

CLIENT / CONTACT BULLETIN 8-30

Just in case it matters to you:

- BUSINESS SUCCESS ALMOST ALWAYS DEPENDS ON A TOP EXECUTIVE TEAM as well as a top Executive Officer, since “putting strategy into operation depends on what senior executives succeed in conveying to the rest of the organization...and energizing the troops.” Recent British research concludes that “the best teams combine talents of four distinct personality types – those who are predominately creative, collaborative, rational or practical,” rather than teams comprised of people who’ve been hired for emulating their bosses qualities. “Such teams may gratify the boss’ ego,” but have less likelihood of obtaining optimal performance and results. [THE WEEK – June 13, 08]
- FIVE OF EVERY SIX AMERICAN WORKERS DO NOT “USE THEIR STRENGTHS AT WORK,” according to a Gallup poll ten years ago. In response, a management model has been emerging known as ‘strength-based performance’ which focuses on “what is right in people rather than correcting what is wrong... Traditional performance management focuses on an employee’s weak areas,” based on past performance data, and sets goals for improvement in those areas. Strength-based perspective instead “recognizes good work... differentiating between tolerable versus business-critical weaknesses and manages performance expectations... encouraging behavior, thinking or feeling that is authentic and energizing to the user, and which enables optimal functioning, development and performance.” This model has been adopted by many global companies (including Yahoo!, Toyota, Microsoft, Wells Fargo) which consider it “successful...in finding people who *love to do the job*, not just those who *can do the job*.” [USI RISK ISSUES – May 08]
- “IN MOST MARKETS, SKYROCKETING PRICES WOULD RESULT IN increased supply and decreased demand that would cause prices to ease. But the oil market isn’t working that way. Supply is essentially fixed in the short term because it takes years to find new fields and bring them online. Demand, meanwhile is also essentially fixed, since there is no ready substitute for gasoline, diesel and jet fuel. Flush with cash from investors of all stripes, traders observing these conditions have simply bid prices up and up... Hedge funds, investment banks, pension funds and other professional investors have poured money into oil (and other commodities), seeking a hedge against inflation and alternatives to a shaky stock market.” In five years, commodity index funds have grown from \$13B to \$260B; in three years, 180 hedge funds have multiplied to 630; oil futures contracts on the International Exchange now exceed \$8 trillion. It’s just basically about speculation and greed, with absolutely no end in sight. [BUSINESSWEEK – June 9, 08]
- “PARENTS AND TEACHERS ARE STEADILY LOSING THE RIGHT TO DISCIPLINE CHILDREN BY FORCE... The latest piece of Utopian dottiness from the United Nations is a campaign to end the corporal punishment of children, all over the world, by 2009.” Presently, over 100 countries have banned ‘smacking’ kids in schools, 23 European countries have banned corporal punishment completely, and every U.N. member other than America and Somalia have ratified a ‘Convention on Human Rights’ which protects children from “all forms of physical or mental violence.” In America, however, “most children have been corporally punished at home by the time they reach adolescence” and each year some 300,000 are physically punished at school – on the premise that spanking “dissuades a toddler from doing very dangerous things” and dissuades school-age kids from anti-social behavior. “In a world where children face such horrors as forced labor, sex trafficking and military conscription,” devoting energy to outlawing parental discipline seems a strange emphasis, but that’s what global egalitarianism is all about. [THE ECONOMIST – May 31, 08]
- THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: ***American P.C. to the rescue again! A father and mild-mannered professor of archeology at the Univ. of Michigan recently took his son to a Detroit Tigers baseball game and bought him a bottle of lemonade. By mistake, the bottle he was handed was Mike’s Hard Lemonade – an alcoholic drink he’d never seen or heard of. When officials noticed the boy sipping it, the son was whisked off by police to a hospital (where he was fine), the father was arrested, and a judge then sent the boy into a foster home. After days of legal wrangling and the father agreeing to ‘move out,’ the son was released to his mother, and eventually the case was dropped. Political Correctness again at its finest.***