



The Underwriter's **INSIDER**

JUNE 2017

INSURANCE • POLITICS • TECHNOLOGY • PEOPLE

6 BUSINESS LESSONS LEARNED FROM WORKING WITH WORLD-LEADING BRANDS

By Merilee Kern, MBA

It's rather shocking to know that fully 96% of businesses fail within 10 years of existence, but what's even more distressing is that many of these failures are entirely avoidable. Even once-mighty Corporate America behemoths are not immune to preventable peril, as exemplified by a glut of high-profile implosions with untold others currently struggling to adapt and stay agile within the digital age—an era where business dynamics on multiple fronts are a fluid, ever-elusive target.

While many business and franchise owners embrace

information technology such as cloud computing, e-commerce, cybersecurity and emerging robotics, many also make the

erroneous assumption that innovations capable of boosting safety and digital defenses, operational efficiency and bottom line-impacts related thereto are financially out of reach. Indeed, often discounted or overlooked is

the opportunity to significantly reduce, or even entirely eliminate,

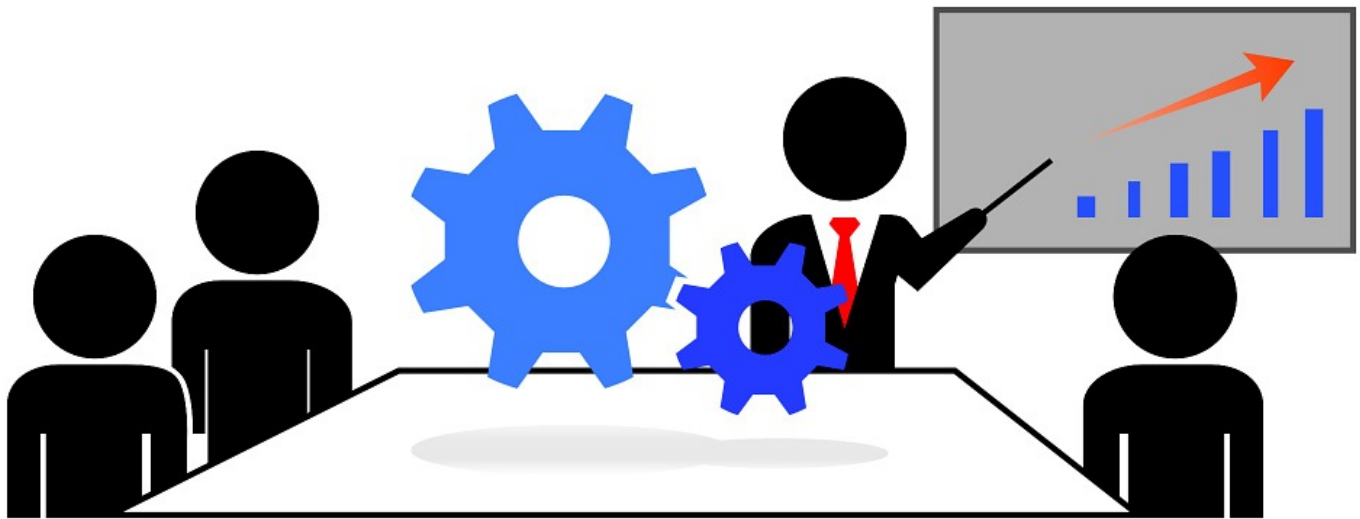
**C-Suite Strategist
Jeff Kiesel offers tactical, actionable ways businesses can create smarter, safer, socially responsible organizations that increase efficiency, productivity and profits**

Yet others either underestimate or entirely disregard how powerful, whether enriching or debilitating, a company culture can be and even how issues like workplace safety play a key role. Multiple millions of non-fatal workplace injuries

occur each year, resulting in absenteeism and



About the author: Branding, business and entrepreneurship success pundit, Merilee Kern, MBA, is an influential media voice and lauded communications strategist. As the Executive Editor and Producer of "The Luxe List International News Syndicate," she's a revered brand and consumer product trends voice of authority who spotlights noteworthy marketplace change makers, movers and shakers. Merilee may be reached online at www.TheLuxeList.com. Follow her on Twitter here: <http://twitter.com/LuxeListEditor> and Facebook here: www.Facebook.com/TheLuxeList



Workers' Compensation claims that chip away at a company's profit margins. And then there are brand identity, perception, reputation and service issues wreaking marketplace havoc, as both small and large companies, alike, fail to "speak human" and meaningfully connect with their constituents.

While such concerns are nothing new, technological innovations and other modern and strategic means of contending with these issues is a landscape that changes monthly and weekly, if not daily. Solutions, both physical and ideological, are available that can readily result in far smarter, safer and more efficient workplaces that also enhance morale, reduce staff churn, bolster profitability and elevate industries at large.

With this in mind, I sought insight from c-suite strategist Jeff Kiesel—a former GE executive and current corporate CEO of Restaurant Technologies, Inc. who's earned a reputation as a business innovation voice of authority. Given that his firm boasts a roster of multi-billion dollar customers that includes titans of industry like McDonald's, KFC and Marriott Hotels, I asked if he could share some of the key business lessons he's learned from working with world-leading brands. This is what he had to say:

Customer Insights:

World-class companies make many of their business decisions based on laser sharp, analytics-driven insights that veritably impact the activities of all departments in the organization

to one extent or another. They're keenly aware that offering, and ultimately selling, a product or service is the net result of having first built a strategically-crafted, risk-mitigated relationship—one that continues to be honed based on key data points well after a deal is closed. Their own internal sales activities aside, the best companies in the world also demand tangible evidence demonstrating how their offerings, as well as their vendor's offerings, are impacting their customers.

Successful companies know, in specific terms and even from various viewpoints, facts that are germane to the kind of solution they offer. Things like if

[*See 6 Business Lessons Pg 14*](#)

[*Continued From Page 9*](#)

6 BUSINESS LESSONS

their offering is saving customers money; how its impacting employee, customer and vendor retention and referrals; if it's increasing operational efficiencies, productivity or creating a safer work space. Such profiling of both prospects and existing customers—or perhaps even lost accounts to the extent possible—can be a determining factor that sets your operation apart from its closest competitors. In today's market where competition is typically neck and neck, activities are best driven by data-induced insights that are optimally developed with a robust CRM software solution. The best run companies in the world vigilantly maintain a true and holistic understanding of the value they proffer within the marketplace.

Embracing Adaptability:

Changing paradigms in any industry is often viewed as a huge risk factor. However, global corporations know that the business practices, equipment and other assets they have been relying upon, perhaps for years

and maybe even decades, can and probably should change. They understand today's environment of adapt or die. They embrace emerging technology and breaking proverbial new ground with fresh thinking from everyone and anyone that may very well "build a better mousetrap" and increase efficiencies that boost bottom lines.

They curate a culture of

“Companies successful at a global level also ensure that their management teams at every level, from the c-suite to the front-line, understand their role in ensuring their teams and departments are trained, enthused and working cross-functionally while adhering to standard operating procedures (SOPs).

ingenuity, seeking input at every touchpoint—from the inside, out and the bottom, up—revising best practices with customers and employees seemingly in real-time. Global brands know that complacency kills and take proactive measures to stay agile and mindful of shifting standards.

Technology Innovation:

Much of the technology found in the food service industry centers around reducing costs, improving efficiency and service quality, and helping managers better handle their teams. However, this technology is viewed with eye toward what will provide the best return on investment and improve an operation's bottom line. To achieve this, the highest caliber operations focus on technology that's easy to implement, scalable and also provides metrics that are of primary interest to executives—things like customer visits and staff costs as well as employee retention through job satisfaction.

The analytics must be easily discernible, providing exact numbers and trend patterns on what it costs to continue operating the old way versus what it would cost to implement new technology. Top-tier operations will parse this data in droves to glean key learning on multiple fronts. In doing so, the most successful companies are able to demonstrate the value of a tech-driven solution within 30 days of deployment.

Operational Excellence:

Companies successful at a global level also ensure that their management teams at every level, from the c-suite to the front-line, understand their role in ensuring

their teams and departments are trained, enthused and working cross-functionally while adhering to standard operating procedures (SOPs). They have a lot on their plate, needless to say. It can be an uphill battle for sure. However, high caliber companies utilize proven technologies and protocols, and implement methodologies allowing managers to establish a simpler operating environment where they can focus more on cultivating people, both employees and customers, and less time on administrative tasks.

Strengthening the Workforce:

World-leading brands understand that thoroughly onboarding team members into a company's culture, with an understanding of its history, purpose, vision and strategy as well as job-specific training, is mission critical. A one-to-one relationship based on trust and candor establishes a path to on-the-job achievement and even growth as staffers evolve in the organization, taking on bigger and more complex roles.

For the employee's part, ongoing training and education as well as an investment in active listening, understanding and ideation is key for proffering loyalty and attaining career advancement. Large successful corporations purposefully and deliberately

focus on strengthening employees relative to both relationships and skill level. Cultivating an employee base that's enthusiastic, well-trained and well-equipped to do their jobs, also understanding why they are doing any given task, creates an environment of respect that will foster higher accountability and ownership by employees.

Corporate Citizenship:

Successful corporations worldwide understand the extent to which their company impacts its community—whether that community is the municipality where it resides, or the industry it serves. The news cycles are faster than ever before, with social media driving demand for information at a rapid pace. This creates a heightened need for a focused work culture that, while talent-driven, carries with it a ton of heart. These companies take corporate social responsibility quite seriously.

As an effective way to fulfill this need, they consistently participate in philanthropic projects. Whether that be establishing and continually contributing to an educational foundation offering merit-based college scholarships to employee family members as my own company does, donating goods or providing services pro-bono, or literally picking up litter in the neighborhood park,

successful global companies wholeheartedly embrace corporate citizenship and make it a foundational pillar of their organizations.

Kiesel's takeaways from working with top global brands makes clear that a holistic approach to business—one that keeps talent cultivation, character and efficiency top-of-mind—creates team loyalty and support and fosters increased market share. As well, Kiesel is eager to underscore that a company's culture is nothing short of imperative for building a successful, growth-oriented operation, noting, "The investment is in the long-term success of our clients, for sure, but in gaining the loyalty of our people within the company, as well." Indeed.

**FREE
CLASSIFIEDS!**

HELP WANTED — POSITION
WANTED 4 — SALE ITEMS

[CLICK HERE!](#)