

HOLY COW!

How to Create an Amazing Workplace that Steers **Passion, Performance & Prosperity**

TRACY BUTZ

with a FOREWORD by Steve Gilliland

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Tracy Butz

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Dedication



I dedicate this book to those who continue to inspire me and enrich my life in endless ways.

First, to my husband—thank you for supporting and believing in me through every challenge and new idea. I am grateful for your words of encouragement when desired and your echoed excitement in times of celebration.

Second, to my boys—I am incredibly proud of the young men you've become. May you learn from your mistakes, walk with courage and purpose, and continue to live a life with integrity, love and happiness.

Third, to my readers, keynote audiences and workshop participants—you continue to amaze me with your stories, knowledge and insight. Thank you for sharing your experiences and for continuing to welcome my expressions of inspiration and influence. Without you, I would have to go back “to work.” But with you, I can continue to enjoy the path of my passion.

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FOREWORD by Steve Gilliland

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FOREWORD



Perhaps the greatest gift that we have to offer as leaders is mentorship. It is a gift to those who are prepared to seize the opportunity and embrace the teaching. It is a reward and obligation for the teacher or mentor; an obligation that must be accompanied by a commitment and willingness to challenge existing thought, while expanding the barriers of the possible.

HOLY COW! is a book about obligation and reward. It is a book about personal renewal. It is a book that invokes individual responsibility and evokes collective achievement.

As an author and professional speaker, every day I am engaged with people who create, lead, manage or work in companies across the United States. My message challenges the audience to be driven by purpose, fueled by passion, and defined by pride. I have learned that the speaker's effectiveness is not found in the immediate applause of the audience (though always appreciated), but measured in the sustained implementation of the lessons relayed in the message. For a message to be of value, it must be applicable and sustainable.

Tracy Butz has created an applicable and sustainable guide for those desiring to do what it takes to improve their station in life. *HOLY COW!* is a learning platform, a springboard forward to a future possibility for those willing to see, seize and create opportunity. The hardest step, as in

most things, is the first.

Are you ready to assume accountability for your business endeavors—endeavors that will influence the course of your life? Then read this book from cover to cover. In doing so, you will grasp the function of leadership's obligation. The direction—the ways, means and methods—are here. The implementation is up to you.

HOLY COW! is that rare, indispensable resource for those determined to make the best of their lives today. As you start every day, *aim for amazing, lead through influence, be authentic, and find the fun* in the process that will become the path to your success.

There will be sacred cows that will be offended by Tracy's honest approach, and lazy cows who prefer the comfort of the herd. This book isn't for those who think they know it all, or for those unwilling to do the work. This book provides both a thorough process and a planned approach. It is a step-by-step guide that, when implemented with personal verve and clarity of vision, will become an integral part of the determined achiever's toolkit.

HOLY COW! will challenge you to create value and determine your success by embracing personal responsibility. It will show you how to *lead* your life and not cede the responsibilities to the whims of others. You must choose influence over power, show transparency between thought and action, and remain aware of the emotional bandwidth that sets the tone for those people in your wake.

Curious learners find the courage to apply what is of value in the

furtherance of their careers. They express gratitude and appreciation for the chance to change today with what they learned from yesterday. Most importantly, they understand that individual achievement is dependent upon the collective cooperation of all in an organization. *HOLY COW!* is a recession-proof formula for enduring value. Life is a process of construction, adaptation and assimilation. This process requires authentic, humble and hungry leadership.

If a company is to survive, leadership can't be a luxury—it's a requisite. Leadership is the lived embodiment of thought through action. If your company is to thrive, leaders must engage, challenge, and encourage their people to grow through intelligent risks. *HOLY COW!* outlines the strategies of engagement that are tried, true and tested from the crucible of Tracy's personal experience. Through hard-won lessons she shares with the goal of advancement for those willing to step forward and become vital contributors to their own success.

We can stumble forward blindly, blaming circumstance, condition, and fate as the tangible factors in our professional and personal pursuits. Or, we can become aware, regain our personal accountability, and move beyond the excuses of past conditions that must not define us.

Growth comes from meeting a new challenge; confident competence ensues from exceeding the demands of the challenge. You will find that life may support those who coast and select “easy,” but it rewards those who overcome the difficulty. Difficulty can be temporary—the chronic discomfort of accepting average or less than average in your life can become a permanent condition. Take the *HOLY COW!* challenge—accept the temporary pain to achieve the gain, and develop a mindset

that reflects accountability, transparency, intention and innovation.

Companies comprised and led by people who exhibit positive energy live with integrity, exemplify authentic self-belief, and build irrefutable reputations from these qualities. Reputation precedes personality and establishes the baseline for performance expectation. Today is the day you take the personal challenge, and become the best “you” possible.

HOLY COW! is your guide on the path forward to your future. Take ownership of it today!

My Best,

Steve Gilliland, author of *Making a Difference* and member of Speaker Hall of Fame, www.stevegilliland.com

Introduction



Toxic workplaces have become a hot topic of conversation in the business world. And almost everyone has a story to tell about a bad boss, a crazy colleague, or a dreadful place to work. It can be difficult to determine if your workplace has a normal amount of challenges, is seriously dysfunctional, or is chronically toxic—the latter of which can zap your energy and productivity, crush your attitude and motivation levels both at work and home, and even threaten your mental, emotional and physical health.

Here are some telltale signs that your workplace is headed down a perilous path:

- Unhealthy, pervasive communication patterns are common—like withholding information, using it to mislead, or naming the source of “intel” as rumors.
- Policies and procedures are poorly implemented, followed inconsistently, or don't exist at all.
- The organization is filled with toxic people—both leaders and individual contributors—which management fails to address or simply ignores.
- Work adversely affects your personal life. As your workweek approaches, your loved ones see an acute lack of enthusiasm, an increasingly intense level of undeniable stress, and a glum and pessimistic attitude about the miserable grind ahead.

The bad news is that horrible workplaces do exist. The good news is that I wrote *HOLY COW!* to help anyone who wants to create positive culture change at work. By reading and applying the strategies unveiled in this book, you can transform your workplace one small step at a time.

Transforming an organization's culture is not just a leadership function. It is the role of every single person. It begins with you—the person who recognizes the problem and has now discovered the solution. Be the catalyst for change and prepare to hear chants declaring, HOLY COW! This is an amazing workplace!”

Unfortunately, instead of positive mantras, lyrics belted out at workplaces near and far often mimic Dolly Parton's famous song, “9 to 5”:

Workin' 9 to 5, what a way to make a livin'.
Barely gettin' by, it's all takin' and no givin'.
They just use your mind, and they never give you credit.
It's enough to drive you, crazy—if you let it.

Clearly, the legendary Ms. Parton understood the drudgery of working 9 to 5. Regardless, the point is that many people equate work with feelings of frustration, worry, disappointment, stress, unhappiness, anger, resentment, or sometimes even fear. Work doesn't have to feel or be this way. We can talk about issues or feelings like these *until the cows come home*—or you can take action.

I know what you're thinking. The voice inside your head is saying this is *deja moo*—the feeling that you've heard this *bull* before. I understand

your hesitation. This book is different. *HOLY COW!* clearly outlines specific strategies to create incremental positive change in the workplace that makes a real and lasting impact.

Imagine making one small change after another, and seeing your workplace transforming before your eyes. People begin harnessing their excitement, energy and effort. Teams actively engage in collaboration and share best practices in productive and meaningful ways. Organizations grow stronger than ever with high levels of passion, performance and prosperity.

Make the time now to initiate the change you want to see. Don't sit back and scream, "This workplace sucks!" Instead, learn, love and live the strategies found in this book, and soon you'll be proclaiming proudly, "This is a HOLY COW! Workplace."



Chapter 1

Track Emotional Investments

“Customers will never love your company until the employees love it first.” *Simon Sinek*

“When you're surrounded by people who share a passionate commitment around a common purpose, anything is possible.” *Howard Schultz*

“To win in the marketplace you must first win in the workplace.” *Doug Conant*

HOLY COW!

Track Emotional Investments



Before determining how to create a HOLY COW! Workplace, the first step must be to understand where the organization is currently. You can't fix something unless you know if it's broken; and if it is, you can then set out to determine what specific parts need fixing and implement a method of measurement to ensure your efforts are creating the change you want.

But what is a worthwhile metric to track? Engagement.

Employee engagement drives business results. Research shows highly engaged employees are 480 percent more committed to help their company succeed; they are 250 percent more likely to recommend improvements; and these individuals are 370 percent more likely to recommend their company as an employer. From a leadership perspective, disengaged managers are three times more likely to have disengaged employees. And organizationally, research from The Gallup Organization shows companies with high employee engagement claim a 20 percent higher level of both productivity and profitability.

To help visualize the importance of engagement, consider this scenario: You have ten people on your team. Three are busting their butts, five are looking at the scenery, and two are trying to sink the boat or cull the herd. Well, according to Gallup, that example represents an average American company today, with 30 percent of employees engaged, 52

percent disengaged, and 18 percent actively disengaged.

Let's take a moment to describe each of these engagement levels:

- Engaged employees go above and beyond, often do more than what is asked, proudly represent and promote the company's brand, and demonstrate passion about the mission, vision and values of the organization.
- Disengaged workers do only those specific tasks that are asked of them, rarely volunteer for extra assignments or take lead roles, and demonstrate a lower level of energy and performance.
- The actively disengaged focus more often on problems than solutions, walk around with a pessimistic attitude, openly show their disdain at work, and their behavior and actions cause more harm than good.

When determining the current level of engagement for you and your workplace, it's important to create a benchmark where future measurements will be compared. An engagement survey should be designed for participation by everyone in the organization. Notice this metric is *not* a satisfaction survey. These two terms are often used interchangeably, but they are very different.

What's the difference? Commitment.

While satisfied employees might show up every day so they get paid, they are not necessarily committed to the success of the organization. Look around your workplace. You know who these individuals are. They come to work, put in their time, achieve average results, look down

when requests for help from fellow colleagues are heard, avoid extra assignments, and their energy level—let's just call it the opposite of Duracell's bunny. Satisfaction is not enough.

Committed employees are different. They bring a strong sense of personal motivation and emotional commitment to their work—demonstrating their responsibility to the organization and its goals, while focusing on successful business outcomes. This emotional commitment means they actually care about their work and their company. They don't work just for money. They work to make a difference. I've also heard engagement, now referred to by me as commitment, described in this way: “When people are financially invested, they want a return. When people are emotionally invested, they want to contribute.” I couldn't agree more.

To better visualize what commitment looks like, here are several examples:

- A committed computer programmer works overtime when needed, without being asked.
- The committed retail clerk picks up some trash on the store floor, even though the boss isn't watching.
- A committed stock clerk pauses from the mountain of merchandise he has yet to mark, and politely asks if he can assist a guest who appears puzzled.

Commitment, though, is not something a company or its leaders can impose. Commitment is a personal choice. Every person chooses if, how and when to expend his/her discretionary energy. As you consider your

work, where are you on the commitment scale? Are you committed, not committed, or highly uncommitted? Are you merely satisfied or super committed?

Before unveiling the organizational measurement tool I use, I need to share some exciting developments with you. Several years ago, Gallup initiated a multi-year research project to define what constitutes a great workplace. They found there are 12 dimensions that consistently describe great workplaces, correlating with workgroups that have higher employee retention, higher customer satisfaction, greater levels of productivity, and higher profitability. It is important to note that the dimensions did not include pay and benefits. That's not to say pay and benefits aren't important; rather, it means neither differentiates great workgroups from the rest.

In developing the HOLY COW! Workplace Commitment Survey as outlined below, I integrated each of Gallup's 12 dimensions, and adapted them to target these four areas: employee retention, dedication, productivity and profitability. This tool is one instrument for gaining comprehensive feedback from where strategic planning and decision-making should be applied. It is a way to determine where your workplace excels and pinpoint gaps that can be isolated, targeted and resolved—helping your organization earn the coveted title and reap the benefits of becoming a HOLY COW! Workplace.

HOLY COW! Workplace Commitment Survey:

1. I understand what is expected of me at work.
2. I have the resources and equipment I need to successfully

perform my job.

3. I enjoy the work I do.
4. I feel I make a difference at work.
5. In the last 10 days, I have received acknowledgement or praise for doing good work.
6. My supervisor appears to care about me as a person.
7. My supervisor encourages my professional development.
8. At work, my opinion seems to count.
9. I clearly understand and support the vision this organization has for the future.
10. My co-workers appear to be committed to doing quality work.
11. I have a close friend at work with whom I can confide in and share personal matters.
12. In the last six months, my supervisor has talked with me about my progress.
13. In the last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.
14. This is a fun place to work.
15. Leaders model behavior consistent with our company's values and principles.
16. My supervisor addresses negative conflict or behavior directly, to resolve issues effectively and in a timely manner.
17. I trust my supervisor.
18. I receive constructive and timely feedback on a regular basis from my supervisor.
19. I feel my job/workload allows for an appropriate work/life

balance.

20. The value of being truthful is communicated and practiced by most, allowing me to feel safe to address a concern.

21. I speak of this company to my family and friends as a great organization to work for.

When designing your commitment tool, you may choose to include all of these statements or incorporate some of your own, using a 1-to-5 rating scale, with 5 being the desired response. Whichever path you prefer, the goal should be to foster an environment of genuine openness in which ideas, opinions and observations are actively encouraged. How do they feel things are going? What are they confident about? What aspects are they concerned with?

When rolling out this tool, it is important to survey all employees annually during the same timeframe, and ensure it is administered anonymously, to increase participation and encourage truthful responses. Questions should remain the same each year for consistency and comparability reasons, ideally using an online survey tool—like Survey Monkey, Google Forms, Zoho Survey, Survey Gizmo, or Survey Planet—that offers confidentiality, ease of use, and accurate analysis from year to year.

After the survey has closed, and the responses have been analyzed and grouped accordingly, reward honesty with action. Communicate company-wide what the survey results showed and what specific actions will be taken and by when. Keep employees informed of progress often, so you continue to get critical feedback every year.

Emotional commitment means you actually care about your work and your company. You don't work just for money. You work to make a difference.

While the HOLY COW! Workplace Commitment Survey is a comprehensive measurement tool I passionately urge you to consider, there are additional tools used in some organizations today that attempt to measure moods, like happiness, in real time. For example, the Japanese Niko-niko calendar, pioneered at Toyota, gives the leadership a daily look at how happy employees are by using red, yellow or green smiley faces. Managers ask questions that are meaningful for the organization to track at scheduled intervals—like every Monday at 2 p.m., for example. The idea is that if production leaders see a lot of red faces, they are in a position to respond more quickly by using this tool. While I am not convinced that measuring mood at a specific time each week directly correlates to the overall level of happiness at work, I do feel a real-time approach is beneficial and useful. Perhaps simply walking the shop or office floor and talking with employees—and paying attention to their body language and listening to their concerns—might just provide the real-time information we want and need.

So, would you categorize employees inside your organization as paddlers, passengers, or those devoted to sinking the boat? The only way to really know is to ask, using an established tool and administering it in a safe and professional manner. Then, by diligently applying key strategies to areas of concern, you can watch your organization transform into an acclaimed HOLY COW! Workplace. Then it is time to

ring the cowbell!

Personal Challenge

Do you consider yourself engaged, disengaged or actively disengaged in your current role? Consider one action you will commit to today to heighten your personal level of engagement. Whether it is a large or a small act, the key component is committing to it and then following through.

Chapter 2

Aim for Amazing

"Great vision without great people is irrelevant."

Jim Collins

"I hire people brighter than me, and then I get out of their way." *Lee Iacocca*

"*Turned on* people figure out how to beat the competition, *turned off* people only complain about being beaten by the competition." *Ben Simonton*

HOLY COW!

Aim for Amazing



Because it takes the same time, effort and energy to hire mediocre employees as it does to recruit amazing people, why not do the latter? Well, the war for top talent is intensifying. Employers need to up their game if they want the top tier to grow their businesses. Just as Simon Cowell looks for the next differentiating star to emerge on *The X Factor*, attracting top talent will be an even greater differentiator tomorrow than it is today.

So where do you find those shining stars? First, look internally to see if the right talent is already on board.

Determine if there are individuals who are ready to step into leadership roles or if investing in development plans is the right choice—given the skill level difference. If the necessary talent isn't currently part of your team, recruiting them to your organization is critical.

According to a recent LinkedIn Talent Solutions annual report that surveyed more than 4100 talent acquisition decision-makers across 31 countries and 14 industries, several sources can have a significant positive impact on recruiting. In terms of sourcing quality talent, referrals used to be the go-to choice. Today, social professional networks are the number one tool, with job boards being number two.

These tools are excellent resources for attracting talent who are actively

looking for new opportunities; yet 33 percent of recruiters today aren't using them, which creates a greater advantage for those companies that do. But what about those shining stars who aren't exploring new horizons?

Companies need to focus their efforts not only on the active talent pool, but also the passive one—meaning reach out to those individuals who are *not* looking, but are open to speaking to a recruiter. Why? Only 61 percent of companies are targeting passive candidates, which means this group is relatively untapped. Passive candidates also can be found at industry/association events—which is where talented professionals go to learn, discuss industry issues, and network with other like-minded professionals. Today, any company—big or small—can find high-quality talent at scale with the right tools and strategy. That's cool!

Determine if there are individuals who are ready to step into leadership roles or if investing in development plans is the right choice—given the skill level difference.

Besides knowing where to look for amazing people, let's consider best practices for how to select them.

- **Assess candidates objectively.** Include direct reports and peers in the interviews, make sure interviewers write good notes, and have an unbiased group of people make the actual hiring decision.
- **Give candidates a reason to join.** Make clear why the work you

are doing matters, and let the candidate experience the astounding people they will get to work with.

- **Be candid about current challenges.** This represents a good opportunity to see how the candidate reacts and offers to be part of the solution.
- **Ensure culture fit.** Look for those individuals who understand and exemplify your company values, and are clearly aligned with the character of your organization. Each new or current employee contributes to sustaining—or eroding—your culture.
- **Set a high bar for quality.** Before you start recruiting and beyond hiring for skill, decide what attributes you want, define “what amazing is,” and hire only those individuals with those traits. Do not compromise on quality. Ever.

The best practice regarding quality of talent is noted last for a reason. I want to discuss it further to help identify the attributes to look for in candidates. Rather than traditional markers, I recommend a combination of hard and soft skills.

So candidates, at a minimum, need to possess the skills necessary for the position. Beyond that, the goal should be to identify traits that drive business impact. Following are six notable qualities to target in your pursuit of elite employees:

1. **PASSION.** For many people, finding the work they love is an untouchable dream. Instead, each morning they pry themselves out of bed, slip into semiconsciousness, and saunter through the

day until the last 15 minutes, when they wait with bated breath for the moment they can leave. Work is what they must do, not what they love to do—or feel passionate about doing.

Passion is innate. It exists in every person. But not everyone brings it to his or her role at work. As Herb Kelleher, founder and former CEO of Southwest Airlines, said, “Put your employees first. If you truly treat your employees that way, they will treat your customers well, your customers will come back, and that's what makes your shareholders happy.” Companies like Southwest know that passion in the workplace drives a relentless desire to help, an audacious goal that motivates, an insatiable hunger for excellence, an unquenchable thirst for success, and an unshakable devotion to the organization.

Can passion be cultivated in a workplace? Absolutely. First, hire and develop people who are already passionate about what they do. Next, identify the strengths of all employees, and give them the opportunity to do what they do best. Then, hire and promote incredible leaders who are engaged and passionate about helping their team members discover and use their own talents.

- 2. CURIOSITY.** This characteristic is crucial relative to engagement, and it is an excellent indicator of other traits like empathy, creativity, innovation, and the ability to learn quickly. Ask candidates questions about a time when they wanted to learn every detail about a particular topic, whether it was work-related or not. Did they apply a high level of discipline, engagement and perseverance to see it through? Be sure to also ask them if they have any questions before ending the interview. Are they

interested in learning anything else that wasn't yet covered?

I had an interesting experience during my last formal job interview for a role I could then envision loving for many years to come. The VP-level interviewer asked me three fairly common behavioral-based questions, and then said he was turning the interview over to me to find out what questions I wanted to ask. I thought that strategy was odd, but I had a full page of inquiries prepared, which I know surprised him. I demonstrated not only preparedness, but a strong sense of curiosity about the position, his leadership style, and the workplace culture. Curiosity definitely didn't kill the cat; in fact, a demonstration of intentional and genuine inquisitiveness was the catalyst that ultimately landed me a fun and highly rewarding 10-year role.

- 3. COURAGE.** This trait represents the willingness to confront uncertainty or danger, to act in alignment with personal beliefs in spite of criticism, and to demonstrate the moral strength and tenacity to resist opposition when needed. Courageous individuals take the initiative to identify problems, engage in candid discussions, choose ownership over blame— even when faced with tremendous adversity—and persevere to resolve problems.

Fostering a culture of courage must start with actions from the CEO, supported and emulated by leaders throughout the organization, which will help frontline employees mirror similar behaviors. This trait needs to be demonstrated at every level, but certainly begins at the top. And contrary to popular belief,

courage is a teachable and learnable skill, and most everyone has the capacity to be courageous. Moreover, nearly all courageous acts represent one or more of three types of courage:

- **The courage of initiative and action.** This behavior includes making first attempts, pursuing new endeavors, and choosing to act on an idea or a stretch goal.
- **The courage of confidence in others.** This aspect may be displayed by letting go of the need to control situations or outcomes, choosing to rely on others and trust they will honor their commitments, and demonstrating openness to change.
- **The courage of vulnerability.** This behavior is demonstrated by a willingness to act without guarantees, and often includes emotional risk with exposure and uncertainty.

Do you have the valor to take action on a new idea, followed with an intrepid belief in others, while demonstrating a degree of vulnerability? Choosing to be courageous is a worthy trait. Accept it. Honor it. Respect it.

4. **AUTONOMY.** When seeking stellar stars, autonomy is one trait that should shine radiantly. Yet, sometimes, the definition of this word is confused. Autonomy is *not* being able to do whatever you want whenever you want to do it. Instead, working autonomously means you are able to shape your work environment in ways that allow you to perform at your best—

often being responsible for your time, task and technique—which is very empowering and often significantly enhances engagement. In fact, allowing employees control over one or more of these areas has shown to help businesses have more committed, loyal and motivated employees:

- What they do
- How they do it
- When they do it
- Where they do it
- With whom they do it

If you effectively add talented individuals to your team who already enjoy working autonomously, you will have an advantage over other teams. Here are some questions to pose that will help you determine if they are comfortable working in an autonomous environment:

- Explain a situation when you were given clear boundaries, yet felt empowered and able to accomplish the tasks that were needed.
- There are times when we work without close supervision or support to get the job done. Tell me about a time when you found yourself in such a situation and how things turned out.

- Describe a situation where you were given an assignment, and where you were asked to submit periodic status reports, and at the end produced a deliverable such as a final report or finished product.

Instead of having a supervisor hover as a “helicopter boss,” those who shine prefer avenues of choice, where they feel empowered with decision-making opportunities that make sense—leading to even higher levels of commitment, loyalty and self-motivation.

- 5. INTERPERSONAL SAVVY.** Interpersonal skills are the life skills we use every day to communicate and interact with other people, both individually and in groups. It's our ability to get along with all kinds of people, irrespective of level and influence, and knowing when to hold back personal reactions, focusing on others first. Essentially, this skill involves whether or not you can “play nice with others in the sandbox.” Hiring talented individuals who demonstrate strength in this ability is critical for a team to perform at its highest level.

Being interpersonally savvy means you know when to use what skills with whom—by actively listening and building appropriate rapport, demonstrating approachability and confidence, and building constructive and effective relationships—with the ability to diffuse high-tension situations when needed. This trait is a foundational component of teamwork, which is necessary today in most workplaces. Teams rarely operate in silos any more, requiring employees to collaborate well in order to be productive and efficient.

In your search for prime personnel, ask candidates to:

- Describe a recent unpopular decision you made and what the result was.
- Describe a situation in which you were able to effectively read another person and guide your actions by your understanding of their needs and values.
- Describe a difficult or frustrating individual that you've worked with and what steps you took to effectively work with him/her.

6. ADAPTABILITY. In a recent discussion with a trusted colleague, we were trying to determine what makes so many talented and hard-working people ultimately *unsuccessful*. She gave me some powerful insight into why some people she knows either got fired, left their jobs, or were/are essentially miserable on a daily basis: they lack the ability to adapt.

Adaptability is one of those traits that often can't be taught. It must be learned. Things are always changing—the economy is up and down, competitors are unpredictable, colleagues come and go, difficult situations arise, and priorities shift. In today's ever-changing business world, being adaptable is something exceptional businesses use as a competitive advantage. If you can embrace change and flexibility, while continuing to perform with great results, you will become an even more valuable asset—above and beyond your skills and experience.

So here's a question to consider: What if a trusted authority said

you had to make several difficult and enduring changes in the way you think and act—and if you didn't, your time would end soon. Could you change when change really mattered?

Most people respond without hesitation saying, “Yes.” However, according to Dr. Ray Levey, founder of the Global Medical Forum, “The scientific odds are nine to one *against* you.”

Let's consider, for example, a teenager who is addicted to drugs. Does he choose the seemingly endless downward spiral that addiction has awarded him? Of course not. Does he choose an overdose, three rehabilitation centers, and seven stays in jail—all by the *unripe* age of 19? No. Yet this is the heart-wrenching story of someone very close to me.

Change, and the ability to adapt to it, is often difficult—yet it's a huge part of most of our lives. And the majority of people I talk with are greatly concerned by the escalating changes they see in their workplace. They share examples of ever-evolving technology, shifting markets, social media, changing talent demographics, doing more with less—all significant elements that are quite complex. Yet those who are highly adaptive can adjust more easily and quickly to these changes and persevere through them.

In an effort to help you enhance your level of adaptability, and to better identify this trait in promising candidates you aim to add to your team, here are three tips to guide you:

- Ask yourself (and others too), “What is one thing I can do

today to help me move toward our goal for the change, even without having all of the necessary information?” This question opens you up to new possibilities and creates a more flexible, agile mindset.

- Consider multiple perspectives that are different than your own. When dealing with tough or complex changes, the natural habit is to crave alignment and to discount or ignore those opinions that differ from yours. Instead, seek out varying perspectives and contemplate each one.
- Determine best- and worst-case scenarios of the change, and consider how you would adapt to each. This process helps me remain calm and feel a bit more in control, since the “scary unknown” is no longer present.

As you *Aim for Amazing*, it's important to incorporate both hard and soft skills in attracting and hiring the best talent. Consider not only best practices for how to select top talent, but also identify the key traits in individuals that drive business impact.

Building a team with the right mix of outstanding talent and expertise takes significant time and energy, but it's certainly worth the effort when it produces tangible results and becomes the ultimate *cash cow*. To find the next superstar, you'll need to be resolute and turn away undeserving contestants—just be careful not to devastate them, like some music mogul judges have been accused of doing.

Personal Challenge

Offer a gesture of kindness today, preferably toward someone with whom your relationship is somewhat strained. It could be as simple as writing a meaningful message in a thank you card to a client, colleague or friend. Or maybe you could offer assistance to a team member who is trying to get all of her work done in order to arrive on time at her son's baseball game. This small gesture will benefit the other person, and you will feel good about reaching out and demonstrating kindness.

Chapter 3

Lead to Influence

“Leadership is not about titles, positions or flowcharts. It is about one life influencing another.” *John C. Maxwell*

“Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing.” *Albert Schweitzer*

“Our chief want is someone who will inspire us to be what we know we could be.” *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

HOLY COW!

Lead to Influence



A significant part of adding talented and amazing people to your organization is ensuring that the best leaders are appointed, armed, and able to act—meaning hire or promote those with strong leadership skills; equip them with the knowledge, training and expertise to lead their respective teams; and empower them to make tough, necessary decisions.

After ensuring all of that, you still will find some leaders are more effective than others. Why?! Why do people respect and support one leader, but not another?

Simon Sinek, a best-selling author and acclaimed optimist, answers this question uniquely well. He said, “Leadership is not a rank. It is a choice.” Sinek went on to describe that there are managers inside organizations who many of us would not follow just because they have a specific title. We may comply, but not follow for various reasons. Though there are other individuals within organizations who many choose to follow without having a leadership title, because they are worthy of being followed.

So why do people choose to follow one person versus another? The essential element is an individual's ability to influence. A leader's responsibility, at its core, is to influence others to achieve a common objective. How a leader exercises this ability is key.

If done well, the conditions for an amazing workplace environment will emerge. Following are 10 honorable traits of influential leaders:

1. **Demonstrates Character and Integrity.** What separates true leaders from others is their character— the quality of who they are as individuals. Demonstrating trustworthiness, keeping promises, being consistent in words and actions, and exhibiting a genuine interest in the well-being of others are foundational qualities of character and integrity that people want to follow.
2. **Steers with Vision and Competence.** Leaders must possess a clear vision, a picture of what an organization or a team could and should be. They need to be able to share the direction of where the company or team is going in a way that others will want to follow. After providing solid direction, it is the leader's job to get out of the way—to let teams determine the “how,” from the “what” they now know. Competent leaders know where their own strengths lie, and they surround themselves with individuals who are better, brighter and stronger in the areas they aren't.
3. **Nurtures Strong Relationships.** A common leadership mistake involves trying to lead others before developing a relationship. The stronger the relationship you have with others—the deeper, more caring, and more connected you are—the more likely you are to enhance your influence and provide impact. Above all, leadership is a people job. When a colleague or direct report needs to talk with you— whatever the reason—be sure to make time for him or her. And when others seek your guidance to a problem they have, remind yourself that cultivating relationships

is about helping them arrive at the solution rather than telling them what to do. Ask questions to solicit thought, reflection, and idea-generation. Assist by offering direction, so the next time they are faced with a similar challenge, they are able to resolve it independently.

4. **Customizes Approach.** Everyone has different values, opinions, attitudes, beliefs, work habits, goals, ambitions and dreams. This diversity includes experiences that effect how information is processed and interpreted. Some people work well under pressure, others don't. Some respond best with a lot of direction, while others prefer total autonomy and tend to shut down without it. To optimize your effectiveness and influence as a leader, it is best to customize your approach on an individual basis, dependent on the situation at hand. The capacity to execute this point will impact your ability to get the best work out of each member of your team.
5. **Is Authentic.** Living as an authentic leader is about being genuine and real about who you are, and behaving in ways that are congruent with your values, preferences and abilities. Don't try to be someone or something you're not. For example, if you aren't generally a funny person, avoid telling jokes just because another leader is adored for his sense of humor. Authentic people are self-aware and accept their strengths and limitations. As the saying goes, "You may as well be yourself, because everyone else is already taken."
6. **Trusts Intuition.** When leading a team through uncharted waters, everything is uncertain, and the higher the risk, the higher

the pressure. That is where your natural intuition has to kick in. Guiding your team through the process of your day-to-day tasks can be honed down to a science. But when something unexpected occurs, your team will look to you for guidance. Drawing on navigational aids like your past experience, a mentor's perspective, and risk assessments can help you avoid accidents. But when a problem comes seemingly out of nowhere, you will need to take quick and decisive action. Choosing to trust yourself and your intuition is as important as your team choosing to trust you.

7. **Communicates Transparently.** Having open and transparent communication in an organization not only helps build trust, it also decreases the chances for negative assumptions and rumors to take hold. When people don't have the information they need, it is natural to fill in the gaps with what they think. This is how interpretations quickly become truth—which leads to nothing good. Convey all the information people need for understanding, preferably before they need to know it. Employees want to be assured that their leader is conscious of the challenges, aware of the issues, and is actively dealing with them. Communicating openly and transparently helps avoid surprises, allows for questions and concerns to be addressed, and creates expectations for how plans will be carried out.
8. **Faces Challenges.** Leaders must step up and face challenging situations. As Mark Sanborn, a best-selling author and leadership expert, says, “If there weren't challenges, we'd have little need for leaders.” Whether it's steering through a business downturn or guiding struggling employees back on track, influential

leaders must meet challenges head-on. After all, grazing in the grassy pastures doesn't promote learning—or require much effort. Confronting difficulties needs to be faced without rough talk and, instead, by pulling yourself up by your boot straps and getting 'er done.

9. **Chooses to Inspire.** There are three ways to get people to do things: coercion, motivation or inspiration. With coercion, people are persuaded using force or intimidation. In motivation, external rewards or punishments are used—like enticing her with a sweeter carrot or threatening him with a sharper stick. Influential leaders choose a different path: inspiration. They have an amazing ability to lift others up, usually without elevating themselves. They inspire people through their values and commitment to mission and purpose. When a leader genuinely believes in employees and understands their incredible value to the organization, employees feel the connection and have a stronger sense of knowing they matter and can make a difference—and they want to. It's no wonder so many studies show companies with leaders who inspire their teams experience significantly higher levels of innovation, employee loyalty, and customer satisfaction.

Thankfully becoming less common is the mode of command and control, to exert power over people. The concept becoming more familiar is to connect and collaborate as a means of generating influence through people: inspiration.

10. **Stands Committed.** Leadership is a decision and a responsibility, and not to be taken lightly. When you choose to

accept the role of a leader or behave as one with followers, people's expectations of you rise. Others look to you for direction, support, acceptance and appreciation. You have a duty to your team, your colleagues, your customers, and your community. You are accountable, not only for your actions, but those of your entire team. Leadership is not for the weak-hearted or thin-skinned. It can be daunting and brutal; and it can be invigorating and rewarding. Once the leadership medal is earned, stand committed with and for your team.

The essential element is an individual's ability to influence. A leader's responsibility, at its core, is to influence others to achieve a common objective. How a leader exercises this ability is key.

Are you and/or your leader worthy of followers? Is the ability to influence others demonstrated daily? Amazing leaders are able and willing to develop these 10 leadership traits. The more effective you become at each of them, the more influential you will be. And influence trumps rank every time.

Personal Challenge

Think about leaders who have positively influenced you in your life. Select one of those individuals and ask yourself how many of the 10 leadership traits he/she routinely

demonstrated. If this person is still alive, reach out and explain how he/she impacted your life.

Chapter 4

Expect Accountability

“People are not afraid of failure, they’re afraid of blame.” *Seth Godin*

“There are two primary choices in life: to accept conditions as they exist, or accept the responsibility for changing them.” *Denis Waitley*

“Accountability is the glue that ties commitment to the result.” *Bob Proctor*

HOLY COW!

Expect Accountability



In addition to understanding engagement and taking a pulse as to where your organization is currently, we also covered the importance of partnering with amazing talent and ensuring influential leaders are able and willing to continue developing essential traits of leaders that others want to follow.

The next strategy relates to accountability—and how every individual should demonstrate it and expect it from others.

Accountability is a personal choice to rise above one's circumstances and demonstrate the ownership necessary for achieving desired results. It's about understanding the link between your responsibilities and organizational goals. It includes accepting responsibility for your actions, and those of your team, while embracing both successes and failures. It means you understand the business—its purpose, goals, functions and competition—and you willingly consider and offer suggestions for improvements.

Even though most of us understand being accountable is important, and likely an expectation, sometimes excuses are heard. Do any of these sound familiar?

- I've been under a lot of stress lately.
- I didn't know it was my responsibility.

- Why me?
- I can't do everything around here.
- You should have listened closer.
- Why didn't you follow-up?

Instead of blaming others or not taking ownership, here are various ways you can personally demonstrate more accountability and help your teams do the same. Check those boxes below of points you or your team do well, and circle those ideas that you could consider implementing:

- Acknowledge the reality and your role, no matter how unpleasant or unfair it may appear/be.
- Demonstrate courage to admit mistakes and recognize the need for improvement.
- View the issue from all sides and perspectives.
- Resist allowing outside actions to keep you stuck. Accept feedback and act on the situation.
- Consider possible solutions, anticipating what could occur and preparing for both the best and worst scenarios.
- Continually ask, “What else can I do?” This question helps to avoid slipping back into a victim cycle.
- Accept appropriate risk and take a significant step that's necessary to accomplish the team goal.
- Develop the willingness and means to do what you've planned.

But why is accountability integral in creating a HOLY COW! Workplace? When team members consistently demonstrate ownership and accountability, trust is formed. However, without accountability, execution suffers. This happens in two ways.

The first is that when we don't hold ourselves accountable for getting work done well and on time, there's a tendency to become even more lenient and forgiving for other delays. A day becomes a week, a week a month. If it happens once, it's that much more acceptable for it to happen again.

The second is that when we don't hold ourselves accountable, the impact is exponential. Your delay becomes your team's delay. The work they had planned is impacted, and soon the snowball is raging down the hill. Teams begin tolerating missed deadlines, a lack of punctuality and unfinished work has the tendency to make this behavior acceptable—as if it were a *sacred cow*—and then others learn that the real deadline is a week from the published one, sub-par work is acceptable in the interest of “getting it done,” plus so much more. The cumulative impact across an organization can be substantial.

So how do you make accountability part of your culture?

Goals are at the heart of accountability. Without them, *hitting the bulls-eye* won't happen. As a leader, break activities or projects into meaningful goals with measurable metrics for everyone. As an individual contributor, do the same for your own tasks, relay them to your supervisor, and encourage s/he to do the same for the balance of the

team. Without proper goals, it's virtually impossible to enforce accountability at any level.

Accountability is a personal choice to rise above one's circumstances and demonstrate the ownership necessary for achieving desired results.

Goals provide clear expectations for everyone about what's expected. The less room for ambiguity the better—so goals need to be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic/Relevant, and Time-Bound. In a team environment, this is especially important because of the dependency on each other's work and the impact of not meeting expectations. Following are two goals, one poorly written, and one written well:

Poor Goal: The CSI team will increase our customer satisfaction score this year.

SMART Goal: The CSI team will increase customer satisfaction by 10 points, from 'X' to 'Y', within the next 12 months (by 'Z' date).

Another important outcome of having goals is defining what is NOT a priority. One of the biggest reasons we fail to live up to our commitments is because we put too much on our plate and lack focus on key priorities. If you've ever heard me speak live, I frequently share this very point. The concept is called, “Planned Neglect.” What is one thing you will plan NOT to do today, this week, this month, or this year to

ensure you have time for your most important priorities?

For example, let's say you really want to enrich your relationship with one of your team members. As colleagues for two years, you don't really know much about him, other than he is very skilled and passionate about the work he does. You've overheard him talking about watching NFL football games, which is a pastime you enjoy as well.

The first step is to determine how much time you need to make the initial connection and then follow through on getting together after work one day, perhaps at a sports pub that is airing the next Monday night matchup. In total, it may take five hours to connect, select a date, include travel time, and plan meaningful conversation while cheering on your favorite team.

The next step is to make a lists of small tasks you could stop doing in a two-week period of time, to set aside ample time for reaching out and getting to know your colleague better. Because you tend to stay an extra hour or so at the end of every day to work without interruptions, you realize this represents a segment of time you could use for *your planned neglect*. Perhaps you could also ask a friend to fill in for your Thursday night dart league. If your friend agrees, this means you will have successfully swapped a Thursday dart night for a Monday football night. If you also commit to leaving work on time one day next week, you will have cut an additional hour from your normal schedule to allow time to plan and reach out to your fellow team mate. And in the end, you'll not only get to know him better, you'll connect at a more personal level, so when work challenges arise, you'll have another person you feel comfortable collaborating with.

Demonstrating accountability is essential for every employee within an organization, and it starts with you. As you and others continue to execute and value it, accountability will deliver numerous business benefits: better execution, lower employee turnover, and more creativity and innovation. Shifting to being more accountable may require a change in behavior from you, your team, and/or your organization, but leaders, managers and employees alike will find the results are well worth the effort.

Personal Challenge

Consider one thing you really want to do but haven't been able to carve out the time necessary to accomplish it. How will you apply "Planned Neglect" toward this desire, so you can attain success with it?

Chapter 5

Cultivate Candor

“It is a myth that you cannot tell the truth and keep a friendship.” *Joseph Grenny*

“Feedback is a function of respect.” *Dr. Brené Brown*

“We cannot change what we are not aware of, and once we are aware, we cannot help but change.”
Sheryl Sandberg

HOLY COW!

Cultivate Candor



If your best friend or close colleague had a weakness that was prohibiting him/her from attaining success, would you want to help? Most of us would. However, too many people look at giving tough feedback or having a difficult conversation as something they want to avoid. But will things get better? It's not likely. What's more probable is things will get worse.

Which leadership behavior do you think effects morale and productivity the most? It's not attitude, engagement, alignment or collaboration. According to a recent Gallup Poll, the correct answer is, “Not enough feedback.”

Stepping up and sharing a tough message in a way that maximizes candor and minimizes defensiveness takes courage.

Some people feel providing feedback during performance review time, which is generally one or two times per year, is enough. I vehemently disagree. Providing feedback once or twice a year and expecting performance change is like dieting on your birthday and wondering why you're not losing weight. It's ridiculous.

Giving and receiving candid feedback is a key component of creating

and sustaining a HOLY COW! Workplace. Feedback, both positive and negative, needs to be provided in a timely manner and frequently. Sharing tough feedback that includes how some negative behavior needs to change is the type of feedback most people struggle with and often put off, pretending all is well—until all is anything but well.

As Jack Welch, former Chairman and CEO of General Electric, said, “Why do we have this false kindness, where we don't tell people where they stand, until we run into trouble?” It's much easier to address something uncomfortable or difficult when it is a small issue versus when it becomes enormous.

Stepping up and sharing a tough message in a way that maximizes candor and minimizes defensiveness takes courage. This point is unmistakable. The challenge of being candid—the art of being frank, honest and open—is learning to say:

- The right thing
- In the right way
- To the right person
- At the right time
- For the right reason

And if you under-perform any aspect, the conversation likely will veer off course.

To achieve more productive and positive relationships—one candid conversation at a time—here are six strategies to help steer behavior and

performance in the right direction:

- 1. Clearly identify your purpose for having the conversation, before engaging in it.** If someone understands that the intent of any feedback is offered in the recipient's best interest, s/he will be much more apt to hear what is being said. If the intent is perceived negatively, though, the natural tendency is to become defensive because of feeling unsafe or uncomfortable. Be certain your motive is honorable before moving forward with the discussion.
- 2. Consider the timing and location of the conversion.** After doing your due diligence and ensuring the information you want to discuss is accurate and complete, determine when and where to have the conversation. Having it as soon as possible after you have done your preparation is key. Waiting too long to meet can make the conversation awkward, and waiting to combine the issue with another one can feel like a planned attack. Choosing a location that is private is paramount, so the two of you can openly engage in dialogue. Selecting a neutral spot that isn't conducive to feelings of power—like a conference room instead of the supervisor's office— is another point to consider.

Standing in the presence of other people is not the time to begin a difficult conversation with an individual. Just like cattle who have almost 360 degree panoramic vision, bystanders tend to see and hear conversations nearby. Perhaps curious onlookers strain to see the reflection of the discussion through a window or are fed mouthfuls of scuttlebutt from one person now planted sideways. Regardless, this is how gossip starts. Instead, share

feedback one-on-one and face-to-face, preferably, or by telephone if necessary. Resist the urge to engage in a difficult conversation using email or texting. Even though this method may seem easier, it likely won't produce the positive, long-term results you seek.

3. Start with an opening statement that invites dialogue. Make sure your first words encourage conversation. Several ideas of what to say include:

- I have something I'd like to discuss with you that I hope will help us work together more effectively.”
- I'd like to talk with you about “X.” We may have different ideas on how to “Y,” and I'd like to better understand your perspective.”
- I'd like to see if we might reach a better understanding about “X.” I really want to hear your thoughts and feelings about this, and share my perspective as well.”

As you introduce the conversation, be conscious of the three ways communication is interpreted—body language, sound of voice, and spoken words.

Non-verbal movements, or body language, is communicated in many ways, like with posture, eye contact, eyebrows, forehead, facial expressions, head tilts, and gestures.

Sound of voice is interpreted through pitch, volume, speed, enunciation, strength and tone.

Spoken words are the fastest means of interpreting a message. Yet words don't always match the body language expressed or sounds heard in the voice— which is cause for pause. When choosing the words to say, consider these points to help the conversation begin smoothly:

- Choose words carefully— words have meaning and they do matter.
- Avoid absolutes—like “never” and “always.” Otherwise, the conversation may easily be diverted, rejecting the idea and saying, “I don't *always* do that! How can you say that?”
- Be specific about the concern. Specificity lends more credibility and produces less defensiveness.
- Focus on the behavior or issue, rather than on the person. And initially, when the issue is raised, avoid the word “you”—altering the statement intentionally to leave out that accusatory word.

Below are two examples of how to communicate a similar message. One is clearly more effective than the other:

Option A: “Your timing plan for this project roll-out won't work.”

Option B: “I have a concern about the timing for the roll-out of this project. Can we please take a few minutes to discuss it further, so I can better understand your perspective?”

Do you see how Option A likely would increase defensiveness and fail to achieve the results you desire, while Option B is focused on the issue and stated in a way that is more likely to propel you toward success.

- 4. Communicate the facts, your interpretation, and then how you feel about the situation.** How individuals interpret facts often affects their emotions because of assumptions that are made. Consider the example below.

Paul is describing a new process improvement idea to his colleagues during his team's weekly meeting. As he is explaining the benefits of implementing this new software tool, he scans the room and notices one team member, Carla, who is clearly agitated— looking down, with her face starting to turn red, and her eyes beginning to bulge. Within moments, she begins to rock back and forth in her chair, shifts her weight from side-to-side, and suddenly shouts out, “Are you serious? Do you think this software savior is going to fix all of the issues we are facing today? New technology will only take us so far. We need to listen to the ideas of our skilled workforce if we want to compete at the same level as our competitors! This is such a #\$\$@&%* idea!” As she storms out, the room falls silent. Heads around the table shift down, with eye contact completely disappearing.

The facts of the situation include:

- Paul shared his new process improvement idea at the weekly team meeting.

- As he explained the benefits of the tool, he noticed Carla's face turning red and her eyes beginning to bulge, as she rocked back and forth in her chair, and shifted her weight from side to side.
- Carla then began shouting about how the idea wouldn't work, used some vulgar language, and abruptly left the meeting room.

How would you characterize Carla's emotion? I describe it as angry or enraged. My guess is that you thought of a similar response. Given the facts, for Carla to exhibit anger or a similar emotion as she did, she likely assumed that Paul's idea wasn't an adequate solution; that it didn't include the opinions of the rest of the team, or perhaps was an attempt to slide through a new piece of technology that Paul had wanted for the past year. Carla's interpretation of the situation led her to feel angry or enraged, and she then acted in a hostile manner.

As you think about this less-than-ideal outcome, was there a different reaction Carla could have? Instead of feeling anger or rage, is there another emotion she could have experienced?

What if Carla felt an emotion on the opposite end of the spectrum from anger or rage—like feeling grateful for being part of a team that discusses new ideas and wants to hear the opinions of others before moving forward with a new idea? In order for an emotion like gratitude to emerge, Carla's interpretation would have to be very different. Instead, she could view Paul's idea as a means of using a tool to supplement, rather than replace, the

team's knowledge and experience to identify possible risks and consider viable solutions.

The second scenario certainly reveals a different interpretation of the facts, which likely would lead to a more positive emotion—one where you aren't *having a cow* over it! And one that prompts a much more favorable result. If you want to impact your outcomes, it starts with the interpretations you make.

When you encounter a situation where your mind immediately thinks of a negative assumption, challenge yourself to consider a different, more positive interpretation. This strategy seems simple, well, because it is. But just because it's simple in concept, doesn't mean it's easy to implement. Changing a habit takes persistence and time. As with most unwanted habits, the effort to alter them is certainly worth it.

- 5. Encourage the other person to share his/her thoughts and feelings.** Fostering dialogue and asking the other person for input sends a message of interest and reassurance that insight is welcomed and appreciated. Having a conversational exchange with someone easily outdoes a monologue. Who wants to sit and listen to someone drone on about what s/he thinks or feels, without caring about the other person's opinion?

When fostering dialogue, it works well when you ask for the other person's input in a thoughtful manner. One of my go-to statements to encourage another person to share his/her perspective with me is by using these four words: “Please help me understand...” It communicates openness, inclusion,

thoughtfulness and sensitivity.

After requesting input, listen attentively to what is said. Resist the urge to talk, even if there's an initial uncomfortable moment of silence. As feedback is shared, do your best to truly understand the individual's perspective. Avoid thinking about your answer or a rebuttal to what is being said; instead, listen for deep understanding. And if the person is searching for the right words, avoid inserting yours, or a personal bias may be expressed without realizing it. If the person doesn't offer any input, you can say something encouraging like, "I really value your opinion," or, "It can be difficult, at times, to put thoughts into words."

As you and the other person are conversing, ask clarifying questions to probe deeper. It's also helpful to acknowledge the other person's point of view by restating what you heard, so clarification can be made and misunderstandings avoided.

- 6. Keep your emotions in control.** Controlling emotions is far less difficult to do when you are prepared. It's not easy, but it's less arduous. Why? Because preparation helps prevent emotions from getting the best of you. It allows for greater composure when it matters most.

Prior to having a candid conversation with someone, the first tactic is to prepare by thinking through how the exchange may go. If possible, consider past reactions from this person. Write down several different possible reactions and think through how you could best handle each one.

Another tactic is to discuss a troubling issue with your supervisor or a trusted colleague. Seeking advice from a confidant can offer valuable insight and help you validate ideas or challenge assumptions before engaging in the conversation.

A third tactic to help control your emotions during a tenuous situation is to contemplate personal triggers—or hot buttons, as they are often called. There are six common conflict triggers that tend to set people off during a difficult conversation:

- **Competence** - questioning your intelligence or skills.
- **Inclusion** - excluding you in some way (*from a group, an event, a committee, etc.*) or implying you're not a good companion.
- **Autonomy** - trying to control you, impose on you, or threaten your self-reliance.
- **Status** - threatening or disrespecting your tangible/intangible assets, including power, position, economic worth and attractiveness.
- **Reliability** - questioning your trustworthiness or dependability.
- **Morality** - questioning your moral values or integrity.

If you can recognize your own hot buttons, you can proactively guard against them—meaning you will be less susceptible to reacting to them and more able to move through them.

A fourth tactic to prevent emotions from getting out of control happens during the conversation. Allow the other person to speak. Resist interrupting. Listen attentively without worrying about what to say next. Lean in and listen without hesitation. If voices start to escalate, consciously lower yours, which often is mimicked by the other person, unintentionally or otherwise. Do your best to acknowledge the other person's feelings and demonstrate a high degree of empathy. We all seek understanding. If you can demonstrate compassion, escalated emotions often subside, or at the very least, diminish.

A fifth tactic to reduce the damage from elevated emotions is to express regret as soon as you realize there is an issue, using helpful, blameless apologies.

Instead of sharing harmful blaming statements, like:

- “I'm sorry, but you didn't send it in on time.”
- “I'm sorry that Sally didn't explain this to you properly.”
- “I'm sorry that Carl told you the wrong way to fix this issue.”

Articulate helpful, blameless apologies, such as:

- “I'm sorry this issue has been frustrating for you.
- “I'm sorry you've been inconvenienced by this situation.”
- “I'm so sorry about the miscommunication.”

Whether you're a leader or individual contributor, you're no doubt familiar with the sweaty palms and butterflies that come with having to

engage in a tough conversation. We've all had to do it from time to time, and we'll continue to face difficult discussions in the future. From a poor performance review to confronting a cheating spouse, the most stressful conversations are those when you're sure tears or anger will ensue. Remember, relationships will continue to show strain until the *cow in the room* is addressed. Poor behaviors don't go away just because you want them to. You must step up, with courage and perseverance, to address the issue at hand. Only then will the relationship have a chance to prosper.

Personal Challenge

Consider one tough conversation that is holding you back from achieving a more collaborative and meaningful relationship with someone. Go to this website and download, print and complete both the “Candid Conversations Preparation Guide” and the “Candid Conversations Practice Worksheet” documents: www.CandidConversationsthatDriveResults.com. After preparing for the hard conversation you know you need to have, step up and courageously engage in dialogue with the person. As you likely realize, relationships don't get better simply because you want them to. Taking action is necessary.

Chapter 6

Ditch the Downers

"You cannot have a positive life and a negative mind."
Joyce Meyer

"Whatever you dwell on in the conscious grows in your
experience." *Brian Tracy*

"A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an
optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty."
Winston Churchill

HOLY COW!

Ditch the Downers



Everyone has that one colleague or friend who can literally “suck the life out of a room.” You say it's a beautiful day, she tells you why it's not. You tell him about your new idea, he tells you why it won't work. You proudly share a recent work success, and she replies with, “Yeah, but what about... ?” I refer to these toxins as “Debbie Downers,” “Cynical Sams,” “Pessimistic Pauls,” “Negative Nancys,” or “Gloomy Glens.” They see every glass of milk as half empty. They play devil's advocate to every positive scenario. They spew venom to anyone and everyone who will listen.

I often wonder if poisonous attackers realize they're being incredibly negative, or if it is so commonplace that it is an unconscious action? Regardless, avoid these snakes before they slither their way deep into your psyche and you start mirroring similar behaviors. She complains, you listen. He seizes his prey with a bite, you exhale. She tightens the coil, and you can no longer inhale. The demise is constricting, swift and lethal.

The truth is, who you hang with, you become. Do you surround yourself with an inspiring support network, who lifts you when you're down, pushes you to grow, and offers candor when needed? Or are you encased with those who consistently pull you down, vomit can nots, why nots and should nots, and/or ooze denial, criticism and blame? Success breeds success. Whining fosters more whining. The choice is yours.

Cutting ties with “Nathan Naysayer” is much easier said than done. Even when bosses need to sever ties, employees often hope they take the necessary action, so the morale of the team doesn't take a bigger hit. Yet, according to a recent survey featured on Fortune.com, fewer than half of managers said they would fire someone for damaging team morale. Interestingly, 88 percent of employees would. Team members understand the direct impact of these destructive types. They personally experience their high-performing, fun and collaborative team morph into something unrecognizable—a team they don't want to be a part of any longer. Sadly, it's often too late when management finally realizes the extent of the damage.

Regardless of your role, putting distance between you and harmful naysayers is essential for healthy, meaningful and respectful relationships to prosper. By making small, purposeful changes in *your* behavior with negative influencers, you can better control your own thoughts and actions, and more positively influence those of your team.

If you know you ought to put distance between you and “the Nathans,” consider trying several of these ideas:

- **Change your routine.** Instead of sitting through lunch with someone who whines and complains about her troubles, critiques mutual friends, and sits and pouts, choose to do something different with that time. Go for a walk, eat with someone else, or spend time reading. If she questions your behavior change, engage in candid dialogue with her, as highlighted in chapter five. The exchange may influence a behavior change from her, too, or at the very least, you will more easily be able to enjoy lunchtime without

facing unwanted whining and negativity.

- **Keep interactions short.** If you have to engage with a toxic individual, keep the interactions short and focused on the desired outcome. Instead of empathizing as she rambles on about her mountainous workload or frustrating spouse, listen for a few minutes, and then explain that you really need to cut this conversation short due to another commitment—the commitment you made to yourself to limit interactions with this person.
- **Control self-talk.** Negative emotions tend to rise when we encounter pessimistic influences. If your emotions begin to elevate after talking with a toxic personality, be conscious of and control the self-talk in your mind. For example, a normally calm, mild-mannered person may resort to yelling outwardly or screaming inwardly because she simply can't take hearing the negativity anymore. It may be tempting to say to yourself, “He makes me so angry!” But blaming others for your feelings gives them more power. When you take control of your reactions, you own your feelings. William Ury, a world-renowned mediator, says that, “Human beings are reaction machines.” Instead of reacting in the moment, slow down your negative thoughts and stay true to your values, even though the circumstances are trying.

Regardless of your role, putting distance between you and harmful naysayers is essential for healthy, meaningful and respectful relationships to prosper.

- **Maintain perspective.** There are reasons people behave the way they do. Sometimes the reasons are clear, while other times it's murky. Perhaps the bothersome naysayer you wish to avoid is facing self-esteem issues, ongoing job performance errors, money problems, health concerns, or something completely different. We each behave in our own way when we have concerns that are weighing heavily on us. Understanding that there may be a deeper cause for the pessimistic persona wouldn't cause me to excuse it, but I could more easily maintain a greater sense of perspective with it.
- **Ask pertinent questions.** When someone has you cornered and is spewing cynical statements, try asking him/her, “How can I help you?” or “What are you going to do?” This strategy helps shift the topic from the negative problem to a possible solution.
- **Optimistically oppose.** If you're stuck in a situation where everything that is flowing out of “Gloomy Glen” is anti-positive, tentatively articulate kind, opposing statements. For example, if he says his food sucks, combat that with, “My food is pretty good. Perhaps, you could try some of mine, if you'd like?” Or if he says the (mutual) boss is a pain to work for, optimistically oppose by saying, “I used to think of her the same way. Then I decided to focus on the positive difference she has made to our team, and that helps me view her in a different light.” If this tactic doesn't influence a more positive tone right away, hopefully you have given this individual a little more to think about. At the very least, “Gloomy Glens” tend to move on to others when what they are getting from you isn't satisfying their mantra.

Almost all of us have dealt—or are still dealing—with an annoyingly negative co-worker or an unbearable pessimistic boss. When facing someone who views the world through a negative lens, realize you can't change him/her—as the only person you can change is yourself. Instead, understand that negativity comes in many forms, and we need to protect ourselves against it. Why? Because negative thoughts stick to us like Velcro and positive thoughts slide off us like Teflon. And chances are, you are taking that venomous snake home with you when you leave the office. Instead, avoid being the innocent prey by taking control of who you spend your time and energy with. This way, you'll be hanging with those you admire, enjoy interacting with, and often seek to emulate or learn from.

Personal Challenge

Is there someone in your life who has a toxic attitude? If so, consider the ideas shared in this chapter and determine how you can best deal with this situation. Once you have outlined a plan of action, take the steps necessary to lead you toward a different, more positive outcome.

Chapter 7

Be Intentional with Innovation

“There is no innovation and creativity without failure. Period.” *Dr. Brené Brown*

“There's a way to do it better—find it.” *Thomas Edison*

“Innovation happens when people are given the freedom to ask questions and the resources and power to find the answers.” *Sir Richard Branson*

HOLY COW!

Be Intentional with Innovation



Innovation isn't only about new products; it's about changing behavior where new ideas emerge.

Behavior is the unknowable variable in every innovation. It's less about how we can make a product better and cheaper, and more about why we do what we do to begin with. This question of why is almost always tied to the question of how markets behave. To illustrate:

This company didn't only create a faster, cheaper and better digital format for music; it altered the nature of the relationship between music and people. Which company and product am I referring to?

This company didn't just create a platform for auctions; they changed the way we look at the experience of shopping and how the community plays a role in the experience. Which company am I describing?

This company didn't just make getting from point A to B faster; they changed the relationship between auto manufacturer and buyer, and fundamentally altered the reason that some may buy a car. Which product am I highlighting?

These are three examples of how innovations added value in unexpected ways, with the solutions being Apple's iTunes, eBay, and On Star (a subsidiary of General Motors).

Instead of viewing innovation as sporadic bolts of lightning, think of it as an intentional process that alters behavior and creates a place where new ideas are born.

For an innovative idea to be viewed both as worthwhile and effective, though, it must be appropriate, useful and actionable—somehow influencing or improving the way things get done in an organization.

Consider an organization's mission statement, intended to describe the reason it exists and help guide decisions about priorities, actions and responsibilities. Most corporate missions sound alarmingly alike: “Become the number one provider of blah, blah, blah.” These generic, broad-based statements might rev up sales teams, but they do little to spark ingenuity and originality. Instead, frame the change you want to see, focusing on how it will help your customers. For example, the Make-A-Wish Foundation has a crystal clear mission statement: “We grant the wishes of children with life-threatening medical conditions to enrich the human experience with hope, strength and joy.”

Many organizations view their mission statements as their highest priority goals. That's a mistake. Abolish this archaic way of thinking. After all, a mission statement shouldn't be a goal, it ought to be *the promise*. Be intentional about what you *will* do, not what you *want or plan* to do. And this new and deliberate way of thinking should resonate throughout your team and across your organization—and certainly not only with respect to your mission statement. Demonstrating a purposeful direction of intentionally innovating must be felt by all, in every aspect

of your business.

Instead of viewing innovation as sporadic bolts of lightning, think of it as an intentional process that alters behavior and creates a place where new ideas are born.

According to innovation expert Larry Keeley, “Innovation that works is a disciplined process.... The real frontier is to not think of it as a creative exercise, but to think about it as being disciplined in using the right methods.” Below are six strategies designed to help you foster and promote innovative thinking:

1. **Become an expert—plan, prepare, practice, perform, persist.**

Success is a function of deliberate practice. As Malcolm Gladwell, a best-selling author and journalist, says, “It takes 10,000 hours or 10 years of practice to be world-class, specifically at cognitively demanding tasks. The goal of deliberate practice is improvement. You're wasting your time if you are engaged in routines you already know.

Experiment with new techniques and develop different skills. Design exercises or projects to push yourself toward growth.

2. **Ask the right question.** Instead of Howard Shultz, founder of Starbucks, asking, “How can I recreate the Italian espresso bar in the United States?” he asked, “How can I create a comfortable, relaxing environment to enjoy great coffee?” By altering how a question is worded, you can foster innovative thinking quite easily. For example, instead of asking: “How can we attract more customers?” other ways to ask a similar question that will likely

produce different—and sometimes more thought provoking—answers are:

- What do our customers really want?
- What can we offer that our competitors don't?
- How could we change the buying experience for our customers?

3. **Be open and aware of possible solutions.** Be more aware by intentionally noticing things and people around you. Be curious about possible solutions. One of the best films that illustrates innovation is *Moneyball*, which is based on a true story. Brad Pitt plays the Oakland A's general manager, who defied conventional wisdom, and even his own scouts, by fielding a baseball team of castoffs who enjoyed one of the most unlikely winning streaks in the history of professional sports. Sometimes solutions are right in front of you; they are just packaged in a way you didn't see before.
4. **Engage in diversity of thought.** Collaborate with people who are different from you. Invite people from other departments to help you solve a problem. It may be uncomfortable, but it will stretch you. View situations from another person's perspective—such as one of your customers or vendors—or in a different way.
5. **Exercise the freedom to choose.** Having the ability to choose is the *cow 's moo*. The fast food giant, Burger King, obviously understands the importance of choice, touting the infamous 40-year slogan, “Have It Your Way.” People tend to be more innovative when they are able to choose which method is best to

accomplish a specific task. Leaders can set goals, but it should be up to the team members to decide how to attain them. New and improved methods can emerge when individuals have autonomy over the “how” after being given the “what.” Just as cattle are known to be curious and inquisitive animals, human beings also want to ponder how they will implement a specific task, process or idea. Without choice, signs of disengagement and resentment often surface.

When my sons were younger, they each were given several household chores per week. One winter weekend, my youngest son was asked to shovel the snow off our backyard circular-shaped patio. He responded with, “Can you please help me?” As we began shoveling, I started with removing the snow from the patio steps, as he started shoveling on the east side of the circle. When I finished clearing the steps, I watched and was not only perplexed, but also frustrated with my son's starting point. Why wouldn't he start in the middle of the circle and push the snow out?

I proceeded to explain the logical process for shoveling a round patio to my 12-year-old. I was quickly and sternly met with, “Really, Mom? I need to be told how to shovel? Wow. I'm sure I can figure it out.” I decided to be done shoveling and let “his majesty” accomplish this task on his own. This represented one of the very few times he has ever talked back to me. And after I thought about it more, I understood why he reacted the way he did. I may have countered similarly, given the same situation.

Even though your organization likely doesn't grant you the

privilege to always “have it your way,” having the flexibility to choose how to carry out a specific task is appreciated and often expected. How do you like your savory flame-grilled beef patty prepared when ordering the popular Bacon and Cheese WHOPPER® Sandwich? And how do you prefer to customize it with flavorful premium ingredients? The freedom of choice is yours.

6. **Ensure intellectual challenge.** Match people with the right problem-solving experiences. Make sure each learning activity supports an individual's interest, expertise and intrinsic motivation. The degree of stretch in each specific challenge is essential, as too little leads to boredom and too much leads to feeling overwhelmed.

In the world today, innovation is inescapable. If an organization doesn't adapt to fit the changing realities, it risks losing its position in the market and becomes less sustainable. If individuals don't practice innovative thinking, they remain in the status quo and their skills eventually become less marketable. Being deliberate about innovation is about changing for the better, resulting in a greater number and a higher level of appropriate, useful and actionable ideas. How we choose to embrace and promote intentional innovation—both inside and outside our walls—is vital to our ability to truly make a difference on the issues we care about most.

Personal Challenge

The Remote Associates Test, created by Professor Sarnoff Mednick at the University of Michigan in 1962, is used to assess creative thinking skills. It measures the ability to see relationships between things that are only remotely associated.

Consider three unrelated words, such as, “Falling—Actor—Dust,” determine a fourth word that connects all three words. The correct answer is “star.” (*fallingstar; movie star; Stardust*).

Test your creative thinking skills with the challenges outlined on the next page. Have fun!

Chapter 8

Yearn to Learn

“Develop a passion for learning. If you do, you will never cease to grow.” *Anthony J. D'Angelo*

“Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever.” *Mahatma Gandhi*

“Learning and innovation go hand in hand. The arrogance of success is to think that what you did yesterday will be sufficient for tomorrow.” *William Pollard*

HOLY COW!

Yearn to Learn



As my father-in-law says, “Education is expensive, no matter how you look at it—you can either pay for the knowledge you learn, or pay by learning a costly lesson.” My preference is the former versus the latter. If presented with this option, my guess is that most companies would agree; however, no matter how much they say they value learning, or how much they spend promoting it, some organizations are not putting their money where their mouth is in order to create an environment that produces a learning culture with curious want-to-be learners.

Studies show that if you want to stay relevant in today's business world, it requires an unyielding desire to learn, improve and adapt. But unless organizations drive and support a learning culture, learning often stops at the individual level, and the benefits aren't shared with the team and certainly not realized company-wide.

A true learning culture is one that supports an insatiable quest for knowledge and shared learning directed toward the mission, vision and goals of the organization. So how can companies develop a learning culture, and even more importantly, foster a deep yearn to learn among all employees? Following are key actions that can help create a growth mindset and unlock learning potential:

- **Secure C-suite buy-in.** Top-tier leaders in organizations not only need to be champions for learning, but demonstrate “leading by

example” to their teams. Rather than simply touting how learning should be a daily habit versus a once-a-year optional activity, modeling this mindset is critical. Leaders often exempt themselves from learning, when instead, they should be first in line.

- **Hire smart.** Evaluate candidates' tendency for learning. Ask structured and behavioral-based interview questions like, “Describe a time when you welcomed a demanding task you didn't know how to do,” or, “Tell me about the last time you proactively learned something new,” or, “Describe a situation in which you recognized you didn't have the knowledge or skill necessary to work through it and how you handled it.” Look for intrinsically driven individuals who are compelled to find answers or solutions —by either learning how to do it or seeking out others who will guide, mentor or assist them.
- **Highlight learning in performance management.** Ensure that learning is incorporated into the performance management process for all employees. When everyone is expected to continue to learn and grow, ongoing performance discussions and encouragement happen more naturally, and budget money is more easily allocated versus cut—which allows for more offerings that are readily accessible, such as in-house training sessions, on-demand virtual learning, external training, high-potential leadership development, quarterly supervisor training, onsite library of books and resources, departmental or team conferences, a comprehensive mentoring program, educational lunch-and-learns, continuing higher education assistance, etc. Also, celebrate key milestones like promotions, designations and degrees earned, which demonstrates strong support and encouragement for learning. Set

the expectation that learning matters, and then empower employees to own and direct it for themselves.

Leaders often exempt themselves from learning—when instead, they should be first in line.

- **Encourage “what,” not “how.”** Leaders should provide direction, or the “what,” and then step aside for employees to figure out “how” to make it happen. It astounds me to see organizations spend so much time, energy and resources to acquire top talent, only to dictate how every task should be done. People want to contribute and make a difference—and they can't do that if they are simply being told how to do everything. Leaders hire for skill, experience and drive. Once the talent is in place, they need to get out of the way. If your supervisor isn't allowing you to apply your expertise, respectfully ask why.
- **Welcome respectful disagreement.** A learning culture welcomes debate and respectful differences of opinion. Employees at all levels should be encouraged to discuss issues directly with the specific individual they disagree or have a problem with, versus complaining about an issue to a supervisor or colleague. When this behavior is more the norm than an isolated hiccup, problems are discussed, solutions are created, and fewer feelings are hurt from talking behind the backs of others.
- **Discuss “lessons learned.”** Whether a new product, service or

process is a success or failure, understanding what went right or wrong is critical. After the completion of any project or initiative, identify the aspects that went well and celebrate those successes. Also, review those pieces that became issues or even failed, and diagnose them for new insights. It's not about finger pointing; the focus should be on understanding and learning, so mistakes aren't repeated.

Every employee has the potential to drive an organization to new heights, sometimes individually, but usually as part of a team. When a transformative culture of learning is unleashed, companies can reap the many benefits that learning delivers. Yearn to learn every day and opportunities for success will flourish.

Personal Challenge

What is one skill or activity you have desired either to learn or improve? Schedule time in your calendar and commit to learning or mastering this new talent. When you do, it will foster a huge sense of accomplishment that likely will lead to enhanced growth in other aspects of your life.

Chapter 9

Value Levity and Fun

"People often say that motivation doesn't last. Well, neither does bathing; that's why we recommend it daily." *Zig Ziglar*

"I always arrive late at the office, but I make up for it by leaving early." *Charles Lamb*

"Got to work this morning and my boss told me 'Have a good day,' so I went home and had a great day!"
Anonymous

HOLY COW!

Value Levity and Fun



Without intentional care and attention, jobs can become unbearable, mind-numbing sentences, with no freedom in sight, as your purpose weakens and sometimes even becomes unidentifiable. It is for this reason that levity plays a vital role in building a healthy culture across an organization. In fact, according to a growing body of research, having fun at work leads to a significant increase in employee trust, enhanced creativity and communication, decreased stress, lower turnover, higher morale, a stronger bottom line, a deeper commitment to the organization, and a thinner waistline. Ok, maybe not the last one.

Additional proof lies with the prestigious Mayo Clinic, which swears that laughter is the best medicine. Over the short term, Mayo researchers confirm laughter stimulates organs, relieves stress, and soothes tension. Over the long term, it improves the immune system and relieves pain, while increasing personal satisfaction levels and enhancing moods. But wait, there are even more facts that support this.

Evidence gathered from more than a decade of research by the Great Place to Work Institute is compelling. Each year, according to Adrian Gostick and Scott Christopher, coauthors of *The Levity Effect: Why It Pays to Lighten Up*, the

Great Place to Work Institute asks tens of thousands of employees to

testify, rating their experience of workplace factors, including, “This is a fun place to work.” On Fortune's “100 Best Companies to Work For” list, produced by the Great Place to Work Institute, employees in companies that are judged and determined as “great” responded overwhelmingly—on an average of 81 percent— that they are working in a “fun” environment. Also, according to Amy Lyman, chair of the board and co-founder of the Institute, “It would be very unusual for a company to be among the '100 Best' and not score well on the fun question.” Clearly, valuing levity and fun is an important part of a strong and engaging company culture.

So, if work norms in your organization tend to be taxing on employees when mistakes are made, lightening up may help. If colleagues become excessively anxious and frazzled when your team faces challenges, having a little uplifting stress reprieve to break the wall of tension could go a long way. If you look around your workplace and you see everyone patently focused—with no talking, laughing or even smiling—the jury may hand down a guilty verdict, with restitution including fun, light-heartedness and laughing for all. But how, you ask?

Spreading a little sunshine at work doesn't take tremendous effort. As leaders or individual contributors, each of us has the responsibility to positively shape our workplace cultures and appropriately model levity.

There are, of course, some types of humor that need to be avoided. Stay away from dark-side humor that is political, racist, sexist, or otherwise offensive. Likewise, an aggressive humor style may instill fear, rather than stimulate relaxation, and a sense of humor that leans toward teasing or sarcasm should be avoided. Furthermore, an endlessly smiling boss is

likely to arouse suspicion, so if that creepy situation arises, it should be confronted.

Having fun at work leads to increased employee trust, enhanced creativity and communication, decreased stress, lower turnover, higher morale, a stronger bottom line, and a deeper commitment to the organization.

Examples of appropriate “tickles of the funny bone” may include:

- **Laugh by example.** Display your own sense of humor by adding a bit of lightheartedness into business discussions, choosing smiles over scowls, and even sharing a relatable joke or two. A sour boss at the helm doesn't lead to fun and jovialness.
- **Personalize workspaces.** Enhance morale by encouraging employees to customize the decor in their workspaces with photos of family and pets, achievement certificates/awards, color schemes that add inspiration, motivational quotes, small trinkets that are tailored to their taste, etc.
- **Designate a “Wall of Fame.”** Decorate it with items such as corporate awards, thank-you notes from clients, and news clippings of your organization's successes.
- **Hold meetings off-site.** Move meetings to an outside area on your work campus, a nearby park, or another open and scenic area.
- **Hang a success (cow) bell.** Set up a bell in an accessible space in

the workplace. When an employee helps a client in a significant way or makes a new lofty sale, he/she rings the bell, which elicits cheering and support from colleagues.

- **Honor employee work anniversaries.** Mark each employee's anniversary with the company by giving them a small gift or gift card. The amount of the gift card can even be tied to the amount of years the employee has been with the company.
- **Celebrate employee birthdays.** Celebrate birthdays once a month. Have cake and ice cream, and give those who are celebrating their birthday that month the opportunity to “Spin the Wheel” and win a prize.
- **Design a game room.** Incorporate games into a breakroom space, like ping-pong, foosball, chess, jigsaw puzzles, basketball hoop, Wii[®], etc., so employees can relax and rejuvenate themselves during encouraged mid-morning/afternoon breaks or over their lunchtime.
- **Host sports tournaments.** Start a corporate basketball, softball or bowling league. Employees will have fun, become better team players, and even get some exercise.
- **Encourage idea testing.** Give employees the room to explore and unleash their passion. Encourage them to bring forth their new ideas, and offer time and resources, if possible, to test their sustainability.
- **Incentivize timeliness.** Whoever gets to work before upper management can park in their reserved spaces.

- **Time-saving services.** Offer discounted services that are paid for by employees to help them save time (i.e. dry cleaning, oil changes, house cleaning, onsite nurse, errand services, etc.)
- **Allow for flextime.** Giving employees some flexibility in their work schedules demonstrates concern for their personal lives. Additionally, allowing employees to work from home at times can be a great motivator, making the days in the office a lot more productive and less stressful.
- **Share an e-newsletter weekly.** Distribute a weekly e-newsletter to all employees that features company news, key milestones, pertinent information, and meaningful stories that support the amazing culture.
- **Play “Cow Pat Lotto”—a weekly lucky draw.** A cow paddock is drawn into a grid with numbered squares. People draw lucky numbers. The cow is let out on Monday morning, and the first grid square it does a poop in is the lucky number!
- **Have an onsite fitness center.** Fitness centers that also provide exercise classes are a great way to keep employees healthy, motivated and having fun.
- **Professional memberships.** Pay for memberships to professional groups that interest employees.
- **Onsite childcare.** Offer onsite childcare at a subsidized price.
- **Corporate year book.** Create a yearbook at the end of each year, just like a school year book, including all employees and featuring

memorable events.

- **Initiate fun worktime events.** In order to relieve tension and invoke a little fun, consider organizing some activities or events that can turn a frown upside down. Some ideas include:
 - Trivia games or TV blooper shows during lunchtime
 - Give a Monday's Motivation Message minibuk to every employee to jumpstart Monday's for a year
 - Cooking/baking contests
 - Halloween costume contest
 - Cookies for special holidays or events
 - Executive management serves lunch to all employees
 - Create a company cookbook with recipes from employees
 - Theme days (wear a Green Bay Packers jersey before a game)
 - Silent auctions
 - Team scavenger hunts
 - Chair massages during stressful times
 - Incorporate games into training programs— prize wheel, Plinko board, Family Feud[®], Jeopardy![®], Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?[®]

- A funny, motivational speaker
- Raise money together for a charitable event (i.e. United Way)
- Holiday party (Be sure to exercise caution and don't *party until the cows come home!*)
- Ice cream sundae bar on first day of summer
- Work on a community project together for one afternoon (i.e. Habitat for Humanity)
- Special summer hours schedule (to enjoy longer weekends)
- Company picnic including family members
- Car wash day hosted by supervisors

Humor is very individual. What one person finds funny, another will view as hysterical, and yet others won't see the wit at all. But, they likely will recognize the humorous intent and be grateful for a lighter and upbeat tone. An atmosphere lifted by levity creates an infectious team spirit, helps ease tense times, and allows for greater open-mindedness to see different perspectives and advance more optimistic solutions.

In keeping stride with valuing levity and fun, I thought I'd conclude this chapter with my *closing argument* as a playful jest that was published on www.giantworldwide.com: A young executive is leaving the office late

one evening when he finds the CEO standing in front of a shredder with a piece of paper in his hand. “Listen,” said the CEO, “This is a very sensitive and important document here, and my secretary has gone for the night. Can you make this thing work for me?” “Certainly,” the young executive says. He turns the machine on, inserts the paper, and presses the start button. “Excellent, excellent!” says the CEO as his paper disappears inside the machine. “I just need one copy.”

Personal Challenge

What is one idea that you will either execute or recommend be implemented this month to enhance the level of levity and fun in your workplace?

Chapter 10

Appreciate and Celebrate

“Appreciate everything your associates do for the business. Nothing else can quite substitute for a few well-chosen, well-timed, sincere words of praise. They’re absolutely free and worth a fortune.” *Sam Walton*

“Celebrate what you want to see more of.” *Tom Peters*

“The deepest craving of human nature is the need to be appreciated.” *William James*

HOLY COW!

Appreciate and Celebrate



Employee appreciation is an art, and the strongest form of gratitude is doing something no trinket or gift card ever can: take actions that help employees and colleagues feel valued, respected, and even loved.

To create a solid strategy to celebrate accomplishments and have employees feel cherished, it is important to have it align with the values of your organization. And during the process, it's important to keep in mind the famous saying, “What's rewarded gets repeated.” However, rather than *reward* performance, it should be *celebrated*. Celebrating performance can be done in many ways, but the point is to highlight and appreciate employees and teams who have made a spectacular effort, have achieved great results, or helped others achieve them. Celebrating success is fun and energizing and shows employees that their efforts are being noticed. And instead of viewing it as a “business tactic,” shift your thinking to it being a sincere and heartfelt tradition embedded in your culture.

Appreciation and recognition, though, is primarily the responsibility of leadership, right? Wrong. It does need to come from leaders across the organization, but peer-to-peer recognition can be even more meaningful.

One award-winning example, YouEarnedIt™, is an employee recognition and reward software gateway that drives real-time

performance behavior and conversations in a way that engages everyone. It is a social recognition feed where employees earn rewards points with each post, turning above-and-beyond actions at work into something more meaningful. The points are then exchanged for rewards, with thousands of products to choose from. As a streamlined platform that is aligned with company values, anyone at any time can give an extra thank you or a shout-out for a job well done, while others can then add to that post with high-fives. It not only supports positive feedback, but also connects employees across geography and generations, unifies the culture, boosts engagement, and clearly illustrates ROI.

You obviously go to work to earn a paycheck,
but for most, desires go well beyond that.
Employees want to be appreciated and
valued for their contributions, and feel as if
they are making a difference in some way.

Additional congratulatory gestures include:

- **Say “thank you” often, promptly and sincerely.** Don't let a good deed go unnoticed. Thank a well-deserving individual as soon as possible. If you wait too long, s/he may feel overlooked and unappreciated. Also, slow down and articulate your words, while expressing them warmly. The change in speed and tone will have a greater, more positive impact. You could also mail a handwritten thank you card—which rarely happens today.
- **Celebrate Employee Appreciation Day.** This special day is observed and honored annually on the first Friday in March. It

was created as a way of focusing attention on the greatest assets of any organization—its people. Sadly, the more successful individuals become, the less often they are appreciated or recognized, even though the need for either is never outgrown. So be sure to appreciate *all* employees at *every* level—up, down, and laterally. (And just in case you're curious, Cow Appreciation Day is July 12.)

- **Organize a party for hitting a milestone goal.** Whether it is to celebrate a team, department, or an organizational landmark achievement, honoring the milestone with a pizza party or a similar celebratory event is a fabulous way to highlight the success.
- **Create meaningful awards.** Ask employees to nominate and vote on employee awards that are inspiring and meaningful, such as: Rookie of the Year, GEM Award (Goes the Extra Mile), Rock Solid Award (consistently performs extremely well), Most Valuable Employee or Team, and the prestigious COWBELL Award (Committed, Optimistic, Willing, Brave, Engaged, Learns, Lighthearted).
- **Publish a kudos column in a weekly e-newsletter.** Celebrate and recognize an outstanding accomplishment, or showcase an employee success story. Be sure, though, that the employee welcomes this form of public recognition. Just because you or most of the team does, doesn't mean every person shares the same cravings.
- **Treat a colleague with candy and a customized comment to**

sweeten his/her day. A few creative ideas include: Lifesavers[®] (saved the day or the first to help someone), Almond Joy[®] (brought joy to the team or is a joy to work with), Skor[®] bar (scored a huge win for the team), Smartie[®] (made a smart decision), or Laffy Taffy[®] (has an infectious laugh worth catching).

- **Give the gift of time.** To celebrate stellar workplace performance on a specific project or task, offer a one-, two-, four- or eight-hour vacation voucher. This form of appreciation allows the employee the choice to come in late, take a long lunch, leave early, or take a whole day off.
- **Value employee passions.** Allow employees one hour per week to work on a personal passion of theirs, usually unrelated to their work, enabling them to further pursue outside interests—like writing a food blog, learning a new language, becoming a more talented landscaper, etc. When employees' passions are encouraged to grow, they know you value them as individuals, not just as employees.
- **Provide intrinsic rewards for bright ideas.** For individuals who frequently bring ideas that transform into successful solutions, celebrate their creativity with an intrinsically (INTERNAL) motivated reward, such as:
 - I - Influence.** Influence in operational decisionmaking—like how department processes or procedures are handled.
 - N - New product/service.** Oversee a new identifiable product or service.

- T - Training and development.** Training and development opportunities that are offered to only a select few, targeted to his/her aspirations.
- E - Expertise.** Demonstrate expertise or share knowledge with peers.
- R - Remote work.** Work remotely for a full week wherever you want to.
- N - News agent.** Communicate some great news team- or company-wide.
- A - Authority.** Utilize an enhanced authority level to make higher-level decisions; mentor team members/colleagues.
- L - Leadership.** Lead a team project from beginning to end, accountable for the success or failure of it.

Let's say you are looking for a different type of appreciation, one that provides an immediate externally motivated, extrinsic reward for completing a task. Common examples include: a sincere “thank you,” a personalized e-card, a favorite snack or beverage, car wash tokens, a restaurant gift card, tickets to a sporting event or movie, a free oil change, or money. Unfortunately, according to Daniel Pink, author of *Drive: The Amazing Truth about What Motivates Us*, several studies prove that extrinsic rewards, particularly “if-then” rewards (“if you do this, then you'll get that”), often *decrease* self-motivation. The only circumstances when extrinsic motivation works well is when s/he has little interest in performing a specific task, is learning a basic mechanical skill, or is solving problems with a defined set of steps and a single answer.

Avoid getting caught up in the day-to-day noise of deadlines, meetings, and endless emails—only to ignore positive contributions across your organization. Instead, notice, appreciate and celebrate amazing performance. Not only is it a good economic idea—with employee recognition programs increasing business outcomes up to 20 percent and enhancing levels of productivity by 50%—it's the right thing to do.

You obviously go to work to earn a paycheck, but for most, desires go well beyond that. Employees want to be appreciated and valued for their contributions, and feel as if they are making a difference in some way. According to behavioral economist, Dan Ariely, what motivates us to work is making constant progress and feeling a sense of purpose—not money or even joy. If employees are shown gratitude for their efforts, they'll feel valued and motivated.

To reaffirm my opening statement in this chapter, employee appreciation is an art. It's a unique, creative expression that should be tailored to each individual. So pull out your custom stretched canvas, specialty brushes, and colorful oil-based paints, and create the next personalized experience of appreciation with a grateful heart.

Personal Challenge

Implement or recommend one congratulatory gesture outlined in this chapter, preferably for someone on your team. It is amazing how one small act of genuine appreciation can have such a profound and positive impact.

Final Thought



If you and your colleagues routinely belt out negative mantras like, “Take this Job and Shove It” or “Bang the Drum All Day,” you're likely not working in a HOLY COW! Workplace. The pivotal question is, are you going to continue laying in the pastures, chewing your cud until the cows come home, wondering why things don't get better? Or are you going to stand tall and passionately apply the countless ideas you've just learned—inspiring the herd while creating and influencing incremental positive change throughout your workplace?

Transforming an organization's culture is the role of every individual and it begins with *you*. Start with one small change, and then another, and before you know it, others will begin to harness their excitement, energy and effort too— with individuals contributing more passionately, teams collaborating more effectively, and the organization performing with perpetual prosperity.

The bad news is that horrible workplaces do exist. Manure happens! The good news is that you are now positioned to steer positive culture change. So *take the bull by the horns*, apply the strategies revealed in this book, and begin transforming your workplace into the next HOLY COW! Workplace... one *hoof* at a time.



About the Author



Tracy Butz is an inspiring speaker, captivating author and results-focused consultant. She has over 20 years of experience actively engaging both large-and small-size audiences including the US Army, Motorola, and Subway, just to name a few. Her reputable experience includes working 10 years as Director of Learning and Development, where she was accountable for talent management and employee development.

Tracy also proudly holds the Certified Speaking Professional™ (CSP) designation, which is the highest honor in the speaking profession, held by only 12 percent of speakers worldwide.

Tracy lives life to the fullest and is continually challenging herself to share her talents, message and inspiration with others. In addition to speaking, Tracy continues to influence the lives of many through her workshops, books and DVDs. She truly delivers the tools for today's world, helping to further engage employees, energize workplace culture,

and empower high performance.

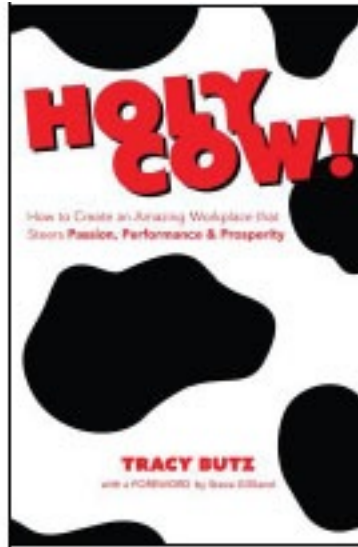
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How Can You Use This Book?

Motivate

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Inspire

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Connect

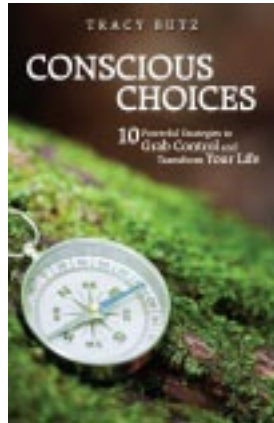
Use *HOLY COW!* as a resource to:

- Build personal bonds with customers, prospects, colleagues and employees.
- Develop a long-lasting reminder of your event, milestone or celebration.
- Provide a keepsake that inspires change in behavior and leads to an enhanced life.
- Deliver the ultimate thank you gift that remains on coffee tables and bookshelves.
- Create the “wow” factor!

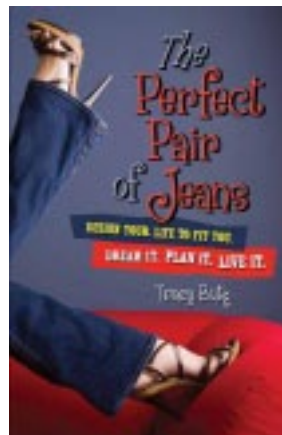
Books are thoughtful gifts that provide a genuine sentiment other promotional items cannot express. They promote employee discussions and interaction, reinforce an event's meaning, and make a lasting

impression. Gift this book to say thank you and show others you care.

More Books Authored by Tracy



Conscious Choices: 10 Powerful Strategies to Grab Control and Transform Your Life

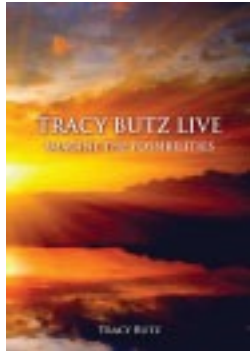


The Perfect Pair of Jeans: Design Your Life to Fit You Dream It. Plan It. Live It.



Tame the Turbulence! Avoid Losing It. Fly Through It. 10 Maneuvers to Stop Stress from Spiraling Out of Control

Additional Products by Tracy

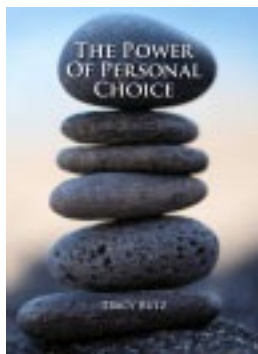


Tracy Butz LIVE *Imagine the Possibilities*

In this inspiring keynote message, Tracy shares creative and empowering ideas to help create the life you want to live. Discover valuable strategies based on three fundamental truths:

1. What you believe is what you achieve.
2. How you react defines your path.
3. You can do anything, just not everything.

(Duration: 32 minutes)



The Power of Personal Choice

A short inspirational movie that reinforces the importance of our choices and how they truly affect our lives in many ways. Filled with inspirational quotes and beautiful images accompanied by an uplifting melody, relax and enjoy this motivational experience.

(Duration: 4 minutes)