



Collaborations

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...the guide encourages you to consider and understand your relationship with time.

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Book Corner

Quick Guide to Interaction Styles and Time Dynamics by Susan K. Gerke and Karon West

Susan's 3rd book is now available! Susan and a long-time friend and colleague, Karon West, joined together to write this guide about Time.

The motivation for writing the guide was consistent feedback from clients as well as observation of today's "24/7" world. People feel busier and more stressed than ever before. Running late, multi-tasking, and squeezing in "one more thing" are the norm rather than the exception. Technology should help, but often seems to make the situation worse, as people expect an instant response to their call or message.

The *Quick Guide to Interaction Styles and Time Dynamics* helps people learn to make good choices about how to use time more efficiently and effectively. The guide identifies four time dynamics that, when understood, provide clarity on how we each relate to time. The dynamics are:

- o time in relation to people
- o time boundaries
- o priorities
- o informed choices

The guide is designed as a workbook with exercises to stimulate your thinking about time. Rather than the "one time management systems fits all" approach, the guide encourages you to consider and understand your relationship with time. As you explore, you will be able to select the time tools that will be most useful for you in your life.

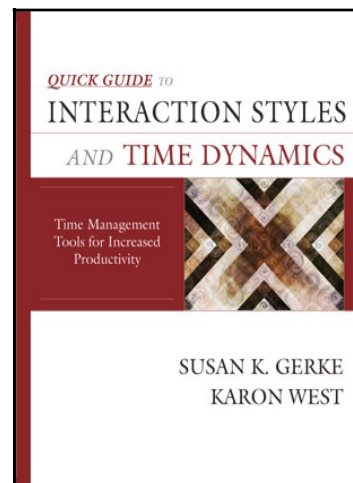
The guide is available now from www.16types.com and will be available from www.amazon.com soon.

Taking the Initiative

Question: *I have tried to encourage people to take appropriate / necessary risks. However, I really don't see many people stepping outside their comfort zones. How can I encourage people to take more initiative, and to go ahead and take a calculated risk once in a while?*

Collaborations response: In the last issue of *Collaborations* we pointed out that risk taking and initiative, while related, are at the same time slightly different subjects. In our previous issue we discussed the risk taking part of the question. In this issue we will discuss taking the initiative.

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Taking the Initiative

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Many times we hear the lament, “Everybody talks about initiative, however, nobody does anything about it!” Our dictionary defines initiative as “the ability to act and make decisions without the help or advice of other people.” Or in the vernacular, seeing something that needs to be done and doing it without being told to do so.

Having people display initiative, or not, is frequently traceable back to the leadership’s position and track record, or the organization’s culture relative to that type of activity. Let’s start with the leadership. (We use the word leadership to indicate everyone in the organizational chain of command, from supervisor to CEO.)

Lots of people taking lots of initiative can be very messy. Things may happen and decisions may be made without leadership’s knowledge, or prior agreement. If you have a high need for control, for being involved in everything that is being done or decided, you probably are aren’t going to be very comfortable with people taking a lot of initiative... and everyone will know that.

So the first obstacle to having people exercise more initiative may well be you!

We suggest that you regularly engage your people in discussions about what “taking the initiative” means to you, and what it means for them in the context of their work and your organization. You could talk about what you and they might be comfortable with as far as “taking the initiative” is concerned. You can probably come up with many examples, both good and bad.

Once people understand and have a feel for areas where they may, or may not, take more initiative, they probably would be much more inclined to do so. It will not happen overnight. Nor will it happen without regular reinforcement and encouragement. Nor will it happen if people aren’t recognized or rewarded for doing so.

By rewarded, we do not mean financially, although sometimes that may be possible and appropriate. By reward we mean that leadership acknowledges actions taken and decisions made. We mean thanking people for seeing things that need to be done and doing them. Leadership needs to refer to examples where people have taken various initiatives and re-enforce the idea that those were good things. Well done!

Those are steps that individual leaders can take. The overall culture of the organization is another, and much more difficult issue to tackle. You as an

individual manager can encourage initiative all you want. However, if the organization’s culture is “people don’t do that around here,” for the most part you will be laboring in vain.

In this issue’s context of encouraging people to take more initiative, organizational culture refers to the written and spoken, as well as the unwritten and unspoken, rules about what is, and is not said and done in your organization. It is the answer to questions like: how do things really get done around here? What are the “sacred cows?” What really

happens when someone steps up on his or her own and demonstrates initiative?

For example, you may know that a memo from the division manager says she wants individual contributors to solve customer problems “on the fly.” However, when someone actually does that, they get very mixed messages from several supervisors because the “culture” dictates that supervisors are always advised prior to any action being taken. That is the “organizational culture.”

Leadership’s ability to influence individuals into taking initiative is impacted by your organization’s

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ON THE WEB ~ Visit www.susangerke.com and www.davecarey.com

Both websites carry all past issues of *Collaborations*. With *Adobe Acrobat Reader 4.0* you can view or download and print the issues.

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culture. The culture may be biased in favor of initiative, or biased against people taking initiative, or anywhere along that continuum.

In general, the culture will have a stronger influence than an individual leader. If the culture is strongly biased toward keeping individuals from taking initiative, you as an individual leader are going to be fighting an uphill battle. You need to realistically assess the culture of your organization. That does not mean that you can't influence people to show initiative. It does mean that it will be significantly more difficult if the culture does not support that kind of activity.

Organizational culture will be the subject of a more in-depth article in the next issue of *Collaborations*.

The Insecure Manager

Corporations have been permitting people to work from home (telecommute) since the early 90's. Some things have changed in those years (technology) and some haven't (lack of trust).

I (Susan) was one of the first at IBM to work from home. I began telecommuting in January of 1993. My manager was initially a little reluctant to let me work at home. IBM had no published guidelines and therefore he had many questions – Who would pay for the dial-up computer line? Was I required to have a separate business telephone line? Would I have to go to the local IBM office to get my mail or would someone send it to me?

Fortunately, my manager and I had worked together for four years and had very good communication and trust. He knew I wouldn't abuse the work-at-home privilege. And we just figured out the logistical challenges as they arose. I was one of the lucky ones. Other managers weren't convinced that people could be trusted to use the time working at home solely for work so wouldn't authorize telecommuting for them.

Now, fast-forward 15 years or so. I deliver many workshops on the subject of leading people who work remotely from their manager, whether from a different corporate office or from home.

Some companies are setting up telecommuting programs for the first time. As I work with managers who are beginning to have people who telecommute, I am surprised to find they are concerned about the same issues that managers were concerned about in the early days of telecommuting -- Are they really working? and How do I know?

Even with all the articles and books on the topic which include evidence of the high productivity of at-home workers, many managers are still afraid that people aren't trustworthy and therefore want to set up extra processes and means of checking up on telecommuters.

A very small number of employees will abuse the privilege to work at home – just as a small number of employees abuse any privilege. The vast majority of employees will not only work productively at home, they will often work harder and give more time and energy to work than if they were in the office.

Managers who struggle with having employees telecommute need to take a serious look at themselves to determine why they don't trust their employees. Figure out the source of your insecurity and let go of it. Then, just as you do with co-located employees, set clear expectations, focus on measuring results and set up regularly scheduled communication for updates.



Susan Gerke

is the president of Gerke Consulting & Development and “helps people work better, together.” Susan's focus since 1989 has been in designing, customizing and implementing leadership and teamwork programs meeting the needs of executives, managers, and employees in a wide number of companies and industries.

Application of her skill and knowledge has been in facilitation, consulting, curriculum development, and coaching. Susan has developed and delivered experiential programs in the areas of *group dynamics, team basics, mentoring, and facilitation skills*. She has worked with global teams and has certified facilitators around the world to deliver management, leadership, and team offerings.



A recognized expert on remote leadership and teaming, Susan is the co-author of *The I in Team ... Accelerating Performance of Remote and Co-located Teams*, and *Quick Guide to Interaction Styles and Working Remotely*.

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As a consultant and coach he focuses on *helping people work together more effectively*. He is an expert in team building, organizational & leadership development.

A graduate of the United States Naval Academy, Dave is a retired Navy Captain. As a Navy pilot he was shot down and spent 5 & 1/2 years as a POW in North Vietnam. His book *The Ways We Choose: Lessons For Life From A POW's Experience* is in it's third printing.



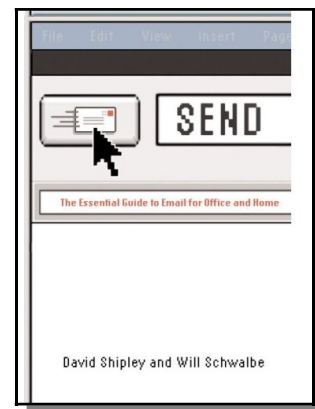
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Email Reading

SEND by David Shipley and Will Schwalbe

Subtitled “The Essential Guide to Email for Office and Home,” this book is an excellent resource for the e-mail challenged. Whether you are trying to learn how to write more effective e-mail or you need to coach someone on using e-mail, this is a great tool.

The authors use humor and some great examples to make their points. And while you will laugh as you read the book, you will also learn some key tips that we all should be using!



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