

Working Solutions

Hints for Researching Your Family History

Family reunions got you thinking about your family tree? You can research your genealogy by starting with a few simple steps.

Getting Started: Read "How-To" Books

Those beginning to research their family genealogy for the first time will find it extremely useful to consult books on how to research family history. This will help familiarize you with the research process, with the basic sources of genealogical information, and with various record keeping methods.

Narrow Your Search

The next step is to narrow your search to a specific branch of the family. This is important in order to keep your project manageable and to be able to organize the information you find.

Begin with yourself and work back through time. If you ignore this rule you will have great difficulty connecting possible ancestors to yourself. There are several reasons for this:

By the time you are several generations back, your family, including cousins, uncles etc. may be quite large. Working from yourself backward will ensure that you are working on your direct line.

Many families have the same name, but are not related. Some names were derived from occupations, such as Smith or Carpenter. Some come from physical characteristics, for example Little, and others from geographic locations. People bearing these names will not necessarily have a common ancestor.

Immigrants to America often anglicized their names or shortened them. The spelling of your name may have changed several times during your family's history in America. Working from yourself back will help you to trace these changes.

(Continued on the next page.)



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Conduct a Home Survey

A surprising amount of information can often be found at home. Some of the sources include family bibles, captions on photographs, scrapbooks, newspaper clippings, diaries, funeral prayer cards, official documents, samplers, and engraved wedding bands.

Family Group Sheets and Ancestral Charts

Using a Family Group Sheet form is a useful way of recording information about the family unit, including husband, wife and children. Begin by filling out a Family Group Sheet for yourself. Then make sheets for your parents, grandparents, and so forth, as far back as you know information. You will eventually want to have a Family Group Sheet for each of your direct ancestors.

Next, fill in an Ancestral Chart. An Ancestral Chart records information about the ancestors from whom you directly descend. It summarizes information on the Family Group Sheet and will help you keep track of names and relationships.

Interview Family Members

One of the best sources of information about ancestors is a relative. Talk with older family members, and if you can visit them, do so. If possible, use a tape recorder, if not take notes. Go armed with Family Group Sheets and an Ancestral Chart, and try to fill in as much information as possible. Also, just let your relatives reminisce. Take down names, family stories, physical descriptions etc., and organize the information later.

If you cannot visit, write a letter. Keep copies of all correspondence. Ask for specific information. You might arrange questions on several sheets of paper leaving space for answers, and always include a stamped self-addressed envelope. Ask your relatives if they have family bibles, letters, photos, or memorabilia that might supply information or clues.

Remember, information from relatives may or may not be accurate. Use it as a guide for further research. Always verify information with primary source records if possible.

Organize Data

Begin to organize the data you are collecting. Keep a file for each head of household for whom you are searching.

The head of household is usually, but not always, the male for each preceding generation. Into the file will also go any information obtained on his or her spouse and children. You will want to use a numbering system to keep your generations in the correct order. Several systems are described in the book, *Managing a Genealogical Project* by William Dollarhide.

Now that you know what information you have, you will have a better idea of what information you need. Keep in mind that the greater the separation in time and place between you and your ancestors, the more important it is to verify personal testimony with information from other sources. Use as many sources as possible to document findings. When there is a discrepancy between sources, use the one closest to the time of the actual event. ■ *Source St. Charles City-County Library District; LifeLines by Workplace Options, Summer 2005*



Create Happy Customers, Don't Wait for Them

It feels great to have customers think you're wonderful because you did something special for them that represented exceptional or meaningful service. All customer service employees enjoy these moments. You don't have to wait for them to happen, because you can influence your customers' attitudes more easily than you think. Here are three ways: 1) Look for permissible ways that you can remove an obstacle or bend a rule that will help your customer get a need met faster, 2) Use your tone of voice as a tool; Have it reflect that you are excited to see the customer, and 3) Assure customers that you will give them support later if they need you. ■

Manage Stress Right Now

Manage stress right now, by prioritizing. List your top three priorities for the day, the ones most on your mind, and put the rest aside.

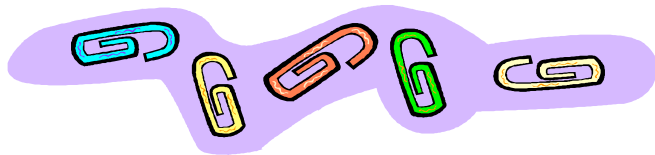
If possible, don't answer your phone or e-mail for 30 minutes.

Collect yourself and focus.

When priorities change, toss out that list and write another one with only three items. Don't think too far ahead.

Stay in the moment. Work on what's right in front of you. Try breaking up your day into 10 to 20 minute segments. Assign a task to each one. Allow no interruptions during these periods.

Watch your performance soar as a result. ■



Injury Prevention at Home and Work

If you experience any sharp pain, weakness, or light-headedness during exercise or working out at a gym, you know the rule, stop. Your body is signaling that something is wrong. Pushing through acute pain is the fastest way to develop a severe or chronic injury, or worse.

Unfortunately, many employees don't follow the same rule when performing heavy manual labor, especially in the summer heat. If you suddenly don't feel well or feel pain during manual labor, stop and evaluate your condition. Your employer wants you to be productive, not injured and off work. ■



Who's Using Drugs?

The U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration recently released its latest report on workplace substance abuse. It lists the occupations in which employees are more likely to use illicit drugs. It also reports on many different aspects of workplace substance abuse. The agency reports the following discoveries: Drug use is more likely when employers do not have testing policies. The smaller the employer, the more illicit drug users there are. Only 58% of employees said their employer offered an employee assistance program (EAP). The youngest adult workers (18–25) reported the least access to educational information about drug and alcohol use in the workplace. This group also uses illicit drugs at twice the rate of the next older group of workers (25–34). Older workers are less likely to use illicit drugs. About 8% of employees who work for small companies use illicit drugs, while about 6% of employees who work for large companies (over 500 employees) use illicit drugs. (Source: www.samhsa.gov/newsroom.) ■

Blood Pressure and Sound Sleep

Talk to your doctor about your sleep pattern if you have high blood pressure. A report published last year found a strong relationship between high blood pressure and fewer

hours of sleep. Sleep apnea (when breathing stops while sleeping) has long been associated with heart health, but this report addresses the actual number of sleep hours. Among participants between the ages of 32 and 59, those who slept fewer than six hours a night had more than double the risk of high blood pressure than those who slept more than six hours a night. Known sleep-zappers include stress, alcohol use before bedtime, caffeine, and pets in the bedroom. (Source: *Hypertension*, May 2006.) ■



Helping Impaired Professionals

“Impaired professionals” are nurses, doctors, pharmacists, mental health counselors, dentists or other licensed professionals, who are addicted to alcohol, drugs, or suffer with psychiatric disorders making them unable to practice their profession safely. This is a controversial topic because denial, a hallmark of addiction, can be especially difficult to confront in health professionals. Typically, impaired professionals are intelligent, strong-willed, morally conscious, and high achievers. These strengths can make it difficult for them to admit they need help. All 50 states have special intervention programs to help impaired professionals. These committees rely upon patients and peers coming forward with their concerns. Are you concerned about a health care professional, but aren’t sure what to do next? The EAP can help you decide. ■



Get a Grip on Team Gripes

You’ll play a major role in making your team more efficient by changing any of these behaviors that are often major gripes by members of workplace teams:

- 1) Eliminate your “silo” existence.

Participate in information-sharing activities so members of the team know what you know when you know it, or as soon as it can possibly be



Shared, 2) Find out early on how well you are performing for the rest of the team. Often team members don’t complain about the performance of other members until a critical state exists. This is a two-way street—ask *and* tell. Make communication a team tradition and members will accept feedback sooner and be less inclined to feel picked on, and 3) Talk to team members in person. Don’t make your group e-mail list (listserv) the primary means by which all information is communicated. Teams must meet in person. ■

Give Payday Loans a Pass

“Payday lending is a debt trap,” says the national Center for Responsible Lending. Payday lending, sometimes called cash advance, is the practice of using a check dated in the future as collateral for a short-term loan. They are generally marketed as quick cash for a short-term emergency. To qualify, a borrower needs only an income from a job or government benefits, and a bank account. Here are some facts: 99% of payday loans go to repeat borrowers. 91% of those borrowers get loans five or more times per year. Many borrow from one loan provider to pay off an overdue debt from another. The average customer who patronizes a payday loan “store” ends up paying \$800 to pay back a \$325 loan! Payday loans can be a debt trap, and the notorious practice of predatory lending has led 14 states to outlaw payday loan stores. What to do: If you are in debt, ask your employee assistance professional about helpful resources in your community, or speak to your local consumer credit counseling center. Avoid the attraction of what appears to be quick relief of debt. If you have a plan, you can eventually find relief, but payday and cash-advance lenders are not the way to go. (Source: Center for Responsible Lending.) ■

Your EAP is designed to help you deal with life stresses and a variety of personal challenges. For confidential services offered at no cost to all employees and their families, please call:

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