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Take a trip to the trenches for a real learning experience

Welcome to our new newsletter!

Welcome to the new, electronic version of the 'Designing Strategies' newsletter brought to you bi-monthly by Maurer Consulting Group. Our newsletter came to your Inbox as an e-mail attachment for the past five years. We decided it was time for us to get with the times and create a better mousetrap to better serve you, our readers. The publication will continue as a one-page, bi-monthly piece with content on topics ranging from strategic planning to business management and marketing.



I enjoy watching 'Undercover Boss' on television to see just how well members of the C-Suite of well-known organizations do when they are down in the trenches with their front line staff -- incognito, of course. This past Sunday evening, Subway sent their chief deployment officer, Don Fertman behind the counter in several of their stores to bake bread, make cookies and put together more than a few foot-longs for customers. The experience proved to be an eye-opener for Fertman. He had the opportunity to see how decisions made at the top affect those working on the front line on a daily basis.

Fertman learned that it's not all that easy to separate those thin slices of cheese and meat wearing those gloves. He learned that everything headquarters decides to add as an 'improvement' affects the way employees need to work, how time and efforts are changed to be incorporated into their work day. He also understood the need for thinking through all decisions from that front line perspective and involving front line feedback into their planning processes.

How do you go about gaining these types of insights for your firm? Do you participate in little covert, undercover projects of your own? There is always much to be learned from looking at your operations from a different perspective. From a slightly different point of view: where do you find ideas to innovate your operations, streamline them and make them more productive? How can you improve your processes, systems and policies? There are always networking events with your peers where ideas are exchanged, or industry conferences you can attend for insights and ideas. Certainly learning best practices from industry leaders has value, as does reading industry journals and attending seminars.

I challenge you to look outside your own industry to see what others are doing. Take notes and incorporate a couple of innovative ideas into your plan for 2011.

Happy Holidays!