



## Book Corner ~ *First, Break All the Rules* by Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman

Here is an excellent management book! The Gallup Organization has spent twenty years identifying the core characteristics of great managers and great workplaces. This book shares what they have learned! The huge amount of research makes this book unique in the leadership and development genre.

Gallup identified 12 core elements needed to attract, focus and keep the most talented employees. They share these with you and make the connection between these 12 elements and productivity, profit, retention and customer service.

Great managers come in all shapes and sizes. There is no one profile to describe all great managers. However, all great managers have one thing in common -- they do not hesitate to break virtually every rule held sacred by conventional wisdom. They do not believe that with enough training a person can achieve anything he sets his mind to. They do not try to help people overcome their weaknesses.

Ultimately, great managers do the following

- they select people based on talent
- they set expectations by defining outcomes
- they motivate people by focusing on strengths
- they develop people by finding the right fit

You will find examples to help you understand just what these four things mean as well as approaches and tips for doing them.



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## Scapegoats?

*Question: We have had a succession of people who have been difficult to work with in our work group. The problem hasn't been their performance, per se. It's more their lack of teamwork, sensitivity, or awareness. Somehow they are outside of the mainstream.*

*One would expect the group to function more effectively without these individuals. So, we get them out of the group in one way or another. However, even when we have identified and eliminated the "scapegoat" any increased group effectiveness is short lived. Problems continue to resurface and we don't seem to be able to get beyond them. Is there something we can do to sustain our effectiveness?*

### **Collaborations response:**

You ask an interesting and rather complicated question that involves several aspects of group dynamics. Let us start by suggesting that the overriding objective of leaders and managers is to "unify a diverse group of people to work together effectively toward common purposes under varied and often difficult circumstances." We find this definition of leadership particularly useful and credit it to the work of the SYMLOG Consulting Group.

There are three vehicles for "unifying" a group of people, 1) the use of power, 2) the maximization of mediation, or 3) the use of a scapegoat. (We'll leave the first two for discussion in future issues of *Collaborations*.)

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## Scapegoats?

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We'll confine our discussion here to the use of a "scapegoat." It is relatively easy to bring a group together against an entity, or person, as in "unify the group against..." People can unify against entities or against people. These entities or people are polarized in some way and are generally deemed to be "negative" or undesirable. We classify them as "scapegoats."

Some examples:

- Many of us remember a few decades ago when the automobile industry in the USA unified itself against the small, gas-efficient, well-built "foreign" cars.
- In combat, we characterize the enemy as mean, hateful, spiteful barbarians worthy of our contempt in order to rally our people against them.
- Work groups unify against other work groups as in the not uncommon polarization between sales and service. And we recognize the polarization between headquarters staff and field operations or the "scapegoating" of accounting and finance by everyone.

A scapegoat then is the perception of an image which is polarized with the mainstream in some way that is perceived to be "negative." "Negative" is important because there are issues, entities and people that are clearly outside of the mainstream but are not perceived as negative and therefore aren't in a position to be "scapegoated."

An example of that is the person in a work group who is the "nurturer." Everyone goes to him for sympathy, empathy, understanding, etc. and he provides only that. In other words, he doesn't talk about responsibility, accountability, or performance expectations. Rather, he ALWAYS listens sympathetically and offers condolences. This person is "outside of the mainstream" but in such a warm, caring way that he isn't in a negative position to become a scapegoat.

So scapegoats do exist, or we create them, to serve as that against which we might unify a group of people.

Two other pieces to this puzzle. First, scapegoats usually don't last for a long time. Witness the US automobile industry today -- we make "foreign" cars. Second, unifying people "against" some entity or person, while certainly possible, is not nearly as effective as unifying the group "toward" or "for" some cause.

Scapegoats often provide the group something which it needs and is unable or unwilling to do for itself in a more healthy way. In groups we work with, we often come across someone who is the "hatchet" man, or woman. Any time the group needs to have someone disciplined, or needs someone tough to put into the argument, the "hatchet" person fills that need. Unfortunately, over time they may always play that role and thus become a very difficult group member on a day to day basis. Therefore, they are a prime target for the group to scapegoat or unify against.

Other potential scapegoats may be the person who "ALWAYS looks for the downside" or the person who "ALWAYS rebels against the organization or system." While teams need to weigh the pros and cons when making decisions or solving problems, the behavior needs to be shared rather than being put on one individual.

*If you are leaning over to starboard to balance the boat against the other guy's propensity to lean too far to port, both of you are about to get wet.*  
— Kenneth Kaye

It would be more effective if other group members were able to develop the ability to use the negative behaviors when appropriate. Developing "flexible, well-rounded" leaders and group members creates a group where individuals do the "most effective thing" at "the appropriate time." That way no one person gets frozen into a role that is necessary sometimes but has the potential to create a

scapegoat.

Possibly the reason your group has the same problems surfacing is that others in the group haven't learned how to provide those necessary actions when appropriate. The person who provides them becomes a scapegoat and is eventually eliminated. Then when similar action is called for the group struggles.

The key point here is this: If a group is unified against a scapegoat, when the scapegoat is gone, the group's unity will be at risk unless they get another scapegoat. So the process continues.

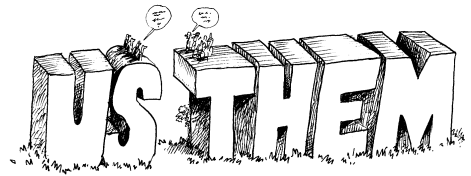
In answer to your question, there is something you can do. Sharing the role, as explained above, is one way to break the process. Another very effective solution is for the group to clarify a common purpose to unify "for or toward or around" (this is the hoped-for function of mission, vision, goals) eliminating the need for a scapegoat.

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We'd recommend some discussion within your group about the following:

1. What was polarizing about the person who left the group?
2. What about our group may have forced that person into that role?
3. How will we provide for that role in the future when it is necessary?
4. How can we keep from "freezing" someone in that or other negative roles?
5. What is our purpose and how can we use that to unify us?



We hope this is helpful. Our intent is to continue with this discussion in future issues.

## Mentoring

In our last issue of *Collaborations*, we talked about the importance of mentoring and the critical elements of a strong mentoring program. We also expanded on the first four of those elements. Here again is the list of critical elements as well as our thoughts about the final three.

1. A clear and supported business reason for doing mentoring
2. A clear definition of mentoring areas (career, skills, new employees, etc.)
3. A clearly defined process
4. Management support for the process
5. Clear definitions of roles (mentor, protégé, anyone else involved)
6. A process/person to match mentors and protégés
7. A "getting started" process for pairs (personality styles, roles, guidelines, plan of action)

### 5. Clear Definitions of Roles

Clarity of roles is a key success factor for mentoring pairs. Each needs to understand both roles. We suggest the pair discuss their roles with each other in order to gain that clarity. You may wish to provide a "starter set" of responsibilities that will help them define their overall roles. (see page 4 for a sample). We feel certain you will have to give people some training or guidance in order to have them engage and do so in a productive, constructive, compelling way. More on this in a moment.

Documenting other roles is important for a smooth overall process. If you have someone in place to help make "matches" you should clarify that role. You may also want to clarify the role the protégés manager plays (or doesn't play) in the relationship. For example the manager may need to approve things such as travel, attending classes, etc.

### 6. Matching Process

How will mentors and protégés find each other. If people are located in the same building, you may want to allow people to select their own partner. When people are located in different buildings or cities, they may not know who would be an appropriate mentor for them. You will want to determine how formal of a matching process you want to put in place. You also should think about whether you want a specific enrollment period or if people can sign up any time.

One of our clients interviewed all potential mentors and protégés and then gave each protégé 3 possible matches. The protégé interviewed each potential mentor and then submitted their first and second choice to a focal point person who then did the final assignments. Another client built a database of potential mentors and then as potential protégés requested a mentor a match was found for them. Yet another client assigns a mentor as soon as a person joins the organization. The mentor is carefully selected by management based on the planned direction for the protégé.

### 7. Getting Started

Matching pairs is one challenge. The next challenge is to get them to start working together. Inhibitors to starting include being very busy, conflict of calendars, and not knowing how to get started. We have found that when you help them get started, they work out the other two issues.

We recommend a "getting started" session. We've seen 2 hour sessions as well as full day sessions. The most successful sessions are where the mentor and protégé attend together. The session facilitator can lead them through exercises and discussions that will help them

- clarify their roles
- agree on how they will work together (when to meet, how to evaluate success)
- begin to build their relationship
- begin creating their action plan for achieving their objectives
- determine their overall objectives for the relationship



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## Starter Set of Mentoring Responsibilities



### Protégé

- assess skills and learning needs
- be realistic as to current competence
- be prepared for meetings with the mentor
- be open and honest with mentor
- respect confidentiality of information
- respect differences in styles

### Mentor

- make time for the process
- challenge the protégé to ensure learning is taking place
- actively seek opportunities for the protégé to move toward his/her goals
- be open and honest with protégé
- respect confidentiality of information
- respect differences in styles

### Who Should Be A Mentor?

In theory, you want the people with the most knowledge, skills and experience to mentor others. Sometimes these people haven't developed their teaching, coaching and feedback skills. You may find your potential mentors need a mentor to help them with these skills before they are ready to act as a mentor!

We hope these tips will help you as you set up your mentoring program. We would be delighted to discuss mentoring programs in more detail with you. Please feel free to call one of us.

### We'd Like to Hear From You

Do you have a question for us or a topic you would like us to write about? We'd love to hear from you. Send an e-mail to [sgerke@worldnet.att.net](mailto:sgerke@worldnet.att.net) with your question or ideas. We can't respond to each individually, however we will respond in *Collaborations* based on topics most requested.