



THE INSIDER

NEWS AND EVENTS FROM THE BUILDERS GROUP



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and Steve Ferley

COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS: A REQUIREMENT FOR SAFETY ACCOUNTABILITY

by Tom Esch

Many people working in the construction industry are not naturally talkative people. But it seems that this may lead them to avoid difficult conversations until a situation reaches a “boiling point”. So when they do finally speak up, their grievances often come out in the form of strong language and dramatic outbursts: “You are impossible”, “What an idiot!”, “I quit!”

But there is a better way. We can all summon the courage to speak up BEFORE bad situations have a chance to escalate. The first time you sense trouble, or see someone taking a safety shortcut, find out what is happening and make a plan. If you are ever having difficulty staying calm and in control, take a break and remove yourself from the situation if possible.

Courageous conversations are challenging for everyone. Nevertheless, they need to happen if you want to grow your business and create a strong safety culture.

Here are some tips for you:

- 1 Learn to identify the need to have a courageous conversation. Look for these three signs:

- The circumstances are stressful, and the stakes are high
- Emotions are strong
- People have different ideas, and they are clashing

Even the presence of only one or two of these signs could be enough, but if all three are present, you may be risking a lot, including safety, if you do not initiate such a conversation.

- 2 Get the firsthand accounts of everyone involved and attempt to cross-check for accuracy if possible; do not just rely on hearsay. Ask for what Sergeant Joe Friday always insisted on in the classic TV show *Dragnet*: “Just the facts, ma’am, just the facts.”
- 3 If you feel your own hot buttons being pushed, take a moment to calm yourself through breathing exercises.
- 4 Keep your attitude easy and relaxed, taking as much emotion out of your voice as possible. Act as if you were sitting down to plan a fishing trip.
- 5 Limit the scope. Keep the focus on the main issue, whatever topic you believe impacts safety or trust the most.
- 6 Create emotional safety. Physical and emotional safety are intertwined so if you can’t create one, then the other is also at risk. Create a safe space for people to express their thoughts and feelings without fear of these being discounted or worse.

Only you can tell if the timing is right to have that courageous conversation or not. If you need help deciding when and how to have these conversations, just reach out to one of our trained professionals in this area.

For more information see www.EschConsulting.com

Please reach out to TBG Safety Services for a toolbox talk on stress or to discuss stress management at your workplace.

It's so important that we all work to find balance in our lives!



ARE YOU FEELING STRESSED?

Unfortunately in today's world stress has become a common part of life for many of us. Demands and/or threats on our bodies initiate an internal stress response, which is actually our body's way of protecting us. In simple terms, stress is our brain's response to any demand or threat, and can also be a reaction to a harmful situation, or a physical, mental, or emotional factor that causes bodily tension. Some stress is actually good for us; however too much can have negative effects and can increase not only our risk for health-related issues, but also safety incidents. Think about the stress in your own life and consider the information below to better understand the effects of stress and how to manage it.

Interestingly enough, stress means different things to different people. What causes stress in one person may not cause stress in another. Some of the more common stressors can include money, jobs, health, relationships and family, safety and security, and major life changes. It's important to be aware of what stressors affect you most and to learn how to identify the signs and symptoms of too much stress.

STRESS MANAGEMENT TIPS:

- 1 Avoid unnecessary stress
- 2 Alter the situation
- 3 Adapt to the stressor
- 4 Accept the things that you can't change
- 5 Adopt a healthy lifestyle

WAYS TO RELAX AND RECHARGE:

- Go for a walk and spend time in nature
- Exercise
- Enjoy a cup of coffee or tea
- Listen to music
- Work on your garden, car, hobbies etc.
- Get a massage or practice meditation
- Read a good book or magazine

When we talk about the signs and symptoms of stress, they often fall into three categories: Emotional, Physical, and Behavioral. Within the emotional response to stress, some of the common signs can include being easily frustrated or agitated, having difficulty relaxing, feeling anxiety or panic, and avoiding others. For the physical response to stress, common symptoms can include having low energy, headaches and body aches, rapid heartbeat, trouble sleeping, and frequent colds. Lastly, within the behavioral category some of the common signs can include worrying, negativity, forgetfulness and inability to focus, use of alcohol or drugs, and appetite changes. Being cognizant of stress symptoms is important because elevated stress levels can increase our risk of negative health conditions such as depression, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and digestive disorders.

There's an abundance of information online from credible sources on stress management and prevention. Here are a few tips for managing stress that you may find useful, as well as some healthy ways to relax and recharge!

SPOTLIGHT: JIM WALERIUS

We interviewed Jim Walerius, currently Senior Auditor at TBG, to learn more about his experience of being the company's first underwriter in 2002 to rising through the ranks to become Audit Manager. Although he originally planned to retire in fall 2019, he was convinced to remain part-time with the company.

Describing TBG as "dynamic," Jim reflected on the ascent from humble inception in 1997 to become a "formidable" worker's compensation carrier: "we went from nothing to something... phenomenal." Although he cites the challenge of competing in a crowded industry landscape, he praises the company's growth and profitability, nonetheless. Ceding that although some mistakes have been made, the company's track record of choosing the right accounts has proved fruitful.

Some of Jim's best memories are of TBG's earliest days when he played an instrumental role in creating the company. He fondly described the work of developing his department and bringing new people on. Throughout the years, he has made an effort to inspire and teach those who work for him. He has enjoyed training assistants and seeing one promoted to underwriter.

Jim eventually worked his way up to become Audit Manager. A big accomplishment as, although he had worked in the insurance industry since 1975, he had never dealt with extensive audits before, but his hard work and willingness to learn made him succeed in this role.

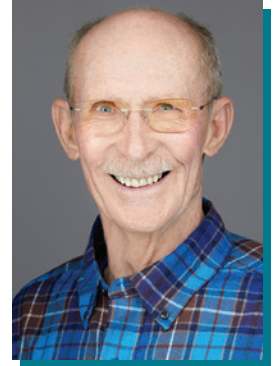
On the subject of adversity, Jim acknowledged that there have been tough times over the years, such as the recession that occurred during the end of the last decade, when business had stalled. His advice to weather these times is simply to "stick with it... (even when) things may look tough. Persevere. Work hard. We will have downtime again... hang in there. Be open to change. I have stuck with changes, and I'm glad I did." He contrasted enduring the difficult times with later moving into a larger office location TBG has since remodeled to accommodate the growing business.

The 20 years Jim has remained with TBG are a testament to the opportunities for career growth he has experienced at TBG. Before this tenure, he would normally change companies every 5 or so years



to grow his career potential. As described in his own words: "this is my longest tenure job. WE are stronger than ever. This means a lot to me... to grow and (see) the company growing. It's a dynamic and continuous process. This has been a great place to work. Stu is a great leader. He started as a marketing guy, and look at how he's carried this company. The financial funds he put into place. Never underestimate people."

RETIREMENT: STEVE FERLEY



Steve Ferley, an Underwriter who has been with TBG since 2004, has announced plans to retire at the end of April. We recently interviewed him to learn more about his time at the company and what he's looking forward to next.

Although his over 17 years at TBG was the longest tenure of his career, Steve previously spent over 12 years with The St. Paul Company underwriting multiple lines, in addition to positions at other insurance companies. It was during this time when he met now CEO Stu Thompson, who was serving as a marketing manager at a previous company where Steve worked. Years later, he learned about an underwriting opportunity with TBG. Although he normally wouldn't have considered going to work for a self-insured fund, especially at a then-young company, his confidence and belief in Stu made him feel comfortable making this move. And this instinct proved correct.

Throughout the interview, Steve emphatically expressed how much he has enjoyed working for TBG. He believes that much of our greatness comes from the top, praising the respect and autonomy given by management. During his time with the company he felt like his opinions and ideas were always heard and respected. Over time he has truly internalized TBG's values and always tried to demonstrate the same respect for other staff by listening to them, valuing their opinions, and handling disagreements respectfully.

He feels the biggest difference between TBG and the standard carriers is the way the entire company works together cross-functionally and everyone's contributions are seen and valued. He feels this environment differs greatly from many larger companies where one may feel like "more of a number". At many larger carriers, a team might consist solely of a manager, underwriter, and assistant. At TBG he truly feels like the whole company works together as one big team.

Although Steve has had many positive experiences during his time at TBG, some of his best moments were when he landed sizable new accounts. A satisfying accomplishment as these don't come every day and take a lot of time and teamwork to achieve. Steve feels proud that his ability to select profitable accounts has created success for the company.

He feels that another pillar of being a successful underwriter is to deliver exceptional customer service. He feels focusing on this service is paramount because, as he asserts, "without the insurance agencies, (TBG) doesn't have a company. They are our advocates. Our accounts are the agent's accounts."

As much as Steve has enjoyed his time working at TBG, he has decided it is time for a new chapter. Although he knows retiring is the right decision, it was not one he made lightly, as he really enjoys his job and the people he works with. However he is really looking forward to the time retirement will allow him to explore different interests and activities. In addition to bicycling and staying active at the gym, he hopes to take up tennis again, as he used to play years back. He also looks forward to traveling more; he plans on taking a road trip every year, visiting places like the Grand Canyon, Smokey Mountains, and the Baseball Hall of Fame. But the most important thing Steve looks forwards to is spending more time with his family, especially his grandkids aged 8 and 11.

On behalf of management and staff, we thank Steve for his years of service and all they have brought to TBG. As much as we will miss having him on our team, we wish him all the best in his retirement.



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Members are jointly and severally liable for their proportionate share of obligations for the group and will be assessed on an individual and proportionate share basis for any deficit created by the group. Dividends are not guaranteed.



MAKING WORKERS' COMP WORK FOR YOU

UNDERSTANDING YOUR DIVIDEND

Welcome members - as a member of TBG, when the fund does well, you do well — specifically by way of a dividend. Our partnership together in the last several years has reduced the frequency and cost of injuries, resulting in increased funds in the account dividends are paid from - Member Distribution Payable (MDP). Dividends are just one of the many benefits you enjoy as an owner in The Builders Group work comp fund.

Thank you, to each of you, these dividends are not possible without this team.

-Stu



Dividends Distribution History

Total 2021 dividends

\$5,513,707

Total dividends since 2012

\$14,018,827

Total dividends since inception

\$21,689,827

Dividend Distribution Approval:

The TBG Board of Directors determines if dividend distribution is justified, the amount of the distribution, and the eligible fund year(s). If the Board approves a dividend distribution, the declaration is sent to our regulator for approval. Once approved, the TBG Board of Directors determines the timing and method of payout.

Eligibility

A TBG Member is first eligible to receive a dividend distribution after five years of membership. You must be a Member during the Fund year designated by TBG's Board of Directors for dividend distribution and still be a Member of TBG on the date(s) when the authorized dividend distribution is paid to the Eligible Member. An individual member's dividend is performance-based – the better the loss ratio, the higher the dividend received.

Annual Dividend Payout Schedule

Board authorized distributions are made per the following schedule:

- 1st Year – up to 20% of the total authorized dividend
- 2nd Year – up to 40% of the total authorized dividend less amounts previously paid
- 3rd Year – up to 60% of the total authorized dividend less amounts previously paid
- 4th Year – up to 80% of the total authorized dividend less amounts previously paid
- 5th Year – At the discretion of TBG Board of Directors, after a Fund Year has been closed with no future claim liabilities.

If you have questions about Dividend Distributions you can contact your agent or review the TBG Dividend Policy on the website.

The TBG Board of Directors has the authority to suspend the payment of dividends if, in their opinion, the payment would adversely affect the financial integrity of the fund. Dividends are not guaranteed, and Members are jointly and severally liable for their proportionate share of obligations for the group and will be assessed on an individual and proportionate share basis for any deficit created by the group.