



Editor's notes:

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Have you lost the fire and passion that fueled you when you first began your career? Here's how to regain your enthusiasm and start moving forward again:

◆ **Compare and contrast** -- Start with this simple sentence and fill in the blanks: "In my life, I was . . . and now I . . ." You'll find the answers to be very enlightening, whatever they are.

◆ **Reflect on the past** -- Draw up a timeline from the very beginning of your childhood and figure out when you were happiest and what got you down the most. It leads to a better understanding of yourself.

◆ **Find your guideposts** -- List five or six principles that guide you in life, and decide whether they are values you truly live by or ideas you merely talk about.

◆ **Fantasize** -- Try writing a page or two on what you would like to do with the rest of your life. Or list things you would like to do before you die. Don't worry about practicalities or priorities. Just create that dream list.

◆ **Make it real** -- Record your thoughts, feelings, and hopes on a recorder. Or tell them to a trusted friend. That way, there's somebody to witness it and hear you out, and you'll feel responsible for making some changes.

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The name "September" comes from the Latin words for seven (septem) and month (membrum), thus the "seventh month." Although September is the ninth month according to the present Gregorian calendar, it was the seventh month in the Roman calendar.

Rosh Hashanah, September 8 (at sundown) -- The Jewish New Year begins at sundown on this day. Over the next two days, Jews around the world will celebrate this "first of the year." The new year, which celebrates the creation of the world, is a time for reflection, when people think about their past mistakes and plan changes for the coming year. One important part of the holiday is going to synagogue and hearing the sound of the shofar, a ram's horn. This ancient musical instrument, which was used to announce important events in Biblical times, is blown 100 times each day of Rosh Hashanah.

Start of Autumn, September 23 -- Even though it occurs on an equinox (a term that means day and night are equal), there are slightly more than 12 hours of daylight on this day because of slight deviations in the sun's light. Rays are bent as they pass through the earth's atmosphere so that we actually see the sun just before it rises and also after it sets.

Five Business Basics Every Employee Should Understand

Whatever industry you're in, your workforce needs to have a solid understanding of how you make enough money to stay in operation. Whenever you have the opportunity, remind your employees of the importance of these five factors:

People -- Mediocre organizations hire mediocre people and accept mediocre performance. Let your workers know that you're committed to hiring only the best, and that you expect their best efforts. Back that up by treating them right.

Productivity -- How you get things done can be as important as what you ultimately accomplish. Train your people to keep their eyes open to inefficiency and waste. Encourage them to improve their skills and offer ideas as often as possible.

Customers -- Even if you're a nonprofit organization, you still have users of some type to satisfy. Emphasize the importance of keeping your audience happy with your organization.

Quality -- Whatever your organization provides to people should be clearly superior to what they can get from a competitor. Even if you're cheaper, in the long run customers will go elsewhere for reliable products and services.

Sales -- "Sales" is a flexible concept and applies to both profit-making firms and nonprofit agencies. If nobody uses what you provide, you'll go out of business before too long. Let everyone know how important sales are to the organization, and show employees how what they do contributes to sales -- suggesting additional products, for example, or going the extra mile to complete a project on time.

The Helix Messenger Newsletter turns 25 years old this month!

Do you notice anything different about this issue of the Helix Courier Limited *Messenger Newsletter*? We have introduced a new masthead but are otherwise keeping the Messenger pretty much the same. Why tamper with success?

For several months, we will be publishing two issues of *The Messenger* every month: one for the current month and one with a retrospective view at the period between 1985 to 2010. Sometimes, looking back at where we've been is educational. Sometimes it helps us relive the 'good' of the 'good old days'. Sometimes it helps us realize that many things have changed for the better over time.

Night shift: Stay awake and safe

Staying awake is a challenge for millions of workers on the night shift—nurses, air traffic controllers, law-enforcement officers, and the like. According to *The New York Times*, recent research indicates that such approaches as light therapy, melatonin, and prescription medications aren't as effective as a simple cup of coffee.

In an article published in *The Cochrane Library*, researchers analyzed data from 13 earlier studies that compared the effects of caffeine with naps and placebos, and determined that caffeine was more successful at decreasing errors and improving performance in activities that involved attention, memory, and decision-making. But don't down the coffee pot in one swig: A Harvard Medical School study found that caffeine is most effective when workers use it in small doses and spread them out over a long period of time.

Try eating nuts to lower cholesterol

Fighting high cholesterol isn't always about completely cutting out the foods you like. For example, a recent study has determined that daily intake of 2.4 ounces of nuts, including almonds, hazelnuts, pecans, pistachios, walnuts, macadamia nuts, and peanuts, can improve blood cholesterol levels and reduce the risk of heart disease.

Scientists at Loma Linda University in California looked at data collected by 25 other research projects on nut consumption in seven different countries. They found that eating the equivalent of two-and-a-half small bags of nuts helps reduce both overall cholesterol levels and levels of LDL (or "bad") cholesterol, as well as improving the total ratio of cholesterol to the patient's HDL (or "good") cholesterol levels.

Do these factors add up to billions?

Are you destined to become a billionaire? Forbes magazine conducted an informal, unscientific analysis of its list of self-made billionaires and noted a few common denominators.

Math skills -- A lot of the world's wealthiest people show a high aptitude for math. Many of their parents had math-related careers such as engineering or accounting.

Birthdate -- More billionaires were born in the fall than in any other season. September was the most common month of birth for the 380 self-made American billionaires who appeared on the Forbes list in the past three years. What does this mean? Nobody knows. Maybe it's the magic of mistletoe.

College -- Higher education isn't necessarily a requirement for vast wealth. Of the 292 Horatio Algers on Forbes' list, 20 percent either didn't complete college or never bothered with it in the first place.

Failure -- Forbes notes that several of the billionaires on its list failed to score on their first attempt. Some of their first attempts at business were disastrous -- but they learned from their failures and now view them as a necessary step to their eventual success.

Stop that twitching eye

It can happen at any moment. Suddenly, without warning, your eye begins to twitch, as if it's doing a little dance. What the heck is going on?

Allergies, stress, fatigue, and even certain medications can irritate nerve endings in the eye, causing muscles in the eyelid to twitch. It can last a few minutes, or a couple of days, but in some cases it can go on for as long as a month.

Here's a cure if you're getting tired of all the twitching: Simply hold down the upper eyelid with your finger for one minute. For more stubborn twitches, apply a warm compress for five minutes up to three times a day, for two straight days. If this fails, and it really starts to get to you, consult a physician

Microbial life on Mars?

Mars may not be home to four-armed green warrior giants or octopus-like creatures intent on invasion, but it could support simple forms of microbial life, according to scientists. A methane-eating bacterium discovered in the extreme northern reaches of Canada is one example of the type of life we might someday find on the Red Planet.

The bacteria survives in the Lost Hammer spring, where the water is so salty it doesn't freeze even at subzero temperatures. As probes have discovered both methane and frozen water on Mars, similar bacteria could be waiting in gullies that might contain springs like the Lost Hammer.

Mars is a cold, inhospitable environment, but in some areas it's actually warmer than the Lost Hammer, making it more conducive to the development of microscopic life.

Some more interesting September dates:

Talk Like a Pirate Day, September 19 -- Avast, ye bilge rat! Drink some grog and dance a hornpipe, or else yer a lowly lubber!

Yom Kippur, September 18 -- Jews observe this Day of Atonement in fasting, repentance, and seeking forgiveness.

Harvest Moon, September 22/23 -- This is the full moon that is nearest the autumnal equinox which falls on September 23 this year. The Harvest Moon is unique in that it rises for several days near sunset and is often a brilliant orange colour when on the horizon.

Quotable Quotes

A society that gets rid of all its troublemakers goes downhill.
-- Robert A. Heinlein

Not being able to govern events, I govern myself.
-- Michel de Montaigne

Education is a state-controlled manufactory of echoes.
-- Norman Douglas

America believes in education: the average professor earns more money in a year than a professional athlete earns in a whole week.
-- Evan Esar