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## Technology Times September 2019 Issue



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All links in this Newsletter are safe and tested for viruses

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## The One Thing You're Doing in Your Company That No One Likes

By Jennifer Faught

“You shouldn’t eat that.”

“Your kids should be going to bed earlier.”

“If I were you, I would speak up more in meetings.”

What emotions do those statements spark in you? Defensiveness? Insecurity? Doubt?

Even when advice is well-intentioned, if the person receiving the advice doesn’t feel like it’s relevant or helpful it can create tension. We’ve all received advice at some point that actually feels like criticism.

On the flip side – have you ever had someone, instead of criticizing outright, tell you a story about a personal, relevant experience and what was learned? If so, how did you feel? Reassured? Relaxed? Understood?

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## [The Beginner's Guide to Ecommerce SEO](#)



Getting more traffic to website is top of mind for any business owner, so the thought of mastering ecommerce SEO has probably crossed your mind once or twice. Consistent, high-quality traffic you don't have to pay for? Sign me up.

But between search engine algorithm updates and excessive industry jargon, it can be pretty difficult to get the hang of this whole SEO thing.

**What is ecommerce SEO and why does it matter?** Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of generating more organic (i.e. free, natural) traffic from sites like Google, Bing and Yahoo.

When you search for something on Google, for example, you are taken to the search engine results page. There, after paid ads marked as "Ad" you'll find organic results. Ecommerce SEO is all about ensuring your product pages appear among those top organic search results. Of course, there are many more pages to explore:



But the higher the page number you rank on, the lower the traffic you'll generate. A few years ago, a study found that only 4.8% of searchers make it to the second page of search results. Page 3? Only 1.1%. I suppose that's why they say the best place to hide a dead body is on page two of Google.

Your rank on the first page matters as well. The same study found that the top result grabs 32.5% of traffic on average. The second result grabs only 17.6%. By result six? You're looking at less than 5% of traffic on average.

The name of the game, then, is to rank as high on the first page of Google, Bing, Yahoo, etc. as you can for search terms that your potential customers might be using.

**Call 907-885-0500 to get your SEO started!**

## How Did This Phoenix Tech Company Achieve a Staggering 36,000 Percent Growth? A Mistake Had a Lot to Do With It

*They started with a swimsuit calendar. Their first big move didn't work out. Today, they're running the No. 1 company on the Inc. 5000.*

The story of the fastest-growing private company in America, a profitable technology startup called [Freestar](#) whose revenue growth since 2015 has been a staggering 36,680 percent, starts with a calendar.

Not a buzzy new calendar app. Not a life-altering meeting request. A printed wall calendar. One of those relics with pictures of animals or landscapes that we all used to tack up in the kitchen.

This particular calendar--Tempe12--had, well, swimsuit models. Arizona State University co-eds in bikinis, to be exact. "All the girls had to have a minimum 3.0 GPA, so they had beauty and brains," explains Freestar co-founder David Freedman, without a trace of sheepishness. Freedman, who launched the calendar when he was a 22-year-old fifth-year senior at ASU back in 2004, has come a long way since then. But he draws a straight line from that fairly crude start to his current success.

Freestar, you see, sells solutions and services that help publishers make more money online by optimizing their advertising operations. When Tempe12 was just getting started, Freedman sold all its ad space to local businesses. The calendar took off, expanded to 21 other colleges by its third year, and drew attention from Playboy and Howard Stern. Tempe12 had a website with photo archives and decent traffic--but no efficient way to make money. In 2008, Freestar's other co-founder, Chris Stark, joined Freedman, taught himself to code, and started scaling Tempe12's online ad business. Other publishers noticed and asked for help, so Freedman and Stark launched a consultancy--DigitalIMGMT.

*"Smaller publishers would get requests from an advertiser to spend money on their website, and they didn't even know how to sell it or how to serve it,"* Freedman remembers. He and Stark could help. They had no secret formula, no proprietary technology, but they were crafty and entrepreneurial and understood an industry that was evolving every month.

*"The biggest problem we had at that point was that we'd take a client from making five grand a month to 50 grand, and some other company would come in and buy them,"* says Stark. "Our success meant having to always find new clients."

In 2014, Freedman and Stark set out to raise around a million dollars and then spent most of it purchasing nine small publishers--webdesignledger.com, webresourcesdepot.com, a stock photography site called lostandtaken.com--thinking that they'd "juice the revenue and sell them off," Freedman recalls. It was the birth of Freestar--and it was a big mistake.

Almost immediately, Freedman and Stark realized that publishing a swimsuit calendar didn't give them any real editorial expertise. They also realized that focusing on scaling their own websites put them in competition with the sites for which they consulted.

But around the same time, Stark began experimenting with a new technology that was revolutionizing online advertising: **header bidding**.

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## It's Time to Let Employees Work From Anywhere

The idea of **working remotely** has been more than bubbling on the back burner. It's at boil status, and the **ability to work from home well** is one of the hottest job skills going. The pot may be about to overflow, and the out-of-office move is about to go mainstream. At least if Harvard researchers have their way.

*Harvard Business Review* recently wrote an article provocatively titled "Is It Time to Let Employees Work From Anywhere?", and researchers from Harvard Business School and Northeastern's D'Amore-McKim School of Business made their case for working from anywhere (WFA) to become more the norm.

The team analyzed data on WFA case studies, especially an in-depth look at a WFA program started in 2012 among patent examiners at the U.S. Patent & Trade Office (USPTO).

Their research, soon to be published in a working paper, found examiners working from anywhere saw their work output increase by 4.4 percent, while quality of work held up, representing up to \$1.3 billion of annual added value to the U.S. economy (based on the average amount of economic value generated by each additional patent granted).

The research also showed that in the specific case of working from home (as the WFA location) versus the office, productivity gains were seen in line with other studies. One such study involved a Chinese travel agency that saw productivity increase a whopping 13 percent when call center employees were allowed to work from home.

The Harvard and Northeastern research team also found that WFA examiners chose to work in locations with lower cost of living, effectively equating to a pay increase--one that didn't cost the organization a dime.

Longer tenured employees tended to move to "retirement-friendly" locations like Florida, which, according to the researchers, could encourage these most-valued employees to stay in the workforce longer.

But what about losing out on that peer-to-peer magic? Enter the most interesting finding of all, the fact that WFA examiners productivity increased more if they were located within 25 miles of other WFA examiners. Why? Because, as the study says, "geographically clustered WFA workers whose job content is similar may learn from each other informally."

In other words, they have the chance to congregate and share knowledge, similar to the way that co-workers informally learn from each other through office interactions.

[Inc.com](http://inc.com)

When we share our experiences with someone, versus telling them our opinions, there is less debate on what's right or wrong, less blame administered, less hurt caused.

What would the world look like if we all shared our experiences instead of our opinions and let others form their own opinions without consequence?

This doesn't mean that you can never share advice or tell someone what they "should" do. Simply, proceed with caution. Many times people who are giving advice simply want to share something that they truly think is helpful and with good intention.

Before giving advice, ask if the person would like to receive it by simply saying, *"Would you like some advice on this?"* Even better: Share an experience with them so that they can come to their own conclusion with newly acquired information.

This simple change is a powerful tool for leaders to motivate and support instead of direct and frustrate. Change your mindset to think about being a direct support for your team versus the direct report for your team. How can you coach your team as opposed to directing your team? A coach asks questions, holds people accountable and shares experiences that can serve as learning opportunities. When you coach and support, instead of direct, you're giving employees the permission to unlock their intelligence to find solutions and make decisions. Would you have hired them if you didn't think they were capable of doing so?

Training yourself to share experiences takes time, awareness and commitment. Organizations that want to scale and develop leaders have to learn how to effectively engage in feedback and experience-sharing. Give people the power to make their own decisions, and watch engagement and creativity increase. As a leader, our opinions can outweigh the group and put the breaks on critical thinking and creative problem solving. Give your employees their brains back and you'll unlock a new level of innovation and engagement you may have never known existed.



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## Shiny New Gadget Of The Month Roadside Emergency Disc



These [Roadside Safety Discs](#) can be seen from over 5000 feet away by oncoming motorists in any direction. Protect yourself and your family in all emergency situations, simply activate each light with a single click. The Magnetic Base allows you to easily attach the discs to the side of your car. You can put them on the ground around your vehicle in seconds and create a wall of protective safety light alerting oncoming traffic and keeping you and your family safe. They are waterproof and durable enough to withstand being run over and they keep on working and continue to shine bright!

Now when you need an Emergency Beacon you get the toughest, brightest and best available. And when you need a flashlight or work lantern you simply click the button and you have both. The LEDs are so bright they can be seen from 5000 ft. away in any direction. If you're caught in an emergency simply press the button and your Safety Discs instantly turn into flashing SOS safety beacons. Plus, these Safety Discs comes with a magnetic base for hands free use. So you can use the Safety Disc features, the work lantern and the magnetic base feature to stay safe and keep both hands free in case of an emergency. Create a wall of safety light around you and your vehicle instantly

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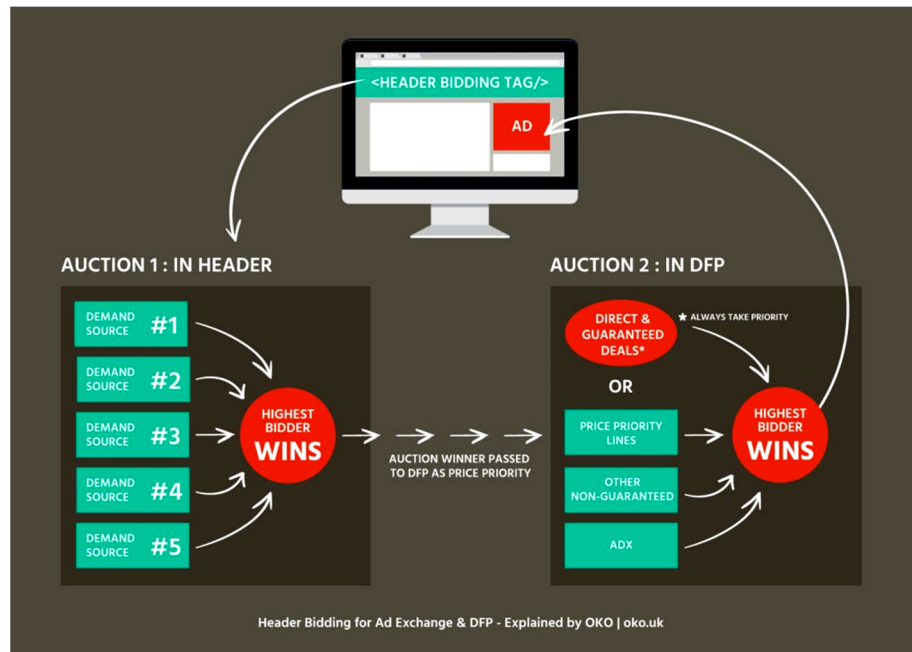
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"..Staggering 36,000 Percent Growth.."  
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Until then, many Web ads had been bought in a split-second auction process that went like this: A publisher sent out a request to advertisers to bid on an ad space, and the software would automatically accept the first qualifying offer. Ads could be sold in real time—but publishers couldn't weigh offers against one another, potentially missing the best ones. Publishers also had little sense of who was buying ads, which left their sites vulnerable to shady operators. "It was as if you were selling your car at an auction, and they let only one person into the room at a time," Stark explains. "That person could offer whatever they wanted—and you had to either accept or reject their offer."

With header bidding, a snippet of code sent a request to all potential advertisers simultaneously—and then selected the best offer. Suddenly, publishers earned more from each ad, and they had more control over which ads ran on their sites. A decade after Freedman started dabbling in ad sales, Freestar took off like a rocket.



"The beautiful thing is, when you start making people more money and helping them run their businesses better, they typically have pretty big mouths," says Freedman. "Word travels quickly." Today, Freestar works with more than 300 publishers, including Barstool Sports, Snopes, and Fortune.

Coindesk, which covers all things cryptocurrency, saw ad revenue increase 300 percent in the first month it worked with Freestar, says Jacob Donnelly, the publisher's managing director of digital operations. Freestar, he says, has made it unnecessary for Coindesk to hire anyone to handle advertising operations. "That lets me think more strategically about revenue generation," he says, "which is huge."

Freestar generates its own revenue by taking a small percentage of the ad dollars that flow through its technology. The company hauled in \$37 million last year and expects to cross the \$100 million mark soon. It now employs 40—including a new face up top. Freedman and Stark aren't big on job titles, and neither was ever formally CEO or president. About a year into the company's breakout growth, the founders tried to hire Kurt Donnell, a well-regarded media executive in their hometown of Phoenix, but failed to bring him on.

Two years later, they tried again, and Donnell joined as president this past January. What changed Donnell's mind? "They had executed on everything they said they were going to do two years prior," he says. And, he adds, "the growth was just astonishing."