

How We Decide

By Jonah Lehrer, 2009 HMH Books

Good news- Very good book! Nicely written with lots of stories, analogies and examples. Easy to read in a few evenings or plane or train rides. Rightfully on many best seller lists.

Bad news- A little heady and techno-medical when the author (over) explains the brain.

Good news- There are a few simple, immediately usable applications revealed in this book and as usual, I have gleaned the best and most practical ideas from it, and offer them to you. Hopefully you can put them to use right away in your current decision making.

Summary:

People are making very difficult decisions these days about their careers, businesses, finances, and futures. And they are making them in some very difficult times.

I have been teaching workshops on Problem Solving and Decision Making for over 25 years and I thought I knew it all, or at least enough. This book reminds me that there is always more to learn and it also fills a nagging gap I have had for some time. Rational decision making where you first list your objectives or criteria, then evaluate or weigh the criteria, and then screen and score your alternatives through your "musts" and "weighted wants" has served me well. But sometimes your feelings and intuition really do matter and sometimes, when time is really short, we need another approach, or at least a quicker approach.

When New England Patriots Quarterback, Tom Brady, had twenty-nine seconds left in Super Bowl XXXVI and needed to move the ball another thirty yards to have a chance to win the game with a field goal (which he ultimately did), he had to make some big decisions in a matter of seconds. And when huge, fast defensive linemen were about to cream him, he had to make really key decisions in split seconds. When Captain Chesley Sullenberger brought USAir Flight #1549 down safely in the Hudson River, he too had to make a number of decisions in a matter of seconds and his were life-critical!

And when a surgeon has to re-connect an aorta or transplant a heart before the patient bleeds out, he or she is making those life-critical decisions on a regular basis. So what do these decision makers have in common? Good DNA? Nerves of steel? Luck? Maybe all of those, but they absolutely have had a lot of practice under pressure. They learned from that practice and they relied on their instincts to save the day.

Before 1990, 65% of all airline accidents were caused by pilot error. Since 1990, that number has dropped to under 30%. Why? Flight simulators and CRM. Flight simulators have allowed pilots to practice under simulated pressure and learn a great deal about decision making. And CRM (Cockpit Resource Management), the practice of voicing opinions and sharing info in the face of on-board problems to reach team decisions, has become commonplace. In fact, surgical teams now use a similar methodology nicknamed "see it, say it, fix it" when they jointly decide on actions to take to solve problems and save lives.

The author points out in great detail that different parts of our brain kick in at certain times when decision making goes well. He also points out how things can go awry when we use the wrong parts of our brains at the wrong times. A great example of this was Jean Van de Veld in the 1999 British Open golf championship. Van de Veld had a three stroke lead going into the 72nd and final hole. He could get a double-bogey six (score two over par) on the last hole and still win. But....he choked. He looked nervous, sweat poured off of him even in a cool breeze, when he drove his ball deep into

the rough. His second shot was no better and his third was worse, landing in the water. He was thinking too much. He took a penalty, chipped onto the green, putted twice and got a seven. Three over par on the hole, tied with two other golfers and forced into a playoff which he eventually lost. He thought too much, used the wrong parts of his brain, and didn't rely on his instincts! Maybe decision making isn't as rational as I thought!

Applications:

1. Continue to use everything I taught you regarding rational process

A. In problem solving:

- Specify the problem, listing both the is and is not's
- Look for distinctions and changes
- Identify and test for true cause

B. In decision making:

- List objectives or criteria first, then separate musts from wants and weigh your wants
- Generate alternatives, screen them through your musts and score them against your weighted wants
- Then assess risks

C. In planning:

- List the steps in your plan and identify potential problems
- List causes for those potential problems
- Plan preventive and contingent actions

2. Use the CRM (Cockpit Resource Management) Approach

- Work big problems and decisions as a team
- Get input and encourage open communication regarding problem solving and decision making
- Use the "see it, say it, fix it" methodology

3. Think like an NFL Quarterback, an Airline Pilot or a Surgeon

- Practice under (simulated) pressure however and whenever you can
- Debrief and learn from your mistakes (and your successes)
- Revise and codify your processes from your lessons learned

4. Trust your instincts (especially you Myers Briggs Intuitive "N" types)

- Your intuition is usually based on past experience or some other reality
- It isn't really some mysterious "inner voice"

5. Don't over think problems or decisions

- Too much of even a good thing can make us choke
- Remember Jean Van de Veld in the 1999 British Open

And Finally:

I work with many clients on Decision Making, Communication, Team Building, Conflict, Executive Coaching and Organization Change issues and have already put aspects of this book to use with some of them. I intend to continue using what I learn about this topic with more clients in the future. If you want more thoughts about this book, or want to add your own, check out my blog. You can visit it at <http://richsteel.blogspot.com/> This opinion and others are posted on my web site: www.rsbc.com To talk more about this and other topics, e-mail me (Rich Steel) at rsbvc@aol.com or call me at my office on 610 388 3680 or on my cell at 610 324 8466.

Uncommon Thinking for Uncommon Times

Andrew Jackson, James Stockdale, and Today's Business Leaders

Good news- I read a new book over the holidays, re-read another book, talked with some clients recently, watched the inauguration and did some of my own thinking.

Bad news- The economy is in its worst shape since the Great Depression!

Good news- I have provided some thoughts that might help.

Summary:

These are uncommon times. "That we are in the midst of crisis is now well understood. Our nation is at war, against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred. Our economy is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some, but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the nation for a new age. Homes have been lost; jobs shed; businesses shuttered. Our health care is too costly; our schools fail too many; and each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen our adversaries and threaten our planet.

These are the indicators of crisis, subject to data and statistics. Less measurable but no less profound is a sapping of confidence across our land — a nagging fear that America's decline is inevitable, and that the next generation must lower its sights. Today I say to you that the challenges we face are real. They are serious and they are many. They will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this, America — they will be met." President Barack Obama from his inaugural address. 1/20/2009
Optimism counts and time will tell if it is well founded, but what we know is that these are uncommon times. And they call for uncommon thinking, and uncommon action.

The new book I read over the holidays was American Lion by Jon Meacham. The seventh president of the United States, Andrew Jackson, a scrappy frontier lawyer-turned-gentleman planter, was best described by a childhood wrestling mate: "I could throw him three times out of four, but he would never stay thrown." As I learned more about this "Lion", I found that I disagree with a number of his policies and actions (especially regarding Native Americans), but he was a resilient son of a gun, and a very good president.

The skinny, rangy Jackson was orphaned at 14. He was the only president ever to attack a would-be assassin, and the only one with a musket ball lodged in his chest! In Jackson's uncommon times, when South Carolina was already thinking of seceding and the economy was in dire straits, when he had recently become a widow, when he first won the popular vote but lost the electoral vote for president, ran again and won, when his vice-president quit, he didn't just sit back, he took action. He put together the first real cabinet. He fully paid off the national debt. He tried to abolish the Electoral College and the Federal Reserve System, and advised his citizens in their uncommon times to "take time to deliberate; but when the time for action arrives, stop thinking and go in." Uncommon thinking for uncommon times!

The book I re-read was Courage Under Fire by James B. Stockdale.

You might remember James Stockdale as a candidate for Vice President of the United States in the 1992 presidential election, on Ross Perot's independent ticket.

You might also remember his infamous vice-presidential debate. Stockdale was not informed that he would participate in the debate until a week before the event. He had no formal preparation for it, unlike his opponents Al Gore and Dan Quayle. Stockdale opened the debate by saying, "Who am I? Why am I here?" Initially, the rhetorical questions drew applause from the

audience, seeming to be a good-natured acknowledgment of his relatively unknown status. However, his unfocused style for the rest of the debate made him appear confused and disoriented.

You might not know that Vice Admiral James Bond Stockdale was also one of the most highly decorated officers in the history of the United States Navy. Stockdale led aerial attacks during the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Incident. On his next deployment, while Commander of a Carrier Air Wing, he was shot down over enemy territory and became the highest-ranking naval officer held as a prisoner of war in Vietnam.

He was held as a prisoner of war for the next seven years. Locked in leg irons in a bath stall, he was routinely tortured and beaten. When told by his captors that he was to be paraded in public, Stockdale slit his scalp with a razor to purposely disfigure himself so his captors could not use him as propaganda. When they covered his head with a hat, Stockdale beat himself with a stool until his face was swollen beyond recognition. He told them in no uncertain terms that they would never exploit him. When he heard that other prisoners were dying under the torture, he slit his wrists and told them that he preferred death to submission.

He was awarded 26 combat decorations, including the Medal of Honor and four Silver Stars. Eventually, during the late 1970s, he served as President of the Naval War College. In a widely read business book by James C. Collins called Good to Great, Collins writes about a conversation he had with Stockdale regarding his coping strategy during his (most uncommon) period in the Vietnamese POW camp.

"I never lost faith in the end of the story, I never doubted not only that I would get out, but also that I would prevail in the end and turn the experience into the defining event of my life, which, in retrospect, I would not trade."

When Collins asked who didn't make it out, Stockdale replied:

"Oh, that's easy, the optimists. They were the ones who said, 'We're going to be out by Christmas.' And Christmas would come, and Christmas would go. Then they'd say, 'We're going to be out by Easter.' And Easter would come, and Easter would go. And then Thanksgiving, and then it would be Christmas again. And they died of a broken heart."

Stockdale then added: *"This is a very important lesson. You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end—which you can never afford to lose—with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be."*

Witnessing this philosophy of duality, Collins went on to describe it as the "Stockdale Paradox". **Uncommon thinking for uncommon times!**

One client discussion was with Tony D'Alessandro, IT Director at Rohm and Haas.

Tony and I discussed the pending purchase of Rohm and Haas, a one hundred year-old, \$9 billion specialty chemicals company, by Dow, a one hundred and twelve year-old \$54 billion chemical company. When I asked Tony how he was dealing not only with this economic downturn, but also the uncertainties associated with the impending purchase, he said, "It feels odd being the bought company, vs. the buying company, but I see this as an opportunity and combined with the economic downturn, we intend to work even harder to support the Rohm & Haas businesses of today and the combined Rohm & Haas/Dow businesses of tomorrow. We have specific goals and intend to meet them. We will also be offering some personal branding



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seminars for our people to help them through this mess, whether they stay with us or not." Uncommon thinking for uncommon times!

The other client discussion was with Rick Hepperla, VP and Regional Division Manager, Automation Products, ABB North America

With over \$30 billion in annual sales, ABB is the world's leading power and automation technology company. As recently as last May, ABB was planning to hire 120,000 more people over the next five years. Today, with the economy in its current state, ABB has a freeze on hiring. When I asked Rick how he was dealing with this economic downturn, he said, "*The Automation Products business has enough back orders to keep us going for 8-10 months, but in the mean time it just gets down to basic blocking and tackling. We have to continue doing what we do well even better; innovating, producing, marketing, selling and serving our customers. We have to keep the big picture in mind and always think strategically, but in these uncertain times, we need to also be very tactical. You can't change the direction of the wind, but you can trim your sails. With that in mind, we have already taken some cost reductions, but with our goals clear, our strategies sound and our tactical activity robust, we intend to come out of this thing stronger than we went into it.*" **Uncommon thinking for uncommon times!**

Applications:

I don't know about you, but I don't anticipate a bail-out or any part of the trillion dollars Congress is about to spend to help us, so I am...

- Staying positive like our new president. That's half the battle.
- Learning from Andrew Jackson: Taking time to deliberate; but when the time for action arrives, stopping my thinking and going in.
- Remembering the Stockdale Paradox: "Never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end ...with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be."
- Like Tony D'Alessandro, working harder, and doing more for my people (clients), even in the face of huge change and challenges.
- Like Rick Hepperla, blocking, tackling, trimming my sails, staying tactical and aiming to come out of this thing stronger than I went in.

And Finally:

If you want more thoughts about all this, or want to add your own, check out my blog. You can visit it at <http://richsteel.blogspot.com/>

Or to talk more about this and other topics, e-mail me (Rich Steel) at rsbvc@aol.com or call me at my office on 610 388 3680 or on my cell at 610 324 8466.

Good news- The books written by Senators Biden, McCain, and Obama are good books and get good reviews! They are mostly well-written. Some are classics! And, of course, all are now very timely.

Bad news- They are not all great books, and some are difficult to slog through. And, I couldn't find an actual book that Sarah Palin wrote, just a biography.

Good news- No matter what your politics, these leaders share some characteristics of leadership that I think we can all learn from and apply in our lives at work and at home, and as usual, I have skimmed them and gleaned what I think are their best and most practical ideas, and offer some applications to you. Hopefully you can put them to use right away.

More good news- I am a real-life, registered Independent and intend to keep this opinion piece positive and non-political!

Summary:

I am a baby-boomer and have been around for a number of presidents (and vice-presidents). I remember lots of gaffs and problems, of course, but I positively remember:

- John Kennedy for his vigor and handling the Cuban Missile Crisis and Space Race
- Lyndon Johnson for his homespun style and Civil Rights efforts
- Richard Nixon for his tenacity and opening the door to China
- Gerald Ford for picking up the pieces after Watergate
- Jimmy Carter for his Mid-East peace efforts and his Habitat for Humanity
- Ronald Reagan as the "Great Communicator" and for ending the cold war
- George H.W. Bush for his "Thousand Points of Light"
- Bill Clinton for his charisma and a booming economy and
- George W. Bush for handling the tragedy of 9/11/2001

All of these Presidents lead America and all are remembered not only for what they did but also how they lead. Of these nine, four were Vice Presidents too, so as we look at the potential leaders of America for the next four years, it is worth looking not only at John McCain and Barack Obama, but also at Joe Biden and Sarah Palin. What will they be remembered for? What do they have in common now? What lessons can we learn from them, so far, that might help us as leaders?

I was in high school and college and remember the John McCain P.O.W. hero story when it happened. I have lived in or very near the state of Delaware and remember when Joe Biden's wife and daughter were killed in that tragic car accident 36 years ago. I watched as Barack Obama addressed the Democratic Convention in 2004 and said to my wife, "That guy might be president someday!" And I remember the "bridge to nowhere" and the Hockey Mom Governor who went right back to work after her fifth child was born. After reading (parts of) their books and examining their quotes, I think they all share or at least combine to make up this list of leadership traits. Following are those traits, with an example for each from those seeking the highest offices in our land. I could have chosen other quotes as examples, since all four candidates have had plenty to say over the years, but I chose these.

1. Resiliency/Perseverance (John McCain from Faith of My Fathers)

After five years in torturous captivity in Hanoi, North Viet Nam: Eventually, [the Vietnamese asked if I considered their release offer. "What is your answer?" "No, thank you." "Why?" "American prisoners cannot accept parole, or amnesty or special favors. We must be released in the order of our capture. My final answer is no."

2. Vision (Barack Obama from The Audacity of Hope)

A line in my speech at the '04 Democratic National Convention struck a chord. "There is not a black America and white America, a Latino America or an Asian America--there is the United States of America." -an America that fulfills Dr. King's promise that we be judged not by the color of our skin but by the content of our character.

I have no choice but to believe this vision. As the child of a black man and white woman, born in the melting pot of Hawaii, with a sister who is half-Indonesian, but who is usually mistaken for Mexican, and a brother-in-law and niece of Chinese descent, with some relatives who resemble Margaret Thatcher and others who could pass for Bernie Mac, I never had the option of restricting my loyalties on the basis of race or measuring my worth on the basis of tribe.

3. Drive/Energy (Sarah Palin from her RNC Vice-Presidential Acceptance Speech)

What's the difference between a Hockey Mom and a pit bull? Lipstick!

4. Communication (Joe Biden from Promises to Keep)

My childhood impediment was a stutter. When I was at home with my brothers and sister, hanging with neighborhood friends, or shooting the bull on the ball field, I was fine, but when I got thrown into a new situation or a new school, had to read in front of the class, or wanted to ask out a girl, I just couldn't do it. My freshman year, because of the stutter, I got an exemption from public speaking. Everybody knew it. It was like having to stand in the corner with the dunce cap. There were days I wondered: How would I ever bear it?

It's a funny thing to say, but even if I could, I would not wish away the darkest days of the stutter. That impediment ended up being a godsend for me. Carrying it strengthened me and made me a better person. The very things it taught me turned out to be invaluable lessons for my life as well as my chosen career.

5. Honesty (John McCain from Why Courage Matters)

Most of us accept social norms: that it's right to be honest, to respect the rights of others, to have compassion. But accepting the appropriateness of these qualities, wanting them, and teaching our children to want them aren't the same as actually possessing them. Accepting their validity isn't moral courage. How honest are we if we tell the truth most of the time & stay silent only when telling the truth might get us fired or earn us a broken nose? We need moral courage to be honest all the time.

6. Empathy/Perspective (Barack Obama from Audacity of Hope)

During the early part of my US Senate race, no blinding insights emerged from months of conversation. What struck me was how much of what (people) believed seemed to hold constant across race, region, religion, and class. I told them that government couldn't solve all their problems. But with a slight change in priorities we could make sure every child had a decent shot at life and meet the challenges we faced as a nation.

7. Managing Change (Joe Biden from Promises to Keep)

[Just after Biden's 30th birthday, after his election but before his inauguration into the Senate, he was informed his family had been in a traffic accident.] I kept telling myself that everything was going to be OK, but the minute I got to the hospital & saw my brother's face, I knew the worst had happened. My three children had been in the car with my wife when the accident happened. Neilia had been killed & so had our baby daughter. The boys were alive.

Washington & the Senate had no hold on me. I was supposed to be sworn in, in two weeks, but I could not bear to imagine the scene without Neilia. I told the Senate majority leader, Mike Mansfield, I wasn't going to be a Senator. Mansfield told me I owed it to Neilia to be a Senator. My wife had worked too hard for me to kick it away. Give me six months, Joe, Sen. Mansfield kept saying. So I agreed. Six months.

8. Charisma (Sarah Palin from her State of the State Address 1/15/08)

We are on the same team, if we have got the same goal. With so much opportunity in Alaska, let's look at challenges like we do in our own families: save money, spend wisely, and we will secure our tomorrow. Invest in solid foundations like education and deferred maintenance. Pull together, (don't) tear down. Be positive. Respect our treasured past, but look forward now. These are leadership characteristics expected by those who elect us to lead, to serve, to work for Alaskans. What a responsibility we have!

9. Decision Making/Judgment (Joe Biden from Promises to Keep)

After I finished an interview on the morning of 9/11, my cell phone rang. President Bush was on the line. "I just watched you, and I'm really proud of you. You were saying the right things." When I asked him when he was heading to Washington, he said the intelligence community told him he shouldn't. I recalled a story about the leader of the French resistance, Charles de Gaulle, near the close of World War II. When France was liberated, there was a parade down the Champs-Elysees in Paris, led by de Gaulle. As they walked, shots rang out, and everyone hit the ground except de Gaulle. He continued to walk ramrod straight. With that one defiant action he lifted France off its knees. "Mr. President, come back to Washington," I said. [President Bush famously did].

10. Courage (John McCain from Why Courage Matters)

We are taught to understand, correctly, that courage is not the absence of fear, but the capacity for action despite our fears. The stories cherished most by all sinners whose consciences are not permanently mute concern the life-redeeming act of courage. They're not, however, as abundant in real life as they are in fiction. Better to look to the lives of good men and women who in a crucible risked or sacrificed their own security for someone else.

Applications:

Let's keep the applications very simple. You wouldn't be on my BVC Opinion distribution list unless you were very good leaders and demonstrated many or all of these ten characteristics already. So, here is a simple, but hopefully helpful suggestion:

1. Assess yourself against this list of ten characteristics and pick one that doesn't or two that don't score as high as the others for whatever reason. If you choose "decision making" for example, google it, learn more about it, follow the lead of others who are better at it, take a course on it, read a book on it, whatever, do something to get better at it!

2. Then pick another one, "charisma" for example. We can get better at all of these, even honesty and charisma. Again, look at others who have charisma, learn from them, dress better, look better, work on your image, be more confident, friendly, articulate, whatever it takes.

3. If you want to be President (I mean a better leader) and you agree that developing these characteristics might help, then self-assess, learn more and work to get better!

And Finally:

I work with many clients on these leadership traits and I am working on a couple of them, myself. And I intend to continue using what I learn with more clients in the future. If you want more thoughts about these books, or want to add your own, check out my blog. You can visit it at <http://richsteel.blogspot.com> This opinion and others are posted on my web site: www.rsbsvc.com

To talk more about this and other topics, e-mail me (Rich Steel) at rsbvc@aol.com or call me at my office on 610 388 3680 or on my cell at 610 324 8466.

Good news- Great book! A classic! 94 pages with drawings. Easy to read in an evening.

Bad news- We need the lessons from it all too often.

Good news- There are simple, immediately usable applications revealed in this book and as usual, I have gleaned the best and most practical ideas from it, and offer them to you. Hopefully you can put them to use right away.

Summary:

We all react to change differently. In the classic book, Who Moved My Cheese, four imaginary characters (two mice named Sniff and Scurry, and two little people the same size as mice, named Hem and Haw) are intended to represent the simple and complex parts of ourselves, regardless of our age, gender, race or nationality.

The main characters live together in a maze and set the stage for a clear and straightforward metaphor that demonstrates several approaches to change that we find in society today. It is easy to find your own personal habits present in the characters depicted in the story.

1. Sometimes we may act like Sniff, who sniffs out change early
2. Sometimes we act like Scurry, who scurries into action in the face of change
3. Some of us act like Hem, who denies and resists change as he fears it will lead to something worse and
4. Some of us act like Haw, who learns to adapt in time when he sees that changing leads to something better
5. Whatever parts of ourselves we choose to use, we all share something in common: a need to find our way in the maze and succeed in changing times.

Applications:

1. **Change happens**
They keep moving the cheese
2. **Anticipate change**
Get ready for the cheese to move
3. **Monitor change**
Smell the cheese often, so you know when it is getting old
4. **Adapt to change quickly**
The quicker you let go of old cheese, the sooner you enjoy new cheese
5. **Change**
Move with the cheese
6. **Enjoy change**
Savor the adventure and taste the new cheese
7. **Be ready to quickly change again and again**
They keep moving the cheese

And Finally:

I work with many clients on Communication, Team Building, Conflict, Executive Coaching and Organization Change issues and have already put aspects of this book to use with some of them. I intend to continue using what I learn about non-verbal communication with more clients in the future. If you want more thoughts about this book, or want to add your own, check out my blog. You can visit it at <http://richsteel.blogspot.com> This opinion and others are posted on my web site: www.rsbc.com

To talk more about this and other topics, e-mail me (Rich Steel) at rsbvc@aol.com or call me at my office on 610 388 3680 or on my cell at 610 324 8466.

Good news- If you're tired of hearing me say, "if your arms are crossed, you're in a closed position and likely in a defensive mode" this may be the body language book for you! Did I really say that?? Anyway, the material in this book was drawn from current academic research, rather than rehashed material from the 1970s. The author never talks down to his audience, but rather presents the material with just the right amount of complexity to convey the full meaning of his subject, without getting bogged down in a lot of behavioral jargon.

Bad news- It is kind of like a textbook and, like most textbooks, could be a little shorter.

Good news- There are loads of down-to-earth, immediately usable strategies revealed in this book and as usual, I have gleaned the best and most practical ideas from it, and offer you some meaningful applications. Hopefully you can put them to use in three minutes if not the three seconds the author claims!

Summary:

Doing business is a lot like playing poker; you make calculated risks and tough decisions based on the best information you have. In poker or business, it always helps to know what the other person is thinking. Are they for real or not? Are they telling you the truth, or just telling you what you want to hear? Whether you're negotiating a deal with a client or collaborating on a project with a colleague, knowing what the other person is thinking will always give you an edge and even better, enhance the communication going on.

The Secret Language of Business reveals the secrets of body language and nonverbal communication. Successful professionals need more than just good communication skills. They also need the ability to interpret the nonverbal signals that everyone displays. The author demonstrates how to master and manipulate our own body language, read the body language of others, and influence people through new skills and perception. No matter what business you're in, this is a valuable guide to achieving more in life and business.

The author reveals the basics of body language and how they expose and influence attitudes, actions, and outcomes. Everyone conveys information through body language, whether they know it or not. Interpreting body language isn't magic, but rather a science you can master. The book explores the meaning of what people wear and the symbols they surround themselves with. It also details the importance of various contexts and environments in which communications take place.

Non-verbal communication happens deliberately and consciously as well as spontaneously and unconsciously, and it happens as the sender and as the receiver

- Children, teenagers, young adults and expressive, extroverted adults exhibit the most spontaneous non-verbal behaviors
- More reserved, introverted adults are less spontaneous or have learned to be so

There are six main categories of body language:

- Repeating (what someone else is doing)
- Conflicting (with others)
- Complementing (staying in synch)
- Substituting (other non-verbals)
- Accenting/Moderating (for emphasis)
- Regulating (not going too far)

Applications:

(some a little more whacky than others, but all usable)

The basics still matter

- Non-verbals represent up to 90% of face-to-face communication
- Closed body positions really do mean that communication is being shut down
- Open positions, palms up, etc. mean that people are listening
- Gestures really count. Shrugs and hand movements mean a lot. "Palms up" is a good sign. "Palms down" is not.
- Touching comes in four categories: Professional, Social, Friendship and Intimacy. Be careful. Know where you are at all times!
- Posture matters too; head, shoulders, arms, hips and legs say a lot. Aim for openness.

People might be lying if:

- Their normal foot position and movement changes (we have learned to control most other parts of our anatomy when telling a lie)
- The size of their pupils changes (either getting larger or smaller)
- They DON'T stumble over their words, sequence or chronology (since we all stumble a bit and a rehearsed lie can come out pretty cleanly)

Not everyone is the same

- Culture really affects non-verbal behavior. This applies to personal space, touching, eye contact, gestures and more. Be aware of people's cultural backgrounds.

Proxemics (personal space) differs.

There are four areas of space:

- Intimate space (0-18 inches)
- Personal space (18 inches to four feet)
- Social space (four feet to 12 feet)
- Public space (12 feet to 25 feet and beyond)
- Men stand and sit further away from others for comfort
- Women stand and sit closer for comfort
- Women sit further away from men for comfort
- Know your own "bubble" and respect others'

What people wear speaks volumes

- Most people want to blend into or match with their work environment, whether it is conservative, casual, industrial or academic.
- Be aware of how you look at all times, dress appropriately and pay attention to others too.

So does what their work space looks like

- If you want to be seen as organized, focused, friendly, open, etc., then make sure your work space reflects these characteristics
- The opposite applies as well and people will make assumptions and judgments

First impressions

- People form opinions of you instantly without a single spoken word
- To make a good first impression dress neatly and appropriately, make sure you are clean and fresh, make good eye contact, walk up to the person confidently, smile, say hello and reach out to shake hands and shake firmly. Stand about four feet away and turn slightly sideways to avoid an aggressive stance.



The Secret Language of Business: How to Read Anyone in 3 Seconds or Less

By Kevin Hogan

Meetings

- Decide where to sit; at the head if you are the leader, beside rather than directly across from someone with whom you are likely to disagree, and not in the back of the room
- Sit up. Don't slouch. Pay attention. Carry as little as possible with you so you don't look disorganized.
- Follow the meeting ground rules, both verbal and non-verbal.

Is it influence or manipulation?

- All of these tips are intended to enhance communication and personal influence
- Do NOT overuse or inappropriately use any of them to manipulate

And Finally:

I work with many clients on Communication, Team Building, Conflict, Executive Coaching and Organization Change issues and have already put aspects of this book to use with some of them. I intend to continue using what I learn about non-verbal communication with more clients in the future. If you want more thoughts about this book, or want to add your own, check out my blog. You can visit it at <http://richsteel.blogspot.com> This opinion and others are posted on my web site: www.rsbc.com

To talk more about this and other topics, e-mail me (Rich Steel) at rsbc@aol.com or call me at my office on 610 388 3680 or on my cell at 610 324 8466.

Good news- Very good article; easy to read, simple principles and filled with practical examples and lessons. I came upon it through a client and friend at Microsoft and have already applied learnings from it with two other clients (ABB and Wilmington Trust Bank).

Bad news- It’s a little slanted toward professional service firms, but only a little. It’s pretty easy to translate and apply to other kinds of organizations.

Good news- As usual, I have gleaned the best and most practical ideas from it, and offer you some meaningful applications. Hopefully they are helpful and timely.

Summary:

Professional service firms (PSFs), like so many other companies, are juggling the modern challenges of global competition, increased regulation, and rapid employee turnover. In a people-oriented industry, attrition has special import. DeLong and Gabarro, of Harvard Business School, along with former Morgan Stanley and Ernst & Young executive Lees, argue that a PSF (and other organizations) can gain a much-needed competitive edge by renewing its focus on mentoring. The authors’ in-depth interviews with professionals from more than 30 PSFs have yielded four principles for firms to heed as they rediscover this lost art.

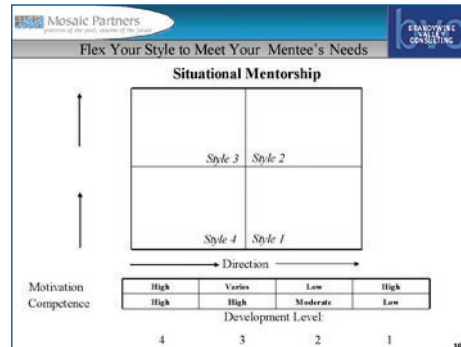
Principle One: Mentoring is Personal. Rather than only relying on standardized programs, mentors must also frequently, and fairly provide authentic advice and nurturing. Partners at PSFs know how to use their ample people skills effectively with clients; the benefits of using them with junior colleagues are even greater.



Principle Two: Not Everyone is an A Player. A small dose of attention given to a B player goes at least as far as a large one offered to an A player. Since B players constitute about 70% of PSF staff, that’s time well spent.



Principle Three: Choice Assignments are in Short Supply, which limits the number of learning opportunities available for associates. Good alternatives include shadowing senior professionals on assignments and taking on research or other projects that are not client-related but that nonetheless build expertise.



Principle Four: Mentoring is a Two-Way Street. Protégés should not only learn from their senior counterparts, but also be taught to attract mentors, and to co-mentor one another.

Applications:

(for each of the principles)

Principle One: Mentoring is Personal. The authors refer to mentoring as a lost art. It may not really be a lost art, but here are 10 tips I have learned over the years regarding mentoring that might add some science to the art:

- Be authentic and vulnerable with your mentee. Don’t try to be anything or anyone else. They chose you for who you are!
- Expand your mentee’s thinking. Mentoring really can be a life-long experience; assimilating into new situations, career planning, technical learning, networking.

(See Lifetime Mentoring Model below)

- Change your mentee’s perspective prior to changing their behavior.
- Help them build on strengths, don’t focus on weaknesses.
- Expand their comfort zone (and yours).
- Plan and manage mentoring meetings like you would any other meeting.
- Flex your style to meet mentee’s needs. (See Situational Mentorship-Model)
- Act as your mentee’s brand manager: help her/him focus on passions, greatness and stretch goals; (Linked In, My Space, U Tube, etc.). (See 3 Circle Model)
- Facilitate discussions, don’t solve problems.
- Practice real mentoring skills; listen first.

Principle Two: Not Everyone is an A Player. No offense, but there really is a bell shaped curve of people in most organizations; some A performers, lots of B’s and some C’s. The A’s get most of the attention in formal mentoring programs. Some really benefit from the attention, some don’t really want it or think they need it, and some like the attention but still leave. Spend time with you’re A’s, but spend some quality time mentoring the B’s too. They really matter!!

Principle Three: Choice Assignments are in Short Supply. Think creatively. Maybe a routine assignment for someone is a choice assignment for someone else. Trade people for awhile. Get a project off the back burner. Ask your people what they think might be a choice assignment before you start assuming and handing them out. Push, stretch, think out of the box.

Principle Four: Mentoring is a Two-Way Street. Pay it forward, make sure your people pay it forward, and expect to learn something yourself too!

And Finally:

I work with many clients on Mentoring, Executive Coaching, Career Development and Organization Change issues and have already put aspects of this article to use with some of them. I intend to continue using these principles (and my own) with more clients in the future. If you want more thoughts about this article, or want to add your own, check out my blog. You can visit it at <http://richsteel.blogspot.com> This opinion and others are posted on my web site: www.rsbc.com

To talk more about this and other topics, e-mail me (Rich Steel) at rsbc@aol.com or call me at my office on 610 388 3680 or on my cell at 610 324 8466.

Good news- Very good, easy enough to read and filled with very valuable team, life, organizational, relationship and leadership examples and lessons. I came upon it in preparation for working with a client company's conflict situation, used aspects of it, and it really made a difference with them! My last BVC Opinion was on Lencioni's The Five Dysfunctions of a Team. That book had a pyramid model for team development that had trust at its base. Covey and Merrill's book picks up where that one left off and gives some unique thoughts and suggestions regarding trust that I had not previously considered.

Bad news- This Steven Covey is the son of the more famous Steven Covey and the book seems to have been cobbled together a bit from Dad's thoughts, the son's thoughts and co-author Rebecca Merrill's thoughts. It also has a zillion testimonials in the beginning pages, makes the main points early and could have been simpler and shorter.

Good news- As usual, I have gleaned the best and most practical ideas from it, and offer you some meaningful applications. Hopefully they are helpful and timely.

Summary:

The one thing that changes everything

There is one thing that is common to every individual, relationship, team, family, organization, nation, economy and civilization throughout the world - one thing which, if removed, will destroy the most powerful government, the most successful business, the most thriving economy, the most influential leadership, the greatest friendship, the strongest character, the deepest love.

On the other hand, if developed and leveraged, that one thing has the potential to create unparalleled success and prosperity in every dimension of life. That one thing is trust.

The authors' Five Waves of Trust model serves as a metaphor for how trust operates in our lives. This summary will cover these forms as the structure for understanding and making trust actionable, including a look at the Four Cores of credibility and the 13

Behaviors of high trust leaders.

The First Wave: Self Trust

(The authors suggest you assess your self first regarding trust)

- Core 1: Integrity: Are you congruent?
- Core 2: Intent: What's your agenda?
- Core 3: Capabilities: Are you relevant?
- Core 4: Results: What's your track record?

There is a very good self-trust, self-assessment in the book. I have included it at the end.

The Second Wave: Relationship Trust

- The authors offer ways to behave yourself out of problems you have behaved yourself into. If trust is low between you and someone else, there are some ways to build trust.
- The 13 behaviors they suggest:
 - Talk straight
 - Demonstrate respect
 - Create transparency
 - Right wrongs
 - Show loyalty

- Deliver results
- Get better
- Confront reality
- Clarify expectations
- Practice accountability
- Listen first
- Keep commitments
- Extend trust

The Third, Fourth and Fifth Waves: Stakeholder Trust

- The Third Wave- Organizational Trust: The Principle of Alignment
- The Fourth Wave- Market Trust: The Principle of Reputation
- The Fifth Wave- Societal Trust: The Principle of Contribution

Nothing is as fast as the speed of trust

Trust means confidence. The opposite of trust - distrust - is suspicion. The difference between a high and low trust relationship is palpable. Take communication. In a high trust relationship, you can say the wrong thing, and people will still get your meaning. In a low trust relationship, you can be very measured, even precise, and they will still misinterpret you. Look at Barry Bonds, David Stern, Michael Vick and many politicians as examples.

You don't need to look far to realize that, as a global society, we are in a crisis of trust. Low trust is everywhere; in government, sports, and society in general. On the organizational level, trust within companies has sharply declined, but relationships of all kinds are built on and sustained by trust. They can also be broken down and destroyed by a lack of trust. Society, organizations and relationships aside, there is an even more fundamental and powerful dimension to self trust. If we can't trust ourselves, we will have a hard time trusting others. Personal incongruence is often the source of our suspicions of others.

Economics of Trust

Trust always affects two outcomes: speed and cost. When trust goes down, speed goes down and cost goes up. Consider the time and cost of airport security after 9/11, or costs for Sarbanes-Oxley Act compliance, passed in the U.S. in response to various corporate scandals. When trust goes up, speed goes up and cost goes down. Warren Buffet completed the acquisition of McLane Distribution from Wal-Mart on the basis of a two-hour meeting. Because of high trust between the parties, the merger took less than a month and avoided the usual months and millions for due diligence and attorneys.

The serious practical impact of the economics of trust is that we are paying a hidden low-trust tax right off the top - and we don't even know it! A company can have an excellent strategy and a strong ability to execute; but the net result can be torpedoed by a low-trust tax or multiplied by a high-trust dividend. This makes a powerful business case for trust, assuring that it is not a soft, "nice to have" quality.

One reason this hidden variable is so significant in today's world is that we have entered a global, knowledge worker economy that revolves around partnering and relationships. The ability to establish, grow, extend and restore trust with all stakeholders - customers, suppliers and co-workers - is the key leadership competency of the new, global economy.

Inspiring Trust

Trust is a whole life choice. The authors suggest you look at the Cores and Behaviors on speed, cost and trust and look for ways to apply them and find opportunities to teach them to others. You will see how the speed of trust; the profits of the economics of trust; the relevance of the pervasive impact of trust; and the dividends of trust can significantly enhance the quality of every relationship on every level of your life.

You may still be hesitant or fearful when it comes to actually extending trust, but leaders who extend trust become mentors, models and heroes. Inspiring trust is the prime differentiator between a manager and a leader and the prime motivator of successful enterprises and relationships. Companies that choose to extend trust to their employees become great places to work. Children develop character and competence in the care of parents who love them, believe in them and trust them.

Most people respond well to trust and do not abuse it. We are all born with a propensity to trust and choosing to retain or restore that propensity is key to our ability to forgive. We have countless opportunities to extend and inspire trust to others, but it also makes a difference in our own lives. Trust is reciprocal.

Applications:

- **Assess yourself using the instrument at the end of my opinion piece.**
 - Make sure you are honest in your responses
 - Work on areas you didn't score well in and need to improve
- **Use the assessment with your team too to see how they measure up.**
 - The assessment is pretty simple and can easily be administered before your team meets. You will need to summarize the results and then present them at the meeting. Some really good discussion should follow.
- **Depending on where you end up in your self and team assessments, choose appropriate ways to behave yourself out of problems you've behaved yourself into.**
 - Talk straight
 - Demonstrate respect
 - Create transparency
 - Right wrongs
 - Show loyalty
 - Deliver results
 - Get better
 - Confront reality
 - Clarify expectations
 - Practice accountability
 - Listen first
 - Keep commitments
 - Extend trust
 - Work on stakeholder trust
- **Organizational Trust:** Make sure your organization is truly aligned with others that matter upstream and downstream.
Market Trust: Your reputation is sometimes all you have. Continually build it!
- **Societal Trust:** We all want to make a difference. After you have completed all the previous steps, don't forget to give back, or pay it forward. It's all about contribution.

And Finally:

I work with many clients on Team Building, Conflict Resolution, Executive Coaching and Organization Change issues and have already put aspects of this book to use with some of them. I intend to continue using Covey and Merrill's wisdom (and my own) with more clients in the future. If you want more thoughts about this book, or want to add your own, check out my blog. You can visit it at <http://richsteel.blogspot.com> This opinion and others are posted on my web site: www.rsbc.com

To talk more about this and other topics, e-mail me (Rich Steel) at rsbvc@aol.com or call me at my office on 610 388 3680 or on my cell at 610 324 8466.

The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable

By Patrick Lencioni Jossey-Bass

Good news- I loved it! Very good, easy to read, hard to put down (like a mystery “who done it”) and filled with very valuable team, life, organizational, relationship and leadership lessons. I came upon it in preparation for working with a client Leadership Team at ABB. We used it, and it really hit the mark and made a difference with them!

Bad news- The author tells a very believable, provocative story using a fictitious dysfunctional team to make some excellent points about teams, team building, assessment, hard work, missions, goal setting, the MBTI and other tools. He also emphasizes the importance of roles, clarity, trust, conflict, commitment, accountability and results; all those things I have been talking about for years. So what’s the bad news? I didn’t write it first!

Good news- I have done you yet another favor by reading all of this book, reading the accompanying Field Guide for Leaders, Managers and Facilitators, gleaning the best and most practical ideas from them, and offering you some meaningful applications.

Summary:

The book is written as a fable, with a fictitious company in very bad shape. A new CEO is brought in to save the day. She has great experience, has been a very successful organization consultant, and has a plan to bring the company back. Her plan revolves around the following model and her belief that it all starts with the Leadership Team.



- **Absence of Trust**
 - Teams are built from clarity and trust
 - Being vulnerable with each other builds trust
 - Without real trust we are stuck with invulnerability
- **Fear of Conflict**
 - Many of us fear or avoid conflict, but dealing with conflict constructively (once trust is built) can be a good thing
 - So, disagree, challenge, and question one another
 - Without this kind of atmosphere and approach, we are stuck with artificial harmony
- **Lack of Commitment**
 - We are more likely to commit to something if we have had our “say” on the issues, made suggestions, and raised concerns, even if we have raised conflict too
 - Unfiltered conflict drives buy-in even without consensus
 - Without commitment we have ambiguity
- **Avoidance of Accountability**
 - Commit to decisions and hold one another accountable
 - A team is a team, because it works together toward common goals
 - Without trust, conflict and real commitment we often set our standards too low

• Inattention to Results

- Even though teams are often made up of people from different functions or functional leaders, the team’s results (their collective results) must come before individual results or agendas

Think of high performing teams you have been on or seen and also think of teams with members like ex-49er, ex-Eagle, current Dallas Cowboy, Terrell Owens or some other over paid professional @\$\$\$&0/3’s. Do words like status and ego come to mind?

Applications:

Have team members read the book in advance and use the five-part model as a guide agenda for your next team (building) meeting.

- That’s what we did at ABB, and the meeting was a big success with very good discussion, real meaningful feedback, conflict raised and dealt with, clear goals set and results committed to and trust built. The model is simple and with some good facilitation (by someone like me) your next meeting can be very successful too!
- **Use the team assessment to see how your team measures up.**
 - Again, the assessment is pretty simple (as many of the best things are) and can easily be administered before your team meets. You will need to summarize the results and then present them at the meeting. Some rich discussion should follow.
- **Share Personal Histories within your team to build trust through vulnerability.**
 - This is not as touch feely as it might seem. As the model suggests, trust leads to willingness to deal with conflict, which leads to commitment, accountability, etc. We tend to trust people we know well and this is simply a way to get to know team mates better. I have done this many, many times with teams and it has always succeeded.
- **Take the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) with your team.**
 - I have used this for over 25 years with great success. Even if you have taken it before, as soon as you create a team or add a new team member, it is becomes new team and is worthy of another look at this time-tested model. Do I need to say more?
- **Use a Conflict Instrument.**
 - The model suggests that a team that trusts one another is willing to disagree with each other and understands that disagreement, even with conflict, leads to greater buy-in. Some of us “get this” more easily than others, so taking a look at individual conflict styles makes sense. I suggest using the Thomas-Killmann Conflict Instrument. Again, I have had great success with this over the years.
- **Clarify the One Thing.**
 - The fictitious team in Lencioni’s book arrives at a single purpose or goal to focus on. Some teams, of course, will have multiple areas to focus on, but it should have a common vision, a common mission and clarity of purpose. If your team doesn’t, then make those things clear. Teams are built from clarity and trust!



The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable

By Patrick Lencioni Jossey-Bass

- **Give each other some real feedback.**
 - As uncomfortable as this can be sometimes, we all need to know how we are doing, how we are perceived, how we can improve, what we should keep on doing, etc. I have found simply asking three questions (and getting real answers) will help.
 - What do you want more of from me?
 - What do you want less of from me?
 - What should I keep doing, just as I have been?
- **Focus on results by creating a team score card.**
 - Team building is not a once and done thing. A team benefits from seeing improvement, and the only way to really see improvement is to agree on and set SMART goals and periodically measure against them.

And Finally:

I work with many clients on team building and organization change issues and have already put this book to use with some of them. I intend to continue using Lencioni's (and my) wisdom with more clients in the future. If you want more thoughts about this book, or want to add your own, check out my blog. You can visit it at <http://richsteel.blogspot.com>

Or to talk more about this and other topics, e-mail me (Rich Steel) at rsbvc@aol.com or call me at my office on 610 388 3680 or on my cell at 610 324 8466.

Summary:

Goodwin tells the story of Lincoln's close and productive relationship with his three rivals for the Republican presidential nomination of 1860. At Lincoln's insistence, these men, William H. Seward of New York, Salmon Chase of Ohio and Edward Bates of Missouri, all became key members of his cabinet and went on to serve him well throughout the bloodiest years of the Civil War. Later, he appointed yet another former adversary, Edwin Stanton, as his secretary of war. In recognizing, recruiting and relying on talent, Lincoln held no grudges.

As Lincoln navigates through incompetent generals, battlefield setbacks and warring factions within his own administration, Goodwin portrays him as a master manipulator, although never for petty or destructive causes. He led his cabinet, the military and the country with a light and sensitive rein, even as he endured a succession of personal crises.

In Goodwin's estimation, Lincoln has had no political equal. He had a sense of timing and a feeling for the country as a whole, like when to issue the Emancipation Proclamation and when to bring black soldiers into the war. But, it was Lincoln's "decency and morality", and his ability to turn these virtues into political instruments that ultimately set him above other leaders.

The Constitution makes no provision for a president's cabinet. After all, no one in the Constitutional Convention in 1787 ever thought the office of the president would require much more than secretarial help. Not even the size of the cabinet has remained stable. Washington had a cabinet of four; John Adams added a fifth in 1798. George W. Bush has 15 cabinet posts, along with four other cabinet-rank executive positions.

By the time Lincoln became President, cabinet-making had reached the point where cabinet members overshadowed the President who had nominated them. Millard Fillmore, Franklin Pierce, and James Buchanan were routinely upstaged or subverted by their secretaries of war and state. And Lincoln did not look like any improvement. He had earned a leading place in Republican Party politics in Illinois, and snatched some brief national attention by challenging Stephen Douglas for the Senate in 1858, almost winning the Democrat's seat. But Lincoln enjoyed nothing like the stature of New York's William Seward or Ohio's Salmon Chase (the John McCain of his time).

Yet obscurity cut both ways; Seward, Chase and the others had spent so long in the political limelight that each had acquired many enemies. Lincoln, at least, had offended no one, and so the nomination swung to him. But once elected, he had to come to terms with the damaged egos of the party's jilted, and there was no guarantee that they would defer to this little known log-splitting circuit lawyer from the prairies. Losing the nomination humiliated Seward, and Chase still longed to be president. These were exactly the sort of advisers Lincoln would have been well advised to keep far away.

Instead, he offered the State Department to Seward, the War Department to Cameron and the Treasury to Chase, knowing that he was also handing them the opportunity to build rival political empires of their own. Lincoln did this partly because he had no real choice. He was painfully aware of his outsider status in Washington, and with no close political allies of national stature, he had no one else to whom he could turn.

But Lincoln's selection of a cabinet of rivals was also an expression of a shrewdness few could appreciate in 1861. Keeping Seward and Chase within his administration gave him more opportunities to control them and fewer opportunities for them to create problems. It also guaranteed

that, in any controversy, he could count on Seward and Chase to back-stab each other, allowing him to emerge as the all-powerful settler of disputes. To improve his chances for command, Lincoln added two of his loyalists, Montgomery Blair as postmaster general and Gideon Welles as secretary of the Navy. Seward, Chase or Bates might have derailed this plan by refusing Lincoln's initial offer of a cabinet post, but the president had correctly guessed that none could bring himself to refuse even secondhand prestige. From that moment, Lincoln had them in his power, and he never let them go.

Goodwin comes to the close of *Team of Rivals* amazed and delighted to find "that Abraham Lincoln would emerge the undisputed captain of this most unusual cabinet" and thereby "prove to others a most unexpected greatness."

Opinion:

Good news- The book is extremely well-written with interesting and detailed plots and sub plots. It is like several biographies rolled into one, and is quite compelling. Goodwin took hundreds of letters, records and personal diaries and weaved them into a wonderful story of our nation's turbulent history in the 1850's and 60's. And the author, through Abraham Lincoln, provides us with some valuable life and leadership lessons for today.

Bad news- It took Doris Kearns Goodwin nearly ten years to write this book, and it felt like it took me nearly that long to read it! Including her notes and index it is 916 pages long!

Good news- I have done you another big favor by reading (most of) the book, gleaming the best and most practical ideas from it, and offering you some meaningful applications.

Applications:

Lessons from Abraham Lincoln (and a few applications for each):

1. Tell the truth, using tact and diplomacy.

- Remember when young Lincoln's father asked him who chopped down the cherry tree and Abe confessed saying, "I can not tell a lie." Hey wait, that was George Washington! But Lincoln was known as "Honest Abe".
- Telling the truth is the right thing to do. Sometimes we need to tell it with tact and diplomacy, but it is still the right thing to do; in relationships, in team settings, at work, at home, leading, following, etc., etc.

2. Demonstrate your passion, humility, decency and morality.

- We have heard this before, but Lincoln reminds us that these are some of the values and characteristics of great leaders. Would any of us like to be known as boring, pampas, indecent or immoral?

3. Keep your friends close and your enemies (rivals) even closer.

- But not just for the reasons we know about. Sure, it makes sense to know who and where your enemies are, but if you can utilize their strengths (by appealing to their egos) and help make a bigger difference, do it. This is where Lincoln's genius really made a difference for him, and for the nation. Perhaps this thinking can help us at work too.

4. Recognize talent (using your rivals for their strengths and expertise and don't hold grudges).

- Politics is politics and business is business (although a lot of it can feel very personal). I have a great friend, client and entrepreneur, who, like Lincoln in his day, can win, lose, get beat up, beat someone else up and go out for a drink or play golf with that adversary, forgetting all that "business stuff" after the fray is over. He separates business from non-business, doesn't hold grudges and has even hired some of those tough adversaries to make a difference in his organizations.

5. Pay attention to timing.

- Do you remember that phrase: "ready, willing and able"? Situational Leadership reminds us that people need to be motivated (willing) and competent (able) to perform a task well and that as leaders, we need to help people along the motivational and competence curves through the appropriate mix of direction and support. But what about readiness? Sometimes people are motivated and competent enough to perform well, but the timing just isn't right. Maybe that relates to motivation, but we need to be very aware of timing too. It can sometimes be the most critical factor.

6. See the big picture and put things in context.

- Lincoln had the big picture in mind at all times. His objective was to preserve the union. And that's why he chose the best people he could find to help him in that mission. Even if they were his previous rivals.

And a p.s to my local friends: Maybe Philadelphia Eagle Coach Andy Reid and Quarterback and Team Leader Donovan McNabb should read this book (or my review) after that devastating loss to the NY Giants. And I am sure Lincoln would agree with these ideas: Always attack. Never coast. Never assume. Pay attention to the big picture AND the small details. Have the right weapons. Have contingencies and adjust the plan when you need to.

And Finally:

I continue to work with many clients on team building issues, and I intend to use some of Lincoln's wisdom with those clients in the future... If you want more thoughts about this book, or want to add your own, check out my blog. You can visit it at <http://richsteel.blogspot.com>

Or to talk more about this and other topics, e-mail me (Rich Steel) at rsbvc@aol.com or call me at my office on 610 388 3680 or on my cell at 610 324 8466.



Is Mentoring a Fit for Your Organization?

Marketing Consultant Marty McLaughlin and Organization Development Consultant Rich Steel share a passion for mentoring.

They have worked together for a variety of organizations in this arena and have documented their responses to many of their client's questions regarding the objectives, processes, and benefits of a well-defined Mentoring program. Both Marty and Rich can point to specific examples where Mentoring has changed the direction of their own careers and personal lives. Marty and Rich offer a unique perspective.

Before starting **Mosaic Partners** in 2001, Marty was a Senior Manager at Andersen where he was mentored by some of the firm's greatest motivators and leaders.

As an **Entrepreneur, Consultant** and **Executive Coach** for more than 15 years, Rich has served as a Mentor to people ranging from senior executives at Fortune 500 companies, to emerging Entrepreneurs, to his own son and daughter.

They summarize their client's most pressing Mentoring questions in Q&A form.

If you have additional thoughts or questions about this newsletter or previous editions, please e-mail Rich Steel at rsbvc@aol.com or call him at his office on 610.388.3680 or on my cell, 610.324.8466.

Summary:

Brief History of IBM: In the late 1800’s, IBM was called the Computing-Tabulating-Recording Company. When the diversified businesses of C-T-R proved difficult to manage, the former number two executive at the National Cash Register Company, Thomas J. Watson, Sr., then age 40, joined the company as general manager. He later became President.

Drawing upon his sales experience at NCR, Watson implemented a series of effective business tactics: generous sales incentives, a focus on customer service, an insistence on well-groomed, dark-suited salesmen, and an evangelical fervor for instilling company pride and loyalty in every worker. Watson boosted company spirit with employee sports teams, family outings and a company band. He preached a positive outlook, and focused on three principles:

- Respect for the individual
- The best customer service
- The pursuit of excellence

These principles formed the culture of IBM for nearly a century.

After decades of innovation and leadership in the computer technology industry and growing to be one of the largest and most successful companies in the world, Big Blue was brought to its knees in the early 1990’s. Competition and complacency hit IBM hard. Very hard. As a result, ex-RJR Nabisco CEO and McKinsey consultant Lou Gerstner was hired to reduce, reorganize, retool and return fire. The company trimmed from about 500,000 employees to 300,000 and transformed itself from a mainframe maker into a robust provider of integrated hardware, networking and software solutions.

The Presenting Problem: Gerstner had righted a sinking ship and the company was saved, but new CEO and lifetime IBM-er Sam Palmisano saw a potential problem that he thought could be even more deadly. People were down, beat up, and out of energy from all of the upheaval they had been through. They needed something and they needed it now.

What the CEO Did: Palmisano felt that the basic beliefs of the company that had formed the culture of IBM for so long needed to be dusted off and brought back. He felt that these could serve as the foundation for a new set of corporate values and re-energize the employees. His management team thought he was crazy. With his next move, they were sure he was crazy. He held a three-day discussion via the corporate intranet about the company’s values. It was dubbed ValuesJam, and more than 50,000 employees participated. After lots of venting, confusion, and a fair amount of cynicism, many executives wanted to call it off.

How It Turned Out: Sam hung in, and after about 36 hours, the mood shifted. The counter critics weighed in and the old remnants of corporate pride took over. The values were reshaped to say:

- Dedication to every client’s success
- Innovation that matters
- Trust and personal responsibility in all relationships

Sam told his 15 direct reports that they had better follow these values and do something about them. His team hosted a follow-up worldwide intranet discussion, informally called LogJam, where employees were asked to identify organizational barriers to these values and make suggestions for improvement.

Where IBM is Headed Now: Changes were made to eliminate the barriers. Hiring has resumed, innovation is up, sales are up, profit is up, motivation is up, the company is on track again, and they are achieving most of this by getting back to what matters. Sam realized that he couldn’t “manage” a company of 400,000 people, no matter what structure, or style, or process he chose. There are way too many variables. He decided that if his employees all shared the same values and believed in them, that this would be all the structure they needed. He believes that people, rather than products, are the real brand of IBM. He also believes that just as IBM’s products and services have to be consistent, so do its people. And the best way to ensure that consistency is to inform their behavior with a globally consistent set of values.

Opinion:

Good news: The article is well-written, tells a compelling and true story, and wakes you up to some tough issues IBM faced recently. It also clearly points out what Sam Palmisano did to make a real difference when many weren’t convinced he had to do anything at all!

Bad news: Sam repeated himself in some of his answers to HBR’s questions, and the editor didn’t edit like he could have. The article, therefore rambles, gets redundant, goes on and on....well you get the idea.

Good news: I have edited the interview for you and also offer some meaningful applications below.

Applications:

1. Whether you have an organization of 400,000 or 4,000 or four, don’t assume that things are going well with your employees just because you don’t hear negative feedback. Find out, just like you do with your customers. Walk around, ask questions, hold lunch-time chats, interview, survey, zoomerang or even ValueJam, like IBM did. Don’t forget that your people are your brand and your most important asset.
2. Once you find out what the issues are that might be holding back progress, or performance, commit to changing. Even if you find out that things are going well, commit to keeping things that way. Change what makes sense, and continually check in.
3. The last idea is probably the hardest, but maybe the best. Like Sam, make sure your values are clear to you. Get input from as many others as you can. Reshape them as necessary for your organization. Communicate them often, and “manage” by these values. It takes upfront work. It means allowing people to walk down a wider road than some of us are comfortable with, and it means trusting people to do the right thing. But, like IBM, it might pay off in a big way.

And Finally:

If you have additional thoughts or questions about this article and opinion, please e-mail Rich Steel at rsbvc@aol.com or call me at my office on 610.388.3680 or on my cell, 610.324.8466.



“Understanding People People” The Harvard Business Review Feature Article June 2004
 Authored By: Timothy Butler and James Waldroop A Harvard Business

Summary:

We often think that “people” people are born that way or certainly have a natural inclination to be “people” people. This study breaks “people” people down into four dimensions or competencies. It contends that “people” people rarely possess all four competencies. It suggests that the competencies track with or should track with jobs and assignments. And it also suggests that the competencies are developable.

To help you see the whole picture, I have created the following table which summarizes the four dimensions or competencies, and lists characteristics, potential jobs and assignments, and development ideas for each dimension.

Dimension / Competency	Characteristics / Behavioral Indicators Job / Assignment Fit	Development Ideas to Enhance this	Competency
Influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Like to persuade and negotiate with others · Find power in holding valuable information/ideas · Live to sell · Network well/build alliances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Sales · Deal negotiator · Labor Relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Participate in Sales Associations/Networks · Read classics in selling · Identify people who are notably strong in this dimension, and study the way they operate. What works for them won't necessarily work for you, but it will help stimulate your thinking. · Practice your influence skills in low-risk situations. You may feel more comfortable trying out new ways of interacting in social settings before changing your behavior in your office.
Interpersonal Facilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Tuned in to interpersonal aspects of work · Use intuition behind the scenes to keep colleagues committed · Analyze interpersonal problems, arrive at solutions and implement changes · Find hidden agendas · Create synergy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Unofficial Department or “Company Psychologist” · Career Counselor/Coach/Advisor/Mentor · Therapist · People problem solver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Don't assume that other people are wired the way you are. Work to get inside their heads and hearts. · As with influence skills, practice and build your interpersonal-facilitation skills in low-risk arenas like social settings. · Talk with coworkers about topics that aren't work related: Ask about a child's big soccer game or violin concert. Don't be afraid to engage in personal conversations. · Read Daniel Goleman's Emotional Intelligence.
Relational Creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Forge connections with groups of people through visual and verbal imagery · Use ad campaigns, brand strategies, motivational themes/speeches to get others to act · Persuade others to buy/invest through words and pictures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Magazine Editor · Marketing · Advertising · Speech Writing · Creating compelling presentations · Public Relations/Communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Look at ads, consider the markets they're selling to, and get inside the minds of the creators. Then think about what you might do differently. · Practice brainstorming to loosen up your creative thinking-as you might stretch your hamstrings for a run. · Pay attention to how vendors try to hook you into buying their services or products, whether you're interested in using them or not. Notice which tactics are successful and which are not. For the ploys that don't work well on you, consider why they might on others. · Read Adweek and Advertising Age.
Team Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Need to see and interact with people frequently · Enjoy working with the team and with customers · Strong customer focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Managing high-energy teams in busy environments · Player-Coach · Sales Manager · Customer Service Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Decide who in your organization is a master team leader and watch him or her in action - even though his or her style may not be a perfect fit for you. By observing, you can pick up an array of strategies from which to choose. · Ask the person you're observing for direct advice. · Take a class or two. National Training Laboratories has been training managers and leaders since the late 1940's, and it offers a variety of courses to bolster skills in team leadership. BVC offers Team Leadership, too!

BVC Opinion:

Very well written and very much on target for some of us, the article presents a very unique and interesting look at people people. It suggests that you hire wisely to bring people people into your organization, that you make the right assignments to match people people with what they can do well and that you develop people people competencies in those people that need to develop them. (Say that three times fast !!!)

Applications:

Effective organizations need people people as much as they need technical, managerial and other kinds of people
Effective teams need people people with a mix of all 4 competencies, just like effective teams need a mix of personality (MBTI) types
Choose or trade for people with people competencies (as well as the technical/functional competencies you are looking for) to make your team a winning team
Build these (or at least some of these) dimensions or competencies into your selection and hiring process. You can do this by adding them to your list of “things you are looking for” in a candidate, by asking behavioral questions, noting their responses and observing their actual behavior to assess whether they are really people people.

And Finally:

If little or none of this makes sense, and you have read all the way to the end, ask a people person to help you!!!

For more information regarding this topic, please e-mail Rich Steel at rsbvc@aol.com or call me at my office on 610-388-3680 or on my cell at 610-324-8466.

The Last Season: A Team in Search of Its Soul

By Phil Jackson, Los Angeles Lakers coach (The Penguin Press)

Summary:

Phil Jackson recounts lessons learned from his last season of coaching the L.A. Lakers. Jackson was used to winning championships with the Chicago Bulls and the Lakers, and the 2003-2004 season looked like another sure bet. They had future Hall-of-Famers in Shaq and Kobe and added two more in Karl Malone and Gary Payton. The NBA braced itself for a record breaking season. What they got was a team that lost its way.

Jackson, known as a Zen Master of sorts, is a great leader and believes in all the right things for a high performing team like:

- Clear Goals, Roles and Responsibilities
- Good Communication
- Focus and Motivation
- Trust and Respect
- Practice, Learning and Shared Leadership

So what went wrong? Karl Malone got hurt. Kobe was on trial for rape and was tired of being Shaq's sidekick. Shaq was tired of Kobe's selfishness, and Gary Payton was simply tired. The team lost its way and lost its soul and the Zen Master couldn't get it back.

1. Goals had been set at the beginning of the season, but roles and responsibilities were never really agreed upon and as situations changed, roles were not reclarified
2. Communication and relationships broke down between Shaq and Kobe, and eventually the coach, owner and whole organization.
3. Kobe's trial was a big distraction and it infected the team, hurting its focus and its motivation
4. The Shaq and Kobe feud caused lack of trust and lack of respect, especially since the coach let it continue and
5. The team eventually didn't practice well, didn't learn and certainly didn't share leadership

BVC Opinion:

Good news: The book is well-written, easy to read, has lots of great b-ball stories, and is a great soap opera.

Bad news: It is hard to find the book's leadership and team lessons to use in the work world. I thought it would be an easier translation.

Good news: I took the time to translate the lessons for you and offer some meaningful applications. Therefore, with no offense to the Zen Master, this BVC Opinion is all you need!

Applications:

1. Set s.m.a.r.t. goals and clarify roles and responsibilities upfront. Kobe and Shaq had clear individual goals and roles but the team goals and team roles were never really accepted. Remember the "a" in s.m.a.r.t. stands for "agreed upon". And also, don't forget to make adjustments in goals and roles, and manage change along the way.
2. Pay attention to early warnings of potential communication problems. Do what you can to reduce their likelihood AND have contingency people plans too. Kobe and Shaq have different personalities, and their MBTI's (Myers Briggs Type Indicators) certainly differ. If they couldn't manage this, it was up to the coach to see it and encourage both of them to flex their behavior accordingly.

3. Choose the right people for your team based on competence AND motivation. They are both essential for success, and make up the definition Situational Leadership gives to a top (D4) performer. (See application number five for details)

4. Set a real example for your team to follow regarding respect and trust. You can't expect to get respect if you don't show it yourself. And you can't build trust by talking about it. You need to deliver on promises and do what you said you would do, all the time.

5. Use the Situational Leadership Model I have been teaching you for years! It really works! Remember it's all about different strokes for different folks, in different situations. And it's all about diagnosis and the right blend of direction and support. Once they learned the "triangle offense" and "defensive pressure", Kobe and Shaq and the rest of the team needed Phil Jackson's support. He didn't offer enough, or didn't offer it in ways the team members could appreciate and they lost their championship, lost their way and lost their soul.

And Finally:

If you have forgotten the S.L. model, the MBTI, what s.m.a.r.t. goals are, or want help on some other application I have suggested, please e-mail me at rsbvc@aol.com or call me at my office on 610-388-3680 or on my cell at 610-324-8466.

Summary:

In all sorts of industries, companies that traditionally have made and sold stand-alone products are changing their strategies. They are creating high-value solutions by integrating products and services – even merging the supplier’s and customer’s operations – to solve a complete customer problem. Solutions are proving lucrative for many companies, even as profitability and growth of their products have come under pressure. In the case of IBM, \$38 billion of its revenue – 43% of the total- now comes from the solutions-related businesses it has developed since the early 1990s. And the financial markets have rewarded IBM for its durable shareholder value built upon hard-to-copy capabilities, light capital investment, and customization that resists commoditization. Thus IBM improved its market-to-book ratio by 600% between 1990 and 1999.

Why haven’t more companies followed IBM’s migration from a product-centric organization to a solutions-centric organization? The trouble is that the very strengths of a product-focused business can hinder its efforts to become a successful solutions provider.

The author has prescribed the following to help companies make the transition:

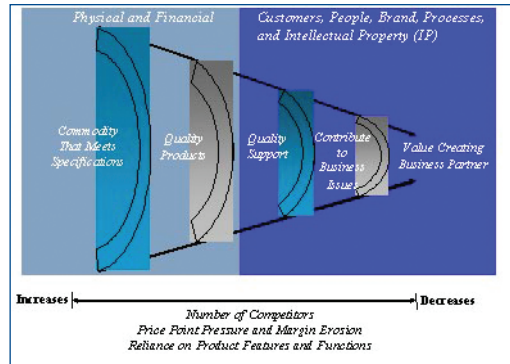
- Build value propositions for customer outcomes. Don’t develop boundaries for meeting customer needs based upon what can be embedded into your current product offerings. In developing solutions, managers must start with a desired outcome for a customer that could encompass a range of needs.
- Don’t go it alone - other companies can play a part in solution development. Suppliers, distributors, customers and even direct competitors may have an important role to play in providing products, services, skills, and market knowledge to extend your customer relationships.
- Choose your customer. The best customers for solutions may not be existing customers for products; they may be upstart companies looking for others to manage non-core pieces of the business, have no established loyalties, and are open to productive partnerships.
- Develop a strong center. Additional value will only be realized, though, if the solutions provider has a strong center (leadership) that adds two essentials to the mix: forceful direction for solutions and effective links between the product-focused back end of the organization and the solution-focused front end.

BVC Opinion:

Very well written and very much on target, the article presents some challenges and some suggestions. **At BVC, we have some suggestions too.**

Convincing senior executives to turn away from existing customer relationships is extremely difficult, especially during turbulent economic times. In some cases, shedding existing customers may be the right thing to do, but you must drive hard analysis to understand how much wealth each customer creates for you today, and based upon your company’s value proposition, how much wealth they will create for you tomorrow. Existing profitable customers should be viewed as a platform to fund your “product to solution” migration. **Our opinion is that the “product to solution” migration should be more evolutionary than revolutionary.**

The author introduces concepts associated with a traditional value creation system. He makes an excellent point regarding change management, stating that a company’s traditional strength may limit their ability to migrate past a product-focus. At BVC, we have developed the following value continuum to help companies determine exactly where they are along the “product to solution” migration, their key source of value creation, and the resulting impact on their finances and competitive position.



It is very difficult to define how to create value beyond your product – so imagine that your product is the ante to enter the game and your intangible assets are the chips to win the game. The game is won by understanding your customer’s need (now the deck is in your favor) and making intelligent bets (both tangible and intangible) when others (competitors) can’t match your moves.

Questions to Put Pieces Together:

- Do you know what your customers are worth today and what they could be worth a year from now? How about three years from now?
- How do you create value for your customers – beyond product features and functions?
- What experience are you creating for your key customers? What would it take for your customers to replace you with another supplier?
- Do you view key processes as strategic assets of the company – designed to deliver consistent and repeatable results to your customers?
- Is your account planning process product-focused and transaction based or solution-focused and value based?
- Are you delivering a clear and consistent message internally and externally to establish a meaningful and differentiated market position?

And Finally:

We all have customers. Some are external and some are internal. And we all have suppliers; external and internal. This thinking applies in all of these circumstances.

For more information regarding this topic, please e-mail Rich Steel at rsbvc@aol.com or call me at my office on 610-388-3680 or on my cell at 610-324-8466.

Summary:

Coach K gives lots of real life, entertaining, basketball related examples of choosing, building and leading teams. The examples are very translatable to business and life. He offers 169 tips, five fundamentals of great teams and 48 quotes from himself and other successful leaders.

Coach K's fundamentals of a great team:

1. Communication
2. Trust
3. Collective Responsibility
4. Caring
5. Pride

His best tips on choosing a team:

1. Recruit great individuals who are willing to be part of a team and who are coachable.
2. Believe in a handshake

His best tips on building a team:

1. Use plural pronouns like "we and "us" right away
2. Instill the discipline to tell the truth. It's a waste of time to deal with anything less.
3. Great teams embrace responsibility
4. Go through an appraisal/reevaluation process every year and rotate some responsibilities.

His best tips on leading a team:

1. Give people the freedom to show the heart they possess
2. Leaders should be reliable without being predictable.
3. All your assistants should have the vision of being a top leader.
4. That way they will want to learn and grow.
5. At the end of every season, thank your team for their effort
6. Sometimes, all the good things you do for team members do not make a big enough difference. Sometimes people have to move on.

The best of the best quotes:

1. "Believe that the loose ball you are chasing has your name on it." - Coach K
2. "Life changes when you least expect it to. The future is uncertain. So, seize this day, seize this moment, and make the most of it." - Jim Valvano

BVC Opinions:

Good news: Well-written, easy to read, lots of cool b-ball examples, and every chapter has a summary of Coach K's tips.

Bad news: Too many tips to remember and you have heard most of them before.

Other news: Most good ideas bear repeating and the timing needs to be right for a tip to be useful. The timing is probably right on some of these tips for everyone. Therefore, well worth reading!

Applications:

- I have been using and telling most of you more than 100 of Coach K's tips and ideas over the last 10 to 20 years
- Coach K would agree with me when I remind you that teams are built from clarity and trust
- Clarity in: vision, mission, s.m.a.r.t. objectives, roles, responsibilities, communication, processes, decision making and leadership
- And trust in all the above and each other
- Measure your team against these criteria and see where you need to get better
- Set goals for team improvement and create real action plans to achieve them
- Coach K would also agree that team building is a never ending process
- Keep at it, and get an outside consultant to help!

And Finally:

If you want help on anything I have suggested, please e-mail me at rsbvc@aol.com or call me at my office on 610-388-3680 or on my cell at 610-324-8466.

Summary:

Like lots of other books, this one is based on research done on successful organizations, where themes leading to success are identified and boiled down into a few key principles. The principles are usually so simple, you would think that everyone already knew them.

And in this case they are very simple. The authors first assume an organization has a strategy with clear goals and a way to achieve them. If you read their first book, they also assume the strategy is a "balanced scorecard" strategy where all key stakeholders (Exec Team, Biz Units, HR, IT, and Finance) have participated in its creation. The follow-on principles are:

1. Translate the strategy into operational terms
2. Align the organization to the strategy
3. Make strategy everyone's everyday job
4. Make strategy a continual process
5. Mobilize change through executive leadership

Opinion:

If you read Building a Balanced Scorecard by the same authors, this book is a nice follow up. If you haven't read their first book, don't bother. Just read this one or better yet, just read my summary. Their latest book mostly retells the first one but does add some pretty interesting real-life stories.

I usually like this kind of book. I like the idea of doing real research, finding out where success comes from and demonstrating that in simple terms. So, I like the concept here. I also agree with the outcomes-the principles. I just found myself falling asleep several times in actually reading the book!

But...good news. I almost finished it. And there are some very do-able applications, in addition to the notion of getting key stakeholders to participate in strategy formation. Read on.

Applications:

There are plenty! Here are a couple for each principle:

1. Translate the strategy into operational terms

- Use your own company's or department's terms like MBO's, KRA's, Performance Targets/Goals, etc.
- Make the goals S.M.A.R.T.
- Remember that you can't DO a goal. You can only do activities that help reach the goal.

2. Align the organization to the strategy

- If the strategy is truly worth accomplishing, then make sure you have the right people in the right jobs to do the work
- If not, organize appropriately

3. Make strategy everyone's everyday job

- Make sure you build strategy and goals and activities into your performance management process
- Reward people (and yourself) for accomplishing activities, and reaching goals that relate to your overall strategy
- Hold people (and yourself) accountable if activities aren't done, goals are not met, and the strategy doesn't work

4. Make strategy a continual process

- Strategies should change as business conditions change, customers' demands change, competition changes, and when the strategy isn't working
- Be flexible. A three-year plan or a business strategy is not a once and done thing

5. Mobilize change through executive leadership

- Make sure people at the top DWTSTWD (Do what they said they would do)
- Make sure you do too!!
- People resist change. Get them involved IN the change early and aim to OVER-communicate in the face of change

For more information regarding this topic, please e-mail Rich Steel at rsbvc@aol.com or call me at my office on 610-388-3680 or on my cell at 610-324-8466.

Summary:

This is the story of a youngish Fortune 500 Company Manager named Jeff Walters. Jeff is in a slump. He has work load issues, people issues, hiring issues, performance issues, and more. Playing golf one day, he sees Tony Pearce, a semi-retired business leader who now writes books and coaches top executives. Jeff had met Tony years ago through his Dad, and Tony had written him a note congratulating him on his graduation from college, noting that now the learning would really begin, wishing him success and offering to talk to him about personal and business issues. The note also said he would be honored to allow Jeff to learn from (Tony's) experiences.

Jeff called Tony and was elated that Tony remembered him. He asked Tony for help and Tony agreed as long as Jeff agreed to meet on eight successive Monday mornings and also as long as Jeff agreed to teach others the lessons he learned. They met each Monday for eight weeks and as Jeff discussed the problems he was having managing and leading his department, Tony offered some relevant lessons. He set some ground rules for the meetings; start and finish on time, tell the truth and try something different. He also gave Jeff some homework to do between sessions.

The eight topics Tony covered are listed in bold and his main points are captured below:

- Drivers and Passengers (there are both...be a driver)
- Until you accept total responsibility, no matter what, you will not be able to put plans in place to accomplish your goals.
- Transitioning from manager to leader requires that you make different decisions. Leading and managing are different.
- Keep the Main Thing the Main Thing (stay focused)
- People have different perceptions of what the main thing is (know your mission and make sure others do too).
- Escape from Management Land
- Get (and stay) in touch with your people.
- Your job is not to lower the bottom by adjusting to and accommodating the fallen stars. You should be raising the top by recognizing and rewarding superstar behavior.
- The "Do Right" Rule
- Develop your action plan before you get into a crisis. Anticipate potential problems, act to prevent them, and have contingencies.
- Guard your integrity like it's your most precious management possession.
- Hire Tough
- The most important asset in your company is having the right people on your team.
- Never lower your standards just to fill a position. You will pay for it later.
- Do Less or Work Faster
- Your time is your responsibility. Take control of your time so you can take control of your life.
- Look for small increments of time by prioritizing, limiting interruptions, and effectively managing meetings.
- Buckets and Dippers (Don't be a dipper and take from others)
- Fill lots of buckets by:
 - Knowing the main things
 - Giving feedback on performance
 - Providing recognition
 - Communicating the team score
- The more buckets you fill, the more your bucket is filled.
- Enter the Learning Zone
 - Get out of your comfort zone and live in the learning zone
- Read one management/leadership book a month (or at least the BVC Opinions!)
- Read at least 10 minutes a day
- Set goals / Stay positive / Give back

Opinions:

Good news- The book is well-written and very easy to read. It only has 100 pages! It has lots of relevant examples of what many of us face in managing and leading others every day. And it's one of those books that makes you say, "I have seen and heard these simple (but powerful) lessons before, but never this clearly," and makes me say, "Why didn't I write a book like this?"

Bad news- Like the recent Oprah Book Club saga, this could be construed as a true story, but it is not. I called the publisher and confirmed my guess that it is a compilation of "truish" stories and events that "sort of" occurred over the years. There is no Jeff or Tony, per se, but this does not take away from the book or the lessons at all. It is still really, really good!

Good news- As usual, I have reviewed the lessons for you and offer some meaningful applications.

Applications:

1. One of Tony's points, Keep the Main Thing the Main Thing, is very near and dear to me. The vast majority of the many teams I have helped over the years have missed on this one. Teams go through those Forming, Norming, Storming and Performing stages. The Norming stage is where a mission should be created, where SMART goals should be set, where roles should be defined, etc. Too many times, that stage is short circuited, or assumed and the team pays for it later. Take the time to define what the main thing is (your purpose, mission and objectives) and test and redefine it along the way; especially when you sense confusion, when a new team member joins, or when conditions change.

2. Keep Tony's other tips listed above as a handy reference.

We have all learned that prioritizing, limiting interruptions and managing meetings better will "save" us time, and we know that accepting responsibility, listening to our people, planning and taking time to develop ourselves are good ideas, but having them as constant reminders hanging on our wall, might be an even better idea.

And Finally:

I work with many clients on Decision Making, Communication, Team Building, Conflict, Executive Coaching and Organization Change issues and have already put aspects of this book to use with some of them. I intend to continue using what I learn about this topic with more clients in the future. If you want more thoughts about this book, or want to add your own, check out my blog. You can visit it at <http://richsteel.blogspot.com/> This opinion and others are posted on my web site: www.rsbc.com To talk more about this and other topics, e-mail me (Rich Steel) at rsbvc@aol.com or call me at my office on 610 388 3680 or on my cell at 610 324 8466.

Good news- It is a stimulating book that made me more seriously contemplate the alarming nature of our rapidly changing and crazy world; a world in which uncertainty and indeterminacy are givens, and avalanches, negative cascades and tectonic shifts are ever-present dangers.

Bad news- A little "new agey", political, and sometimes fuzzy. I needed a thesaurus to help me several times. It was also difficult to glean some practical applications and tactics.

Good news- I worked extra hard on this one to find you those applications and tactics! Hopefully you can put them to use right away.

Summary:

Joshua Cooper Ramo is the managing director of Kissinger Associates; the controversial "geostrategic advisory firm" founded by the former secretary of state, and was formerly an editor for Time Magazine. In this provocative book, Mr. Ramo argues that today's complex, interconnected, globalized world requires policy makers willing to toss out old assumptions (about cause and effect, deterrence and defense, nation states and balances of power) and embrace creative new approaches. Today's world, he suggests, requires resilient pragmatists who, like the most talented Silicon Valley venture capitalists on the one hand or the survival-minded leadership of Hezbollah on the other, possess both an intuitive ability to see problems in a larger context and a willingness to realign their organizations continually to grapple with ever-shifting challenges and circumstances. He assesses the precarious state of today's post-cold-war world in which nation states face asymmetric threats from the likes of terrorists, drug cartels and computer hackers.

The central image that the author uses to evoke what he calls this "age of surprise" is Per Bak's sand pile. Danish-American physicist, Per Bak, argued two decades ago that if grains of sand were dropped on a pile one at a time, the pile, at some point, would enter a critical state in which another grain of sand could cause a large avalanche, or nothing at all. It is a hypothesis that shows that a small event can have momentous consequences and that seemingly stable systems can behave in highly unpredictable ways.

It is also a hypothesis that Ramo employs in this book as a metaphor for a complex world in which changes in politics, ecosystems or financial markets take place not in smooth, linear progressions but as sequences of fast, sometimes catastrophic events. Real-life sand-pile avalanches, like the collapse of the Soviet Union or the 1929 crash of the stock market, the author declares, demand "a complete remapping of the world". Policymakers must dump a lot of their old thinking to cope with this unpredictable new order.

As Ramo observes, "Theories that involve only armies and diplomats don't have much use" when "confronted with the peculiar nature of a financially interconnected world, where danger, risk and profit are linked in ways that can be impossible to spot and manage" ...and complex systems "tend to become more complex as time goes on"

And the systems never get simpler. "There was no moment at which they would evaporate or condense into a single, easy-to-spot target such as the U.S.S.R. The 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran, for example, was a single very knotty event that, in turn, gave birth to hundreds of jihadist groups, each of which developed different methods of terror, particular techniques of attack and destruction, which themselves were always changing and evolving."

In this sand-pile world, a small group of terrorists armed with box cutters can inflict a terrible blow on a superpower as Al Qaeda did on 9/11/2001,

just as bands of insurgents in Iraq managed to keep the mighty United States military at bay for years.

Iraq, Ramo notes, is a war that showcased all of America's most "maladaptive" tendencies. It was inaugurated on the premise of flawed thinking and planning: that it would have "a clean, fast end" and would lead to a democratic regime that would transform the Middle East in a positive fashion. And the certainty of administration officials not only led to incorrect assumptions (like the bet that "the 'ecosystem' of Iraq would settle into something stable that could be left to run itself") but also resulted in an ill-planned and rigid occupation that was "incapable of the speedy refiguring that life in a war zone" inevitably requires.

As Ramo states, "we live in a revolutionary age," defined by problems whose complexity, unpredictability and interconnectedness increasingly defy our efforts at control (consider: terrorism, global warming, pandemics, and financial meltdowns). States no longer dominate, "new actors" abound, and the day belongs to the fleet and adaptive. These threatening new dynamics demand, in Ramo's view, nothing less than "a complete reinvention of our ideas of security," even the reversal of "a couple of millennia of Western intellectual habits." Outmoded notions like deterrence and balance of power must give way to the new "defining concept" of "resilience." We must "innovate" and "keep learning," as a society and in our dealings with the rest of the world.

Applications:

So how should leaders cope with the sand-pile world? How can they learn to “ride the earthquake” and protect their countries from the worst fallout of such tremors? Mr. Ramo suggests that they must learn to build resilient societies with strong immune systems: instead of undertaking the impossible task of trying to prepare for every possible contingency, they ought to focus on things like “national health care (oops), construction of a better transport infrastructure and investment in education.”

He suggests that leaders should develop ways of looking at problems that focus more on context than on reductive answers. And he talks about people learning to become gardeners instead of architects, of embracing Eastern ideas of indirection instead of Western patterns of confrontation, of seeing “threats as systems, and not objects.” **So.....**

1. Get smarter and think differently

Really think out of the box in planning, problem solving and more. Your competitors are.

Read more about new ways of thinking. Google interesting and new topics highlighted in this BVC Opinion.

2. Change and Lead Change More Quickly Than Ever

The pace will never slow down. It will only get faster. So understand it, benefit from it and help others understand it and benefit from it too.

3. Connect Rather Than Alienating, Isolating or Striking Back

This is a tough one, but as I have taught for years, in the face of conflict we all have options and all are appropriate at times. We can:

- Avoid
- Accommodate
- Compete
- Compromise or
- Collaborate

This author certainly leans toward compromise and collaboration and a bit more of that would certainly be helpful in this “unthinkable” new age.

4. Do Unthinkably Decent Things

Use your imagination in the workplace, at home, in other walks of life to make a POSITIVE difference. If not you, who and if not now, when?

5. Step Up, Be Bold, Be Courageous

And answer this question posed by the author: What does this new age demand of me?

And Finally:

I work with many clients on Decision Making, Communication, Team Building, Conflict, Executive Coaching and Organization Change issues and have already put aspects of this book to use with some of them. I intend to continue using what I learn about this topic with more clients in the future. If you want more thoughts about this book, or want to add your own, check out my blog. You can visit it at <http://richsteel.blogspot.com/> This opinion and others are posted on my web site: www.rsbc.com To talk more about this and other topics, e-mail me (Rich Steel) at rsbc@aol.com or call me at my office on 610 388 3680 or on my cell at 610 324 8466.

Good news- Written by the same guy who wrote Built to Last and Good to Great, this book takes a look at companies that have either not lasted or attained greatness, and is written very well. It is loaded with engaging stories and solid comparative examples to learn from.

Bad news- A little lighter on the research side than his other two books and a bit redundant to them, but not overly redundant, repetitive, or similar. Get it!!??

Good news- It has some very practical lessons for companies, organizations, departments and individuals that I have turned into applications and tactics! As usual, I hope you can put them to use right away.

Summary:

Jim Collins' research method in his previous books, Good to Great and Built to Last, relied on examining "matched pairs" of successful and less successful companies. The point was to highlight what distinguished the winners from the also-rans. In How the Mighty Fall, he revisits the corporate histories compiled for those studies and looks for the seeds of destruction in the periods preceding serious performance stumbles, in both the exemplars and the comparison companies.

This book addresses two related questions:

1. Why do good companies fail?
2. And how does management respond once a company gets into trouble?

Collins introduces a five stage model to answer these questions

His stages are:

1. Hubris born of success
2. Undisciplined pursuit of more
3. Denial of risk and peril
4. Grasping for salvation
5. Capitulation to irrelevance or death

Stages one and two address the roots of corporate failure and stages three through five address managements' response. Collins' analysis of management response to decline (denial of risk, grasping for salvation, and capitulation to irrelevance or death) accurately describe how leaders respond to deterioration in their business.

In stage four, (grasping for salvation), for example, Collins states that it's a bad idea to "make panicky, desperate moves" or "destroy momentum with chronic restructuring," or "search for a leader-as-savior, with a bias for selecting a visionary from the outside who'll ride in and galvanize the company", and I agree! His analysis is solid and he does a particularly good job of describing dysfunctional leadership behaviors of companies in decline.

Collins' analysis of why companies get into trouble in the first place is less intellectually compelling but very intuitive. Companies fail, according to Collins, when success breeds managerial hubris (overbearing pride, presumption or arrogance) where executives think they know it all which leads them to overreach and ultimately fail.

What comes through in this book is honesty. Collins previously chose Fannie Mae as a "Good to Great" institution. Recently, they have demonstrated anything but greatness in facing economic and marketplace changes. There are other companies he chose, like Circuit City, that have gone the same path. Collins discusses why these enterprises were chosen in his previous book and why they fell on hard times after once being great. Because a great company stumbles into mediocrity does not mean the criteria is flawed or the framework is wrong. Rather, as the study shows, somewhere along the way

these companies strayed away from what once made them great. How the Mighty Fall uses the same criteria from Good to Great, only in reverse, to show how and why these once great enterprises have fallen.

Applications:

So...the obvious applications are to avoid these stages or do the opposite:

Hubris born of success....Be humble, no one knows it all

Undisciplined pursuit of more....Have discipline and a tested process

Denial of risk and peril....Do risk and potential problem analyses

Grasping for salvation....Don't panic and constantly restructure

Capitulation to irrelevance or death....Avoid stages 1-4 and don't capitulate!

And there were some other lessons:

1. Capable continual business model innovators like Kroger, Pitney Bowes, Wal-Mart, Wells Fargo, Best Buy, IBM, TI, and J & J outperform those who mostly try to make old business models more efficient and effective, so be innovative!

2. Companies are more likely to try to do too much and swerve off in weird directions because the CEO feels insecure (Addressograph, Ames, Bank of America, Merck, Motorola, Scott, and Zenith) compared to a predecessor and the predecessor's track record (or a competitor CEO and that CEO's track record) rather than because of excess pride, so be confident!

3. Denial of risk and peril arrives long before the company's performance peaks (Addressograph, Ames, Bank of America, Circuit City, Motorola, Scott, and Zenith). It just shows up as a problem later after a change in the environment causes the company to be exposed to worse results because of risk than before, so weigh your risks!

4. Ignorance about how to do big acquisitions successfully is rampant in large organizations (Ames, Hewlett Packard, Merck, and Motorola). If you do a difficult large acquisition without understanding how to succeed you will probably fall flat on your face. And your stock will fall flatter than a pancake, so be smart!

5. Pursuit of seemingly higher-growth markets is an irresistible lure for the portfolio-strategy-focused CEO regardless of the real opportunity (think of the AOL-Time Warner merger), so use a rational, objective process in your decision making!

And Finally:

I work with many clients on Decision Making, Communication, Team Building, Conflict, Executive Coaching and Organization Change issues and have already put aspects of this book to use with some of them. I intend to continue using what I learn about this topic with more clients in the future. If you want more thoughts about this book, or want to add your own, check out my blog. You can visit it at <http://richsteel.blogspot.com/> This opinion and others are posted on my web site: www.rsbvc.com To talk more about this and other topics, e-mail me (Rich Steel) at rsbvc@aol.com or call me at my office on 610 388 3680 or on my cell at 610 324 8466.