

LEAD
THINK LIKE EINSTEIN,

YOUR
CREATE LIKE DA VINCI

STAFF
AND INVENT LIKE EDISON

TO
*52 Powerful
Real-World
Techniques
That Work!*

D O N B L O H O W I A K

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*52 Powerful Real-World Techniques
that Work!*

DON BLOHOWIAK

IRWIN

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PREFACE

If you manage at least one other person and are expected to produce more work in less time, with fewer resources, and at higher standards of quality, this book is for you. In 52 brief chapters—one for every week of the year—you'll find help for the awesome challenge of meeting ever-increasing expectations with ever-decreasing support from your organization.

The principles and methods described between these covers are based on *Mavericks!*, my 1992 book, which, through several foreign-language translations and growing worldwide sales, is finding acceptance around the globe. The positive media reviews and appreciative letters from readers in many countries confirmed that *Mavericks!* gave individual managers workable solutions to tough workplace challenges. This book distills many of those lessons, adds a few new ones, and presents them in a quick, palatable format.

I am grateful to the correspondents and reviewers who saw both promise and fulfillment in the ideas you are about to read. And I am especially grateful to the many bosses and employees I've been privileged to work with in my career. All have taught me the underlying and most profound principle that runs through every page of this book: **An individual manager's actions matter more than any organizational policy, period.**

Don Blohowiak
Princeton Junction, New Jersey

CONTENTS

PREFACE

page vii

1

YOUR BEHAVIOR MATTERS MORE THAN TECHNIQUES

page 1

2

THE MOST IMPORTANT CORPORATE ASSET WEIGHS THREE POUNDS
AND IS INVISIBLE

page 5

3

IT'S NOT WHAT YOUR EMPLOYEES KNOW THAT COUNTS, IT'S
WHAT THEY IMAGINE

page 7

4

TIE PAYCHECK SIZE TO RESULTS DELIVERED

page 11

5

REMIND PEOPLE OF THEIR HIDDEN COMPENSATION

page 15

6

"BIG MO" TAKES MORE THAN MONEY

page 17

7

THE MOST POWERFUL MOTIVATOR CAN BE SUMMED UP IN A
SINGLE WORD

page 20

8

THE PHYSIOLOGY OF WORK PSYCHOLOGY

page 22

9

CREATE AN EXCLUSIVE MEMBERSHIP

page 24

10

PUBLICLY CONFER APPRECIATION

page 26

11

SAY THANK YOU WITH A GESTURE

page 29

12

CORRECT WITH PRIDE

page 31

13

BE A GENIUS

page 33

14

COMMUNICATE FACE TO FACE

page 34

15

DO AS YOU SAY YOU'D DO

page 38

16

COMPLIMENT WITH YOUR UNDIVIDED ATTENTION

page 41

17

DON'T EXPECT HR TO TRAIN YOUR EMPLOYEES

page 43

18

SPECIFY GOALS NOT METHODS

page 45

19

QUALITY IS A LEARNING EXPERIENCE

page 47

20

HOLD PRODUCTIVE MEETINGS

page 49

21

SEEK GREAT THINKING FROM YOUR EMPLOYEES

page 51

22

ENCOURAGE ACHIEVEMENT

page 55

23

REWARD WITH PERSONAL GROWTH

page 57

24

A MORALE PROBLEM IS A MANAGEMENT PROBLEM

page 58

25

QUESTION RULES AND PROCEDURES

page 61

26

BAN DEPARTMENTS

page 62

27

TEAR DOWN MENTAL ELECTRIC FENCES

page 64

28

PUSH THE STANDARDS

page 68

29

HAVE SOME FUN

page 70

30

TREAT EVERYONE WHO REPORTS TO YOU AS AN INDIVIDUAL

page 72

31

NOT NEGATIVE IS NOT POSITIVE

page 75

32

WHAT'S IMPORTANT GETS BUDGETED

page 77

33

EMBRACE PEOPLE WHO COLOR OUTSIDE THE LINES

page 78

34

GET 'EM TO KISS SOME FROGS

page 80

35

PROVIDE VISIBILITY

page 82

36

ARRANGE FOR A SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT

page 83

37

ENCOURAGE TIME AWAY FROM WORK

page 85

38

PROVIDE TIME TO PURSUE A PERSONAL PROJECT

page 87

39

LET YOUR STARS MOONLIGHT

page 89

40

USE RECOGNITION SPARELY AND PURELY

page 90

41

FIGHT IGNORANCE: GET SMARTER

page 92

42

PURSUE PRIME PERFORMANCE NOT PERFECTION

page 97

43

LEADERSHIP IS INADEQUATE

page 100

44

USE THE ANNUAL REVIEW TO LOOK IN THE MIRROR

page 102

45

MAKE A HABIT OF BREAKING HABITS

page 104

46

DON'T MANAGE BY BUZZWORD

page 107

47

WELCOME DISAGREEMENT

page 109

48

CARRY A PROBLEM AROUND

page 114

49

MEET YOUR IDEA QUOTA

page 115

50

TRUST YOUR GUT

page 117

51

LIVE FOR MORE THAN DAILY BREAD

page 118

52

YOUR PERSONALITY IS COMPETENCE

page 121

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

page 123

CHAPTER 1

YOUR BEHAVIOR MATTERS MORE THAN TECHNIQUES

This book describes ways that you as a boss can influence the work of smart, talented people who think to make their living. Many management books imply that you need only issue a vision statement or publicly affirm warm feelings for the people on the payroll to have them magically perform to your expectations. Little is said about how you as the boss must behave to effect change in employee behavior.

The techniques described between these covers have more to do with how you spend your day as a boss than with the details of what you can do to your employees. The basic premise of this book is simple: *To manage a better staff, become a better manager.*

WHERE DOES *MANAGEMENT* COME FROM?

Were you trained as a manager? You can become a boss with no preparation and not much more qualification. Many who assume authority over or responsibility for others do so ineffectively or even counterproductively. Organizations often reward and thus encourage harsh, even cruel, behavior by bosses whose methods result in short-term effects such as cutting costs, increasing profits, or boosting productivity.

You cannot obtain greatness from a person through threats, though for a short time fear can be an effective motivator to spur increased activity. Longer term, other meth-

ods are far more effective in encouraging improved performance among workers whose productivity depends on producing *thought-based* work, where attitude and motivation affect competence.

MOTIVES MATTER MORE THAN METHODS

If you accept the idea that managers influence the work performance of the people who report to them, then it stands to reason that employees do better work when their managers are better prepared to help them. Tragically, formal management training usually teaches little about positively influencing people and scarcely anything about getting the best thinking or creativity—or even cooperation—from employees.

Most management literature and education seems obsessed with process improvement where the cure for vexing challenges is assumed to lie in defining evermore streamlined and efficient techniques. This mentality suggests that overcoming tough challenges merely requires the right tools. When applied to people, this principle has managers eternally chasing after hot techniques to tweak productivity from the payroll (“Five Easy Steps to Doubling Anyone’s Workload”).

No scientific method exists to get people to give an organization their best thinking, most creative ideas, and commitment of tireless energy. No methodology can squeeze inspired work from someone who does not want to give it.

A manager’s approach to methods often matters more than the methods themselves. That’s why people manage-

ment programs that work marvelously well at one firm don't necessarily transfer well to another; the soul is lost in the transplant. Motive and action are inextricable. Your effectiveness as a manager comes from your influence as an ethical person who cares about the people you manage rather than the power of your position or the craftiness of your methods. When deployed with integrity, the methods described in this book will help people achieve their best. Without earnestness, they are hollow attempts to manipulate.

ACTION BIAS

For many of us, reading intriguing management material or attending seminars is similar to attending religious services. We clap our hands. We sing praises. We may even shout "hallelujah!" And as with religion, we often fail to grasp its greatest benefits because our emphasis is on belief, not practice. When the fleeting celebration is over, we go back into the world just as we did before.

Believing in managing better doesn't make you a better manager. That's why every one of the essays in this book concludes with a series of action steps. These actions are the tools of the **value-adding manager**. *Positive change begins with thinking new thoughts, but it happens by taking new actions.*



ACTION STEPS

- Read this book with a commitment to improving your own performance.
- Write in your own action plans. Use the blank lines

to enrich the action steps that already are listed for you.

CHAPTER 2

THE MOST IMPORTANT CORPORATE ASSET WEIGHS THREE POUNDS AND IS INVISIBLE

In the new world competition, there are two strategies for beating your competitors. First you outthink them, then you outwork them. “Excellence” isn’t enough. “Quality” isn’t enough. Quality and excellence only buy you equilibrium with competent competitors; they do nothing to distinguish your organization from a cadre of customer-wooing competitors. To excel, you must create a corporate culture of constant innovation that ingrains ingenuity and high productivity into the workforce as today’s work ethic.

THE CAPITAL THAT COUNTS

Flesh, blood, and brains, not buildings, turbines, or file servers, determine success. Computers and other machines fail to improve productivity or competitiveness at the point where human ingenuity and judgment must bear on the enterprise. The most advanced technology can’t invent new products, generate innovative competitive strategies, or make customers feel welcome or served.

In our postindustrial world, it is not the capital assets or the number of employees that will determine a company’s fate but rather the intensity of motivation and innovation of its work force. The most important corporate asset weighs only three pounds and is invisible to the unaided eye: the brain in every employee’s head.



ACTION STEPS

- Examine your valuation of assets. Are you counting only depreciable physical assets?
- Honestly assess how your physical assets distinguish your organization from others with which you compete. Do they give you a sustainable competitive edge?
- Think how the unique knowledge and enlightened imagination of your workforce constitutes an irreplaceable and priceless asset.
- Review your investment strategy. Does “human capital” receive a regular and sufficient investment (money, time, priority) to upgrade it? Is your capital budget proportional to your skill development budget?
- _____

CHAPTER 3

IT'S NOT WHAT YOUR EMPLOYEES KNOW THAT COUNTS, IT'S WHAT THEY IMAGINE

From supercomputers to tender chickens to increasing efficiency, ideas are the new currency of commerce: the new capital. The very word *capital* has its roots in the Latin *capitalis*, which means “relating to the head.” So it is quite natural for capitalists to concentrate on the heady matters of creativity and innovation. With the Information Age now a reality, the creation of wealth truly is a creative activity.

Call it brain power, intellectual capital, creative assets, or whatever, thinking is the new competitive weapon. Business moves too fast for you ever to know what you need to know. So it's not just what people on your payroll know that counts, it's what they can imagine.

Creative people are not all painters or novelists anymore than all salespeople are universally gregarious or loquacious. Creative people can be found in all departments in an organization: finance, engineering, data processing, sales, research and development, operations, marketing, and human resources. The ability to generate original thinking has little to do with job function or even formal education.

Your job as a manager is to encourage more free thinkers—people who come up with ideas for improving products and processes without being told (or in spite of being told not to!).