's posts in Tabbloid format. As you might recall from an earlier post, Tabbloid is a free service that lets you create a custom PDF format 'newspaper' from your selected blogs and other sites RSS feeds, and have that newspaper delivered via email on whatever schedule you choose.

Here is this week's collection of posts, in handy PDF format - Steve's Blog : May 17-23, 2010.

I hope making content accessible in this way is a help to someone out there, I will continue to post these collections on Sundays for the time being. I hope that if you find them useful, or actually download the PDF and give/send it to someone that otherwise would have never seen these posts, you would take a second and let me know in the comments.

This is one way to try to break out of the echo chamber, but it is certainly not the only way, and if you have other and better thoughts on how to do this, I would love to hear them.

And so I don't get accused of simply 're-purposing' my own content to keep the feed readers fed, here is a new bit of information - the excellent and very cool site Significant Objects in conjunction with their sister site HiLobrow recently announced a neat writing contest. The premise - Write a story set in the town or city where you live, but imagine that it (and its surrounding area) has been flooded with several hundred thousand gallons of crude oil daily, because of a drilling-related crisis some weeks earlier. You might find using the interactive Gulf Coast Oil Spill Map helpful in this eco-catastrophic exercise, but it's not a requirement.

The 'story' has a short 250 word maximum, and you can post your entry in the comments of this post on HiLobrow. I mentioned it here since I know at least a few HR bloggers out there are reading this and thinking, 'Man I am getting tired of writing about management/leadership/crazy interview tales again'. So there you go, a good reason to try out a bit of a 'stretch assignment'.

Happy Sunday!
