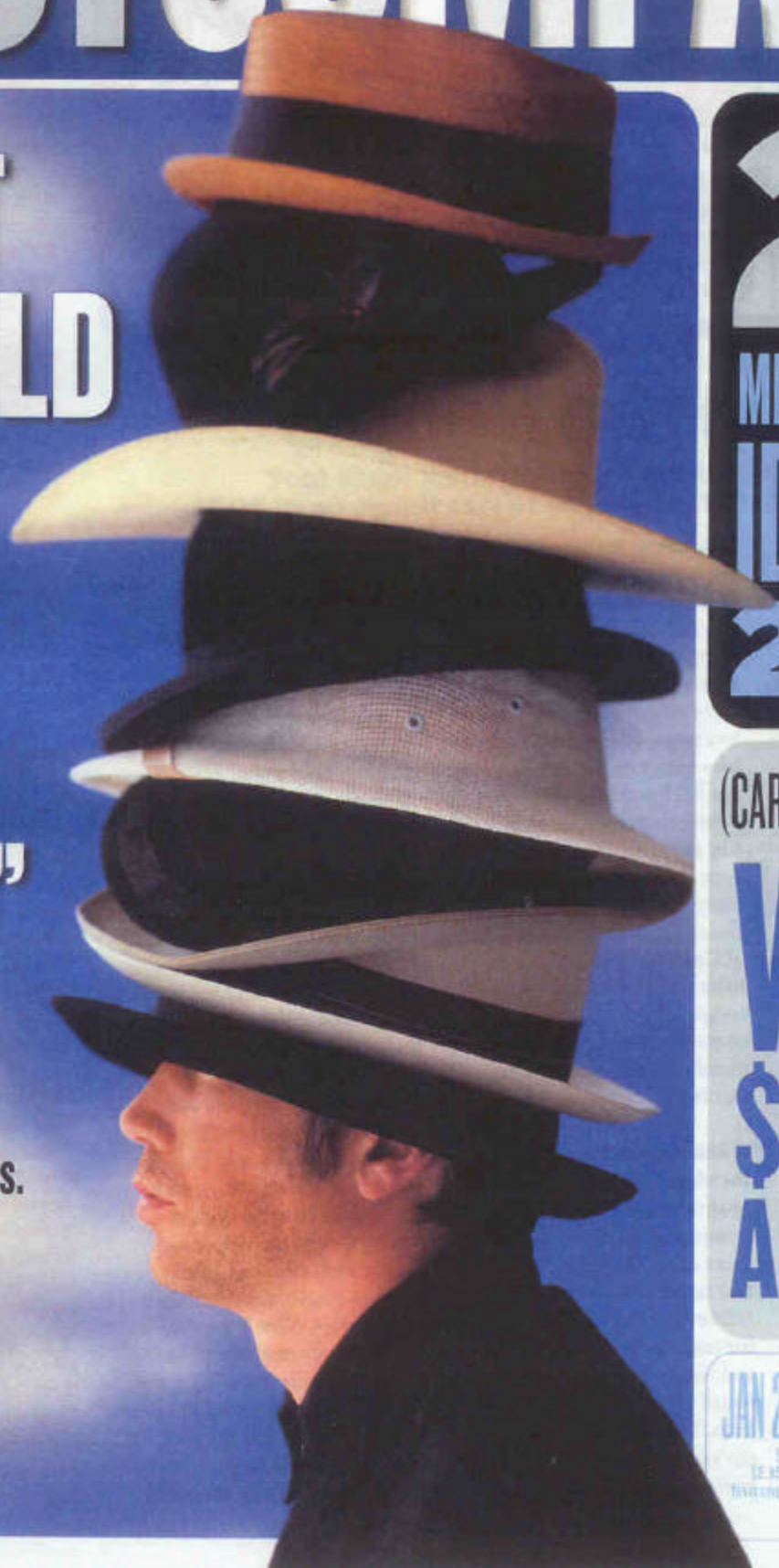


FAST COMPANY

“WHAT SHOULD I DO WITH MY LIFE?”

Getting Back to What Matters—
A New Era for Work and Business.
By Po Bronson



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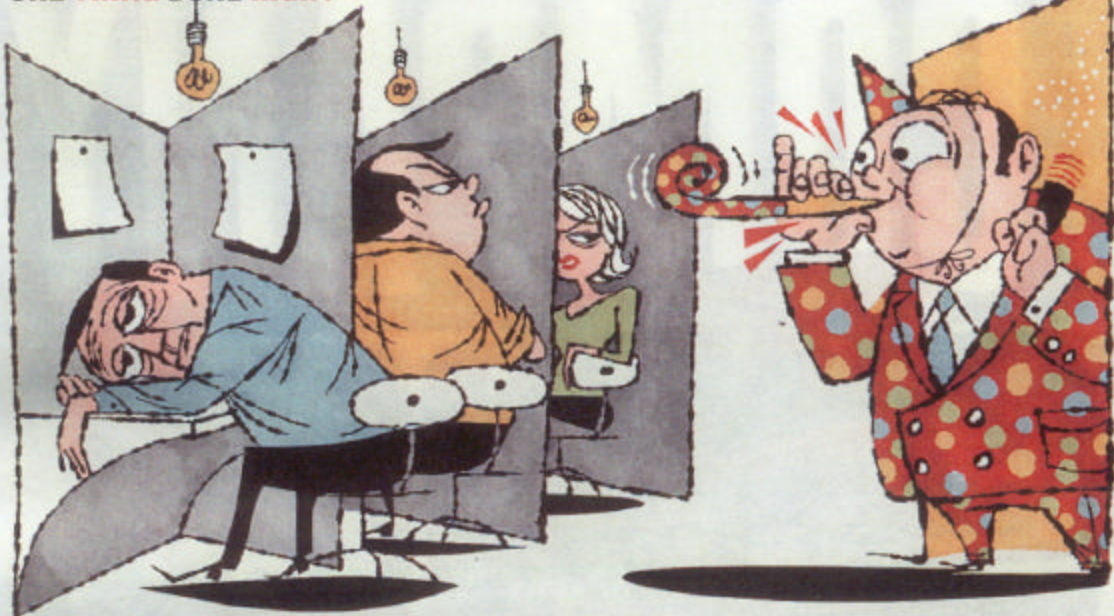
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ONE THING DONE RIGHT



Power Up the People

Economy stuck in the doldrums? Morale stuck there too? Here are a few things that you can do to jazz things up in 2003.

The good news is that 2002 is over. The bad news is that 2003 ain't looking much better. And the worst news is that it's *your* job to get the troops jazzed to face the new year. The question, of course, is how to do it. FAST COMPANY sat down with human-resources consultant John Izzo, a best-selling author and onetime Presbyterian minister who is now preaching the gospel of organizational change—and sharing his latest ideas on how to keep people engaged during tough times.

1. Lose the survival language. If your idea of inspiration is to call everyone together and tell them, "Now's the time to pull together, folks, or we could go out of business," think again. Vague, panic-ridden language only heightens employee anxiety—without providing clear suggestions for how to cope. A better idea: Engage the troops. "Ask employees for suggestions for what to do during the slow period in order to prepare for future growth," says Izzo. "Don't sugarcoat the truth, but remind them about where you're going over the long term."

2. Celebrate the victories—even the little ones. "Things were booming three years ago, and successes today look small by comparison," says Izzo. "People are bashful about celebrating. But you can get too focused on bad news, and it's important to take notice of success, however small." Forget the extravagant parties that characterized the late 1990s. Instead, try to highlight at least one success at every meeting. Lawrence Fish, chairman, president, and CEO of Citizens Bank, makes it a habit to write a thank-you or congratulatory note every day to someone on his team. Don't dismiss small gestures: They cast big shadows.

3. Reinstate summer hours... in the winter! With revenue off and profits all but nonexistent, bonuses are in short supply these days, as are promotions and raises. "What companies refuse to acknowledge is that for many employees, money and leisure time compete pretty equally with each other," says Izzo. That means that if you can't give people a raise, consider giving them an extra week off.

Or offer flexible work arrangements that will allow employees to pursue personal interests, classes, or other opportunities outside work.

4. Support pet projects. The company 3M famously allows employees to spend 15% of their time on projects of their own interest—even if those projects are completely outside their job descriptions. Consider initiating a similar policy in your own department. The encouragement may be enough to get staffers excited again—and produce ideas that could kick-start new growth.

5. Less action? Try more talk. Take a page out of FedEx CIO Robert Carter's book: He sponsors town-hall meetings with his IT staff about every six weeks, and he sits down each month with eight randomly selected employees over lunch or breakfast. Now's the time for frequent, informal conversations with your team. That way, when business picks up and you have the budget for bonuses again, you'll still have a team to give them to. **Alison Overholt**

HOW TO GET YOURSELF GOING

We talk about motivation as if it were our boss's job. But we all know the hard truth: The only person who can motivate you is... you! Here, three New Year's resolutions to help you keep yourself fired up.

"Don't put all of your emotional eggs in the work basket," says organizational-change consultant John Izzo. During the boom times, it seemed natural to look for fulfillment at work—after all, that's where you spent 95% of your time. But now is a great moment to take stock of what else is important to you. Start a hobby. Volunteer. Learn something new. Have you always wanted to play the guitar? Take a class, and start practicing. By devoting time, energy, and commitment to something besides work, it will be much easier to roll with the punches at the office.

Keep networking. "People tend to go hide in their offices during times like these," Izzo says, "but this is exactly the time when you should be out there the most. I'm not talking about networking specifically to find jobs. I'm talking about continuing to seek mentors, volunteering for work outside of your own area, or simply keeping in touch." Call friends who have been laid off and ask them to lunch. Follow up with people you've met in other departments. Use these down times to continue developing relationships and learning from those around you. "As soon as things pick up, you'll be the first to be remembered," Izzo says.

Nothing comes to those who wait. When business is slow, there is an enormous opportunity to pursue projects that you've always been excited about but never had a chance to act on. But don't wait for the boss to come to you. Take the initiative and approach him with ideas. Ask if you can spend 10% or 15% of your time developing your own projects for the company. If your idea is implemented, it could hot-wire your career. If it's not, at least you had a chance to work on something you love—even if it was just for you.