Florida Businesses: Where We Were, Are Now, and Should Be

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The big question about drug users is, what do they look like? Can we identify these folks? What do they look like? The observation, "They're absent, they're not doing this, they're not doing that..." is, in many cases, true. But they are not all absentee employees. Just two years ago, we had an individual who was an outstanding salesman who had broken all the records and brought in millions of dollars in new business to the company. He had two kids and one on the way, and was big-time positive with both cocaine and marijuana.

Many drug users, I suggest to you, are very much like novas. They become bright and brighter, and very, very bright; then they often explode.

We have to help a lot of people to understand what drug use looks like. There is only one true test to find out, the old Clairol test of "does she or doesn't she?" - only her hairdresser knows. We discovered this a long time ago, when we started drug testing. It simply tells you who does and who doesn't.

We really believed that we could make a difference. And in our company, which was an orange juice company at the time, we were bringing people in from all over the state of Florida. We asked Governor Bob Martinas to give us a couple hundred thousand dollars to fund the State Chamber of Commerce program and then, we thought, we'd fund local chambers and bring everybody in together. We'd literally franchise Florida, 200-some-odd chambers, and we would teach people how to start drug-free workplaces. We'd work with the EAPs and with law enforcement. We would show people, "By God, this is our state, we'll make a difference." We believed that we could. And we started.

Let me tell you a story. Once upon a time there was an orange juice company, it's called Tropicana. When we got started with our program, we met Dr. Mike Walsh. He said, "Sit down. Let me tell you what you're going to do, let me tell you how you're going to do it. You're going to put the study together this way, you and your guys are going to record everything over a period of time, and you're going to do it in a science-based way."

So we did, and here are the statistics, for whatever they're worth, for a series of years.
We won the governor's "Best of the State" and similar accolades. But that is neither here nor there. What was important was that OSHA recordable accidents were down 30 percent from our 1991 start, lost-time accidents went down 70 percent lost days down 67 percent, total accidents down 55 percent, and total labor hours up 1.3 percent.

One of our supervisors said, "Geez, you human resource people seem to harvest better people now. What's changed?" Well, nothing's changed. We're still making orange juice, still working seven days a week during harvest, still employing bout 3500 people, and so on.

We started our testing program because every Monday, my boss would read the newspaper, the *Bradenton Herald*, and he'd look down at Police Beat, and see all the people who had been arrested on theft charges. And he'd ask me, "Martin, all these people work for us, and what are you going to do about it?" Not a good way to start a Monday.

But today we're really clicking. Everybody in the company knows the message. Use drugs, you "die". Step forward, ask for help. We will invest in you to the extent that you invest in yourself. We will help you all the way through, pick up all your costs, do everything for you and your family, if you step forward. If we catch you, though, you're gone. And after a number of terminations, people started to believe that.

In looking at our medical costs, -- we've broken down for the employee, for the spouse, for the kids – we see that a number of interesting things happened.

It used to be common for kids to be treated for mental or stomach disorders, and after a while, when we got everything straightened out with the medical providers, these conditions were usually attributed to marijuana or cocaine use.

Today, even when the company is adding more employees, we are actually increasing benefits, etc., and the cost seems to be going down.

We put a sign on the door that said, "We do drug testing." People would walk up, see the sign, turn around, and would run into people coming in behind them. When we first started testing, about 25 percent of the people were testing positive. We hit what was called a black hole. We'd have "x" percent of people just disappear before testing. They were ready to be hired, all they had to do was walk 100 feet to the test -- then whisk, gone into the black hole!

Yes, it was rather aggressive. And as time went by, there seemed to be a relationship between everything that was going on. Contrary to the National Academy of Science report that was released a couple of years ago - the one that stated that there is no evidence that workplace drug programs are effective - we had good, visible results. Well, we can talk cause and effect, health costs, accidents, discipline, etc., but the main thing noticed was the quality of people. Things seemed, over a period of time, to be different. Problems that used to exist didn't exist anymore. Far fewer shootings and the like. More drug testing, fewer drug users.

One of our speakers talked about social marketing. Our marketing campaign was something like, "Read my lips, watch my hips, boom." In our environment, that very direct orientation made sense. That's the kind of people we are, for better or for worse. We offered the hand of help to anyone wanted to reach out and accept it.

We've heard a lot of things today from economists. Remember, however, that economists predicted only seven of the last two recessions. The point being, all of us, including myself, use lots of numbers to tell stories. I agree with what Dr. Goetzel said this morning here. He said, "the focus is on working America." That's where the issue is. That's where the problems are, and that's where the solutions are. If you go down to Lake Wocochobie and you'll see some old

boys coming back in, and they'll have a big string of bass and brim on their stringer. People come by and say, "How do you catch all those fish?" And the old boys say, "Hell, I just fish where the fish are."

So the challenge to all of us here, from everything that you have heard today, is to fish where the fish are. Where are the problems, where are the opportunities, and what are the strategies that make sense? Where are the fish? They are in working America. Do they need help? Some know it, some don't. The challenge is to figure out, collectively and individually, what is help?

We need to find coherent and succinct communications that can say a message to America, not the way we want to deliver it, but in the way America and American business people are accustomed to hearing, and listening, and understanding.

Steve Hill talked this afternoon. He mentioned one particular company. He said, "These are the greatest marketers in the world." He was talking about Proctor and Gamble. And what is it that they have? Is it that their products are so darn much better? No. They have found ways to package and present, and make people believe that what is in there is truly value-added, good for you.

And the challenge, I suggest to you, is not to take a step back, and to worry what we can't do, but be able to be market driven, to help focus the attention on drug issues in a way that makes sense to the people who are going to implement drug-free workplace policies throughout America.

In Florida, we had chambers of commerce throughout the entire state. And then a change of leadership came about, and all of a sudden a terrible thing happened. There was no leadership; business people lost their spirit. The guy who got to see the birth of the drug-free workplace, and the Florida movement, tried to raise money in the private sector and other sectors to keep it going, but he couldn't do it, and he saw it die.

We were once in a position of leadership, we are now at the point of losership. And all the hope that was once there was lost. We lost it. Well, do we quit? Do you put your tail behind you and you run? I don't think so. Because I have to do my part, and you have to do your part, and we have to believe that individually and collectively, from Washington to Florida and all the points in between, we can make a difference.

We can make a difference provided that, one, we're unselfish; and two, that we focus on what America and companies throughout America really need: the courage to stand up for what we believe in, doing our part to make America drug-free.

My final thought is, remember, when the sun comes up on our coast, it goes down on yours. A lot of people's lives are going to be affected by what we do that day. The world is full of choice; we suggest to you the policy of responsible toughness where you choose hard, choose right, stand up for what you believe, and make it all work.