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SMART SPOONS RESCUE DINNER

SCIENTIFIC INNOVATION HELPS PROVIDE INDEPENDENCE

Anupam Pathak wants to end the embarrassment the 11 million people with essential tremors or Parkinson's disease experience when they sit down for a meal. The limited motor function

associated with these conditions turns eating into a stressful ordeal, and the University of Michigan Ph.D. student took steps to remedy the problem. He founded Lift Labs, and developed a device to help individuals with tremors eat easier. Dubbed Liftware Steady, motion sensors in the computerized handle detect which direction the device is pulled and move the utensil attachment in the opposite direction, negating shaky motion. First released in 2013, in less than a year, the popularity and success of Liftware attracted the attention of Google, which quickly acquired Lift Labs.

With the additional support, Lift Labs launched a second product in December 2016 to address the needs of individuals with limited hand or

arm movement. The new Liftware Level uses sensors to detect motion in 3-D space and move a flexible joint to keep the utensil attachment at the right angle. Like its predecessor, the Level proved to be a meal saver, especially for people with Huntington's disease or who have suffered from a spinal injury, cerebral palsy, or post-stroke deficits.

Both the Liftware Steady and the Liftware Level are available at liftware.com, where starter kits sell for \$195. The concept of a smart spoon may make some people scoff, but for those who use Liftware, the device means more than just keeping their shirt clean while eating hot soup; it renews their independence and confidence.

"Once you start to lose the ability to function independently, there's a huge emotional toll ... people will often just avoid going out in public."



Pathak plans for this technology to be adapted to any hand-held device, from keys to makeup brushes, and wants to help people of every ability level enjoy more independence.

ENLIGHTENING, EDUCATIONAL, ENTERTAINING:

DISCOVERING HOW BUILDINGS FAIL

Last month, I flew up to Boston to attend a conference I frequent each year: Building Science Summer Camp. I'll be honest; this year's BSSC wasn't quite as educational as I expected, but they can't all be home runs. I still had a great time, though. Each year, I go with a group of friends who are consultants like myself, or acquaintances I've met in other fields. Most of the lectures are enjoyable, and one of the most fun things we get to do at BSSC is see how buildings fail.

Just over six years ago, Washington, D.C. experienced a major earthquake. Thankfully, no one died and few people were injured, but some of the nation's iconic monuments suffered a great deal of damage. The Washington National Cathedral is still being repaired, with its bill clocking in at \$34 million. Across the city, the Washington Monument suffered deep cracks. Described as a "singular disaster," the Washington Monument was closed for three years during repairs.

Some time ago, the engineering firm that worked on the monument's repairs gave a presentation at BSSC. This wasn't an easy fix. The cracks let water inside, causing the building's internal humidity to drastically increase. One of the engineers in the presentation talked about how she went to the top of the monument and squeezed through the tiny window. She then went down from the outside, checking the monument brick by brick to determine what needed to be done. The job took four people a week to complete.

They're not all national monuments, of course, but some presentations can be just as interesting. Last year, a forensic carpenter gave a lecture explaining some of the misunderstandings about building science. His job is to go back into a building 10 years, five years, or sometimes just one year after construction is finished, and figure out where problems are coming from. Not



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understanding how moisture behaves or how to prevent it from moving into a building can cause all kinds of failures. The presentation was fascinating!

When I started in indoor air quality, understanding building science or the movement of moisture didn't seem like a big part of my job. Now I can't imagine doing my work without that knowledge. I can better help my clients address the problems they face, and prevent future problems from arising, when I am

able to recognize what causes these problems in the first place. Basically, I need to know why buildings fail so I can help my clients keep their buildings from going down the same path.

Recently, I was in Albuquerque, New Mexico, to inspect the IAQ of a Social Security Administration building. They were worried about a mold problem, and in my report, I was able to include my findings, as well as notes on numerous small issues I saw. For instance, the caulking around the windows was old and could be letting in moisture; the air conditioning didn't operate properly, and unfiltered air was being let into the building. All of these details came from my knowledge of building science, and only by correcting them could my client prevent additional problems in the future.

Even when Building Science Summer Camp doesn't blow my socks off, you can bet I'll be back next year. It's a unique opportunity for education and enlightenment, and it's guaranteed to be entertaining, too.

Train West

Out With the Old, in With the New

It's Time to Revamp Your Elevator Pitch

As a professional, you know how important it is to perfect your elevator pitch. Without it, you can find yourself fumbling over your words while consequently losing the interest of your potential customer or client. You may think that your current elevator pitch is up to par, but when is the last time you actually gave your speech?

An elevator pitch is a short summary of your service or company and how it adds value to customers and the world. It's a useful tool for communicating important information in a time-constrained setting that will hopefully yield you an invitation to have a longer conversation at a later point in time.

There are two problems that professionals run into when evaluating their elevator pitches: The pitch is out of date, or it was created on paper but never adjusted to work in actual conversation.

Keeping your elevator speech updated is just as important as updating your resume. Maybe you have new responsibilities in your job role, or your company has recently rebranded their mission statement. Both situations would require you to evaluate your elevator pitch and make the necessary adjustments.

When a pitch sounds robotic and unnatural, people end up feeling pitched at instead of engaged with. As much as our society is driven by a consumer mindset, no one actually wants to be sold to. If you are too busy making sure you sell the benefits of your work, you are neglecting the main reason that people may do business with you: a personal relationship.

In order to make your pitch sound natural, it needs to be written in the way that you speak. Using common vernacular makes your pitch sound believable, and asking questions promotes a more spontaneous flow to the conversation. The best way to ensure that your speech sounds natural is by practicing it with people who will give you honest feedback. Rehearse it until it sounds unrehearsed, then get feedback on how authentic you sound.

Most times, an elevator pitch needs to be revamped simply because it hasn't been used in a while. Without practice, your elevator pitch can sound robotic, and a robotic speech can hurt your chances of making positive first impressions. Update your elevator speech and practice with your peers. It could mean the difference between upward movement and a stagnant career.



Meditation for Better Business Decisions

When you think meditation, does your mind conjure faraway pictures of chanting monks in Zen gardens? Perhaps you think, "Meditation just isn't for me. Becoming one with the universe is too far removed from my day-to-day activities, especially at work." After all, you wonder, what do these imagined "oms" have to do with your daily business life? A lot, actually. Meditation can allow you to make better business decisions by helping you eliminate negative emotional and physical influences within yourself.

Of course, this doesn't mean that you should give up critical thinking altogether. In fact, we recommend that you begin the decision-making process for any dilemma with some form of organizational action. A list of pros and cons, for example, or the Kepner-Tregoe (KT) Decision Analysis, will take you step by step from clarifying the problem to, as American Express puts it, making the "best-balanced choice."

But after the analysis is done and before the decision actually has to be made, there's an important step that you shouldn't skip: mindfulness and meditation.

Why Meditation

Meditation is good for everyone, but many of its advantages are especially helpful for managers. First, meditation helps you relax and, for a moment, escape the many pressures weighing on you. But according to the Harvard Business Review, in their article "How Meditation Benefits CEOs," meditation provides a myriad of other, more specific advantages, including anxiety reduction, resilience promotion, increased emotional intelligence, more fulfilling relationships, and enhanced focus.

How Does It Work?

Research done by neuroscientists and psychologists at three separate Pittsburg universities shows that meditation decreases the size of the brain's amygdala, an area responsible for that gut fight-or-flight response — the one that can influence rash business decisions. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, fight-or-flight response reactions include an increase in heart rate, perspiration, and blood glucose concentrations, as well as tremors and anxiety, none of which are conducive to calm, rational business decisions.

Next time you have a major business decision to make, consider taking a moment for mindfulness. It just may make the difference between a rash decision with negative consequences and a calm, collected decision with positive effects.

Where Do I Start?

If you're new to meditation, never fear! There are numerous, apps, books, and audio downloads that can guide you on your meditative quest. For reliable and free guided meditations, visit UCLA's Mindful Awareness Research Center website, where you'll find audio files for various types of meditation, from breathing and sleep meditation to "meditation for working with difficulties."

What Was the Dirt on Pig-Pen?

THE SOURCE OF THE DUST IN YOUR OFFICE

In the classic "Peanuts" comic strips, readers were introduced to an endearing cast of characters. Among them is Pig-Pen, a young boy who is constantly covered in a cloud of dust. We never learn where this dust comes from, though, and in the rare scenes where Pig-Pen is shown cleaning himself, he instantaneously attracts dust again. Tenants in an office environment will be familiar with this phenomenon: Desks and monitors seem to be perpetually covered in a fine layer of dust. And when some activity sends that dust airborne, complaints are sure to follow.

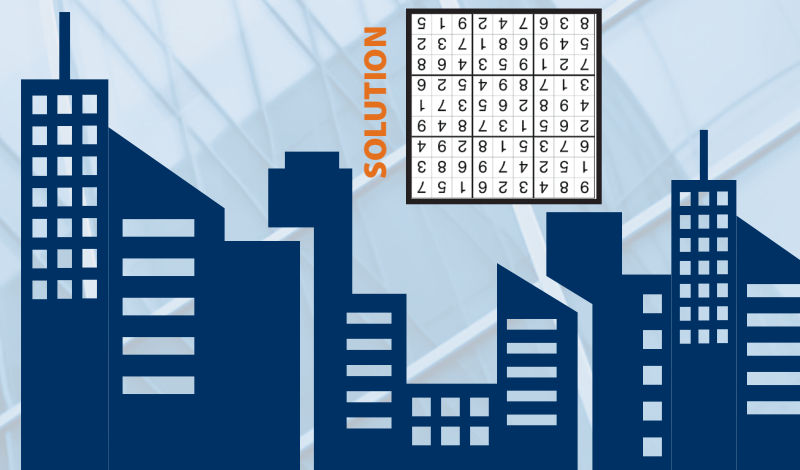
When employees complain of sneezing, coughing, itchy skin, itchy eyes, or upper respiratory problems, mold might be the suspected culprit. However, research from the Department of Labor's Division of Occupational Safety and Health says that the real criminal is dust. A little dust might not seem like a big deal, but it's a common indoor air quality problem in office spaces. Custodians are the first to take the blame when dust becomes commonplace in the office. Employees might complain to management or leave bits of paper on the ground to see if the custodians are really doing their job. While poor custodial services can negatively impact IAQ, they're not always at fault.

Custodians can't clean spaces covered in folders or stacks of paper, nor will they vacuum in places where boxes are stacked. Dust regularly accumulates on messy desks and carpets. As soon as someone shifts the boxes or drops a pile of folders on a workspace, an invisible plume of dust becomes airborne. Building Air Quality has conducted research with laser particle counts in office settings. We found "explosive increases" of airborne dust particles when occupants are in the office. Dust settles in the evenings, but if offices are cluttered, custodians



cannot clean properly. When occupants come in to work, daily activity distributes the dust back into the air, and we see a dramatic decrease in the IAQ.

It is pretty much impossible to prevent dust altogether. Most office dust is a mix of soil from outside, dead skin cells, fibers from carpets and clothes, and tissue from papers. Air purifiers can help remove airborne dust, but it's important for occupants to keep their workspaces clean so custodians can do their job and remove dust before it gets kicked up into the air.



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