



You must continually create value for others, and it doesn't have to cost a penny.

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Book Corner

The Fred Factor by Mark Sanborn

“Fred” is the author’s mail carrier. Fred is unusual – he goes beyond what anyone would expect from their mail carrier. Mark Sanborn is a motivational speaker, and after his great encounters with Fred, he started using Fred as an example in many of his speeches. People started sharing stories with Sanborn of people who were passionate about what they do and make a difference in other’s lives. So, Sanborn wrote this book to share what it is that these people have that makes a difference.

The Fred Factor Principles are:

1. Everyone Makes a Difference
2. Success is Built on Relationships
3. You Must Continually Create Value for Others and It Doesn't Have to Cost a Penny

You Can Reinvent Yourself Regularly

Besides illustrating these principles which can help the reader become a “Fred”, Sanborn also shares how to develop other “Fred’s.”

This is a quick read and reminds us how easy it is to focus on making a positive difference.

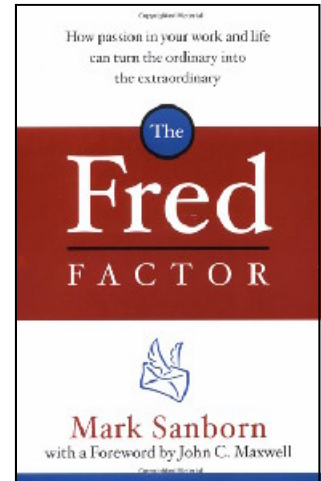
Let's Deal with Problems and Issues in a Timely Fashion

Question: *In our organization we tend to avoid discussing ‘people problems and issues.’ We seem to be reluctant to deal with various issues amongst ourselves. Rather, we avoid discussions until the problem becomes a crises or it becomes too big and too obvious to ignore. Any advice?*

Collaborations Response: After more than 20 years of working with all types of groups, at all levels, and all over the United States, our observation is that what you describe is very typical. In general, we do not find that a good, or timely, job is being done to work on all of the ‘normal issues and problems’ that arise when people are working together. And by the way, we would categorize almost every ‘issue and problem’ as ‘normal.’

A lesson from Dave’s POW experience

When Dave is talking about his POW experience in Hanoi, he is frequently asked a question along these lines, “As POWs what kinds of problems or issues did you have among yourselves and how did you deal with them?” He responds:



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“As you might imagine, in those cells we had all kinds of issues and problems. Just imagine the issues you might have if you, along with five or six other people, were locked up in a room - for a year or so. You'd have some issues and problems!

Those of you locked up would have different: abilities, preferences, personalities, educations, opinions, desires and goals, strengths and weaknesses, loyalties, values, etc. I believe those differences constitute all normal issues and problems among people.

Indeed, in the prisons of North Vietnam we had all kinds of issues and problems. So what did we learn about dealing with all the normal stuff that occurs among people? I'm sure my answer is going to seem very simplistic to you, but here it is:

We learned to *immediately* start talking about the issue, no matter what it was. You see in those prisons we didn't know how long we might be together - it could be years. So if we had some kind of issue or problem among ourselves, or individually with each other, we needed to start talking about it and working on it right away. We would pursue those discussions until we came to some resolution. Of course, we had lots of time.”

Immediately start talking - and more importantly listening

Our experience, working with many, many groups at all levels of organizations, is that issues and problems are not talked about immediately - and oftentimes they are never talked about. Rather, we observe a great reluctance to enter the discussion. People tend to think and hope, “this will go away,” or “maybe (s)he will get over it,” or “snap out of it,” or “(s)he will work it out themselves,” etc..

Many of you reading this are in very large organizations. You know that if you just hang on long enough you'll eventually be able to transfer the person with the issue to some other part of the organization.

During our consulting and training work, we will often hear about some issue with someone. When we ask specific questions about what has been said and/or done about it, the answers are usually pretty sparse.

If we go look in that individual's performance file, or HR record, we most often cannot find anything, let alone anything critical or adverse.

The general tendency we see is an avoidance of issues and problems, particularly if they are not yet directly impacting production. Then, when you add in the sensitivity to racial, ethnic and sexual differences that we live with in this day and age, there is a great reluctance to engage in discussions of issues and problems.

Keep Short Accounts

We also observe that people do not keep “short accounts” with each other. There are lingering issues, problems, frictions that are not resolved. Since there is no resolution people then tend to drag these issues around with them - sometimes forever.

Often, during team building sessions, we will hear about something that occurred between a couple of the team members. It will sound like it just occurred. It finally dawned on us after years of this kind of work to ask: “When that incident happened?” The answer is invariably: “Oh, about eight years ago.”

Eight years ago! And they have been talking about it as though it happened last week!

We really need to learn how to keep very short accounts with each other -- how to talk about issues and clear the air so that we can move on.

When to open the discussion? Now!

If you observe something with an employee; if someone's performance starts to slip; if their work is getting a little lax; if there seems to be some sort of friction somewhere; our strongest recommendation is that you open the conversation - immediately. Don't think it will go away and take care of itself, start talking - and more importantly start listening.

Furthermore, our experience is that almost every time the conversation has been engaged - it was never as bad as we were imagining it would be. We do tend to make mountains out of molehills!

So, our opinion is that we all need to become much better at talking, and listening. And we need to engage in those discussions much, much sooner than we typically do. We know of no other way to resolve all of the ‘normal issues and problems’ among people than through discussion.

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Networking in Tough Times

Networking is a hot topic right now. That isn't surprising given the tough economic situation and the number of people currently out of work. While people know that networking can be helpful in finding opportunities, many don't network effectively. We'd like to share some ideas with you about how to improve your networking.

#1 If you are just now starting to network, you are behind.

Networking is something you should be doing at all times – both good and bad. Stephen Covey talks about sowing seeds in the Spring so that there will be a crop to harvest in the Fall. Networking is very similar. You need to build relationships, so that when you need them, they are there for you to draw on.

I (Susan) am finding in this economic downturn that my business is the best shape it's been in during a recession because of the relationships I have and the reputation I've built with the people in my network.

If you are just starting to network, make a commitment to keep it going even after you have gotten what you want and think you don't need your network any more.

#2 Networking is much more than what happens in the 5 minutes when you exchange cards at a meeting.

Of course, networking often begins with the "card exchange" at a meeting. To really build a relationship that will benefit you both in the long term, you need more time to talk. Once you meet someone, determine if you'd like to follow up and then do it. Call them and ask for an hour to meet and get to know each other better. Follow that meeting up with a thank you and then make a note to yourself as to when you will reach out to that person again.

#3 Meeting people can be easier than you think.

Often we just ask people "What do you do?" Try some new questions that can make the interaction more interesting. Questions we like to use include:

- What brings you here? (to whatever event you are attending)
- What is your current favorite book (or website)?
- What are your clients currently most concerned about?
- What is your biggest challenge at work?
- What have you accomplished recently that you are proud of?

Notice that these are questions about them. You don't have to do much talking at all and you will learn a lot about the person. Some good follow up questions are suggested in Idea #4.

#4 If you are only looking for what you can get, you won't be as successful.

The people we know that are most successful at networking, enter into a new relationship focusing on how to help the other person. As you meet someone new, ask "What do you need?" and "How can I help?"

I currently have a list hanging at my desk of the people I know who are looking for work. I actively think about opportunities that might be a fit for them and I forward job opportunities that I hear of to them.

What can you do for someone?

In my most recent networking meetings, I've:

- helped a colleague brainstorm marketing ideas
- helped a person fine tune a proposal she was preparing for a prospective client
- helped a person who is just starting her consulting business think about key elements of setting up a business
- connected two people to other people I think they could benefit from knowing
- shared a book with a colleague that will help her business

So, what do you need to do to build or enhance your network? Start today!



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is the president of Gerke Consulting & Development and “helps people work better, together.” Susan's focus since 1989 has been in designing, customizing and implementing leadership and teamwork programs meeting the needs of executives, managers, and employees in a wide number of companies and industries.

Application of her skill and knowledge has been in facilitation, consulting, curriculum development, and coaching. Susan has developed and delivered experiential programs in the areas of *group dynamics, team basics, mentoring, and facilitation skills*. She has worked with global teams and has certified facilitators around the world to deliver management, leadership, and team offerings.



A recognized expert on remote leadership and teaming, Susan is the co-author of *The I in Team ... Accelerating Performance of Remote and Co-located Teams*, and *Quick Guide to Interaction Styles and Working Remotely*.

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Dave Carey

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As a consultant and coach he focuses on *helping people work together more effectively*. He is an expert in team building, organizational & leadership development.

A graduate of the United States Naval Academy, Dave is a retired Navy Captain. As a Navy pilot he was shot down and spent 5 & 1/2 years as a POW in North Vietnam. His book *The Ways We Choose: Lessons For Life From A POW's Experience* is in it's third printing.



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What's Good About It?

I was a participant in a workshop recently and we did a quick activity that you may find useful.

We stood in a circle and the first person answered the question “What's good about the current economic downturn?” After answering the question, the individual tossed a koosh ball to someone else in the circle. Then that person answered the question and tossed the ball. We continued the process until everyone had a chance to speak.

It was interesting to hear what people are finding good in what for many is a very difficult time. So, you may want to start a team meeting with this exercise – or just “toss the idea around” at your dinner table! It can shift people to a more positive place!

