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Book Corner... *The Next Level* by Scott Eblin

Scott Eblin has provided a wonderful resource for new executive leaders. His belief is that moving to the executive level is among the toughest transitions of any career. Statistics support that belief. According to research conducted by Manchester Associates, 40 percent of new executives fail within eighteen months! This book will help you understand what separates those who make it from those who don't.

Eblin focuses in three key areas:

- 1) Personal Presence
- 2) Team Presence
- 3) Organizational Presence

In each of these areas, Eblin shares the key behaviors and beliefs new executives need to "pick up" and those to "let go of." His advice comes both from his personal experience as well as from many top executives that he has interviewed and/or worked with.

If you are a new executive or anticipate moving into an executive role in the next 6-12 months, this book will be like having your own personal coach. It will help you gain the courage and confidence to let go of behaviors that no longer serve you while picking up new ones that will. If you coach executives, you will find this to be a great tool to use while working with them.

Leaders as Facilitators

Are your facilitation skills what they need to be to be most effective when leading meetings?

We're not talking here about the basics of defining the meeting purpose, setting the agenda, running the meeting and summarizing the actions at the end. While these are very important elements of a meeting, we are talking about the actual facilitation of a meeting.

Specifically, how good are you at knowing and using good processes to solve problems, do effective planning, and make group decisions? How well do you gain people's participation? How well do you manage disruptive participants and handle group conflict? Do you understand group dynamics well enough to provide the level of facilitation the group needs to have a successful outcome to the meeting?

A critical component of effective meetings is a highly competent facilitator. Managing the task as well as the group, and guiding the group toward completion are important skills for the person facilitating the meeting. You may have access to excellent facilitators that can provide the needed skills for your critical meetings. If so, you're lucky. Be sure you utilize this great resource.

If you don't have ready access to facilitators for your most important meetings, then you need to be sure you have the skills yourself.

I (Susan) have a client who recently brought me in to provide facilitation skills training for leaders in their organization. While each participant in the workshop brought some skills with them, each found areas for improvement. Learning together, practicing their new skills on each other and providing feedback to each other provided a rich learning environment. Each participant felt they will be a significantly better facilitator due to the workshop.

Meetings are a significant investment of time and therefore money for an organization. It is critical for that investment to provide a return. Be sure you are providing key individuals in your organization with skills to enable them to facilitate higher quality meetings with increased engagement of meeting participants.

Inside this issue:

| | |
|---|---|
| Book Corner— <i>The Next Level</i> by Scott Eblin | 1 |
| Leaders as Facilitators | 1 |
| How's The Culture of Your Organization? | 2 |
| Live Video Conferencing | 3 |
| Resources—Ideas Into Action Guidebooks | 4 |
| Contacting Us | 4 |

How's the Culture of Your Organization?

The last two issues of *Collaborations* responded to a question about encouraging people to take appropriate, and often necessary, risks as well as encouraging people to take more initiative. Those are two similar but not exactly the same subjects.

Toward the end of the last issue's article "Taking the Initiative" we touched on the impact of an organization's culture in encouraging, or discouraging, people from exercising initiative and taking appropriate risks. (The last two issues are available on our websites at www.susangerke.com and www.davecarey.com/author). In this issue we want to explore "organizational culture" a little more, and offer some thoughts on managing and influencing it.

So what is Organizational Culture?

Organizational culture is the sum total of 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 embodied in the answers to questions like: "How do things really get done around here? What are the "sacred cows"? What really happens when someone takes a reasonable risk and fails? What does it feel like to work here?"

We all have felt the impact of the culture of an organization. As I (Dave) write this, I am flying, and Southwest Airlines immediately springs to mind. Southwest "feels" different from other airlines. If you have flown on Southwest you know what I mean. The difference shows up as joke-cracking flight attendants as well as pilots who taxi the airplanes like they are actually going somewhere and are going to get there on time! Other airlines "feel" different from that. When we interact with an organization, what we experience is all a product of that organization's culture.

Ever lose, or have your luggage damaged? Last winter my snowboard bag –yes, snowboard bag – was destroyed on a Southwest flight to Seattle. I knew something was wrong when Southwest paged me in the baggage claim area! The baggage representative had my bag. It was totaled. She said, "The bag handlers are terribly sorry. They will come and talk with you if you would like." I thought that was novel, at least I had never heard of anything like that offer before. She continued saying, "I'm sure you will need to get all of your gear back to Texas after your visit. I can't do it myself, however, I am going to get authorization to give you a check now."

I imagined that anyone who could do such damage to a virtually bullet-proof bag must be the size of an 800 pound gorilla, so I declined the opportunity to talk with the bag handlers.

The baggage rep did exactly what she said she would do. Thirty minutes later I walked out with cash in hand. Pretty impressive!

(This could be an article about customer service...) The point here is that everything I have described is a reflection of Southwest's culture.

Organizational culture impacts everything. For example, the division manager says she wants individual contributors to solve customer problems on the fly. However, when someone actually does and is reprimanded for not advising the supervisor, it becomes clear that it is a different "organizational culture" from what has been professed.

Large organizations

In a very large organization, an individual manager can encourage initiative. However, if the organization's culture essentially is "people don't do that around here," she may be laboring in vain. In a large organization it is very difficult for any one individual to strongly influence the organization's culture.

On the other hand we don't want to minimize anyone's individual influence and impact. We have all read about, seen and experienced groups that are not an accurate reflection of their organization's culture. Everyone has an impact, and we all choose how we will act, or react in various circumstances. In general terms however, it is hard to "swim against the tide."

If the senior leadership team is fractured, engages in turf battles, lacks trust, selfishly protect themselves, communicates poorly among themselves, *etc.* you may rest assured the organization will accurately reflect all of it.

We have worked with many senior teams in both large and small organizations. We can guarantee that the organization will be a reflection of the senior team – only more so.

Smaller organizations

In general, the smaller the organization the more impact an individual has on the organization's culture. So what we have said above, about individuals and senior teams, is even truer as the size of the organization shrinks.

Who is trying to manage the culture of your organization?

In our experience, the answer to that question is usually "no one." In most places where we have worked no one has ever really tackled that subject. Everyone knows what the culture is of course. They know the spoken, written, unspoken and unwritten rules. The culture has just evolved over time. The senior people and the strongest personalities generally have the most impact – and not always in a positive direction.

Therefore, if you are on a senior leadership team, reading this, an excellent question to be asking yourself is, "What kind of impact am I, are we, having on the culture of our

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.

(Continued from page 2)

organization?” While we know you have a myriad of other demands on your time and energy, we advocate actively working on the culture of your organization. What do you want it to be? What is most important to the organization? How can you emphasize and re-enforce that?

Do you want your organization’s culture to be biased in favor of risk taking and initiative, or biased against risk taking and initiative, or somewhere in between? How can you emphasize and re-enforce that?

Live Video Conference Presentations

Dave Carey’s motivational presentations are now available through *real time video conferencing*. His inspiring presentations, relating lessons learned from his 5&1/2 year POW experience to work and life’s challenges, are now available live through video conferencing technology.

Audiences large and small will enjoy and benefit from Dave’s powerful message thanks to his association with Polycom and The Learning Enhancement Centers. These real time live video presentations are customized to your organization and can be as interactive as your time requirements permit.

Dave is every bit as inspiring and thought provoking via video conferencing as he is in person. Following his first live video presentation he received the following letter:

Dear Dave,

On behalf of the Konocti Unified School District, I want to express my sincere gratitude for the opportunity to hear your message via videoconferencing on August 9, 2007.

Your story is powerful and an inspiration to our management team as we prepare for the opening of school next Monday and cope with our struggles in trust and accountability to each other and the organization.

Your words, “We did what we had to do. We did our best. We chose to grow from the experience” are powerful guidance to us as we work together and lead our individual teams.

Blessings upon you in your important work in this world and thank you for sharing your time and talent with us!

Sincerely,

Louise Nan, Ed.D.

Superintendent

Konocti Unified School District

Taking advantage of live video conferencing will save your organization travel expenses. Plus for a limited time Dave is so certain of his impact through live video conferencing that he will discount his fee in order to prove it to you. As always, Dave guarantees your satisfaction with his presentations – or he will return your fee.

We are excited to be able to make this offer. Contact Dave, dave@davecarey.com or Marcia Snow, marcia@bluefeathermanagement.com, for details and availability. Dave’s video conferencing address is 140.242.16.1##375869.



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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Dave Carey

is a sought after motivational speaker, organizational consultant, and coach. As a motivational speaker, Dave relates his experiences as a P.O.W. with intensity and humor, inspiring others to overcome seemingly insurmountable difficulties and gain a renewed sense of purpose, satisfaction, and control over their circumstances.

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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Resources — Ideas Into Action Guidebooks

Not long ago, I discovered a new source of some excellent tools for people to learn skills such as goal setting, listening, working cross-culturally and more. Center of Creative Leadership has published quite a few booklets in their Ideas Into Action Guidebooks series. These 30-page small format booklets each focus on a specific topic and include specific, practical advice for dealing with the topic at hand. Several have self-assessment tools that help with the learning.

Some specific guides that I've read and have either used with or recommended to clients are:

- Active Listening
- Setting Your Development Goals
- Managing Conflict with Your Boss
- Ongoing Feedback
- Communicating Across Cultures

You can find these \$10 booklets at www.ccl.org/publications

We'd Like to Hear From You

If you'd like to contribute to Collaborations or if you have a question or topic for us, we'd love to hear from you. Send an e-mail to sgerke@sbcglobal.net with your ideas or questions. We will respond based on topics of most interest.