



Workers' COMPanion

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CELEBRATING LABOR DAY: WHAT MAKES A GREAT EMPLOYEE

AND WHAT MAKES MY EMPLOYEES GREAT

I've been fortunate over the years to have a lot of great employees at my law office, both now and at my previous firm, and before that, when I was cutting my teeth working for the state. Over that time, I've come to realize that a good employee is worth their weight in gold, and it's in my best interest as an employer to do whatever it takes, within reason, to keep them around.

Unfortunately, a lot of employers don't understand how valuable their employees are. In the workers' compensation claims I handle, I've unfortunately encountered many employers failing to treat their employees with the respect they deserve as human beings. Not too long ago, I represented a woman doing some extra work for her employer, handing out sandwiches to the indigent population in the city, but then she tripped, hit her head, and got a concussion. Her employer refused her request for compensation for that injury, even though it happened while she was doing something her employer had requested of her. I just don't understand how an employer could refuse to compensate an employee who was injured on the job while handing out food to the homeless.

I'm grateful for the employees I have at my office. In fact, I view us as coworkers. Without them, I wouldn't be able to help nearly as many clients as we do. They make me look good! They all have years of experience in their work, so I know I can trust them to take on all the paperwork and day-to-day communications that would otherwise prevent me from devoting myself to client representation, writing articles, and working on the Workers' Comp Specialization Board to influence policy in that area for the better.

Most employees want nothing more than to do an honest day's work, and employers should let that happen. When my employees put in a good day's work day after day, I look good in the process. Good employees are worth making accommodations for in many circumstances, whether that means okaying a request to work from home for a period, for some time off, or for something else. Also, my employees' work ethic allows me some peace of mind. Heaven forbid I couldn't take a day or two off every now and again because I always felt the need to micromanage everything!



My team's stellar performance isn't just good for me, though — time and time again, I've seen how it has benefited our clients. I've watched my team repeatedly form personal connections with our clients, getting to know the people and lives behind our cases. Even after we've settled their claim, clients still reach out to us (and us to them) to let us know how they're doing.

Our friend and client, Kaden, gave us smoked turkey and hot sauce after we began representing him in his case, which was a pretty memorable gift! Earlier this year, his wife, Kat, called to let us know Kaden had cancer. His treatment was difficult as he also had to undergo neck surgery. She called regularly with updates and, as the end drew near, to pour out her grief. Wilma and Todd listened and shared their hearts and hope. Cancer is a pitiless disease and Kaden died far too soon. I'm grateful his wife, Kat, had someone to share her burden with.

It's those moments between my employees and my clients that let me know just how incredible my team is. None of us are from silver spoon backgrounds. We've all been through challenging times. However, we can use those experiences to empathize with clients in their times of need — and if that doesn't make my employees some of the best around, then I don't know what does!

- Jim Monast

Client Success Story

Stacia Hamilton

"Ah, breaker one-nine, this here's the Rubber Duck.

You gotta copy on me, Pig Pen, c'mon?

Ah, yeah, 10-4, Pig Pen, fer shure, fer shure.

By golly, it's clean clear to Flag Town, c'mon.

Yeah, that's a big 10-4 there, Pig Pen.

Yeah, we definitely got the front door, good buddy.

Mercy sakes alive, looks like we got us a convoy."

—"Convoy," by C.W. McCall, 1978

If you are under, say, 45, you've likely never heard this song. Looking back, I'd say be grateful! I sometimes recall the music and TV shows of my youth and think "Good grief, we are a long way from that stuff!" (... except for classic rock, which lives forever.)

Still, corny as this song was in the era of CBs and eight-track tapes, I've always loved semis. As many of you know, two of my brothers hauled for Tri-State trucking out of Joplin, Missouri. Many of my uncles were drivers and my brother Bryce, who gave up trucking while he and Sheila were raising their kiddos so he could be home more, took it up again after retiring from Whirlpool. In fact, he still teaches new drivers. When I was a toddler, my parents often could get me to sleep only after driving me by the "big krucks" on Range Line in Joplin where the terminals were.



I've been honored to represent a fair number of drivers over my career. I think the diesel fumes and the long, open road just "gets in your blood" for many folks, just like sawdust and floodlights do for circus performers.

Women are about 10% of semi drivers, according to some estimates, and several of our driver clients are women. Stacia Hamilton is one. She grew up in a family of truckers, even more so than I did. Her grandfather was a trucker. Her brother's a trucker. Her mom and dad were truckers, and she'd ride along with them when she was a kid.



She's been driving for 22 years. She loves the freedom of the open road, nobody telling her what to do and not being stuck behind a desk (but, as she says, "Now I'm stuck behind a steering wheel!"). She delights in the scenery and how it changes as she drives — and the money is good!

In the "you're never too old to learn something new" category, Stacia came to us after a young driver pulled out in front and ran into her semi. Stacy got thrown around, injuring her neck, left hand, and wrist. She also got her bell rung.

Like many of us, perhaps especially folks who work where they frequently get bumps and bruises, we hate running to the doctor for things we think will just go away in a few days. Within hours of the accident, she developed headaches and dizziness. No biggie, she told herself, but they persisted. Thinking they'd go away soon, and not wanting to appear a weenie, she didn't go to the doctor. Three weeks later, after she started routinely falling out of bed and bouncing off walls, a friend drove her to the ER where she was diagnosed with a concussion and post-concussion syndrome.

This is where Stacia's "what I learned from my mistakes" lesson comes in. By not going to the doctor sooner for her vertigo and headaches, Stacia's employer fought against having the concussion recognized as part of the claim. We appealed the disallowances into court and negotiated a settlement for her, but this prevented payment for treatment that would've helped get her back in the driver's seat sooner.

As proof that our experience can benefit others, when a fellow driver got in an accident and developed symptoms similar to what Stacia had but also didn't want to go to the doctor, Stacia drove him there herself that very night. His concussion was allowed and he got treatment.

After several months, Stacia's condition improved to where she could return to driving. Back on the open road, our good buddy once again may find herself on the way to Flag Town with Pig Pen and Rubber Ducky! Ten-four, good buddy! (Sorry, I just couldn't resist!)

REUNITED AFTER YEARS APART

Pennsylvania Woman Finds Her Long Lost Dog at a Local Shelter



Most of the time, when you adopt a dog from your local humane society, you don't know what challenges you'll encounter in taking care of them. Many are nice and well-behaved, but many also carry trauma from experiences with previous owners. Luckily for Pennsylvania mom Aisha Nieves, she didn't have to guess when picking out a dog at the shelter.

That's because she adopted Kuvo, a pit bull-Rottweiler mix she had actually owned — until he went missing two years ago.

Nieves came across Kuvo's picture when she was searching for a dog that could be a companion for her two boys. At first, she wasn't sure if she was actually looking at a picture of her own dog on the shelter's website. However, when she recognized a small scar on the dog's face, she knew she'd found her long lost pup.

According to Nieves, Kuvo had initially escaped from their yard after a careless driver damaged their fence. Though Nieves searched for him, it seemed as though Kuvo

was gone, and she was devastated. However, Kuvo actually turned up several weeks later in someone else's yard. They took him to a nearby shelter, where Kuvo was renamed Ash, treated for some injuries he had, and put up for adoption.

Kuvo was adopted shortly thereafter, but after a while, his new owners had to bring him back to the shelter due to unfortunate circumstances. When he was put up for adoption a second time, that's when Nieves found him.

At first, Nieves was worried that Kuvo wouldn't remember her. However, when Kuvo saw her, he immediately whined and tugged away from the shelter employee holding him. When he let him go, Kuvo jumped on Nieves, and they kissed and hugged. All the while, Nieves assured him, "Yeah buddy, you're going home. I'm so sorry this happened. Never again am I losing you."

When Nieves lost Kuvo, it was like losing a family member. Upon finding him, she knew her family was whole once again.

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ANSWER

NIBBLES WITH NUG

EASY PEACH COBBLER



Inspired by MyRecipes.com

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup unsalted butter
- 1 cup flour
- 2 cups sugar, divided
- 1 tbsp baking powder
- Dash of salt
- 1 cup milk
- 4 cups peaches (fresh is best!)
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- Ground cinnamon or nutmeg to taste

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 375 F. In a 9-by-13-inch baking dish, add butter and place in oven. Remove when melted.
2. In a large bowl, combine flour, 1 cup of sugar, baking powder, and salt. Then pour in milk and stir until the mixture is smooth.
3. Pour the batter over the melted butter, but don't stir!
4. In a pot, bring peaches, lemon juice, and remaining sugar to a boil. Stir constantly.
5. Pour peaches over batter, but once again, don't stir!
6. Sprinkle with cinnamon and nutmeg, then bake at 375 F for 45 minutes.

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SELF-HELP BOOKS CAN'T DO IT ALL

HOW READING FICTION CAN BENEFIT YOU

Many CEOs and other successful individuals continually espouse the benefits of regular reading. Many times, leaders read self-help books to improve their leadership skills and become more successful.

This is all well and good, but even the most successful people in the world could be missing out on the unique benefits that come specifically from reading fiction. But what are those benefits exactly?

Greater Empathy

When a psychologist analyzed 86 functioning MRI (fMRI) studies, they found the same parts of the brain that fire up when reading fictional stories also fire up when we're seeking to understand the thoughts and feelings of others. That's because when the characters in the book we're reading are thinking or feeling a certain way, we tend to think or feel that way with them.

Less Stress and Better Sleep

When we read fiction specifically, we tend to disengage from the world — and that's a good thing! Our brains can't always be functioning at their peak

capacity. We need breaks, or else we'll stress ourselves out and negatively affect other areas of our lives. Stress tends to keep us from sound sleep, but reading fiction before bed engages the imagination, taking us away from the stresses of everyday life before we drift off.

More Comfort With Uncertainty

Even though many stories (particularly those portrayed in popular movies) have nice happy endings, most people would agree that life sometimes leaves things a little more open-ended. While this fact might stress out some people, researchers have discovered that fiction readers don't need "cognitive closure" as much as nonfiction readers.

Greater Happiness

Even if none of the benefits of fiction interest you, everyone wants to find ways to make themselves happy — and for many, that is reading fiction. According to one survey, 76% of participants said that reading makes them feel good and improves their lives. So, what are you waiting for? Dust off that novel you've been meaning to read and crack it open!