

**SEPTEMBER 2016**



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**“Yes, And...;” The Team Behind Four Day Weekend Teach Good Listening Skills With “Happy Accidents!”** – by Andrew Cristi

When it comes to inspiring millennials, rarely does anyone ever say how a technique that promotes listening to others acts as this sort of springboard. But, when it comes to the improvisational troupe Four Day Weekend, they might just have found the hidden secret toward getting the Y generation tuned in to the needs of others. With an old improv game, the troupe teaches millennials the importance of “yes, and,” as they circle back to the basics of the importance of listening and supporting one another in business.

Having started out in 1997, the troupe, founded by David Wilk, David Ahearn and Frank Ford, started in a small theater in Fort Worth. Now, with members, Oliver Tull, Josh Roberts, Anthony Bowling, and musical accompanist Ray Sharp, the group of improvisers are always mostly dedicated towards putting on a good show, but at the same time, they make sure to teach their inspiring business module to their clients wherever they go.

Knowing the importance of certain words, the troupe has pinpointed the effect that words like “no” and “yes” have, as well as personalizing things with “my” and “your.” They teach companies skills how to fix these word-focused dilemmas, particularly with their “yes, and” game. With an impressive roster of clients that includes Southwest Airlines, Hilton and FedEx, this group has already influenced some of the most powerful people in business and now, with their new book, “*Happy Accidents*,” the troupe can reach an even wider audience!

**Talk about main goal of Four Day Weekend and what it hopes to accomplish. How did you get started?**

When we started Four Day Weekend in February of 1997 we began with a limited six-week run in a small 99-seat theater in downtown Fort Worth. Our initial run began following the long running and very successful stage show *Forever Plaid* at Casa on the Square in downtown Fort Worth.

Eventually at the end of our first year a larger theater venue asked us to move into a new space and the 212-seat Four Day Weekend Theater was born and has been our home for the last 19 years. With this new theater space our responsibilities grew.

The business grew by implanting a culture of “yes, and” and we had to eventually figure out how to manage a staff, bar, training center, corporate communications division, and film and television arm of a business we didn’t entirely plan on having. Although no one in the group was a business major we soon realized that we now had a business to run. We returned to our roots and we decided to use our guiding principle of “yes, and” to run this growing business and this became one of the best decisions we ever made.

**Talk about some of the methods you go about in order to achieve this goal.**

It was through the improvisation technique “yes, and” that we decided to run our business. In improvisation it is our job to lift each other up and make each other shine. We strike the word “no” from our vocabulary and we replace it with a technique call “yes, and” where we turn “your” idea or “my” idea into “our” idea. When everyone values the ideas of others and builds upon them we discover what we come up with together is far more powerful than what we come up with individually.

## **Who are some of the major clients that you work with, and who would be some of your dream clients?**

We are already working with our dream clients! We have worked with a long list of Fortune 500 companies, each unique in their own way and with different however very similar challenges. Some of our favorite clients are Southwest Airlines, Fed Ex Office, Hilton, Essilor, Fiserv, Wingstop and **we are currently Executives in Residence at TCU Neeley School of Business**. All of these institutions embody the “yes, and” spirit and philosophy and have become an example of a new way of doing business. Having said this, we always look forward to working with new clients!

“Happy Accidents” will be available soon for order at Amazon.com.

## **America's Web Radio**

September 15, 2016

### **Despite claims to the contrary, science says fracking not causing increased earthquakes**

GUESTS: Jeremy Boak: Director, Oklahoma Geological Survey Increased seismicity in Oklahoma; Rex Buchanan: Interim Director, Kansas Geological Survey Possible solutions to induced seismicity; **Ed Ireland: Executive Director, Barnett Shale Energy Education Council and Associate Professor Energy MBA Program, Neeley School of Business, Texas Christian University**: Why induced seismicity is blamed on Hydraulic fracturing; Steve Everley: Senior Advisor, Energy in Depth Oil and gas industry's efforts to solve the induced seismicity situation.

## **FORT WORTH BUSINESS CEO**

September 2016

### **More Than a Paycheck - By Danyelle Williams Ackall, SPHR, instructor at the TCU Neeley School of Business**

In the next few months, employees across the U.S. will be given news about their paychecks. They'll either receive a raise — the lucky few — or they will be changed from salaried exempt to hourly non-exempt to comply with the adjustment in regulations the Department of Labor announced for the Fair Labor Standards Act, all effective December 1<sup>st</sup>.

Since the adjustment was announced in May, CFOs, and financial managers have been compiling reports and conducting analyses of the financial impact these compensation changes will have on their bottom lines. Employees, too, will be making adjustments as they deal with a switch from a consistent paycheck to one that may fluctuate. It is a serious financial issue for both the organization and the employees.

### **More Than Money**

It might be more than a financial issue for the employee. Organizations should be careful not to overlook the non-financial concerns employees may not vocalize. The issue can be subtle and easily overlooked. It is an emotional response not necessarily based on logic. This makes it messy and difficult to address. But it is real. Take for instance, Tony, a purchasing specialist. Tony graduated three years ago with a bachelor's degree and makes \$45,000 a year as a salaried exempt employee. Since this salary is lower than the new FLSA threshold for white-collar exemptions, Tony's employer has decided to make Tony's position hourly non-exempt. Since Tony routinely works 45 to 50 hours a week, this could mean a larger check for Tony. A bigger check should make Tony happy. So, why is he not happy about this change?

First, Tony was told he'd have to clock in and out. Tony immediately feels as if he has to answer for his two-minute tardiness. Although his supervisor didn't say a word, there is documentation to show the late arrival. No one has ever mentioned his arrival time before; now he feels as if he is being watched.

Tony enjoys lunch away from the office and although he is not one to take long lunches, he doesn't worry if he is gone for an hour and a half ... or at least he didn't worry before. Now when Tony goes to lunch with his work buddies, he says he'll drive separately in case they run late. He can't risk being late or taking more than an hour. It makes everyone uncomfortable when Tony gets his lunch to go and says he has to get back so he doesn't get in trouble.

Friday is the last day of the pay period and Tony has 20 purchase orders to process. At 4:30 p.m., he has already hit 40 hours for the week and his supervisor was adamant that he not work overtime. Tony can stay and finish the job, risking being chewed out for the overtime hours, or he can follow his supervisor's instructions and leave for the day, risking being chewed out for leaving the job half done. Either way, Tony doesn't like the feeling that he may get in trouble. In addition, Tony feels pressured to cram his normal 45 hours of work into only 40 hours. It's stressful!

Tony is experiencing a common emotional reaction professionals have when they are placed in a non-exempt role.

## **Status**

The status of being salaried exempt brings a certain prestige, confirmation of the professional status they've achieved; it's like a rung on the corporate ladder employees desire to climb. Changing an employee's status to non-exempt can have the same impact as a demotion. Taking away the ability to set their own hours, not work until the work is done, and then report every minute worked can feel demeaning to an experienced professional. If you take away their ability to control their work, even if it is only the perception of taking away their control, you can leave the employee feeling deflated, dejected and degraded.

Your organization may decide changing professionals to non-exempt is the change to make. That's a business decision. But there are several steps you can take to soften the blow and keep those white-collar professionals from feeling like they are no longer valued for their experience and knowledge.

**Keep the conversation confidential:** Employees may (under protection of the law) tell whomever they wish how much they make. However, the organization needs to be careful not to inadvertently disclose salaries. It would be wise to avoid pulling all employees facing this change in to a single meeting. You'll be announcing to everyone that those assembled make less than \$47,476 a year. Have one-on-one meetings. As tedious as that sounds, it will be worth it.

**Consider clock-in options:** Those being changed to non-exempt will now have to track their hours worked. Attempt to make clocking in and out less obvious by using a computer-based system with access at the employee's desk, ability to report time on paper, or reporting of schedule deviations only. Highlighting that

someone has to clock in after Dec. 1 can be seen as an announcement the employee is below the salary minimum.

**Consider automatic approval:** Give newly non-exempt employees approval to work the same hours they were working as exempt employees. Track those hours for a month or two prior to the change. Maybe they routinely work 45 hours. Approve them for 45 hours without requiring additional permission. This gives them some professional consideration for the ups and down of their workload.

**Be direct:** Encourage supervisors to have frank conversations about the change (or no change) in expectations for employees. Address the emotional side of the change head on.

It's not easy to understand an employee's feelings. You don't have to agree to know they feel a certain way. Understanding their negative emotional response to a positive financial change may mean less drama in your organization.

And let's face it – drama is best left to the silver screen.