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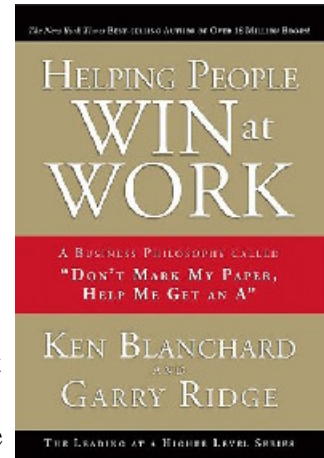
Since they began the “Don’t Mark My Paper, Help Me Get an ‘A’” system, annual sales have more than tripled!

## Book Corner

### Helping People Win at Work

by Ken Blanchard and Garry Ridge

Garry Ridge is the CEO of WD-40 Company. After hearing Ken Blanchard talk about giving his final exam at the beginning of a course and then teaching students the answers so they could get an A, Garry Ridge decided to use the same philosophy in his business. He set up a “Don’t Mark My Paper, Help Me Get an A” performance management system that has had a very positive impact on the bottom line. Since they began the system, annual sales have more than tripled!



This book helps us see the value of engaging employees. Ridge tells us what it takes to change the culture of an organization to one of helping others learn and grow. In this culture, employees get clear information about their responsibilities and goals. Managers give regular feedback with caring and candor. Mistakes are called “learning moments.” The values of the organization (Caring, Candor, Mutual Trust and Respect, Learning and Teaching, and Persistence) are known by every employee and are lived every day.

I recently had the great fortune to hear Ridge speak at a local American Society of Training and Development (ASTD) meeting. In addition to being very entertaining, he gave several concrete examples of how his philosophy has been implemented across the organization world-wide. I encourage you to read this book. And, if you have an opportunity to hear Ridge speak, don’t miss it!

## Succession Planning

*Question: Our organization has several key senior people who are approaching an age where, while they wouldn’t have to, they certainly could choose to retire. We have done practically no succession planning. Do you have any advice?*

### Collaborations Response:

We believe that succession planning ought to be an integral part of the long range planning process. Large companies, with a board of directors, generally have a mandate to have in place a plan for the succession of key senior leaders. However, as organizations become smaller, with less formal governance, there is less attention paid to preparing ahead of time for how to replace senior

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leadership. From your question, we are guessing that your organization is in the latter category. Our comments here apply to this latter category of organizations.

Very few of the smaller organizations or organizations with less formal governance that we have worked with have done succession planning. In fact, we have worked with many organizations where the subject is, well... not exactly taboo - but in reality never discussed, until someone announces that they are leaving or retiring.

By the way, with the “baby boomers” approaching retirement age we think that planning for their retirement, or the loss for whatever reason of key individuals which certainly includes all of the senior leadership in an organization, is imperative.



### **Start small...**

First, we suggest starting small. Don't launch a company-wide succession planning initiative! In your case, start discussing the subject with the senior management team to which the key people whom you mention belong. If they are at several different levels in the organization start the discussions at the most senior level. You know, do the “lead by example” thing you have always heard about.

### **Discuss the pros and cons of the present state of succession planning - or lack thereof...**

Begin some discussions, at the appropriate team level, about the need for and desirability of having some plans in mind for the eventual retirement, or loss of upper management or other key individuals, i.e. ‘us.’ The goal is to evolve to where people are comfortable talking about the subject and succession planning becomes a legitimate topic of discussion.

### **You are not setting anything in concrete...**

We have found that one of the biggest obstacles to having meaningful succession planning conversations is a feeling that “if I say anything about what I might be going to do it all of a sudden becomes carved in stone.” We are not advocating carving anything in stone. This planning will be verbal and in pencil on paper. It will be changeable, updatable, etc.

### **What to talk about...**

How might that evolve with the senior leadership team? These discussions would revolve around the pros and cons of doing succession planning.

The questions to discuss are: “If we were to lose \_\_\_\_\_(insert name) what would we do? Who is waiting in the wings, or being brought along? If the answer to that is ‘no one,’ then how can we go about preparing someone - and who might that be? Or will we just scramble and find someone when presented with the need?”

Eventually, all of the senior leadership ought to make public, at least in their peer level, what they are thinking about their own futures - at least in general terms.

One of the outcomes of the discussions will probably be identifying individuals with high potential. Then you can consciously begin to prepare them for increased responsibility. Or, if there is no candidate internally, plans can be made for launching a search at some appropriate time in the future.

ON THE WEB ~ Visit [www.susangerke.com](http://www.susangerke.com) and [www.davecarey.com](http://www.davecarey.com)

Both websites carry all past issues of *Collaborations*. With *Adobe Acrobat Reader 4.0* you can view or download and print the issues.

### **Groom your own replacement...**

Lastly, throughout an organization, people ought to be preparing their own replacements. There are great benefits to this kind of “grooming” of our subordinates. First, we all live a fragile existence. A bus could hit anyone at any time and it only makes good sense to be preparing our people in case they need to step in and take over. Second, it demonstrates an internal commitment to potential paths for upward movement.

People want to work where there are opportunities for growth and development. I (Dave) recently did a survey of “expectations” in a client company - fully one third of the responses revolved around personal growth opportunities.

### **Succession planning...**

Is not the easiest topic in which to have people engaged, but, people are getting paid big bucks to be able to deal with difficult business topics and decisions. Preparing our organizations so that they will thrive in the future - without some of us - is only good business. We encourage you to broach the subject and move forward with it.

## **Retaining Your Best Employees**

Organizations often focus on employee retention when the job market is “hot” and their employees are considering other employment. We feel that the most important time to focus on retention is during difficult economic times. Employees who feel valued now are less likely to leave when the job market loosens up.

Many of you have been quite busy in 2009 downsizing your workforce and trying to get work done with fewer people. Spending time and energy on retention has probably been low on the priority list. We challenge you to take 10 minutes and think about the impact of losing your top 2 or 3 people. If your department or organization would definitely feel the impact, then consider this question: *What do you need to begin doing to minimize the chance of those people going to another company?*

Your people need the opportunity to learn and grow and need to feel they are critical to the success of the organization. A starting place for retention may be a conversation with each identified employee. What is important to them? What do they want to learn? What are their long-term goals?

Then put together a plan. Some items on the plan, such as training, may cost money. Budgets continue to be tight, so you may need to identify growth opportunities that require little or no budget dollars. Ideas might include:

- Giving them special projects or tasks
- Providing cross training
- Getting them a mentor
- Having them mentor someone else
- Including them on strategic thinking or conversations
- Reading books or articles
- Joining a professional association

You and they can probably think of other ideas too. What is important is that you begin immediately!

## Susan Gerke

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*.

**SUSAN GERKE**  
Gerke Consulting &  
Development L.L.C.  
28782 Jaeger Drive  
Laguna Niguel, CA 92677  
Voice: 949.831.7088  
Fax: 949.831.0502  
sgerke@sbcglobal.net

## Dave Carey

is a sought after motivational speaker, organizational consultant, and coach. As a motivational speaker, Dave relates his experiences as a P.O.W. with intensity and humor, inspiring others to overcome seemingly insurmountable difficulties and gain a renewed sense of purpose, satisfaction, and control over their circumstances.

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.



**DAVE CAREY**  
402 Dawson Trail  
Georgetown, TX 78628  
Voice: 512.819.9481  
Fax: 512.819.9482  
dave@davecarey.com  
<http://www.davecarey.com>

## Collaborative Solitaire

Whether on a computer or with a deck of cards, if you have played the most common game of solitaire, you know that you can win occasionally. But, can you imagine a scenario where you win 17 games in a row?!

I have done it. But not alone! My husband, sister, mother and I play all together. As we each play our own deck of cards, we place all the aces in the middle of the table and we can all play on every pile. We've played this way for years, and traditionally counted up how many cards each person got up and named a “winner” of each game. Recently, we decided to count total cards up for the group rather than personal totals. The results have been stunning!

We win far more games – and over the holidays we won 17 in a row. What does it take? The following:

- A common goal (rather than individual goals)
- A few operating guidelines (like -- when 2 people have the 2 of Hearts, who should play it?)
- Lots of communication (we name a card as we put it on a stack – so people know what's up)
- Group problem solving (when someone is “stuck,” we work together to help them)
- A leader when needed (toward the end, it helps to have a single person guide the group)
- Celebration (we do a “hand bump” when we win a game)



My point? There is great power in teamwork! What are you doing in your organization that focuses on individual vs. team goals and rewards? Maybe it's time for a change!