



Dear Colleague:

Happy end of summer! Hope you all had an opportunity to enjoy the gorgeous weather we have had the last few months. Although I never like saying goodbye to summer, I do look forward to watching the leaves turn to beautiful shades of red, yellow and orange. The transition to fall is the prettiest time of year.....and it always brings with it the symbolic traditions of transitioning “back to” school and/or work after a period of rest and relaxation. Although it has been a busy summer for many of us, we seem to get into high gear once September rolls around and we set out to **accomplish our goals** before the end of the year.

In doing so, a critical strategy is to reflect upon our “**lessons learned**” and make adjustments as necessary. In that spirit, I’d like to share some of my “**lessons learned**” **while providing a brief news update on myself, the market and our field.**

Lesson #1- High standards of excellence never go out of style! I’m happy to report, even in this active market, there is no replacement for the **highest quality** of work – it is expected and demanded. During the craziest of times back in the 90’s, this criteria was sidestepped to meet short-term demands but this is no longer the case! High standards of excellence distinguish the successful companies from the rest – and their sustainability.

Lesson #2 – Leadership skills and competencies are required of most professionals in this competitive marketplace not just by those in management and/or leadership roles. There is a growing demand to develop leadership skills within all levels of the organization. An individual contributor can also be a great leader and expected to be so in many cases. Our ability to bring out capabilities in others and realize their utmost potential is one sign of a true leader. Please watch for an article I have written to be published in an upcoming issue of Boston Women’s Business Journal titled, “**Top Ten Competencies for Leadership**” for further dialogue on this subject.

Lesson #3 – Technical areas are once again in demand! According to the Boston Business Journal, 8 of the top 10 Bachelor’s Degrees in highest demand are technical as follows: Accounting, Business Administration, Computer Science, Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Information Systems, Marketing, Computer Engineering, Civil Engineering and Economics/Finance. There has been an increase in college graduates hired within all of these areas.

Lesson #4 – Career Management and Coaching has become more of a standard part of conversation in many corporations over the last year. I’m happy to say that career

management initiatives are included in strategic discussions around talent management as an important imperative to remain competitive in today's marketplace. Much of my work, both with individuals and corporations, has been around career development and planning for **all levels of professionals up to and including management and executive leadership.**

Lesson #5 – It is never too late to learn!! I've mentioned in my earlier newsletters that while I've been teaching at Northeastern University, I've also gone back to school myself to complete my Masters degree which I had started many years ago. As I get closer to graduating, I have reflected on what an extremely enriching experience it has been for me – personally and professionally! It has been reported that many baby boomers are going back to school to advance their education and further their learning. I am one of those statistics and I have found the experience much more satisfying than I ever could have imagined!

As you set out to accomplish all of your goals in the remaining months of this year, I'd love to hear some of your "lessons learned" that will either assist and/or alter the strategy for executing and completing your goals! **Please email me YOUR "lessons learned".....**

As always, I thank you all for your continued interest and support. Business continues to flourish for me and most importantly, I am thoroughly enjoying the work I've been fortunate to have come my way! **I am grateful to many of you who have engaged my services, referred business to me and/or provided additional networking opportunities for me.** Please let me know if I can be of any assistance to you, formally or informally. Last but not least, please visit my website at www.ritaballenassociates.com for additional updates on my business as well as upcoming events and recent news. Thank you and I look forward to keeping in touch and speaking soon!

Best Regards,

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