

Fall Institute

Climb to Safety

November 12-14, 2008

The Wynfrey Hotel, Birmingham

"You can hear it comin' like a train out of control..." That's right, the 2008 AL HFMA Fall Institute will be here before you know it. It will be held at The Wynfrey Hotel, November 12-14. Our theme for this year's meeting is **Climb to Safety**.

Our featured keynote speaker, Brent Bishop, will share **Climbing the Mountain: Lessons from Everest for**



Peak Achievements. Brent's topic will bridge the world of climbing and the world of business through his wealth of mountaineering and professional experience. The Bishop family connection with Everest spans over 45 years, and adds a unique and historical perspective to the world's highest peak. His presenta-

tions draw on an exquisite body of mountain images, while his themes focus on the importance of vision, goal setting, leadership, and teamwork needed to reach your goals. Audiences love Brent's ability to relate the lessons learned in the mountains to the business world. His presentations truly inspire, motivate, and enlighten.

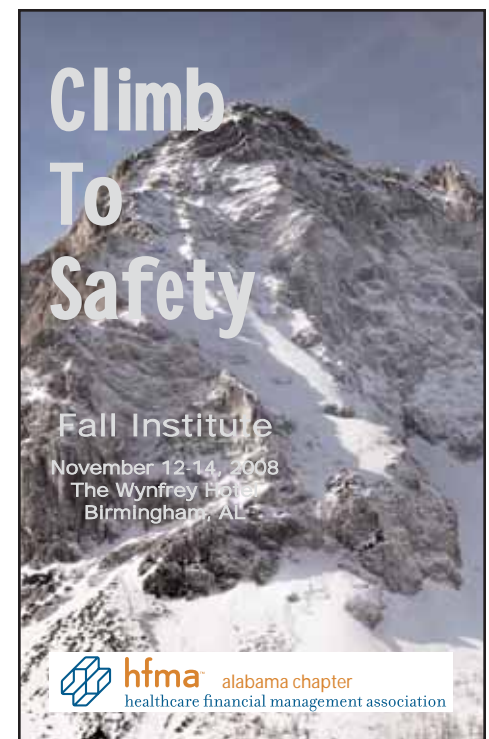
Alabama's own, Roger Shultz, will close the conference Friday. Roger is a fun-loving Southern guy who is very loud and very outgoing. He's very proud of being an ex-football player for The University of Alabama. Roger was a contestant on NBC's, "The Biggest Loser: Couples." Roger teamed up with



former teammate Trent Patterson on NBC's hit show. Roger initially weighed in at 363 pounds, and on the final weigh in, he weighed 199 pounds, having lost 164 pounds and 45.18% of his original weight. He finished the show in second place overall. Throughout his journey to lose weight, Roger learned more about teamwork and setting goals than ever before. His perspective is unique

because of his background with football, his first passion. Roger will walk us through his amazing transformation to becoming a healthier person. While the show is called "The Biggest Loser," Roger is truly "The Biggest Winner."

You can register via the website at www.alabamahfma.org. Come and join us for a mountain of fun and learning!



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It feels like I just took office as the President of your Chapter and it is already passing me by. When I first accepted this position, I had many hopes and dreams about all I wanted to accomplish. However, as the reality set in, I realized that I needed to focus on just a few of the things that I wanted to accomplish. So what do I hope to accomplish this year?

- I would like to see our chapter earn a bronze award for Excellence in Certification. HFMA certification is a great way to set yourself apart from others in your field and it is also an excellent way to help you grow professionally. We will offer coaching courses and testing on-site at both the Fall Institute in November and the Dixie Institute in February. If you have been waiting for an opportunity to take the exam, I hope this will encourage you to take it. **WE WILL EVEN PAY FOR THE EXAM.**

- I would like to see more of our membership involved with active participation in our committees. Our National theme this year is "Making Connections". If you allow yourself to get involved in your committee, I promise you are going to make connections on both a personal and professional level. Many of you have already accepted this challenge, but we always have room for more volunteers. If you are not currently participating and would like to help, please let me know and we will find a place for you.

- This year just happens to be the 50th anniversary of our chapter. We are planning a celebration at our



**Vicki Parks, CPA, FHFMA
President**

annual meeting in 2009, but in the meantime we are trying to reach out to our members who used to be active, but for various reasons are not currently participating. Past Presidents, I am talking about you too! We need your leadership and ideas. We will have a special session at the Fall meeting in November, just for YOU. I hope you will make plans to attend.

- As always, we want our educational offerings to be top notch, so we have placed an emphasis on the Forums this year in order to make sure that you look to HFMA for all your educational needs.

I can't express what an honor it is to serve as your President. If we are able to accomplish all of the goals listed above, it will not be because of me. None of our goals could be achieved without the numerous hours of work contributed by many who volunteer to serve this Chapter. I thank each one of you for your contributions and I am looking forward to a very successful year.

Vicki Parks

ANNUAL INSTITUTE PICTURES

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ELECTION 2008 - NOW THINGS REALLY GET INTERESTING

What seemed a few weeks ago to be a foregone conclusion and an exercise in quadrennial formality has turned into the most compelling story in the history of American politics. The 2008 presidential election was on track to be an electoral wipeout in favor of Senator Barack Obama (D-Illinois), whose upstart primary campaign vaulted him to an upset victory over the once-seemingly inevitable Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-New York). Obama locked up the nomination in May after sweeping through North Carolina and compiling enough delegates along the way despite badly losing November swing states like Ohio and Pennsylvania. Obama even took the bold steps of making a triumphant world tour and speaking before a throng of 100,000 or more in Berlin in July, visiting Middle Eastern leaders and setting up weekends at Camp David for next spring, and performing before a crowd at Denver's Invesco Field.

While the former Chicago "community organizer" (Google that and choose from 869,000 links to find out more) still holds a lock on the German, French, and British vote just fifty days before the general election, he has seen his lead among voters that count disappear in favor of Senator John McCain (R-Arizona). Everything changed the day the nation was introduced to a moose hunting mother of five from Alaska.

McCain's campaign was in desperate need of a shake-up and a source of new energy. The Republican base has never been enthralled with his antics, particularly with regards to his stances on campaign finance reform and President Bush's tax policies. Many suspected that the base

would either sit out this election or half-heartedly pull the McCain lever without campaigning in earnest for him. The results "down the ticket" (Senate and House races) would have been devastating for the GOP. His selection of Governor Sarah Palin (R-Alaska) as his running mate has proven to be a catalyst to energize what was destined to be a sleepy race.

The Fear of the Unknown?

Much has been written about Governor Palin since her elevation to the lofty post of number two on her party's presidential ticket. By now you are all familiar with her story of rising from the PTA to mayor of a town of about 7,000 citizens (I guess the mayor of Atmore was not available) to the top position in her state. Much more will be written over the next seven weeks as the armies of attorneys, political campaign operatives, and media converge on the state of Alaska to dig up whatever dirt they can find on Palin. They're sure to find plenty including her already legendary intervention to terminate an ex-brother-in-law and her fondness for "earmarks" (2.31 million Google hits), the object of greatest disdain in Senator McCain's book.

While the arguments being made in favor of Palin (executive experience, skill at work/life balance, etc...) are compelling, it remains to be seen if the public will continue to hold her in such high standing after fifty days of mudslinging aimed directly at her. Can anyone remember a presidential election that hinged so heavily on how well the population gets to know one of the parties' second fiddles?

And then there is the prospect of

the Vice Presidential Debate. While Palin was an overwhelming hit with her speech at the Republican National Convention (the consensus was that the rest of the event was a big snoozer), many wonder if she can pull off the same magic when not in front of a TelePrompTer and when faced with the inevitable "gotcha" questions about obscure foreign leaders or government agencies whose existence not even the president can probably justify.

Biden...A Safe Bet or a Potential Liability?

While McCain's selection of Palin stole the limelight from Obama just a day after his acceptance speech on the Broncos' home turf, the naming of Senator Joe Biden (D-Delaware) as the Democrats' number two was heralded as a much safer choice and one that helped to offset Obama's lack of experience in matters of governmental policy humdrum. Many derided the choice of Biden in light of Obama's "change" theme and wondered how much change a guy who has sat in the Senate since Nixon was president could really help to foster. Others pointed to Biden's two previous disastrous efforts at presidential campaigns; the first (1988) which ended in a plagiarism scandal that has stuck with him ever since, and the second that resulted in his receiving less than 1% of the vote at the 2008 Iowa Caucuses.

Biden bears watching for a number of reasons; foremost among these are his tendency to love the sound of his own voice and his penchant for committing gaffes that are frequent reminders of Leslie Nielsen's Frank Drebin character of "Police Squad" and "The Naked Gun"

ELECTION 2008 - NOW THINGS REALLY GET INTERESTING, CONTINUED

fame. He has already commented publicly about the ethnicity of the typical Seven-Eleven cashier in his state, referred to Governor Palin as "good looking" and as "Lt. Governor" of Alaska, and then topping them all by exhorting a paraplegic state senator from Missouri to "stand up" at a rally point in a speech last week.

Look for the debate between these two to be the most watched in the history of vice presidential debates (if anyone is actually tracking statistics on viewership of these), and expect the debate to actually matter in the grand scheme of things this time around.

Issues on the Table

While the VP candidates are great for an amusing sideshow and for pundits to mull over the impact of a woman on the ticket, elections sometimes come down to issues rather than personalities. And the issues facing the next president are more than daunting. Earlier this month the federal government bailed out (interpretation: "took over") Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the twin mortgage giants. Just today, the largest bankruptcy in American history (Lehman Brothers) looms, likely bringing about the end of the road for a company whose roots go back to Montgomery in the 1840s. One of the most prestigious investment banks and wealth management firms in the nation with their recognizable bull logo (Merrill Lynch) is being absorbed by Bank of America. The fallout over all of this is going to be more far-reaching than most of can imagine or even understand. Do we really feel confident that a freshman senator and a 72 year-old who has been quoted

to say that "the issue of economics is not something I've understood as well as I should" are up to handling this sort of an environment?

McCain has been a staunch supporter of the war effort in Iraq, but Obama used his "doveishness" on the war as a feather in his cap to contrast Senator Clinton's more hawkish stance during the primaries. Now that our general fortunes in Iraq have changed and a scaled-down troop presence is on the horizon, don't expect this issue to dominate the general discussion between the two candidates.

On the issue of healthcare reform, both candidates are promoting the typical lofty ideas we see every four years. Obama's involve more government intervention and cost more. McCain's involve more market-based approaches and tax incentives that have not proven to be workable when applied on a test basis to date. Obama's would involve massive tax increases to be economically feasible. McCain's would involve no expansion of safety net programs at a time of potential economic disaster. In other words, neither has this figured out.

For more on each candidate's plan to reform the healthcare industry, see the following:

<http://www.johnmccain.com/Informing/Issues/19ba2f1c-c03f-4ac2-8cd5-5cf2edb527cf.htm>

<http://www.barackobama.com/issues/healthcare/>

Forecast for November

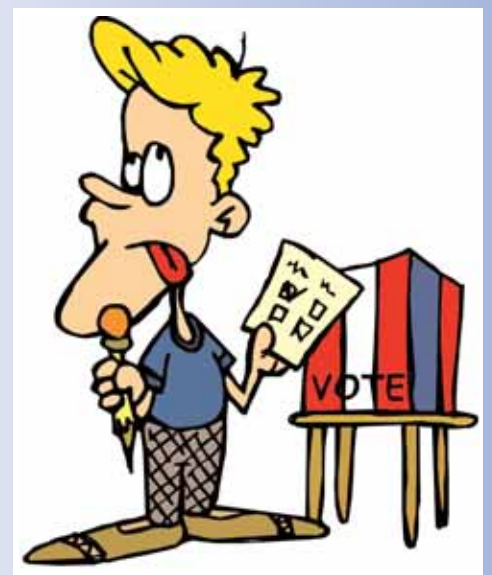
Obama appeared to be on track to having both the bully pulpit of the White House and comfortable

majorities in the Senate and the House just a few weeks ago. This trifecta does not look to be as certain today, although the Democrats' position of strength in the various Senate races seems to be the most sure bet of the three.

The race will come down to just a few key states; Ohio, Virginia, Florida, Pennsylvania, Colorado, Michigan, and New Mexico. It's hard for me to imagine McCain losing the first three. Obama is still clinging to leads in the next two (two points or less) that should hold. But I'll go out on a limb to predict that McCain is going to take Michigan while falling short in New Mexico. That would result in a 282-256 electoral margin for McCain on November 4th.

(For political junkies or those of you who may casually follow the electoral process, make a daily habit of viewing <http://www.realclearpolitics.com/> for comprehensive political coverage.)

- Paul T. Graham





50th Anniversary Celebration - Alabama Chapter of HFMA

"The annual recurrence of a date marking a notable event" is how the Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines anniversary. The Alabama Chapter of the Healthcare Financial Management Association is turning fifty years old, a notable event. Since 1959, the year it was founded, the Alabama Chapter of HFMA has provided its members with quality healthcare educational information. On April 22, 2009 the Alabama Chapter of HFMA (then known as American Association of Hospital Accountants) will turn the "golden" age of fifty, a notable event that is worthy of celebration.

We are privileged to have the opportunity to celebrate the remarkable contributions that the Alabama Chapter of HFMA has made over the past 50 years to the healthcare industry. The economy has impacted healthcare but our Chapter has been proactive in meeting these challenges. Today the Chapter has over 500 healthcare professional members. Educational workshops are now conducted statewide. Seminars and meetings are held to provide our members information about the latest financial regulatory or industry changes in healthcare.

In 1964 the Bama Chatter was created and declared the official newsletter for the chapter. The first membership handbook was distributed in 1968. By 1971 the chapter had over two hundred members and the Annual Institute began in Gulf Shores, Alabama. The American Association of Hospital Accountants name was changed to Healthcare Financial Management Association in 1982. This name change was to recognize that health care finance also included billers, collectors and other financial professionals employed by the healthcare industry. In the eighties, the chapter began to make its mark as a prominent resource for hospital financial professionals through the strategic planning of healthcare institutes and programs i.e. the Dixie, Fall, Spring, and Annual Institutes, Patient Financial Service Road Shows, Accounting Workshops, and Compliance Forum.

To get a more detail report of our chapter's history, go to:

<http://www.alabamahfma.org/AlabamaHFMA/History.asp>

The success of our chapter is due to the commitment of its volunteers and the employers that allow them to volunteer. This 50th anniversary is an event where everyone can come together to celebrate the contributions made then, now and in the future. In upcoming chapter events, a videographer will be present to capture memorable moments, conversations and interviews. Past-presidents and others will be interviewed for making a 50th anniversary video that will be featured during the anniversary celebration at the June 2009 Annual Institute in Destin Florida.

Take a look at the listing of missing past-presidents. We have contact information for all the past-presidents except the ones listed below. Please take a few minutes to review the listing and let us know if you know how to contact them and/or a relative/friend. If you have contact information for any of them, please email it to Johnathan.Bedell@stvhs.com or Yolanda.Rich@stvhs.com. Also, if you want to send old pictures, early versions of the Bama Chatter and/or any other memorabilia, please email them to one of the addresses above or mail to Yolanda Rich at St. Vincent's Health System, 1700 Galleria Tower, Suite 1700, Birmingham, Al 35244. THANK YOU!!!!

**-Yolanda Rich, FHFMA
50th Anniversary Committee Chair**

Name	Year Served	Name	Year Served
Kyser Cox	1959-60	James H. Ford, Jr.	1975-76
Fred Hansen	1960-61	Eunice D. Bayer	1976-77
Milton Booth	1961-62	Jacqueline M. Smith	1977-79
Don Wallace	1962-63	Joseph L. Harris	1979-80
Elizabeth Smith	1963-64	George H. Wallace	1979-80
Dan Childress	1964-65	G. Marc Neas	1981-82
Joe Greene	1965-66	James E. Rowell	1982-83
Frank Wells	1966-67	Derrell O. Fancher	1983-84
Elmo Elrod	1967-68	Timothy J. Thornton	1984-85
Nellie Faye Whitmire	1968-69	Charles E. Simon	1985-86
Will R. Wakefield	1969-70	Dennis T. Bynum	1986-87
Alex M. Smith, Jr.	1970-71	Steve F. Saylor	1987-88
James D. Powell, Jr.	1971-72	Thomas M. Hales	1990-91
Patricia M. Lewis	1972-73	Beverly A. Floyd	1991-92
Ken Stanton	1973-74	LaVonda B. Keel	1993-94
Woodford W. King	1974-75	Kenneth C. Robinson	1994-95
		Kathy B. Martin	1998-99

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Celebrate Mardi Gras with Region V Dixie

February 17 - 20, 2009

Renaissance Riverview Plaza Hotel
Mobile, AL

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healthcare financial management association

Jammin' at the Dixie

<http://hfmadixie.org> Online Registration begins August 1st, 2008.

The Renaissance Riverview Plaza, located in downtown Mobile, has reserved a block of rooms for the Healthcare Financial Management Association for the dates of Monday, February 16, through Friday, February 20, at a rate of \$150.00 (plus tax) per night, single and double occupancy. Current lodging taxes are 14%. Reservations may be by phone or internet through Marriott. Marriott Reservations can be reached at 800-922-3298, just ask for HFMA or Healthcare Financial Management. Reservations can be made online at www.marriott.com - just find Mobile, AL, using the city search, choose the Renaissance Riverview Plaza; then place the group code of "hfmfma" in the box indicated. The site will guide you from there.



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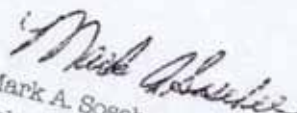
A Testimonial To Our Professional Collection Staff:

July 22, 2007

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Here is one for the record books. I wanted to thank you for your honest and sincerity in the manner you used in collecting my past due account. A collection agency that was not only kind but honest as well. Dealing with people such as myself want to do the best the other side of the spectrum such as yourselves makes people on they can do in repaying their past due debts. You will never know how much you keeping your word meant to me and especially my future. This past due debt was not one that I just didn't want to pay, it was due to losing disability benefits and then fighting for a year to regain them. This is exactly what I did. Now thanks to your understanding and honesty I am now able to get my life back on track and buy that first home I have always wanted. If you ever need a recommendation feel free to use me.

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HEALTHCARE REFORM IS COMING - ANI 2008

Political insiders James Carville and Mary Matalin agree that healthcare reform is coming--and that the need for reform is so critical that it will be a major issue in the presidential campaign.

How can two people, James Carville and Mary Matalin, who are such polar opposites politically, be happily married to each other? It's a question that puzzled many of those in attendance at the Annual National Institute (ANI) keynote presentation by political insiders James Carville and Mary Matalin.

Matalin is one of the most popular conservative voices in America, and has served presidents Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, and George W. Bush. James Carville, a Democrat, is a colorful political consultant and strategist, and has managed more political campaigns than anyone in U.S. history, most famously as chief strategist for the 1992 Clinton/Gore presidential campaign.

One might think it would be impossible for two people whose political beliefs are so distinctly different--"He watches the 'Clintonista Network,' I watch the fair and balanced FOX (News) Network," Matalin quips--to live together in harmony, let alone parent two young girls together. The two are so passionate about politics that they have separate television viewing rooms, where Matalin once heard comedian Dennis Miller, a Republican, describe her husband as "yipping away like some Satanic Chihuahua under a strobe light." "That's my man," she said with a grimace after sharing the anecdote with ANI attendees.

But as Carville says, "I'd rather be married to someone with passion than someone without passion who just agrees with what I believe." And if there's one thing they can agree upon in regard to politics, it's this: This year's presidential campaign is unprecedented. Never before have an African-American man, a man over the age of 70, and a woman been top contenders for their parties' presidential nominations. Never before has a presidential primary continued to be fought as late as May in an election year. "We are exhilarated, as most of the nation is, by this particular cycle," Matalin says. "We've never seen this before."

"We're already blowing the hinges off of things that we thought were there," Carville says. "You have remarkable things that are happening here." Sen. Barack Obama, the presumptive Democratic candidate, has had 1.5 million people contribute to his campaign;

"Entire cycles have not had a million and a half contributors," Carville says.

They also agree that healthcare reform is coming--and that the need for reform is so critical that it will be a major issue in the presidential campaign. It's not a matter of whether the healthcare system will change; it's a matter of how it will change, Carville says.

"The healthcare system today is not a lot different than it was eight years ago. I promise you the healthcare system in 2016 will look different than it does in 2008," Carville told the crowd of healthcare finance professionals at ANI. "You had better be on the vanguard of the case.

"Whether you're a Democrat or a Republican, you know I'm right when I say change is coming, and it's gonna be big," he said. Healthcare finance professionals need to be involved in the debate, he told ANI attendees.

The two listened to Richard J. Umbdenstock, president and CEO for the American Hospital Association, speak to ANI attendees on the need to redirect and reinvent our nation's healthcare system. "That was by far the best framing up of a critical issue that I think either of us have heard on the campaign trail," Matalin said afterward. People have a better understanding of the need for healthcare reform than they did in the 1990s, when Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, then First Lady, initiated national discussions on this issue.

Sen. John McCain, the presumptive Republican candidate, and Sen. Obama are currently in a holding pattern in this post-primary phase of the campaign, and must now do two things: define their opposition, and better define themselves to the American people. "We've played a half-inning of baseball so far, if that," Carville says.

Both McCain and Obama must develop more detailed proposals of how they would address the top challenges facing the country, including voters' concerns about the cost of health care and health insurance, and the quality of care provided. As the national party conventions draw closer, more substantive information on the candidates' proposals for addressing such issues will begin to emerge. "People are going to demand that," he says.

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-Libby Bailey, CPA
VP Membership
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ADVANCED TELECOMMUNICATIONS CAN CHANGE YOUR FACILITY'S TELECOM USAGE

"The U.S. healthcare industry is expected to spend \$55 billion on telecommunications over the next five years," according to a study released Friday by Insight Research Corporation. "The use of telecommunications by healthcare providers will grow at a compounded rate of 8.4 percent, from \$7.5 billion this year to \$11.3 billion in 2013.

Your hospital's telecom and networking charges are predicted to consume an even larger part of your future budgets. A lot of hospitals ignore their telecom expenses and take the, "Oh well, what can one do?" approach. Many times someone in a hospital is assigned the task but something else with a higher priority comes along and the telecom file gets shelved.

If your hospital has a separate line for each employee and it comes from the telephone company's central office, you are Centrex-based. Any hospital or clinic with more than 15 employees, each with their own line, can save money. Instead of having individual lines for everybody, you can have what is called a ISDN-PRI , or Primary Rate Interface. It is a protocol designed to allow digital transmission of voice and data over ordinary telephone copper wires, resulting in better quality and higher speeds than available with analog systems. There are two advantages to this technology. One is that a single channel can support four or five phones, thereby, cutting down significantly on the number of lines needed. Clair Callaghan, owner of CableTec Communications Systems says, "PRIs permit direct inward dialing (your own number) and caller line ID without requiring individual lines for everyone. It can be a tremendous way to save on costs."

It's based on the fact that not everybody is on the phone at once. It's just a matter of getting the ratio right based on usage so you never get a busy signal.

The other advantage is that there are many more features that can be utilized without having to pay extra for each one.

Reference: Telemedicine: A Guide to Assessing Telecommunications for Health Care (1996) Institute of Medicine (IOM)

Healthcare IT News By Diana Manos, Senior Editor 06/02/08

- **Steven M. Zimmerman Ph.D.,
John Ottolino, ABCP and
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WILL "THE BIGGEST LOSER" STAY A WINNER?

An Important Question. How do you make significant changes in your life so you can achieve your goals and dreams? Answer: Know what you want, plan how to get it, take stepwise action and keep going until it's done.

This glib answer makes setting and achieving goals sound so easy, doesn't it? And yet, let's be honest, making changes to your behavior so you can achieve your dreams is tough, really tough. Fact is, if you have a track record in any area, it's highly likely you'll continue down the same road; think "credit scores". This week marked the end of another season of "The Biggest Loser". What is the likelihood that the winners will keep their weight off? Frankly, it's not good. The first season's winner-Ryan Benson-has gained most of the weight he lost and is back to 300 lbs. After all, we set these goals for ourselves. Why is it so damn difficult to achieve them? Over the next few Perspective Power messages, I'm going to teach you how to overcome the powerful psychological forces that cripple most people's attempts at achieving their goals. In truth, your brain is chock full of mental quirks ready to drag you back into your old habits whenever you try and change.

The Three Steps

There are three core steps to achieving your goals:

1. Define your journey
2. Plan your approach
3. Pull the trigger

Over the next three weeks, we're going to look at each of these steps in turn...

Step 1: Define Your Journey

I recently had the pleasure of giving a series of workshops for the pre-sales force at a major corporation on how to give a dynamic presentation. One of the core teaching points was the need

for absolute clarity around their objective on the platform.

How were their prospects currently thinking, feeling and acting.

(Perspective A)

And, how did they want their prospects to think, feel and act after their sales presentation.

(Perspective B)

Once these salespeople clearly defined the journey they wanted to take their prospects on-from Perspective A to Perspective B-delivering an engaging and persuasive sales presentation became much easier.

In exactly the same way, if you want to achieve a goal, you must define your journey. You must have crystal clear answers to two core questions:

Question #1: Where are you now?

(Situation A)

Be honest! Compared to this time last year, how much happier, more successful and fulfilled are you? What bad habits have you changed in the last twelve months? Do you even think about reaching for the sky any more? Or have you simply given up on your goals and dreams? If thinking about your current circumstances makes you feel bad, don't beat yourself up, simply take responsibility-full responsibility-for the choices that got you to where you are now; and get ready to move forward.

Question #2: Where do you want to be? (Situation B)

Before you begin a project, you must have 100% clarity around your desired outcome. Here are some things to ponder:

- What are you truly passionate about? When you burn with enthusiasm and excitement, what's on your mind? It might be creating software, singing or NASCAR. Do you love working with children? What sets your



Steve Bedwell, MD

"passion pulse" racing? (Thank you Marcia Wieder!)

- What might your unique contribution be? What are you really great at doing? What have you always gotten compliments for? In what ways did you excel at college?
- How does your goal serve those around you? We're not talking "Mother Teresa" or "Gandhi" here. Rather, how could what you're really great at benefit other people?

In summary: Your objective is to define the journey-from "Situation A" to "Situation B"-that would most enable you to passionately express your uniqueness in the service of other people. It's this excitement for your chosen path and sense of purpose that will drive you to continue making the effort and changes you need en route to achievement.

Prime Your Brain

Here's where most people make their first mistake, they never clearly define their journey. And, as a result, fail to prime their brain for success; a critical element to achieving your goals and dreams.

When you prime a pump, you set it up for immediate use. In a similar way, when you clearly define your journey-from "Situation A" to "Situation B"-you

prime your brain to spot opportunities, insights and solutions that will help you achieve your goal.

Unfortunately, if you don't define your journey, your brain doesn't get primed and you're likely to overlook the clues that would move you towards your objective.

In the context of goal-setting, here's how you prime your brain:

Step 1: Write down specific answers to the question: Where am I now? (Situation A)

Step 2: Write down specific answers to the question: Where do I want to be? (Situation B)

Step 3: Mull over your answers, define your journey and commit your plan to paper.

Cognitive Dissonance

In England, as passengers board a subway train, they hear the announcement: "mind the gap". This is a warning not to step into the space between the edge of the platform and the subway car. The warning is equally relevant when you set yourself a goal.

When you think about the gap between where you are today (**Situation A**) and where you'd like to be (**Situation B**), you should start to feel uncomfortable. The bigger the gap between Situations A and B, the more dissatisfaction you'll feel with your current circumstances. This discomfort, which results from holding two conflicting thoughts at the same time, is called cognitive dissonance.

Close The Gap

In order to resolve your discomfort, your brain will try to close the gap between Situations A and B. One way to close the gap is to give up; generally accompanied by a flurry of rationalizations and excuses. "I don't have the right computer program," "I'll do it tomorrow," etc. The other way to

relieve dissonance and close the gap is by taking aim at your goal.

What determines which option you'll choose? Answer: The size of the gap between your current situation and goal, relative to your confidence that you can attain your goal.

This is another common mistake that people make when goal setting. They assume in a motivational, self-help kind of way that the bigger their dream (i.e. the bigger the gap between Situations A and B), the more likely they are to achieve it.

Shooting for the stars will certainly increase your cognitive dissonance and hence your discomfort. Unfortunately, if you ramp up your discomfort too far beyond your level of confidence then the odds of succeeding tend towards zero.

Here's a better approach: Aim for as big a gap between Situations A and B as you can while, at the same time, keeping it believable; for you. I call this approach "The Goldilocks Strategy"...

The Goldilocks Strategy

Remember in the fairy story 'Goldilocks and The Three bears' when she first discovers the bowls of porridge and the beds

In both cases, one option was too small, one too big and the third...just right.? ?With respect to the journey you've defined for yourself, if the gap between Situations A and B is...?

(a) Too small: You won't experience any cognitive dissonance and therefore won't have any motivation to change your behavior; you're simply not reaching high enough.

(b) Too big: You won't be totally convinced you can attain your goal. ?

(c) Just Right: Chart a campaign which you feel confident that, with focused persistence, you can win. A

journey that will certainly be difficult and inspire you to greater performance but, nonetheless, absolutely believable for you.

For example, let's say your goal is to write a novel...

- You might believe you can complete your novel, find a literary agent and convince a major New York publishing house to publish it. Great! Make that your goal, it's just right!

- If, instead, you skipped the novel and committed to writing regularly in your journal, that would be setting your sights way too low.

- But don't make your goal getting to #1 on the 'New York Times' Bestseller List unless you truly believe you can do it. If you are not truly convinced in your soul that you're up to the task then, for you, the goal is too big.

To be clear, I'm not saying you couldn't get on a bestseller list or that you should settle for less than your dream. I am saying that, at this point in time, your goal should be something that's you find believable. Something you can wrap your head around and clearly visualize yourself achieving.

So, if you want to use the psychological power of cognitive dissonance to your advantage, ask yourself: Is my dream too small, too big or just right?

In Summary

There are three steps to achieving a goal. (1) Define Your Journey. (2) Plan Your Approach. (3) Pull The Trigger.? ?Today, we talked about how to define a believable journey that primes your brain. Once you have clarity around your journey you can plan your approach, the second step towards achieving your dreams, hopes and desires...

- Steven Bedwell, MD

Dr. Steve Bedwell is the creator of Perspective Power™. He teaches business audiences how to sharpen their thinking, dilute toxic emotions and take effective action. Find out more: 800-542-9930 or <http://www.stevebedwell.com>



CHANGE IS IN THE AIR

During World War II, Albert E. Bowen wrote a book compiled from a series of radio addresses, which he entitled *Constancy Amid Change* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1944). They were a world in conflict, and people the world over needed a message of certainty, assurance, and stability. Sixty-five years later, we are still a world in which many people need, or want, a message of certainty, assurance, and stability. The issues have different covers, the concerns are modernized, but they still stem from the same basic concern: CHANGE.

Several years ago, there was a Disney movie called the *Lion King*. I got the CD for the sound track because of one of the songs from the movie that was entitled "Hakuna Matata." The first two stanzas of the lyrics say:

Hakuna Matata!
What a wonderful phrase
Hakuna Matata!
Ain't no passing craze

It means no worries
For the rest of your days
It's our problem-free philosophy
Hakuna Matata!



**Jeff Burkhardt,
Ph.D., FHFMA**

How many of you live in a world of no worries? If you do, enjoy your world of fantasy. From what I see, we are all in a world of change. Change inevitably means worries. Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that some change is bad and oftentimes needed, but it does cause disruption of the status quo and to our comfort zones.

The theme for this newsletter is change. We are in an election year, with a new president to be elected in November. Campaign promises are being made (again) to reform the U.S. health care system, so no matter who is elected, we can expect change, or at least talk of change. Reimbursement rates are continually being changed, (usually downward), staffing changes are always an issue, and new technology brings rapid change.

In the world of healthcare, change is an inevitable part of day-to-day operations. As new students enter our Masters degree program in Health Administration, one of the attractions to health administration is that there is so much change, that each day is different. No two days are the same, and there is some excitement to that. I find that it attracts people to the health care field. On the other hand, it is what drives others away. Whichever it does, change is the one constancy on which we can depend. Curse it, or praise it, but in the end, live with it and learn from it. It's what makes this job so rewarding.

**- Jeff Burkhardt
Editor**

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The Bama Chatter supports the mission of the Alabama Chapter by serving as a key resource for individuals involved or interested in the financial management of health care.

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The Bama Chatter is the official publication of the Alabama Chapter of HFMA and is written and edited principally to provide members with information regarding Chapter and national activities, current and useful news of both national and local significance, information about seminars and conferences and networking with colleagues, and to serve as a forum for the exchange of ideas and information.

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