

MEDIATE THIS !

THE ABSENTEE DESIGNER AND THE SEETHING SALES REP

BY STEVEN P. DINKIN

Dear Mediator:

When my partner and I launched our biotech firm in 2006, we agreed on a division of labor that played to our individual strengths: He would oversee product design, and I would manage product sales. This worked great for 10 years, and we are now very successful. But this past year, as my workload has grown, he has been increasingly absent, delegating his work to staff. Quality control has not suffered (yet), so investors and customers are satisfied. But I feel very resentful, and he knows it. Should I confront him? Or offer to buy him out?

Ready to Split in Mira Mesa

Dear Ready:

Business partnerships, like marriages, are not static. They evolve as partners and circumstances change over time. So your original agreement about assigned areas of responsibility may need to be revisited and even renegotiated. But that's not the main

problem here. Your top priority is to reopen the lines of communication that have broken down. This will give you an opportunity, which you both seem to need, to interact in a new and mutually beneficial manner.

You two have had a personal bond that was strong enough to start a business and make it succeed. That is a significant achievement. It's time to restore that core connection.

Did you commemorate the 10th anniversary of your business in any meaningful way? If not, schedule a celebratory dinner so the two of you can look back on hurdles you cleared and wins you scored.

This would not be an occasion to hash out work concerns. Instead, exchange happy memories and catch up on each other's personal lives, which is something that often gets lost in the daily grind of running a firm.

You don't seem to know the underlying reasons for your partner's absences. Solving that mystery is the key to bridging this gulf. Once you two have had a chance to relax together,



GETTY IMAGES

This week's question involves frustrations resulting from a successful 10-year business partnership in the biotech industry.

you can broach the subject in a nonconfrontational manner.

Conflict resolution involves asking open-ended questions and listening attentively to the responses. Is your partner feeling fulfilled on the job? Is he getting enough time to take care of personal matters? Does he have any ideas about restructuring opera-

tions?

Two possible scenarios are that a) he is grappling with a personal situation he hasn't wanted to disclose to you and b) he has lost interest in his easily delegated product design work. If it's the former, you are in a unique position to offer comfort and support. If it's the latter, this could be an opening to think about how

your firm might enter a new phase of creative growth.

But enough about your partner. Let's talk about you.

It sounds like your growing workload has left you feeling strained. The sales world you inhabit is crammed with the interpersonal tripwires of client demands, deadline pressures and production sna-

fus. When people get tangled up in such webs, it can be difficult to break free.

Working through the partnership issues could be your ticket to emancipation. When we stop to assess all aspects of a difficult situation, we have license to explore our own underlying needs and determine if they are being met.

For entrepreneurs like you, burnout is an occupational hazard. It's possible that your partner isn't spending enough time in the office. It's also possible that you are spending too much time there. Ask your loved ones if this is the case. And if you haven't had a vacation in the past six months, plan one right away.

Steven P. Dinkin is a professional mediator who has served as president of the San Diego-based National Conflict Resolution Center since 2003.

Do you have a conflict that needs a resolution? Please share your story with The Mediator via email at mediatethis@ncrcnline.com or as an online submission by visiting www.ncrcnline.com/MediateThis. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

NOTEBOOKS

From Union-Tribune reporting staff

ZOO: BRADLEY J. FIKES



SAN DIEGO ZOO SAFARI PARK

Vote on Facebook to name the two female cheetah cubs (left and center) at the S.D. Zoo Safari Park. The male cheetah (right) was named by a benefactor.

Name the Safari Park's cheetah cubs!

Two cheetah cubs at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park need names. And you're invited to help name the baby girls.

To vote, go to the Safari Park's Facebook page at j.mp/cheetahpurple and pick a permanent name for the cub now called "Purple."

Two names are offered for the first cub. Tadalala, which means "we have been blessed" in the Chewa language, and Sizani, which in Zulu means "you all help."

The second cub, now temporarily named "Yellow," will be either named "Blondi," or "Blondie" in Zulu, or "Lesedi," which means "light" in the Tswana dialect.

Vote for the second cub's name at j.mp/cheetahyellow.

A third cub in the litter, a male, has been named by a benefactor. The names of all three will be revealed this week.

You can visit the cubs at the Safari Park at the nursery in the Nairobi Station area.

This isn't the first cheetah girl cub pair cared for at the zoo. In late 2016, two sisters arrived, and they were cared for in the nursery. They were weaned in January, according to an online story in Zoonooz, the zoo's maga-

zine for the public.

Cheetahs in the wild face very severe threats to their existence. Their numbers have been dropping precipitously.

Found in Africa and a small part of Iran, cheetahs are classified as Vulnerable on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species.

The IUCN estimates the worldwide cheetah population has dropped from 100,000 in 1900 to just 7,000 today, with about 10 percent living in zoos or wildlife parks.

Besides humans, cheetah survival is threatened by their lack of genetic diversity. The population experienced a bottleneck about 10,000 years ago, when the species came close to extinction.

Without a diverse gene pool, cheetahs are vulnerable to diseases, from infections to inherited complications of inbreeding.

So the San Diego Zoo and allies across the world are actively at work in raising and protecting cheetahs in a human-controlled environment, providing some measure of insurance against extinction.

bradley.fikes@sduiontribune.com

THE READERS' REPRESENTATIVE: ADRIAN VORE

Obituaries then and now at the U-T

I knew an editor years ago who said a person should appear twice in the newspaper — after they are born and after they die.

There once was a day when the Union-Tribune ran free birth announcements and small obituaries. But times have changed. The U-T, and newspapers in general, no longer have the large staff and the large number of pages needed to run those items for those born in the county and for those who die.

It actually was as recent as the early 2000s when the U-T had a newsroom staff member whose main job was to type up three- to four-paragraph obits obtained from information mortuaries faxed over. The formulaic items contained such information as name, age, date of death, date of birth, survivors and services.

The U-T also had a full-time news story obituary writer. Longtime readers will remember the name Jack Williams. Williams would not just write an obituary after a notable person died, but he would gather background information and begin stories on well-known San Diegans in preparation for the day they passed. He retired in 2006. He was the last full-time U-T obit writer.

Most obituaries readers see in print today are written by family members, who pay for publication. Classified advertising handles the items. The newsroom is not involved in their production.

News story obituaries today are written mainly by reporters on their respective beats. If a well-known local politician died, the politics reporter would probably handle it, for instance.

The subjects for news obits also have narrowed along with the smaller newsroom staff. For a news obit to be written today, the local subject generally must have been known to the public, have had some extensive interaction with the public or have had done something or created something that affected lives.

Although not as many staff-written news story obituaries are penned today as compared to years ago, they still are written. In fact reporter John Wilkens, who frequently is assigned the task of writing obituaries on a highly prominent San Diegans, will now be writing more news obituaries. Beat reporters will continue to write obits, as well.

Reaction to removal requests

A couple of weeks back I wrote about re-

quests to remove stories from the Union-Tribune's online database. The U-T's policy is not to remove stories unless they have gross inaccuracies, misidentification that could result in defaming a person or publication could endanger a life.

Some people who were the object of court cases had asked that years-old stories be removed.

I wrote that I strongly disagree with removing stories. Established news organizations (the U-T has been around since 1868) are in the business of chronicling the happenings of the day, not removing them.

I asked readers what they thought. Here are some responses:

• Jim Wenck of Carlsbad: "I agree that the U-T and other media should not remove stories once they are published. Serious errors could be corrected, but that's about it."

• Lynn Gardner: "If you say someone is arrested and never say they were acquitted or a crime as expunged, every Google search from a potential employer is damning. Those with money can hire companies to push the story onto pages readers may not scroll to making those with resources less likely to be negatively affected. Perhaps the paper should only publish names when someone is convicted, not just arrested unless you do the follow through."

(I agree with Gardner. If someone is arrested on suspicion of committing a crime and named in a story, the article should be followed up on.)

• Sheryl Koval of Santee: "I am not in favor of ever removing stories. It's the job of the newspaper to report the news, whether good, bad, or indifferent. If a story is incorrect, it should be corrected once the inaccuracy is discovered. Stories should never be removed and especially not removed just because someone doesn't like what was reported, even years later, as in the case of someone 'trying to get his life back together.'"

• Zach Goldman of San Diego: "There's something to be said for 'the right to be forgotten.' I'm sure there's some reasonable approach to removing old articles without the U-T turning into an Orwellian Ministry of Truth."

(The European Union has a policy — the right to be forgotten — that allows people to request that Google and other search engines in Europe remove links to stories in which they are named.)

FROM THE ARCHIVES | LOOKING BACK OVER 150 YEARS

DIXON LAKE'S DOTTIE

The San Diego Union-Tribune will mark its 150th anniversary in 2018 by presenting a significant front page from the archives each day throughout the year.

Saturday, March 25, 2006

In March 2006, "Dottie," a huge largemouth bass, almost made the record books but instead just made history. Dottie died of old age in 2008.

Here are the first few paragraphs of the story:

REELING IN THE ULTIMATE FISH STORY

BASS NATION IS ABUZZ WITH NEWS OF THE 25-POUND, 1-OUNCE CATCH IN DIXON LAKE

By Ed Zieralski

Right there on Tuesday's front page of the Drudge Report was important news of the day, with the usual headlines and stories: President Bush, Iraq, Oprah Winfrey.

And a celebrity fish.

The new media darling was a 25-pound, 1-ounce largemouth bass pulled out of Dixon Lake by Mac Weakley of Carlsbad, a fish big enough to shatter the world record that had stood for nearly 74 years.

It sent the Web spinning.

Bass fishing magazines and bass Web sites jumped all over the story. ESPN sent camera crews to the lake. San Diego Union-Tribune

stories about the bass drew more than 376,000 page views this week on the paper's Web site, almost 6 percent of all traffic.

By week's end, the catch had captured the attention of not just the Bass Fishing Nation of more than 11 million Americans, but many more who'd never used a fishing pole and wondered what all the fuss was about.

Weakley was besieged with interview requests.

How big was the story?

"It's so crazy here now I'm thinking Elvis caught that bass from the grassy knoll with a UFO flying overhead and Sasquatch watching from shore," said Tony Smock, supervisor at Dixon Lake, a tiny 72-acre lake in Escondido, about 40 miles north of San Diego.

So what's the big deal about a big bass?

First, bass fishing itself has become a big deal. It is the most popular of American freshwater fishing pursuits, with a rich tradition, born in the South and Midwest.

The bass fishing industry is estimated to be a \$12 billion-a-year whopper. There are magazines galore. There are pro bass fishing tours that travel the country, televise their tournaments nationally, offer big purses and promote their fishing stars as NASCAR does its drivers. Cable channels are filled with bass fishing



shows. And an army of Internet anglers -- who will pay anywhere from \$10,000 to \$40,000 for a specialized bass boat -- can talk about bass all day, every day on a number of Websites.

Second, people have been trying for decades to break the largemouth bass record: a 22-pound, 4-ounce largemouth caught by George W. Perry at Georgia's Montgomery Lake in 1932.

For years, the talk around Bass Nation has been that millions of dollars -- in endorsements, appearance fees and such -- would go to the angler lucky enough to catch a bigger fish.

Perry's son, George Larry "Dazy" Perry, said

yesterday that he believed a record bass would be worth more than \$10 million.

The gold and glory at the end of the record-bass rainbow has obsessed anglers ... and also spawned an underside to the sport where hoaxes and cheats became legend.

The fact that bass fever has been as hot in San Diego as anywhere in the country isn't anything new. Twelve of the 20 heaviest bass ever caught have been taken in San Diego County.

San Diego's Dave Jessop waited nearly half a century for someone to catch a bass bigger than Perry's.

It was 46 years ago this spring when Jessop and a group of San Diego sportsmen banded with then-San Diego City Lakes manager Orville Ball and imported a batch of fingerling Florida-strain largemouth bass.

"Orville believed that those Florida bass would grow out here," Jessop said. "And he was right."

That was before the lakes were stocked so heavily with rainbow trout -- a favorite snack of oversized largemouth bass -- from hatcheries as far away as Mount Lassen.

And before the modern subculture of big-bass hunters that includes Weakley, 34.

Weakley's bass, however, won't officially topple Perry's record.

After saying he unintentionally foul-hooked it -- the hook lodged in the fish's side, not in its mouth -- Weakley began getting criticism locally and from across the nation. Mostly for that reason, he decided not to submit an application to the International Game Fish Association to consider the fish a world record.

ONLINE: View this and other anniversary front pages online at sandiegouniontribune.com/150-years.