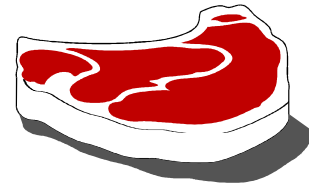
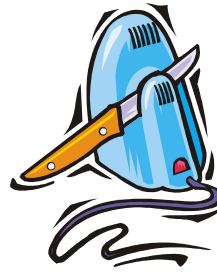


## On “Trimming the Fat”

“Trimming the fat” is a euphemism sometimes applied to staff reductions. No matter what these are called (e.g., layoffs, RIFs, restructuring, downsizing, right-sizing or workforce-workload balancing), there are lessons to be learned from the actual act of trimming the fat from a piece of meat.



When “trimming the fat” DO NOT REMOVE ALL THE FAT. The removal of all fat alters irrevocably the flavor of the meat. Keep in mind also that some fat is inextricably embedded in the muscle. This is usually referred to as “marbling” and it is a mark of choice selections. If you try to remove that “fat” you will destroy the cut of meat.

People often confuse “trimming the fat” with “cutting to the bone.” In their zeal, they cut too deeply, again destroying the very thing they were bent on saving.

Shaky hands can botch the job, resulting in butchery instead of surgery. Even-handed as well as steady-handed cutting is also beneficial; otherwise, those sitting at the table might fall into quarrels regarding their portions.

Logic and reason, not to mention experience, suggest that the proper method of “trimming the fat” is basically as follows:

- First, make certain the knife is extremely sharp. This ensures a clean cut and induces a certain amount of caution on the part of the person doing the cutting.
- Next, confine the first cut to the perimeter – you know, the stuff that’s on the edge – and be sure to stay away from the lean; in short, on the first pass, cut fat only.
- If you conclude that a second pass is necessary, again confine the cutting to the perimeter. However, because the gross removal of fat has already been accomplished, a second pass might result in the loss of some choice parts.
- If the remaining portion has huge strips of fat inside the perimeter, you can try removing them but proceed carefully. Sometimes “the fat” serves to hold two or more pieces together and the removal of this fat results in disintegration of the whole. You must give careful consideration to removing what might be termed “interior fat” and do so only if your intent is to cut up the whole so as to create smaller pieces.
- Third passes are to be avoided. They are usually undesirable and always unnecessary if the first two passes have been properly made. A third pass signals a lack of decisiveness or ability on the part of those doing the trimming.

Some of the important abilities and competencies needed by the people doing the cutting are rather obvious:

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- A steady hand.
- The ability to envision the course of the cutting and its likely effects.
- A willingness to follow through once the course of the cutting and its effects have been envisioned.
- And last, but by no means least, a truly essential requirement is the ability on the part of those doing the cutting to distinguish between that which is fat and that which isn't.

I hope this brief post proves of value to those who must carry out, witness, await or feel the effects of efforts commonly referred to as “trimming the fat.”

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