

# FORUM

## Everyday life on the front lines of DMV



**Nigel Alston**  
Motivational Moments

*A friend is somebody you want to be around when you feel like being by yourself.*

— Barbara Burrow

Going to the Department of Motor Vehicles (the DMV) can be a trip — a twilight zone experience, similar to visiting a hospital emergency room. You don't know what to expect, you really don't want to be there and you don't know who will come in or what will happen next.

It would make good "reality" TV.

I couldn't believe it. I shook my head as I got up to leave. I was disappointed. It wasn't anyone's fault but mine. I had waited patiently for 40 minutes or so to change my address and get a new

license — only to find out that I didn't have the appropriate documentation to prove my Social Security number.

I would have to make another trip to the DMV and start waiting all over again. You are required to inform the DMV of an address change within 60 days. I was delinquent. I had decided on the spur of the moment to get it done one day last week.

Piece of cake, right? Wrong! When I first walked into the waiting room, I noticed the people, a very diverse group. They were young, old, black, white, foreigners, men and women.

I wandered into the adjacent room seeking assistance. I was instructed to sign my name on the list, to take a seat and wait to be called. "It will be about 30 minutes," the examiner told without missing a beat. "You better wait and do it now," she said with a straight face.

I took her advice. As I waited, I noticed that other people coming in were also

puzzled about what they needed to do. Not only were they uncertain, some of them didn't have the right information either.

"My boss told me you could use this," one young man told an examiner. He was insistent. That was after the DMV examiner informed him that he just couldn't use his nickname; he needed documentation with his given name on it.

"Listen, I am going to tell you this one more time," the officer said. If he said that once, he said it three times. "I can't use this with a nickname. Go back..." and before he could finish his sentence the man interrupted him again.

"That's OK, I'll get somebody else to help me," the man responded.

I noticed several Mexicans, communicating through their interpreter, were experiencing difficulty too. There were inconsistencies with the paperwork they provided. Information on one document didn't match information on another one.

"Listen, I am going to tell you this one more time," the examiner told the interpreter. He must have difficulty getting through to people. I heard him say that several times as I twisted and turned in my small seat waiting for my number to be called.

In the meantime, two children — about age 2 — played with the water fountain, with each other, ran in and out of the room, spilled water all over the floor and pleaded for a piece of bubble gum out of the penny machine.

The mother of one of the children was talking to a woman in front of me about her fingernails — very long ones. She had accidentally — this was the second time — broken a nail tying her shoes and her finger was bleeding. "The last time this happened I had to go to the emergency room," she said, loud enough for all to hear.

All I wanted was to change my address, get a new license and return to work. If you have a

See Alston on A10

## 'Profit Building': a book review



**Armstrong Williams**  
Guest Columnist

Though I have quite an appetite for literature — often devouring two books a week — it is rare that I have an opportunity to offer a book review.

But as the new administration begins to navigate the economic challenges that will haul this country along, I was particularly struck by the relevance of a new business book titled "Profit Building: Cutting Costs Without Cutting People" by Perry J. Ludy. This groundbreaking book offers a new paradigm for preparing people, businesses and organizations for change. Already, business are reorganizing around Ludy's business model, a five-step technique called Profit Building Process, aimed at siphoning creative input from everyone in the organization. As Ludy explains, "Leaders must develop the total means available to improve profit, reduce costs and create a better place to work."

One may glean little pockets of Ludy's organization strategies in Bush's attempt to choose advisers

and cabinet members from diverse backgrounds and disciplines. Ludy relates the importance of a diverse group in fostering a dynamic work atmosphere that is not constrained by insular groupthink. Ludy quotes author and manager Roger von Oech, "We all need an occasional whack on the side of the head to shake us out of routine patterns, to force us to re-think our problems, and to stimulate us to ask the questions that may lead to other right answers." Some out-of-the-box thinkers can give us that "whack."

The ideal team, as Ludy envisions it, should have cross-discipline, complementary skills, meaning it should include representatives from as many departments in the company as possible to take advantage of their specialized skills and knowledge. Appropriately, the Profit Building Team members are held individually accountable by a monthly review of the team as they analyze the P&L statement. Implementing a diverse team not only allows for specialized contribution of individual members, but keeps the organization in touch with the needs of a diverse populace.

In "Profit Building," Ludy makes the following points: Share with your people these words of Peter Drucker, "The first perfor-

mance requirement in a business is economic performance. Indeed, the first social responsibility for a business is to produce a profit... Adequate profitability alone can provide for the risks, growth needs and jobs of tomorrow."

Managers need to be better prepared and trained when it comes to developing profit improvement strategies that fit their organization. Organizations looking for an enduring competitive edge should put into place profit building teams whose only task is to focus on cost reduction and profit improvement. Cost reduction is possible and necessary at every line of a company's P&L. Recognize the downside of downsizing. Instead use employee skills, knowledge, diversity and creativity to build your organization by increasing sales and profits.

An unusually provocative feature of Ludy's book is his 110 steps for profit improvement. Did you know that you might be able to rent "antenna space" to cellular phone companies, or that you can challenge your property tax assessment annually, and that it's good business to "manage your trash." From bank fees to insurance costs, from T&E to marketing, Ludy has ideas that will energize any executive, manager or entrepreneur to more effectively deal

with our new economy.

The most innovative concept introduced in "Profit Building" is a technique called "Questions Brainstorming," which is a new twist on traditional brainstorming.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "When we arrived at the question the answer is already near." Using this principle, Questions Brainstorming draws on the ingenuity of every person on the profit building team. It's a great way to stir up new ways of thinking about old problems and brings people closer together on important issues. Questions Brainstorming could be particularly useful within our government, corporate America and various organizations that are planning structural changes.

If innovation, creativity, inclusion and participation have become the new mantra for our national agenda, then the book "Profit Building" hit the street at an ideal time in our political and economic history. Business and political leaders, including my friend, GWB, would benefit by its messages. It is a new millennium and new thinking is appropriate and needed.

Williams is a conservative radio talk show host based out of Washington, D.C. He can be reached at [www.armstrong-williams.com](http://www.armstrong-williams.com)

## Bush confused on separation of church and state



**Val Atkinson**  
Jones Street

Just in case anybody really bought into candidate Bush's compassionate conservatism, let it be known that President George W. Bush is revealing his stripes and spots for all to see — and they're mostly right wing and conservative with no traces of compassion.

Bush obviously thinks compassion means appointing minorities to cabinet positions while he maintains a conservative philosophy and implements right wing policies. It's the philosophy we're concerned about, Mr. President, not the color of the person enforcing the philosophy.

Bush's latest revelations were

the symbolic elimination of funds to the World Family Planning Organization and his plan to fund faith-based organizations to dispense social service assistance. The elimination of the budget for the World Family Planning Organization is not as significant as one would be led to believe at first glance.

The organization didn't perform abortions or pay for abortions.

It was involved in family planning counseling and record keeping. Bush's ban on these funds was symbolic. — It was like tossing red meat in the cage. It gave the right wing anti-abortionist crowd something to chew on while he concentrated on other issues. But the funding of faith-based organizations to dispense social services to the poor is another matter.

The doctrine of separation of church and state is rooted in the very essence of our being as a nation. One of the reasons that

many religious groups came to America was to escape religious persecution and to have freedom of religious choice. This business of giving religious organizations money to dispense to the poor is not good.

Your elevator isn't going all the way to the top if you think that religious groups are gonna give out food, food stamps or a free bed and breakfast without asking the poor recipients to say a prayer of thanks to the Virgin Mary, Jesus, Mohammad, Moses, Buddha, Sorrosta or a host of other icons representing a particular faith. Most Christians, Muslims and Jews that I know would be insulted if asked to participate in a religious ceremony (other than their own faith) in order to eat or sleep.

It's tantamount to a forced conversion. And the last thing we need on planet Earth is a throwback to the days of the Crusades.

We'll probably hear explanations from the administration that the poor aren't forced to beg for food. We'll also hear that the poor have choices (meaning if one is a poor Muslim he should go to the mosque for food and if he a poor Jew he should go to the temple). But if you don't have a mosque in your town or if you don't know where the Jewish temple is, it's not like asking for directions to the Social Services office.

This faith based social services charade is thinly veiled. It's another payoff to the Christian Right. Anything wrong with being a Right-winged Christian? Absolutely not! But using food, clothing and shelter as bait for conversion and then having taxpayers pay for it without their consent is somehow not kosher.

Val is a well known North Carolina commentator. He can be reached at [JonesStreet@Africana.Com](mailto:JonesStreet@Africana.Com)

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