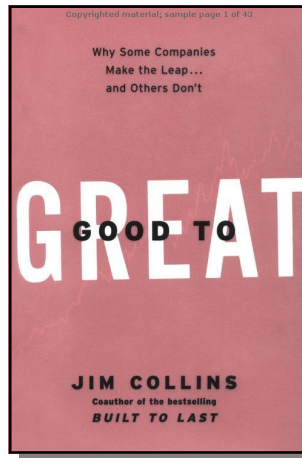




Book Corner ~ *Good to Great* by Jim Collins

Jim Collins asks,
“Can a good
company become a
great company and
if so, how?”



Jim Collins, author of *Built to Last*, has a new book out -- *Good to Great*. While *Built to Last* answered the question “What does it take to start and build an enduring great company from the ground up?” *Good to Great* answers the question “Can a good company become a great company and if so, how?”

To answer the question, the Collins research team identified companies that made the leap from good results to great results and sustained those results for at least fifteen years. These companies were compared to a set of companies that failed to make the leap or, if they made the leap, failed to sustain it.

Collins and his team found six key elements that distinguished the companies who sustained the leap. Leadership and having the right people on the team were two of the six elements.

Collins does an excellent job defining what he calls “Level 5 Leadership” and showing how the leaders in the 11 companies fit that model. I recommend this book for anyone in a company that is focusing on leadership development or that wants to become great.



Inside this issue:

Book Corner: <i>Good To Great</i> by Jim Collins	1
Behavior Contracts	2
Reframing	3
What Has Dave Been Doing?	3
E-mail	4
Contacting Us	4

Behavior Contracts

Question: As a management team we sometimes have difficulty when we meet. We seem to be unable to keep from falling into repetitive patterns of behavior and repetitive discussions which often waste time, go nowhere and sometimes hurt feelings. What can we do to be more effective when we meet?

Collaborations Response: We have frequently worked with groups where recurring patterns of behavior have become a problem. Over time, groups often develop “norms,” i.e. what is “normal” for them. Some norms are good, some are innocuous, some are awkward and some can be downright problematic.

Behavior Contracts

(continued from page 1)

A group where various members might regularly summarize the conversation and keep the group on track is an example of a “good” norm. Many norms can keep the group from being as effective as it could be. Examples include letting discussions drift, seldom coming to closure on issues and allowing people to interrupt one another. Is it “normal” for your group to actually start their meetings 10 to 15 minutes after the announced start time? Do certain individuals routinely tend to take the conversation off track? There are innumerable patterns which can be less than optimum and degrade team productivity, waste time, and cause interpersonal problems.


One of the most powerful mechanisms for helping with these problems is for the team to discuss, and then agree on, what we will refer to as a “behavior contract.” A behavior contract is exactly what it sounds like -- an agreement among team members about acceptable behavior, such as sticking to topics of discussion, member responsibilities and timeliness.

Public agreement to a “behavior contract” is a very helpful and powerful device. There are many reasons for that. A key reason is that it necessitates a group discussion of how individuals will conduct themselves, how the group will run meetings, how the group will conduct discussions and how members will help hold each other accountable for the agreed-on behaviors.

We find that most groups never hold a discussion of these subjects, let alone draw up an agreement stating the agreed-to behaviors. It is usually a very helpful discussion and yields considerable clarity around group process.

Perhaps, more importantly, a behavior contract legitimizes one member correcting another and each member taking responsibility for the effectiveness of meetings. For example, if a team member gets into a passionate dissertation about a completely tangential issue and a member tries to bring the conversation back to the topic at hand, she might say something like, “I think we are off track here and need to get back to subject A.” Without an agreed-to behavior contract, the team member may feel quite awkward interrupting and saying that. Others, caught up in the passionate speech, might view her doing so as quite subjective, thinking and even saying, “Who appointed you monitor of this meeting?”

However, if a group has a behavior contract where everyone agreed to stick to the topic at hand till some conclusion was reached, any team member can now bring the conversation back to the topic by referring to the agreement and the commitment to finish discussing one topic before moving to another. In that way a behavior contract legitimizes correcting behaviors and discussions. The one who tries to do some correcting does not put him or her self in an awkward position of interrupting discussions or correcting behavior based only on his or her own judgment.

Our response to your question would be incomplete if we failed to reinforce all the things you’ve ever been taught about running good meetings. While groups may choose not to include them in their behavior contract, important elements include having an agenda, a starting and stopping time, making sure the right people are in attendance and having someone chair or facilitate the meeting. 

ON THE WEB

Visit www.susangerke.com
and www.davecarey.com

Susan has a new web site and Dave has recently updated his. Both sites carry all past issues of *Collaborations*. With *Adobe Acrobat Reader 4.0* you can view or download and print the issues.

We will continue to send *Collaborations* via “snail mail,” but this gives another option for viewing or referencing.

Reframing

Have you ever noticed that when you tell someone to NOT do something, it seems to be exactly what they do? For example, when we tell children “DON’T TOUCH,” they touch. Or, when we say “DON’T TRIP on your shoelaces,” they trip on their shoelaces.

Psychologists tell us that while we may hear the negative modifier, we don’t retain it. So in the examples above, you are essentially telling the child “TOUCH” and “TRIP.”



This applies to adults as readily as to children. Have you had an employee who you warn “Don’t come to work late,” or “Don’t use the telephone for personal calls” or something similar? Consider reframing what you say in a positive way. For example, try “Please come to work on time,” and “Please use the telephone for business calls only.”

This seems simple, but listen to yourself and others. I think you’ll find we frame things negatively more often than we think. Try reframing to the positive. In addition to increasing the chances of the person doing what you want, you will also find your overall messages will be seen as being more positive.

What have you been doing lately?”

Responding to that question, *Collaborations* will periodically and briefly highlight our authors’ activities.

Dave Carey

In 2002, as a **motivational speaker**, Dave made numerous presentations. Some of his audiences included public school administrators, hospice volunteers, the Dairy Distribution and Fleet Management Association, the Navy’s Explosive Ordinance Safety Conference, the Border Patrol, several prayer breakfasts, the Printing Industries Association of SOCAL, Air Systems Components’ Winners Circle, the South West Association of Colleges and Employers, National Conference of Standards Labs, and several HMOs. Also, he was privileged to have been the visiting “pastor” in several church pulpits.

His **consulting** work focuses on “*assisting people in working together more effectively*,” and over the course of the year, included numerous teambuilding workshops, retreats for leadership teams designed to develop clarity around Mission, Vision and Values for client organizations, succession planning and strategic planning initiatives.

Lastly, Dave has an ongoing relationship with several clients as a **coach and mentor**. Recently he has focused on goal setting, planning, and execution, employee development, solving personnel problems, business development and fiscal management.

How *you* doin’?



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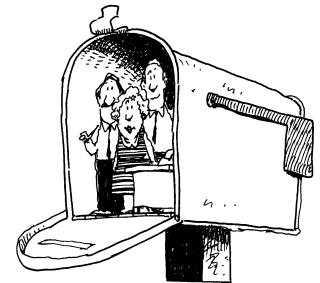
e-mail

We've been sharing e-mail tips in our last two issues. We've gotten several positive comments about them and several people have said they are incorporating them in their teams. Here are a few more that we hope you find helpful.

e-mail Key #6 - Don't use e-mail when talking is more appropriate. If you start a conversation with e-mail, once you have replied back and forth 3 times, pick up the telephone to complete the dialogue.

e-mail Key #7 - Use good writing practices. This includes starting the note by telling what the note is about, then giving the meat of the message, then finishing up with a summary.

e-mail Key #8 - Use attachments appropriately. 1) Some team members may not have fast speed access and attachments can really slow them down. Be careful that they are not too big. 2) When the attachment is very small, consider whether you should just cut and paste the information into the e-mail. 3) If your team shares information frequently, consider a shared data base for documents.



We'd Like to Hear From You

If you'd like to contribute to Collaborations or if you have a question or topic for us, we'd love to hear from you. Send an e-mail to sgerke@att.net with your ideas or questions. We can't include everything, but will respond based on topics of most interest.