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Ideas For Success | December

With David as your coach, you'll explore the business and personal dreams you desire. Much like sports coaches unleash potential in athletes, he will show you how to soar to new heights as a franchisor, franchisee, business owner or senior executive.



Challenging times provide opportunities for learning. This year, many lessons were revealed to me, and in the spirit of the season, I gift the best to you..



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Oh Christmas Tree

PNC Wealth Management released its annual analysis of the true cost of buying your true love the items in "The Twelve Days Of Christmas." To

Companies fail – I actually learned this one from a friend's father in 1982. That successful stock broker was speaking about the challenges facing a DFW-based airline. "Sometimes you take your haircut and move on," he said, referring to stopping losses on a declining investment. "But if you're looking for a bargain stock, you might want to buy this one. After all, when was the last time the government let a big company go under?" Two weeks later, Braniff declared bankruptcy, fired all 9,000 employees and left its shareholders with nothing. With the Big Three automakers begging Congress for at least \$34 billion in rescue money, you might want to hold off taking a flyer in your portfolio.

Faith is on the rise – You probably missed the news last week of the passing of Alexy II, patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church since 1991. From the Bolshevik Revolution until its collapse in 1992 – a span of 75 years – the Soviet Union was an atheist state. Fast forward to today. There are 142 million members of the Russian Orthodox Church, which represents two-thirds of the population. History shows during challenging times people return to their religious roots. Over the next year look for many Americans to reclaim their faith.

Oprah is right – Call me an evangelist, but I'll say it again: Amazon Kindle is indeed a great product. I took it on a recent trip and finished three books in seven days...and found myself reading faster than usual. Amazon got it right with this one. The bad news is its Web site says, "Due to heavy customer demand, Kindle is sold out." (I'm assuming that's more the Oprah effect, than my having written about it last month.) So, if your loved one didn't buy you one already, it probably won't show up under the tree.

We're on the same team – This lesson came to me at my son's recent basketball game. His junior high was playing a team that includes a player from our summer select program. As they ran up the score on our vertically challenged squad, I found myself not really caring. After all, we're friends with the kid's family. That's in stark contrast to the competitive spirit that often overtakes parents as they watch their children on the court and playing fields. Perhaps there's an analogy here for business. The Law of Abundance says there is plenty to go around. Would adopting that mindset have you doing things differently? Might there be an opportunity to develop a relationship with your competitors?

purchase all 364 gifts, your bank account will be reduced \$86,609...11 percent more than a year ago – and the whimsical index's second largest year-over-year increase.

That pear tree you could have purchased for \$150 last year is now \$200, plus \$20 for the partridge. Those seven swans-a-swimming soared 33 percent to \$5,600. Three French hens, on the other hand, dropped \$15 to \$30, and six geese-a-laying are down to \$240 from \$360.

Obviously, the economy is taking its toll, even among maids-a-milking. Perhaps a better gift for the special person in your life would be a new car. I read where one dealer is offering a buy one get one free. Now there's a bargain.

If you're intent on being true, wait until December 26th. You'll find bargains on gold rings and other gifts. Rise early. Lords-a-leaping require serious shopping. Seems unemployment has many looking for new gigs.

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Stretching is good – A year ago, someone who provides guidance for our business asked what revenue level we intended to hit in 2008. I threw out a number that seemed achievable... and he laughed. “Why are you taking the easy way?” he said. “If you focus there, you'll have no chance of playing big.” A few days later, I e-mailed him a much larger number, which I wrote on a Post-It note and placed under the glass on my desk. Nearly every morning, I looked at it and thought, “We'll make it.” There must be something to the whole positive affirmation thing, because we surpassed that lofty number. Aim high. You might surprise yourself.

Would you want this job? – After a few years in office, presidents appear to age dramatically. Look at before and after pictures of Mr. Bush and Mr. Clinton – born a month apart in 1946 – and the impact of the pressure of the office is readily evident. Into the cauldron steps Mr. Obama, who is the same age as Mr. Clinton was when he moved into the White House. With many make-or-break issues on the agenda, it will be interesting to see how the new president weathers the aging process. Make you thankful for the simpler role you play in the universe?

Canada is OK – Last month, I spent a week on a cruise with a Canadian franchise company, giving the keynote address at their Conference. Beyond the relaxation, the best part was getting to know our neighbors to the north, who, it turns out, are pretty much like you and me. One of them summed up the relationship between our countries: “Actually, we love the States. We think you're all nuts with your crime, attitude and gun rights, but we love you. Just to be clear, though, we never want to live there.” Seems fair enough to me.

Customer care goes both ways – Being kind to your customers is a business axiom that always rings true. That said, it appears people often forget the Golden Rule when it comes to treating employees of the businesses they frequent. “It's amazing how rude some people are when you're trying to help them,” an Ace Hardware employee told my wife recently. “They can really be mean.” Our New Year's resolution is to be nice to customer service folks. We're all on the same team.

Somewhere Nicole and Ron are smiling – Couldn't let the moment pass without acknowledging Orenthal James Simpson, now 61, will spend at least the next nine years behind bars. Whether he did or didn't murder Ms. Brown and Mr. Goldman in 1994, only OJ and the Big Guy know. However, it seems poetic justice that he will no longer be free to “search for the real killer.”

Sports as unusual – You've probably never heard of Myron Rolle. He was the highest rated football recruit in the nation coming out of high school when he signed with Florida State. All he's done since is play at an All American level, graduate in two and a half years with a 3.75 GPA in pre-med, conduct cancer research and teach Seminole Indian children about health and physical fitness. Someday he intends to become a doctor and open a clinic to help the needy in the Bahamas. First, though, he'll head to England to study medical anthropology, as one of this year's 32 American Rhodes Scholars. With all the negative publicity athletes bring upon themselves, it's good to know there are ones out there like Myron Rolle.

May you have a wonderful Christmas and holiday season, and enjoy every moment you spend with your family. Until next month, Happy New Year – and continued success in all things.

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