August 19, 2015

Dear Maureen,

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Leadership Insights

By Suzanne F. Kaplan

Kevin Robins
CEO, MidAtlantic Employers’ Association

"Work Hard and Have Fun"
Four years ago, Kevin Robins was brought in as CEO to ramp up the growth trajectory of the then somewhat sleepy
MidAtlantic Employers’ Association (MEA). And ramp it up he has.

Now consistently achieving a 12-16% annual revenue growth, last year MEA saw 95 new members join with a 91% retention rate, rather than the usual 40-50 new members. Robins’ goal is to add 120 new members yearly, maintaining 91% retention.

Partnering with almost 500 organizations in PA, NJ, DE and MD, MEA is a membership association delivering a complete array of high quality Human Resource services to help members attract, retain and motivate their workforce. Members, typically with 25-500 employees, can stay focused on their core business operations while relying on a trusted resource to supply up-to-date training, compensation and benefits, compliance and other HR needs.

Core Values Can’t Be Missed
As seen in the accompanying photo, MEA's core values are not printed on a framed piece of paper mounted on a wall - they are painted in large letters ON a wall. “Work hard and have fun” is one of the five values, and the high-energy Robins lives the value.

When I first met Robins, it was obvious how much he loves his work. Work is not a chore, and he leads the charge to work hard while having fun. He believes in hiring responsible people and holding them to high standards, but never babysitting. That philosophy goes back to a summer job as a housepainter. He preferred working really hard and getting done early. He sees no value in dragging out a job to look busy, and says, "If it's not fun, find something else to do.”

Find Something Better
"Find something you can do better than your client and become a trusted advisor for that role" is another of his ingrained philosophies. The entrepreneurial Robins learned that relationship-building model while working at SEI Investments - first as General Counsel but honed as the developer of the SEI Wealth Network unit - which he led when it was created in 2000. As “trusted advisors,” MEA leadership meets with every member organization at least once a year to stay in tune with their needs and be the
trusted workforce adviser members call when needing quality services and "Wow" experiences at a fair price.

Since he so clearly sees the business world as relationship driven, his conversations with other executives about the challenges of onboarding new employees, particularly Millennials, led him to research and write an article on the Top 10 Success Skills that contribute to the success of any employee entering the workforce. Identifying "interpersonal skills" as #1 in communicating and building relationships, he believes in coaching younger employees so they gain needed skills. He calls it unfair to expect young employees who grew up texting and interacting virtually to know how to interact and be comfortable in business situations requiring strong interpersonal skills.

**Keep the Momentum Going**
As a leader, he is always looking at how needs change so he and his organization help Members stay ahead. He models two other values written on that MEA wall - Learn and Grow and Be Creative. It looks as though he is going to stay ahead of the competition.

*Suzanne F. Kaplan, President of Talent Balance, is a generational consultant, speaker, writer and GPSEG colleague. In Leadership Insights, she interviews and writes about outstanding leaders to share their stories and experiences. Although we’ve all probably read some of the thousands of publications on leadership, it’s the personal insights that Suzanne will be capturing for our benefit.*

*We welcome your comments and suggestions of other CEOs and leaders, including those not well known to GPSEG, whom you would like to see featured in future columns.*

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**Why You Should Sign Up to Be A GPSEG Guide**
GPSEG Guides are matched with new members to provide guidance on how to get the most from their memberships and support the engagement and networking of our new members. Guides recently met to celebrate two successful years of this program and reported that they gained new friendships, enjoyed the networking, and in some cases found new business opportunities. Benefits of being a Guide can include:
• Meeting new members and developing new friends and colleagues
• Becoming recognized as a GPSEG leader
• Expanding their networks among their fellow Guides as well as with members
• Giving back to GPSEG by providing valuable engagement opportunities to others

Ready to Guide? Contact Barbara Taylor to sign up.

Easier Access to Causeway from the GPSEG Home Page

We've now added a quick link to Causeway on the upper right hand corner of the Home Page at www.gpseg.org next to the quick link to the GPSEG LinkedIn group. Causeway is GPSEG’s host system for our email lists for our committees, subgroups and all the lists such as members, general networking, friends, etc.

If you attempt to log in at https://members.gpseg.org and receive an error message that you still need to activate your account, click on the "forgot your password" link on the log in page, put in your email address, and hit the button to "resend activation email." Once you receive the email, follow the instructions to activate your account. Be certain you are using the email account associated with your GPSEG lists, or the system will not recognize your address. Once you have activated your account, set your list subscriptions, join any lists you are not yet part of that are open/unrestricted, and you should be able to post messages and manage your subscriptions.

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