

Johnson

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sister do her taxes. However, I started working with my brother-in-law who had a trucking company. I unloaded trucks from 3 to 7 a.m. and sold vacuum cleaners in the afternoon. I had plans to go to graduate school," he said.

"While living with my sister, one of my nephews got in trouble and was put out of Pineville Junior High School," he said. "I went to the school to try to get him back in school. Lemon Coleman, who was the principal, didn't let my nephew back in school, but he gave me something that started me on my way."

Coleman, Johnson said, referred me to Willie Spears, who then worked as a senior vice president with Hibernia National Bank in Shreveport.

Spears, who is senior vice president of community affairs at Red River Bank, tells the following story about Johnson's start with the banking industry.

"Mr. Coleman, who had taken me to Grambling, called me about a young man, who would be a good hire. Having all of the respect for Mr. Coleman, I set up an appointment for Martin. I was expecting to see Martin, but I saw Martin and his dad. I had never interviewed an applicant with his mother or father."

"This was a formal interview, but his dad interviewed me. His dad also supported a lot of answers that Martin responded with. The thing that struck me most about this interview was the dad said, 'if you hire him, you won't be sorry.' I have not been sorry at all for hiring Martin."

Spears hired Johnson as a part-time teller for Hibernia in Shreveport.

"Martin won every award that we had for a teller," Spears said.

While working as a teller, Johnson learned how to put loan packages together by helping another employee do so.

In the meantime, Spears afforded Johnson the opportunity to participate in a management loan officer development program. The young banker spent eight weeks in New Orleans learning the banking trade.

"I was 23 years old. I thought I had it going on," Johnson said.

After completing the program, Johnson was assigned to Alexandria. "When I moved here in 1990, I didn't know anybody in business. There was nothing going on. I had a hard time getting with the girls. It was hard," Johnson said. "But then something happened that changed everything



BUSY MAN — Martin W. Johnson, a native of Minden, surveys Regions Bank's renovation of the new headquarters, which is located on Dorchester Street in Alexandria. In addition to his job, Johnson is the chairman of Central Louisiana Chamber of Commerce's board of directors. He and his wife, Karen are the parents of two daughters, Lauren and Paige.

for me. Hibernia's stock dropped, and everybody who had stock who could leave the bank did so."

That event worked out for Johnson's good. In 1992, with little experience, he became a commercial loan lender, which is rare.

"The rule was they had to promote from within. I got the job," he said.

Johnson recalls the late civil rights attorney Louis Berry congratulating him and admonishing him to always do his best.

Johnson's business connections began to widen as he became connected with community groups such as the Central Louisiana Business League. It was in the Business League that Johnson got the community bug.

"Most people don't understand the benefits of giving. I realized that I could keep complaining about what is not or I can help make a change," Johnson said of his role as a volunteer.

"God told me to be active and not complaining," he said. "I have been blessed to serve on various boards."

Some of those boards include Central Louisiana Business League,

Greater Alexandria Economic Development Board, England Authority, Christus St. Frances Cabrini Hospital Foundation and St. Matthew Baptist Church Apartments.

Though Johnson is a business and community-minded man, he is quick to point out that he is a family man first. He and his wife, Karen, are the parents of two daughters, Lauren and Paige.

"I make all doctors' appointments, all school programs. I try to make every activity for my children," he said.

Karen Johnson said her husband abides by the motto "God, family, then country."

"He is a very thoughtful, kindhearted man and believes that nothing is too good for his wife and daughters. That love and compassion spills over into his extended family and friends that he attempts to help in every way possible," Karen said. "Rarely does Martin think of himself. He would literally give you the shirt off of his back with no questions asked."

"He has a very affectionate personality a lot like his mother, Martin perceives good in everyone in spite

of the way he is sometimes treated. I owe my new found attitude and interpersonal growth to him. He has truly taught me a lot about how to treat others and be more forgiving. Martin is really a blessing to our family. I pray for him constantly that he will remain focused on his family and the great things that God has planned for his life."

Johnson said as he reflects over his career, he has always had to seek wise counsel from a diverse group of mentors.

"America is made up of who you know, and the world is very connected," he said.

One of Johnson's mentors is Johnie Varnado, owner of Kazette Enterprises.

"Martin is compassionate, fair, honest and committed to doing what he loves doing. He loves making deals, working with small businesses and helping people move up a level.

"He lives to wake up in the morning

Johnson
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Spotlight on Business



GROUNDBREAKING — Folks gathered at mid-field of where the new stadium seating 5,000 spectators at Louisiana College will stand a few months. The groundbreaking was held July 24.



PINEVILLE STORE — Ahmad Ghannam (owner) and Mayor Clarence Fields cut the ribbon together to signify the grand opening of Furniture Gallery, which is located at 104 Kings Country Village.



RIBBON CUTTING — Taco Bueno general manager, Johnny King, cuts the ribbon to celebrate the opening of the new restaurant with owner, Rob Antoon, standing to his left. The ceremony was held July 23. The restaurant is located at 755 MacArthur Drive.

Learn from your mistakes, keep moving forward

By Dante Lee
www.BlackBusinessCoach.com

We all have made bad business decisions. Some of them were quite dumb, others were just bad instincts. Maybe you lost money, wasted time, or even both. Despite this, you must recognize that making business mistakes is a natural part of building your career as an entrepreneur.

Here's the key: When you do make a business mistake, learn from it. Start by fully accepting the blame and responsibility, and not putting it on others. There are very few cases when you can place the blame on someone else other than yourself, and this is very easy to determine.

All you have to do is ask yourself: "Was there something I could have done to prevent this?" If the answer is yes, then it was your fault. If the answer is no (which it rarely is), then it wasn't your fault.

The point is that the minute you accept full responsibility, that's the same moment that you actually learn something valuable from your mistakes. As a mature adult, your brain is automatically trained to not make the same unwise decisions over and over again. However, your brain is waiting for you to admit that it was

you who actually made the mistake.

Some people, however, end up "burning" from their mistakes. Instead of admitting that they were at fault, they blame other people or factors. They say things like "he screwed me over", instead of "maybe I should have looked closer at the contract." They say things like "he stole my idea", instead of "I should have better protected my idea through patents and trademarks." Or even "he didn't do what he said he would do", instead of "I should have gotten that in writing."

They "burn" from their mistakes because in the future when they face a similar scenario, they will make the same mistake again...and again and again. Why? Because their brain is telling them that last time it wasn't their fault, so there's no reason to proceed cautiously this time.

Please believe that the only way to grow in business is to learn, not "burn" from your errors. We all make bad decisions, but how we respond thereafter determines how successful you will be.

Dante Lee is the president and CEO of Diversity City Media, a multicultural marketing and public relations.

Deadline set to participate in Board Builders program Aug. 8

An Aug. 8 deadline has been set for nonprofit organizations to become part of the 2008 Community Development Works Board Builders program.

Board Builders prepares emerging leaders for service on Central Louisiana nonprofit boards. These graduates are highly trained on board governance issues.

Nonprofit agencies that sign up before the deadline will be matched with

at least one Board Builders participant at the end of the 2008 training session, which begins in September and concludes in December.

Board Builders is offered free of charge by Community Development Works, a program of The Rapides Foundation.

To get involved, call (318) 443-7880 or (800) 803-8075 or visit www.communitydevelopmentworks.org.

School Supply Giveaway
8:15 a.m. to 1 p.m., Aug. 9
Kees Park Community Center, Pineville

Sponsors:

Pineville Concerned Citizens/VFW Post 1736 Ladies Auxiliaries

U.S. Air Force musicians coming to perform in Alexandria



The Arts Council of Central Louisiana will host Dimensions in Blue, the jazz ensemble from the United States Air Force Band of the West, in concert at 7 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 9, at the Coughlin-Saunders Performing Arts Center.

The performance is free of charge and open to the public.

This group performs a wide variety of music ranging from the classics of Duke Ellington, Count Basie, and Woody Herman, to the more contemporary sounds of Rob McConnell, Bob Mintzer, and Frank Mantooth. The band can also recreate the look and sound of the 1940s Glenn Miller Army Air Corps Jazz Band in a faithful reproduction of the World War II era.

Tickets are free and may be obtained at the box office one hour before the performance and in advance by calling (318) 484-4474.



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Spotlight on Religion

Public and private actions equals true character

By Kelly Bogg
Louisiana Baptist Message

“The measure of a man’s character is what he would do if he knew he never would be found out,” Thomas Babington Macaulay said. The 19th-century English statesman understood that who we are in private – what we do when no one is looking – is who we really are.

Macaulay’s wisdom is not only, as the Brits would say, ‘spot on,’ it is also time-tested. If you really want insight into a man’s character, disregard his public persona – his carefully crafted image – and pay attention to his behind-the-scenes behavior.

A case in point is Jesse Jackson. The so-called civil rights leader has once again been caught using language unbecoming a leader, especially a leader that covets the title of “reverend.”

It seems that while on a break during a recent appearance on the Fox News Channel, Jackson thought his microphone was off and that he was engaged in a private conversation. As a result of this

presumed privacy, he whispered to another guest that he did not like the way Barack Obama “talked down” to black people. Jackson then used a crude phrase to indicate that he would like nothing better than to turn Obama into a eunuch.

Once Jackson was alerted to the fact the remarks were to be made public, he issued an apology. He said the comment was “hurtful and wrong” and that he was “very sorry.” However, Jackson also indicated that his comments were in the context of a “private conversation” and “not a public speech or declaration.”

Jackson’s apology indicates as much about the man as does his crude statements. In essence he said that his crass comments came during a private conversation. Don’t judge me by my crude whisperings, Jackson implied, but rather judge me on my carefully crafted and rehearsed public oratory.

This is not the first time Jackson has been caught with his foot in his private mouth. In 1984 – in what he thought was an off-the-record conversation with a reporter – he referred to New York City by using an

anti-Semitic slur.

At first, Jackson denied having used the offensive term. Eventually, he did apologize for using the slur, but only after indicating it occurred in what Jackson thought was an off-the-record conversation. “Charge it [the racial remark] to my head ... not my heart,” Jackson said.

It seems that in Jackson’s world the head and the heart, the public and the private, are not connected. You can put on a show for the masses on stage while acting the exact opposite behind the scenes.

Jackson’s delusional thinking about a public-private disconnect is further illustrated by the fact that in 2001 it was revealed that roughly two years earlier he had had an extramarital affair that resulted in the birth of a daughter.

Jackson is not alone and I don’t take any joy highlighting his indiscretions. He just happens to provide a convenient illustration. There are any number of leaders – conservative and liberal – who seem to operate on the premise that what they do in private should have no bearing on their

public self and service. Like a scene from the “Wizard of Oz,” these so-called leaders say, “Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain.” They’re saying, “Just be impressed with the image I project.”

There are no perfect people and thus no perfect leaders. However, leaders are the thermostats for an organization and society. They set the standard – the temperature, as it were – of what we could and should be. We need leaders who place living a virtuous life ahead of projecting a good public image.

Leaders cannot exist apart from followers. If there is a lack of leaders in America who understand that who we are in private – what we do when no one is looking – is who we really are, followers bear some of the responsibility.

Responsible followers must demand responsible leaders. To think otherwise is foolish or delusional – perhaps both.

Kelly Bogg is editor of the Louisiana Baptist Message newspaper.

Arthur F. Smith student participates in teen pageant



Saretta Wilson, daughter of Nakia Wilson, recently represented Alexandria in the Miss Louisiana Pageant.

Saretta participated in the Pre-Teen Division in the pageant that was held July 24-26 in Lafayette.

In the finale program, Wilson won first place for the Best Decorated Heels at the Pajama Party, received a trophy and sash for the Bronze Level for the Outstanding Souvenir Program Participation, and received a trophy for General Participation in the Miss Louisiana Pageant.

Saretta attends Arthur F. Smith Middle Magnet School.

Church Coalition to gather

The second annual Gospel Explosion will be held at 5 p.m. Aug. 3 at the Coughlin Saunders Performing Arts Center, 1202 Third St., Alexandria.

The speaker will be the Rev. Robert Vincent, pastor of Grace Chrch.

Dr. Raymond L. Franklin is president of the Coalition.

Good Hope to host revival

Good Hope Baptist Church, 1114 S. C.L. Bradford St. in Pineville, will have its revival at 6:30 p.m. Aug. 3 through Aug. 5.

The speaker will be the Rev. Fred Luter III of Concord Church in Dallas

UEMBA Choir Night set

The United Educational Missionary Baptist Association’s Choir Night will be at 6:30 p.m. Aug. 4 at Antioch Baptist Church, Houston Street. The Association will meet Aug. 4-7.

The musical will feature the UEMBA’s adult, youth and brotherhood choirs. The special guest will be gospel recording artist Pastor Mitchell J. Stevens of New Orleans.

New Birth schedules 3K Run/Walk

New Birth Fellowship Baptist Church is sponsoring its first 3K Run/Walk beginning at 8 a.m., Aug. 8.

The event will help fund the Connie Thompson/Eddie Erving Scholarship Fund. The church is at 1328 Enterprise Road, Alexandria.

Musical at Bright Morning Star

The Brotherhood Choir of Bright Morning Star Baptist Church, 521 Baptist St. in Pineville, will hosts its musical concert at 3 p.m. Aug. 10

Call (318) 445-6954 for information. The Rev. Floyd D. Kirts is pastor.

St. Matthew hosts Harvest Festival

St. Matthew Baptist Church’s Sunday School and Youth Department are hosting its 2008 Harvest Festival from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Aug. 16 at Cheatham Park.

The theme is “Laborers Wanted.” Activities will include inspirational speakers, praise dancers, food and games for all ages.

For information call, Eulalia Carter at (318) 443-5039, Catherine Kyles at 443-2756 or Nancy Williams at 793-8379.