



Collaborations

Volume 1, Issue 3

Autumn 1999

The Ways We Choose

“His story, told with intensity and humor, inspires and empowers others to overcome seemingly insurmountable difficulties and gain a renewed sense of purpose...”

Dave has finally written a book! That may be startling news for those of you who had no idea that he was even contemplating doing so!

After years of “messaging around” with the idea; tons of encouragement from family, friends, and many, many people who have heard him speak; a year of writing, editing, and waging incessant warfare against procrastination.

The Ways We Choose: Lessons for Life from a POW Experience by Dave Carey is scheduled to make its appearance in November.

Dave has documented the life lessons he learned while imprisoned in Hanoi for five and one half years. In this remarkable book Dave relates his experiences as a POW to help people better understand the prison-like aspects they may experience in their personal and professional lives. His personal story, told with intensity and humor, inspires and empowers others to overcome seemingly

insurmountable difficulties and gain a renewed sense of purpose, satisfaction and control over their circumstances.

The life lessons Dave shares can be applied to every aspect of business, relationships and life as a whole to help you make the most out of any situation. After all, in this life we are all going to get “shot down” and for many of us it will happen more than once.

As a highly sought after motivational and leadership speaker, Dave has been inspiring audiences with his story for years. He stresses the choices we all make in every aspect of our work and lives, even when the circumstances are beyond our control.

The Ways We Choose will be available in book stores, through Amazon.com, from BookPartners at 800-895-7323, or by contacting Dave directly through the contact information on the last page of this newsletter.



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Performance Appraisal: Art or Science?

Question...

Performance appraisal is a very uncomfortable task for me. The process feels very vague and subjective. When I talk with my direct reports, their perceptions are not exactly the same as mine. In many instances we end up discussing, and generally disagreeing about,

what was expected and what was done, and whether it was or was not accomplished. Can you cast any light on the “fine art” of assessing performance and performance appraisal?

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Performance Assessment: Art or Science?

Collaborations Response:

We come across many questions about, and uneasiness with, performance appraisals. Our strongest suggestion would be to make the entire evolution less “art” and more “science.”

At the end of the week, month or year there should be no surprises and no uncertainty in either your mind or the mind of the employee whose performance is being evaluated. At all times during the appraisal period the employee should clearly know how he or she is doing. The end of the appraisal period should merely be a matter of documenting what has already been discussed.

The old “I haven't heard from anyone, therefore I must be doing O.K.” just isn't appropriate at best and is disastrous at worst. Everyone wants to do well, and part of a leader/manager’s job is to clearly define “well.”

We suggest the way to get clarity in the process is to involve the employee in the entire process.

At the beginning of the evaluation period sit down with the individual and jointly identify and agree on goals, objectives, and performance criterion which will be expected for a specified time frame. Ask the individual to bring

his thoughts about what he might reasonably expect to achieve with him in writing to your meeting. You, too, should arrive at the meeting with your thoughts prepared, also in writing.

Together, come to agreement about what the evaluation criteria will be for the upcoming performance period. Discuss what performance criteria looks like when it is above or below expectations. The individual can use that to track her own performance throughout the time period. When you meet periodically, you can use those clear, concise expectations as a base for your discussion. You should plan to meet at least quarterly, unless there is a performance problem, in which case you should meet more often.



“The inherent preferences of organizations are clarity, certainty and perfection. The inherent nature of human relationships involves ambiguity, uncertainty, and imperfection. How one honors, balances, and integrates the needs of both is the real trick of feedback.”

• **Richard Pascale and Anthony Athos**

When the performance period ends, you each should write an evaluation and then discuss it together. There won't be any surprises if you've been communicating along the way!

A vague approach to the performance appraisal process creates an uncomfortable and difficult environment for both of you. It also leaves you open to criticism about being “unfair.” To do performance appraisal right takes time and energy, but it's one more joy of leadership!

Team Assessment: The Basics

Do you know a team or group that is less effective than it needs to be? We find it useful to assess teams in three areas in order to determine how to help them. The three areas are “The Basics,” “Group Process,” and “High-Performance.”

Susan recently worked with a team that was having trouble admitting they weren't working well together, but all the signs were there. Conflict was hidden, small groups were communicating only among themselves, and blaming was a common approach to

problems. After taking the Team Assessment, they

- admitted that they hadn't spent time on the basics
- agreed it would be helpful to clarify their goals and roles
- agreed to create a set of ground rules

This won't solve all their problems, but it will certainly give them a common base to work from as they move forward.

In this and the next two newsletters, we will share the Team Assessment.

Team Assessment: The Basics

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These ten questions deal primarily with goals, roles, relationships and meetings. For any team (or group) to work effectively, goals and roles need to be clear, relationships need to be built and meetings need to be well run.

Using the following scale, assess the basics of a team of which you are currently a member or that you lead.

1=Strongly Disagree; 2 =Disagree; 3=Don't Know; 4 =Agree; 5=Strongly Agree

1. ___ The current goals and objectives of this team are clear.
2. ___ The current goals and objectives of this team are relevant.
3. ___ Team members are clear about the team's level of authority in all important areas.
4. ___ Roles and responsibilities of members are clear so that misunderstandings seldom arise about who is responsible for what.
5. ___ The role of the leader is clearly defined and the leader operates accordingly.
6. ___ The team has an agreed-to set of operating guidelines or ground rules and operates according to them.
7. ___ Team meetings are well run -- agenda created and followed, time managed well, people are prepared.
8. ___ Team meetings are characterized by openness to ideas and participation by all members.
9. ___ Team meetings are held at appropriate times, with the right participants using the appropriate vehicle -- face-to-face, voice, electronic, etc.
10. ___ The team provides a supportive environment for its members to realize their uniqueness by allowing for and encouraging individual differences.

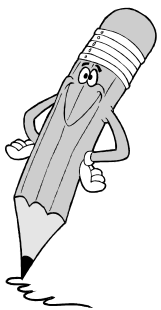
If a team has a 3 or less on any item, that is an area where they need to put some time and energy. You can bring in a facilitator to help, you can facilitate yourself, or you can ask a team member to take the lead.

An excellent resource with tips on how to facilitate some of these discussions is *Team Think*, by Ava Butler (McGraw-Hill, 1996.)

If you would like to purchase copies of the Team Assessment, contact Susan. See contact information on page 4 of the newsletter.

"Wearing the same shirts doesn't make you a team"
Buchholz and Roth

Help with Ground Rules



Sometimes it can be helpful to create ground rules for the following categories:

Meetings: Times, Frequency, Place

Agenda: Who sets? When published? Input invited?

Minutes: How detailed? Who prepares? Who publishes? Who receives?

Attendance: Excused absences, Handling late comers

Decision Process: Consensus, Majority, Sub-group

Leader Role: Expectations of leader?

Facilitator Role: Expectations of the facilitator?

Behavior Norms: Listening, Interruptions, Giving and receiving feedback, empathy

Process Checks: How frequent? Who is responsible?

Confidentiality: What goes outside the group? To whom? How?

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An Easy Process to Create Ground Rules



1. Have people think of the most ineffective meeting they've attended, then list and discuss the behaviors that got in the way. This builds "buy-in" to the need to have ground rules.
2. Have members brainstorm potential ground rules.
3. Clarify all items on the list.
4. Have members vote for 4-7 items.
5. Sort down to the top 6-10 items.
6. Have each person commit to live by the ground rules.
7. Agree that each member is responsible to monitor the ground rules.
8. Regularly assess how well the team is abiding by the ground rules. Adjust behaviors or ground rules as necessary.

If a team needs a "starter set" of Ground Rules, you might select from these:

- One conversation. No side conversations.
- Honor start and stop times.
- Assume every person has a valid reason for their opinions.
- No silent dissent.
- Strive for consensus decisions, rather than unanimity.
- Be clear. Strive for communication rather than for advocacy of your point of view.
- Be Positive
- Appreciate Differences
- Be Respectful of Ideas and Each Other
- Be Honest
- Meet Commitments
- Accept Responsibility and Accountability
- Commit to Do Your Best

