

## **For Immediate Release**

For a review copy of the book  
or an interview with the author,  
please contact Dottie DeHart,  
Rocks-DeHart Public Relations,  
at (828) 459-9637 or DSDeHart@aol.com

### **Building an Emotional Bank Account with Your Employees: Eight Ways Leaders Can Save for a Rainy Day**

*Put in enough “deposits” and the inevitable “withdrawals” won’t break the bank.  
Quint Studer explains how to open—and regularly add to—your emotional bank account.*

**Gulf Breeze, FL** (January 2006)—Leaders, do your employees say communication could be better? Would they like more input into corporate decisions? Do they wish their contributions were more appreciated? If so, consider focusing more attention on what Quint Studer, CEO of Studer Group, calls “building an emotional bank account” with your employees. Not only is it the right thing to do, it’s good insurance for the future. Eventually, your employees *will* feel let down—so you must ensure there’s enough emotional capital in the account for that metaphorical rainy day.

“Most leaders truly want to do the right thing,” asserts Studer, author of *Hardwiring Excellence: Purpose, Worthwhile Work, Making a Difference* (Fire Starter Publishing, 2004, ISBN: 0-9749986-0-5, \$28.00). “They want positive, productive, trust-based relationships with their people. But let’s face it: perfection doesn’t exist in leaders or in companies. You put in enough ‘deposits’ so that when the inevitable ‘withdrawals’ are made—let’s say you forget to say *thank you* or you have to institute pay cuts—there’s enough goodwill in the account to salvage those relationships.”

Withdrawals, Studer points out, are usually weightier than deposits—so great leaders do everything they can to make more of the latter. For instance:

- **Diagnose employee satisfaction—and act on the results.** Use a proven, respected assessment tool to figure out where your problems lie. Then, commit to solving them. “One of the biggest issues we see in our work with clients is that people say, ‘Well, they measured our satisfaction but nobody responded to what we said,’” says Studer. “We advise organizations to be open about the results and have everyone to vote on the top three issues. Eventually, you should address them all, but start with the top three.”

- **Harvest best practices.** If assessments reveal that a high number of employees cite “poor communication” as a problem, dig deeper. You may find that one department manager got great communication scores. Find out what she is doing right and reward her. Then, work to apply her communication practices throughout the organization. “Your company doesn’t really have a problem with *poor* communication, just *inconsistent* communication,” says Studer. “Take what people are doing right and expand it. It’s much more effective than trying to start from scratch—and it builds goodwill.”

- **Announce that you’re making changes. Accept skepticism, but not cynicism.** “Tell employees *specifically* what you are going to fix,” says Studer. “Naturally, they will be skeptical. You can even tell them that skepticism is fine, even expected, but ask that they try not to be cynical. If they start rolling their eyes and say, ‘Oh, we’ve heard all that before,’ tell them, ‘Look, you can be part of the problem or you can be open to change and see good things start to happen.’”

- **Go for “quick wins” to establish credibility.** A quick win is an action that shows employees you really *are* committed to meeting their needs. If you are trying to establish an environment of fairness, for instance, don’t “pull rank” as a senior leader and cut in line. Don’t insist on having the parking spot nearest the door. (Not only will it send a signal that you’re no more important than anyone else, the longer parking lot trek gives you the opportunity to talk to employees and stay on top of what’s going on in your company.) Perhaps your quick win might take the form of getting a department a piece of equipment that employees have requested for years, or finally dealing with a low performer who’s been dragging everyone down.

Sometimes you won’t know what your quick win is until the moment it presents itself. And seemingly small gestures can have a big impact. In *Hardwiring Excellence*, Studer tells a story about his first day as administrator at a new hospital. He asked a nurse how he could make her job better, and she said she was frightened walking to her car at night because of the tall bushes by the parking lot. While she worked that day, Studer got the bushes trimmed and put up a small fence. It made the nurse feel safe and, more to the point, valued as an employee and as a person.

- **“Round” relentlessly.** Studer is a huge proponent of leadership “rounding,” a process similar to the one doctors use to check on their patients. In the business world, a CEO, VP, or department manager “makes the rounds” daily to check on the status of his or her employees. “Basically, you take an hour a day to touch base with employees, make a personal connection, recognize successes, find out what’s going well, and determine what improvements can be made,” says Studer. “And of course, you fix any problems that come up. Rounding is the heart and soul of building the emotional bank account, because it shows employees day in and day out that you care.”

- **Get rid of low performers.** Make no mistake: your employees don’t want to work with low performers. Nothing makes employees as discouraged and resentful as having to co-exist with people who don’t pull their own weight. In fact, low performers usually drive

high performers right out the door. “Turning a blind eye to these people quickly drains the emotional bank account you’re trying to build up with your good employees,” says Studer. “However hard it may seem, you *must* move these people up or out.”

- **Avoid creating a “We/They” culture.** The temptation to get on your employees’ good side by saying (for instance), “Well, I fought for the budget increase but this is all I could get,” can be huge. It may feel easier or more comfortable at the moment, but ultimately you’re dividing the staff instead of uniting them. Of course, few leaders deliberately foster a “We/They” mentality, but it can be easy to do subconsciously. “Interestingly, the other side of the coin—‘I know you’ve begged for more money for years and here I took care of it in one afternoon!’—can be equally divisive,” adds Studer. “When you solve a big problem overnight, you might be undermining mid-level supervisors who’ve been working on a problem for a long time. Don’t walk around and perform magic.”

- **Be open and truthful with your employees, no matter how difficult it may be.** “Let’s say you know that part of your organization is going to be outsourced in the next few months, or that there are going to be major cuts in benefits,” says Studer. “Even if it doesn’t directly affect your team, it certainly impacts them on an emotional level. Once the decision is final, you owe it to your employees to tell them. Don’t wait for them to read it in the paper. They will know that you knew all along—and a huge amount of trust will be lost.”

In the end, of course, trust is what building a healthy emotional bank account is all about, says Studer.

“When you’ve always been up front with your employees, and proven every day that you want what’s best for them, they’ll give you the benefit of the doubt when things don’t go their way,” he says. “They might not like it, and they may be angry. But they won’t feel betrayed to the point of leaving. They’ll realize that you’ve always treated them like adults, with respect and consideration. And that’s when you’ll truly see the value of the work you’ve been doing. That emotional capital you’ve invested will save the relationship—you’ll see that it’s the very foundation of a healthy company.”

###

### **About the Author:**

**Quint Studer**, a former hospital president and 20-year health care veteran, is founder and CEO of Studer Group,<sup>SM</sup> headquartered in Gulf Breeze, FL. An executive coaching firm and national learning lab, Studer Group is devoted to teaching tools and processes that organizations use to achieve sustained focus on Service and Operational Excellence. Partner organizations see clear results in the arenas of higher employee retention, greater customer satisfaction, healthy financials and growing market share, and improvements in various other quality indicators.

A nationally recognized health care management thought leader, Studer was named one of the “Top 100 Most Powerful People” by *Modern Healthcare*. Studer has devoted his professional career to helping health care organizations become world-class leaders in Service and Operational Excellence. He has contributed to features in *USA Today* and *Inc.* magazine, and has authored in-depth feature articles on consumerism, service excellence, organizational alignment, and communicating quality to major health care trade journals.

Studer’s 20-year career in health care management includes positions as COO of Holy Cross Hospital in Chicago and president of the Baptist Hospital, Inc. in Pensacola, FL. As a result of Studer’s leadership, Baptist Hospital was awarded the prestigious Quality Cup by *USA Today* and the Rochester Institute of Technology. Studer led both hospitals to the top 99 percentile in employee and patient satisfaction as compared to hospitals nationwide in an independent health care survey.

Quint received the HFMA’s Helen Yerger/L. Vann Seawall Best Article Award for 2003-2004. This award—given for his article titled “The Value of Employee Retention,” published in the January 2004 issue of *HFM*—honors outstanding contributions to professional literature in the field of health care financial management.

The author of the best-selling book *Hardwiring Excellence: Purpose, Worthwhile Work, Making a Difference* and the recently-released *101 Answers to Questions Leaders Ask*, Studer received B.A. and M.A. degrees in education from the University of Wisconsin, Whitewater. He has the honor of serving on the Board of Directors of the 32,000-member Healthcare Financial Management Association, a national professional organization of CFOs and finance executives in health care.

Quint’s new book, *Results That Last: Hardwiring Behaviors That Will Take Your Company to the Top*, will be published by John Wiley & Sons in 2006.

### **About the Book:**

*Hardwiring Excellence: Purpose, Worthwhile Work, Making a Difference* (Fire Starter Publishing, 2004, ISBN: 0-9749986-0-5, \$28.00) is available at bookstores nationwide, major online booksellers, or directly from the publisher by calling (866) 354-3473. Copies also can be purchased online through the Studer Group website at [www.studergroup.com](http://www.studergroup.com).