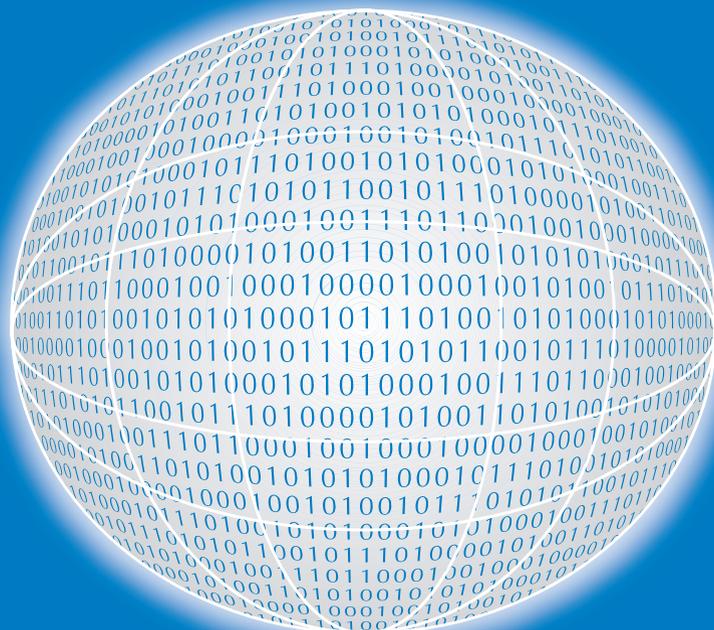


Managing People



in the 21st Century

ERIC W. SWENSON

MANAGING PEOPLE
IN THE
21ST CENTURY

by Eric Swenson

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Managing People in the 21st Century

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Published by Icenibooks™
610 East Delano Street, Suite 104, Tucson, Arizona 85705 U.S.A.
www.icenibooks.com

International Standard Book Number: 1-58736-292-9
Library of Congress Control Number: 2003099676

Publisher's Cataloging-in-Publication
(Provided by Quality Books, Inc.)

Swenson, Eric, 1962-
Managing people in the 21st century / by Eric Swenson.
p. cm.
LCCN 2003099676
ISBN 1-58736-292-9

1. Management. I. Title.

HD31.S7985 2004

658.4
QBI04-2000072

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Preface

It was the spring of 2000, and try as I might, I couldn't get a manager trainee to see the light.

Responsible for twelve managers and over 250 salespeople, my job was to get this guy to become a complete manager, as opposed to the administrator he had been for almost thirty years.

It wasn't easy.

I worked with him for hours and conducted special training sessions just for him. Even though I was responsible for twenty offices, I spent 25% of my time in his office, giving advice, showing him how to be a manager—make decisions, take ownership, how to instill passion and become a visionary. At my request, he spent days observing top managers in other offices. Nothing worked. Production slipped; morale went down; he became frustrated and therefore I became frustrated.

One night, slightly discouraged and desperate for answers, I did the most mundane of chores: I went through all my computer files, deleting unnecessary ones to save disk space.

When I got to my PowerPoint files, I reviewed several presentations I'd given and seen over the years. Here were presentations on motivation, on management, and on improving the process. In the course of several years, I had distilled the lessons I'd learned from other managers into

these presentations, which I gave to other managers and my sales team. Some of this, I thought, would be beneficial for Mark. I took all of the presentations and consolidated it into one. There was a long outline remaining, and I started tailoring it to Mark's needs.

Late that night, I realized I had the basics of a book. Not just a specialized book on motivation, or on some specific area of management, but a general book for people who manage. I could take all the lessons I'd learned and experienced over the years, and condense them into one book. And much to my surprise, the book essentially wrote itself—just one hour a night for a few months, and the core of the book was complete.

So, out of desperate concern for a manager came this book.

It sounds pretty ostentatious, doesn't it? *Managing People in the 21st Century*. And just who the heck do I think I am to be able to talk about such a voluminous subject?

Especially since I'm not one of those types with a PhD in business management or an MBA. As a matter of fact, I didn't even go to business school; I was an English major. And I certainly don't claim to be a perfect leader or manager. I made mistakes—lots of them. I've experienced failure and done things I truly regret, and sometimes I haven't always learned from my errors.

But I've been in management with two large, although completely different companies, for seventeen years. I had a span of control of over 250 managers and staff, in more than twenty locations, for over six years. Prior to that, I inherited a mediocre sales team of twenty-five outside sales agents and took them to the top performing regional team in less than eighteen months.

But most importantly, I've *been managed* by dozens of supervisors and managers—some of them excellent and

some not. I paid attention to all of them, however, and always took the best elements from each of them and incorporated them into my own style.

I've attended seminar after seminar and listened to hours of tapes on management, and the one thing that is clear to me is this: you can listen to others, you can learn from others, but at the end of the day, it's up to you to perform. Not every style is for everybody.

When I first started as a rookie insurance sales agent, I was twenty-four years old and the most significant job I'd ever had was as a waiter in a restaurant. I took the product training and a little bit of sales technique training, but the best thing that happened was that my manager made me spend a day with each of the veteran sales agents in my office. There were thirteen other agents, and I got to listen to each of their presentations, their styles, and their closing techniques. I could never emulate any of them because all of us were so unique. But what I did do is take bits and pieces from each of them and incorporate them into my own style.

The same thing has happened in my management career and should apply to you as well: pay attention to each of your supervisors—whether you like them or not. You'll be surprised that you will learn something from everyone. My management style is still evolving and I hope my mind is always open enough to make sure it always does evolve.

I spent several years managing managers. And the hardest thing for me was to avoid forcing my style on managers who were struggling. The challenge was to point them in the right direction, and allow them to discover their own style.

So the concepts you're going to read about in this book are not exclusively my own. I gleefully admit to pirating from others. And you'll see example after example of what I've learned—both good and bad—from the people I've worked for and with. The lessons I've learned from my own experi-

ences in management—also both good and bad. All of these skills comprise who I am as a person, and therefore as a manager.

The opportunity to lead others is a rare challenge that has to be taken with equal doses of humility and confidence. Whether you like it or not, the person who you work for pervades your entire life. If your manager is difficult, you can't help but take your frustrations home with you. If you have a great manager, this also affects your professional and personal life as well.

Many people want to be managers and leaders. They want the job for the power, or the money, or the authority, or whatever. The reality of managing, however, is brutally difficult at times. Not everything about leadership and management is great. When the going is the toughest is when you really earn your money. In fact, managers aren't paid money to deal with the good times—they're paid to deal with problems. How well you overcome them will judge how well you succeed.

I've been blessed to work with and for some of the finest people in business today, and I hope the lessons I've learned can help you succeed as much as I have.

Hallmarks of Great Managers

1. *Vision.* They know where they want to go and, equally important, they know how to get there.
2. *Communication.* They are world-class communicators.
3. *Equality.* They treat employees the way they want to be treated and they are no more demanding of others than they are of themselves.
4. *Decisiveness.* They can make decisions quickly and are accountable for those decisions, but are never so rigid that they are wed to those decisions.
5. *Leadership.* People want to work for them. (There's a big difference between liking someone and wanting to work for someone.)
6. *Knowledge.* They know their position, their industry, and what their employees do better than anyone else.
7. *Accomplishment.* They get things done.
8. *Style.* They are not so entrenched with their professional lives that they forget that a quality personal life is the most important thing to most people.
9. *Commitment.* They are committed to the success of their business unit, of the people who work for him, and of the company they work for.

What's Different about Management Today?

Managing people in the twenty-first century requires an entirely different set of skills than it did in the past. Times change and managers have evolved and must continue to do so in order to be successful.

At the time of the Industrial Revolution in the late nineteenth century, managers were little better than slave drivers, requiring laborers to work extraordinary hours for pennies a day. Motivation (such as it was) came in the form of firing an employee. Management was autocratic and imperious (there was no reason to be anything else—no one dared question a manager). The labor force was largely un- or undereducated. Employees had no rights; there were no organized labor movements or unions, and most people felt fortunate just to have a job.

It's hard to imagine now, but at the turn of the twentieth century, it was employees who banded together to create unions. Today, the derisive term "big labor" connotes fat cat bosses smoking cigars and dabbling with pension funds. But at that time, unions were formed solely for worker safety and to negotiate a fair wage for a fair day's work. And it wouldn't be so until the 1930s when OSHA and the Fair Labor Standards Act were enacted. Instead of dealing with employees as individuals, managers had to suddenly negotiate with them en masse—as a union. Employees received

more money; they had more rights, but most still felt fortunate to have a job.

The two great world wars changed the labor market forever. With millions of men and women seconded into the armed forces, the labor market was filled by millions of people (mostly women) who had never held a job before. Once again, managers were forced to adapt to this new type of worker. The same techniques that had worked ten years before didn't work now. There was no skilled labor set; these were brand-new workers unaccustomed to the production line or working on a time card. Successful managers and companies adapted, but many businesses could not and consequently failed.

After the Second World War, the economy became supercharged by the war-related job industries. GIs returning from years abroad had children, which created the baby boom, which continues to reverberate through society today. In the 1950s, a strong middle class appeared, and the stereotypical "nuclear family" emerged. Millions of today's executives and managers grew up in this atmosphere: Dad working nine to five, Mom a housewife, and 2.1 kids in school, all of them in the suburbs. In fact, the term "suburb" didn't become part of the American lexicon until the mid-1950s.

In the 1980s when I was in college, the personal computer was set to revolutionize business. I read numerous articles about how we could do twice as much in half the time. This new era was to be called "The Age of Leisure," and the big discussion was about what we were going to do with all the leisure time we'd have as the computer made it so much easier to do our jobs.

Well, the opposite occurred. Instead of creating more leisure time by making workers more efficient, business moguls and owners discovered the computer would allow them to do more work with fewer workers.

There was and is no leisure time. Not in the way anyone predicted. Today, in the twenty-first century, people do more with less. They work harder for a lower quality of life than at any time in the past two hundred years. (I'm not counting the upper 10% of society, which continues to be a leisure class, as it has for decades.)

Don't believe me? Think about the middle class today. How many families do you know who are able to live the "nuclear family" lifestyle with just one breadwinner? How many people own a home, have two cars, and lead a solid middle-class lifestyle when only one parent works? (I don't know about you, but where I live and with whom I work, it's not a very large number.)

As a consequence, there is more stress in the workplace than ever before. People believe they're working harder for a lower quality of life. And in this information age, workers are more aware of what's going on in the world than ever before. People work to live; they do not want to live to work.

This isn't a judgment or complaint; it's a fact. It is a fact that managers must realize every day when creating their own management style. Successful managers discover what their team wants and needs, then develop a style to fit the needs of their team and themselves.

Consensus Management

What Workers and Managers Need in Today's Workplace

Because workers are more stressed and do more for less, managers cannot afford to forge an antagonistic atmosphere. Successful managers develop a style that I'll call *consensus management*. In this style, managers encourage their employ-

ees to participate in decisions and acts that affect the entire department. Prior to making a decision, the manager has created “buy-in” from their team by soliciting opinions and forging a decision by consensus.

The same theory is used at the top levels of corporate business. The successful CEO knows that an important decision isn’t made at the time of a board meeting; it’s made in the days and weeks prior to that meeting. The CEO solicits board members, gets input and buy-in, and by the time of the meeting, the decision is a foregone conclusion, if the CEO has a majority opinion.

Whenever I decided upon a controversial plan of action, I slowly (and individually) brought in members of my team. I laid out the problem and the situation we faced. I then outlined my potential solution and asked, “What do you think of this?” I’d take the feedback and modify my solution. Eventually, the question became: “If this is the decision, can you support this?” When I had enough people supporting the solution, I’d conduct a meeting and the decision was a foregone conclusion. That’s consensus management.

The other benefit of soliciting feedback and asking opinions is to mitigate the shock of a change. No one likes change. Quality people learn to adapt, but no one likes it. In summer of 2003, for example, I decided to step down from management and take a sales position with my company in order to have more time to complete this book. The decision was made in late March, but my boss asked me to keep it quiet until May. He had excellent reasons for this, including the fact that he didn’t want disruptions in the sales team so close to the end of our fiscal year, which was on May 31. When the announcement was made to my team at a meeting, they were surprised and upset. (I can’t claim they were so devastated at my leaving as much as simply shocked at the change.) It took a good two weeks of one-on-one meet-

ings and phone calls for people to adjust to the change. Had I been allowed to “let it slip” to a few selected people, the shock wouldn’t have been as great.

Besides benefiting you as a manager, consensus management also empowers and creates a great atmosphere among your team. No one wants to be treated with disdain or a lack of respect. If I’m working harder and under some amount of stress, then I’d like to believe I have a say in decisions that are made by my company. I’d hope my boss would consult with me from time to time on issues, or before making a decision.

One of the best questions you can ask a member of your team is “What do you think?” People want their opinions heard (and hopefully valued)—especially if an upcoming decision affects them.

So consensus management becomes the antithesis of old-style management. Old-style managers said, “Here’s the way it’s going to be—deal with it. And if you don’t like it, there’s the door.” Consensus managers sound out their employees for ideas and consult with them prior to making and implementing a decision. They get “buy-in.” The result is happier employees who believe they are contributing to the overall good of the team.

Workers also want to be treated less as a servant class and more as equals and peers by their managers. Good team members understand and respect the person who is the boss, but also want to know that the boss cares about and respects them as individuals.

And from the opposite perspective, managers don’t force their viewpoints on their employees—they treat others the way they wanted to be treated. This is an important lesson to learn—the person working for you today could be your boss down the road.

Chapter One

What Is Management?

That's a pretty lofty question to ask, and one that's been asked and answered by thousands of business professors, MBAs and other students of the art of management. And you can rest assured they know a lot more about the "book end" of this question than I do. On the other hand, most of them haven't worked for as many people as I have, nor managed as many either! But, in deference to the "bookworms," I'll amend the question to say:

What Does Management Mean to Me?

In a sentence: Successful management is simply getting your team to do what needs to be done. And—at the end of the day—it's just that simple. But the road to get there is a tricky one.

So here's what the art of management means to me:

- ◆ *Establishing Your Core Values*—Identifying what's important to you professionally and personally and embodying those values every day of your life, with every action you take and every decision you make.

- ◆ *Setting and Delivering Expectations*—Letting everyone around you know:
 - what they can expect from you
 - what you expect from them, and
 - where you want to go.
- ◆ *Communication*—This is the key to everything. If you can become a master communicator, you are 90% of the way to being a master manager.
- ◆ *Inspecting What You Expect*—It's not enough to set and communicate your objectives; you need to make sure that it gets done, and in the manner you desire.
- ◆ *Instilling Passion*—To succeed—and I mean *really succeed*—you must be able to get your team to perform with passion for their jobs. And instilling that passion is only possible if you have that passion as well.
- ◆ *Taking Ownership*—To gain respect as a leader, your team needs to know that all decisions are yours, even if you're just communicating upper management's wishes. It must come from you.
- ◆ *Treating People Well*—The “Golden Rule” cannot be used to better effect than when you are a manager.
- ◆ *Innovate and Take Risks*—I never saw a successful manager who didn't take a calculated risk now and again, or who was not considered an innovator. On the other hand, I've seen many average managers miss becoming great because they were afraid to make a mistake.
- ◆ *Adapting to Change*—No one really likes change, but it's the only constant we have. Managers must be the first to embrace and then adapt to change. Once this happens, you can get your people to embrace change as well.
- ◆ *Commit to Success*—You must be able to make a commitment to your success and that of your team. And you have to get your team to commit to success as well.

Asking for a commitment is a scary yet essential component of great managers.

- ◆ *Plan to Succeed*—You can't get where you want to go without a specific game plan, with a purpose and big thoughts.

So—that's all there is to being a successful manager! Pretty simple, huh? In the following chapters, you'll learn about my philosophies on management and the lessons I've learned from other managers, both successful and mediocre. Remember, you can never learn enough.

On Leadership and Management

This is not a book on leadership. It's a book on how to manage people. Management and leadership are two entirely different art forms. Throughout this book, I occasionally interchange the terms, but make no mistake: leadership is not the same as management.

What are the differences, and how are they similar?

There are lots of books to read and classes to take on both leadership and management. And if you want to learn more about leadership, this isn't the book for you. Leadership conjures an image of inspiration—great military commanders or world leaders. There are very few great leaders in the world, primarily because leadership is an innate quality. I believe most leaders are born with the characteristic. A person devoid of any leadership traits cannot be made into a great or even good leader.

While leadership then tends to be an inbred quality, managing people is not. I believe anyone with a strong desire and some intellect can be made into a good manager. Management is an acquired quality. However, it drives me

crazy when I hear people call management a process. It's not. Average management is a process; managing people well is an art.

“Manage,” according to Webster's, means “to conduct or direct affairs; carry on business.” You can manage a project, or a checking account, or a pet. That indeed is a process, requiring little or no art. Managing people is an art form. Juggling the needs of several or dozens of employees while dealing with your day-to-day business needs while keeping a constant eye on the ultimate goals and relating all of that to the needs of your own superiors is nothing less than an art.

Leaders and managers who have an aptitude for what they do are better for it. I believe anyone can develop habits and qualities which allow them to succeed in management—that's why I wrote this book. And many managers have leadership traits which provide a fundamental basis for being a great manager of people. But they're still different.

Think about the best manager you've ever worked for. What were or are that person's best qualities? This is a question I often ask in interviews. The most common answers I've heard are:

- ◆ They communicate well and understand my needs and interests.
- ◆ They are consistent in administering all they do.
- ◆ They have a mastery of their position (and mine).

Those are not the best qualities of a leader. When I think of those qualities, I turn to people who I think are truly great leaders, and their qualities include:

- ◆ the ability to inspire others to exceed;
- ◆ the ability to say, “This is what I believe and where we're going,” regardless of what others think;

- ◆ the ability to create an atmosphere where people believe they are going to go where they never have before—and they get there.

Some leaders have good management qualities and some managers have good leadership qualities. But I'm willing to wager the best manager you've worked for doesn't likely have all of those leadership qualities. Very few people in history have.

Unlike great managers, great leaders usually have to be defined by the moment. Sometimes it's a crisis, or circumstances, but usually something must happen for a leader to come forth.

For example, George W. Bush would never have been considered a "great" leader until the greatest domestic terrorist act ever in the United States. A couple of days after September 11, 2001, Bush was standing on the rubble where the World Trade Center once stood. Someone shoved a bull-horn in his hands, and he started to talk to the thousands of police and firefighters. Understandably overwhelmed by the moment, he wasn't saying much that was inspirational. Then someone yelled, "We can't hear you."

Without missing a beat, Bush yelled back, "I can hear you. The world can hear you. And those who did this are going to be hearing from us very soon."

In those moments, Bush became a leader. He showed compassion, vision, responsiveness, and decisiveness.

Most leaders—especially those in the twentieth century, were also defined by the moment. Would Franklin Roosevelt have been considered one of the greatest leaders ever had he been president from 1992-2000, as Bill Clinton was? There was generally great prosperity in the world, few international crises, and the United States was in cruise control. But Roosevelt led the country out of the Great Depression and

into and out of a second world war. Circumstances and timing, combined with his innate personal qualities, allowed him to be a great leader. It would have been fascinating to see how a Bill Clinton would have led in those times.

You can be a good manager and you should certainly aspire to be a great one. Like leaders, good managers show the way and direct the course. Good managers and leaders lead by example—they literally practice what they preach.

In 2003, in the course of a couple of months, three universities for a variety of reasons fired their major college football coaches. One married coach spent an evening (on school time) at a strip bar in Florida, and then woke up the next morning with one of those women. Another married coach, after an away game, went to a fraternity party and was photographed with beers in his hand with co-eds. The coach was forty-seven years old, and rejoined the rest of his team the next day. The third coach participated in a betting pool for the NCAA College Basketball Tournament and won \$20,000, a violation of the National Collegiate Athletic Association.

All three had one thing in common—they used incredibly poor judgment. You can decide for yourself if their actions were ethical or not, but for leaders to lead (and managers to effectively manage), we cannot expect behavior of others that we don't do ourselves.

Managing people takes natural and learned qualities and can be improved over time—with training and experience. Leadership is mostly inbred qualities and great leaders are defined by the moment. They are similar and different and elements of each naturally crossover. But both are art forms.

Chapter Two

The First Step: Establishing Your Core Values

Whether you know it or not, you have an innate set of values that you use every day in your professional life. These values guide your behavior, form the basis for your decision-making, and help define you who are—both to yourself and those around you.

Many of your values come from your upbringing—your parents, your first teachers in school, and your friends. Yet your values continue to develop as you mature—I learned a great deal about myself in college and as I became an adult. I never realized at the time what I was learning. It was only in hindsight that I'd recall an event or moment in my life that changed who I was forever and thus created a core value that remained with me.

Your core values stay with you regardless of where you work, what you do, or for whom you work. They are the essence of your professional life.

Don't confuse core values with goals. Goals are much more specific and once achieved are over.

Most people, however, don't realize these values as a critical tool to become a top manager.

How do you determine what your core values are?

You already have core values—now it’s time to actually identify and define them. Ask yourself:

- ◆ What do I want from my professional life?
- ◆ How do I want to be perceived
 - by my subordinates?
 - by my peers?
 - by my superiors?
- ◆ Are these values reasonable to achieve?
- ◆ Are these values easily communicated to my superiors, my team, and myself?

Don’t try to write down your core values in the middle of a hectic workday. The best time to do this is actually after a few days off, when you’ve had time to get away.

I’ve discovered—like you have—that a few days away from the job increases your perspective. It’s so easy to get caught in the minutiae and routine of our jobs that we forget that it’s our goal as managers to always keep an eye on “the big picture.”

So take a couple of days on vacation, then get paper and pen and write down what you want. I’ll give you an example of my values.

Eric Swenson’s Core Professional Values

1. Make a lot of money
2. Have a lot of fun
3. To the extent possible, have peace and harmony in my job
4. Conduct my business with utmost honesty and integrity
5. Foster an atmosphere where my team believes in and shares those values

See, that wasn't hard, was it? Those are my core professional values. What I do every day—every decision I make and every idea I have—need to have those values in mind.

In every management job I've had, I've shared those values with each member of my team. In fact, I've printed those values and framed it on my office wall. I want everyone to know what I'm about—what I believe in. Then, when I make a decision, they know *why* I'm doing what I'm doing. And placing the values on the wall ensures they know and I know why I'm there—at all times.

Like everything you do, these goals will evolve, if not entirely change, over time. One of the best bosses I had was an extremely driven taskmaster. But he always said his favorite thing to do was to teach—indeed, he was a terrific public speaker. And his goal was to get in a financial position so he could become a schoolteacher. This never would have been a value when he was younger. But when he was in his mid-forties, that became a core professional value and goal. And do you know? He started changing. I was in sales training at the time, and he started taking a more active role in the day-to-day classroom activities, and he loved to give a special presentation or two. I hope he gets to be a teacher some day, because there are a lot of young people who will truly benefit.

What do you want from your professional life?

Volumes have been written about this, but it bears a review. Most people work to live. And I find that people who live to work often have all of their priorities out of whack.

If someone lives to work, what does that say about their individuality and their soul? Are they a person or a drone? What is the personality and where are the values they were supposed to develop over their life? And what does it mean

at the end of one's life—that your big accomplishment was you worked a lot? Was it worth it?

So why do you do what you do? Do you know the answer? If you don't, you need to find out immediately, or you'll most certainly suffer regret down the road.

When you examine what you want, ask yourself: Is it about money? Is it about job happiness? Is it about being close to home, or without extended business travel?

In 1997, I was making a reasonably good living as a district sales manager. I had very high job satisfaction—a boss who left me alone; agents who were happy, driven, and independent; a sales team on the rise and recognized throughout the company; and pretty good money (I worked on a commission based on how my agents produced). Even though I was really happy, I wanted to have a higher standard of living than what my salary produced. So I always figured that I'd want to marry someone who made a lot of money and always wanted to work. (Yes, I know. It was a pretty stupid theory. Read on.) I didn't want to leave that job, but I wanted the better standard of living.

But since then, I've totally evolved my position (I hate the word change—most people don't change—they just modify their original thought!). It's become almost a status symbol among my friends to be able to have one spouse at home full-time—especially when children start popping out. And that thought really appeals to me.

So today, that job with great satisfaction isn't acceptable to me on a professional basis. If I want a certain standard of living, then I'm going to have to be the person that earns it—not my spouse (unless, of course, she wants to work!).

How do you want to be perceived by your subordinates, peers, and superiors?

Some people glibly say, “I don’t care what anyone else thinks of me. I’m going to do what I want to do.” But once you get into management, it’s especially important *how* you want to be perceived, especially by your subordinates. You—and you alone—affect that perception.

Management means not worrying about if others like you. Successful management means you’re secure enough in your own life to minimize the problems people create for you in your job, because you’re satisfied in your own personal and social life.

I once worked for an executive who loved addressing every new training class. One of his favorite sayings was, “We want you working hard between eight a.m. and five p.m., occasionally to six p.m. But we don’t want you working late at night or on weekends. Because I believe if you have a great home life and a great social life, you’ll have a great business life.” He was dead on.

Not too long ago, I sat in on a verbal counseling with a sales representative, a lady who had been highly successful the year before. But recently her production had been below average and well below quota. Her manager asked me to witness the meeting. The rep was shaking as she walked in. The manager said, “Penny, we’re here to discuss your production. Eric and I need to understand what’s going on. Your recent production is unlike you. What’s happening?”

The rep started talking about how hard she was working, but something didn’t ring true with me. I decided to interject.

“Penny, what’s really going on? Something traumatic must have happened for this to be happening to you.”

And out came the tears. Turns out Penny had suffered several family tragedies and setbacks in the past few

months. Her manager and I discussed with her the most intimate and private details of her life, and it was difficult for everyone. Penny was upset, especially when I had to re-focus the discussion back on business. She was clearly distressed with me and said so. But I had a business to run; I needed her to work through her problems and succeed, or give up and punt. That's what we talked about.

I'm writing these words the evening the meeting took place. I don't regret getting her so mad because as a manager my responsibility is running a successful business. The rep either needed to resolve her problems and continue producing, or not. I recommended counseling as a way of solving those problems. In any instance the rep disliked me intensely. It didn't matter to me; I was there for two reasons—to help a fellow employee and ensure our success as a team. The last thing I needed was to worry about was if Penny liked me or not. That wasn't the issue.

For me, I want everyone to know that I want to win. I want to be associated with winners, and I want to win through playing by the rules. Once I became a successful manager, I enjoyed attending corporate trips and conferences in exotic locations with my top salespeople. At corporate meetings, I tended to sit with them. My boss finally noticed this and told me, "Your biggest problem is that you hang out only with your top people and don't spend enough time with your mediocre people." He was right—I don't want to hang out around people who don't have or commit to the same success that I do.

Therein lies one of the biggest paradoxes of management: Not everyone who works for you is going to have the same drive you do. I recently talked with Debbie, who got promoted into management on the basis of a spectacular five-year career in sales. Her biggest frustration in her new job was exactly that—not everyone was as driven as she was.

That's natural—and that's why Debbie and you got promoted into management—top management recognizes (or should, at least) those who are driven to succeed and tends to promote those people into management and beyond. There is no solution to Debbie's dilemma, either—I told her that dozens of managers I've worked with (including myself) have felt that frustration. There are some techniques in this book that can help instill passion in people, but the bottom line is that not everyone is as driven to succeed as you are, and you either need to accept and work with that fact, or find people who do.

I will never tolerate—in an employee or myself—any unethical or untoward behavior. Winning at all costs does not work with me. Winning the right way is the only way to win.

So how do you want to be perceived by your employees? As a tough but fair leader? As a compassionate, caring colleague? Your actions—and your core values—will guide you in making this decision.

If your employees know what you are about—then they will always be more understanding of your style.

Are these values reasonable to achieve?

There's nothing wrong with aiming high. That's what goals are for, not values. Be really careful with confusing core values and goals.

Here's a goal: "I want to be CEO."

Here's a value: "I want to conduct my business and lead my team to ensure everyone maximizes their potential and therefore we all succeed."

See the difference? Goals are specific and values are the way you conduct yourself. And if you follow the values you establish, you'll ultimately find promotion and success.

I've only worked for two companies since college. And trying to get a sales job as my first position was difficult, to say the least. I had moved back home from college in 1986, and had interviewed for a number of jobs but not successfully. In fact, I had interviewed one company for several positions that paid less than the job they finally offered me.

Then one day in October, I got a call to interview with a manager in Long Beach. The position was insurance agent. I introduced myself and handed him my résumé. He reviewed it, then dropped the résumé and looked up to me and said, "You're an Eagle Scout." I acknowledged it and he said, "When can you start?" (Right away, as it turned out.) There was never any interview.

Several years later, I got the gumption to ask him what it was about an Eagle Scout that made him hire me on the spot. He told me that although he never was an Eagle Scout, two of his sons were. And if my values and drive were good enough to become an Eagle Scout, they were good enough for him. He had identified those values as important to him as well.

That was a nice compliment to me. And the critical lesson I learned was this: You can't shoot too high when establishing your core values. Set standards that are reasonable but that you can achieve.

Are these values easily communicated to yourself, your superior, and your team?

For heaven's sake, don't write a novel when establishing your core values. Each value should only be one sentence. You want people to read, understand, and buy-in to your values, not look at a 5,000-word treatise and fall asleep.

Your values should consist of one sentence each and all together be no longer than one piece of paper. I strongly rec-

commend placing it in a highly visible spot in your office. You want your people to be reminded of it every day. And the most important person that needs to be reminded is you.

It is also important that your immediate superior see your core values. Hopefully in hiring you, he or she knows something of those values already. But it's an excellent idea to share it with your boss. I'm sure your boss knew something of your values prior to hiring or promoting you, but an important meeting takes place when you sit him or her down and only talk about your values.

One of my favorite employees, Terry, was a manager and infamous as a loose cannon. She had no fear of telling it as she saw it, to the chagrin of many executives, but I liked Terry's candor. She told me what she thought and I appreciated hearing candid and non-filtered opinions.

Terry challenged a number of my decisions and ideas, and eventually it started driving me crazy. Then one day at lunch, we talked about what her values were. It turned out that her most important values were integrity, quality, and success. I realized then that her feistiness was due to her core values—if something or someone wasn't up to her standards, then she created a scene.

What an insight! I was then able to frame my suggestions and discussions in the context of quality—or, if I had to deliver bad news, I was able to frame my arguments to include the need for integrity and quality.

As a manager of managers, I had no desire to know all the detailed stuff each one did. But what does interest me is the foundation they set for their management style and beliefs. That foundation shows how we can plan to accomplish the goals we mutually set for each other.

Chapter Three

The Second Step: Setting and Delivering Expectations

There isn't a more important duty of a manager than letting your employees know precisely what you expect of them. A good analogy is that of parents of a young child. A toddler has and needs parameters and guidelines—slip over the line, and here comes the punishment!

Even a puppy has expectations—a puppy knows it can and cannot do certain things—where to go to the bathroom, whether or not it can dig in the garden, or if it can jump on the family couch.

So if a baby and a puppy get clear expectations, why wouldn't the professionals who work for you get the same advantage?

I recently spent the day with a sales manager in his office. This was an office with fairly low morale and extremely challenging circumstances. One of the reps who was assigned to answer the incoming phones wasn't at his desk at nine a.m., and finally showed up at ten a.m., an hour late.

Answering incoming phones represented about 40% of a sales rep's new business quota. When I asked Andrew, the manager, about it, he said, "I have that problem with this guy all the time—he shows up late at least once a week for his phone duty."

I asked Andrew what he had done to rectify the situation. Andrew: “I’ve asked him to make sure to come in on time, and he promises me he’ll be here, but he still shows up late.”

“There needs to be a consequence for these actions,” I told Andrew. “You need to tell him that if he shows up late again, he’ll lose his phone duty for a month.”

“Now isn’t the time to be delivering threats,” said Andrew. As I mentioned, times were tough and morale was down in his office.

“You’re right—the time to be delivering expectations was the day he started working for you. But now you have to do it—regardless of how bad the timing is.”

If Andrew had clearly laid out his expectations when the rep started, and the consequences for failing to perform those actions, it would not have become a problem later on.

Setting expectations—and clearly communicating them—is mutually beneficial to both you and your team. In fact, there are three major areas of expectations you should deliver:

- ◆ What your team can expect of you
- ◆ What you expect of your team
- ◆ Where you want your team to be at the end of the:
 - month
 - quarter
 - year

Whether or not you’re in a sales management position, expectations are critical. And yes, this is going to require a lot of work and thought. But coming in prepared with these expectations can really help your team start in the direction you need them to go. In fact, the expectations you develop are really the blueprint for your goals and objectives. Your

team can't help you get where you want to go unless they're clear on where that place is!

But don't come in on your first day with your expectations. How can you know what needs to be done before you've even worked with your team?

Getting Started with Your New Team—Meeting with Your Boss

Before your first day, you should have a lengthy conversation with your new superior. Ask plenty of questions:

- ◆ What are the issues—positive and negative—with the team, as your superior views it?
- ◆ What are the goals your superior has for this team?
- ◆ What needs to be addressed immediately?
- ◆ What does your superior see in you that will help this team?

Why is this so important? There are several reasons:

- ◆ It helps you get your boss's support for what you're doing.
- ◆ It allows the boss to help set your framework for success.
- ◆ Finally, you truly can't get into trouble if things take a turn for the worse because you can always tell the boss, "I'm holding true to the values we discussed!"

The answers you receive from your boss will start laying the foundation for your expectations. But you need to do more than just talk to your boss.

Meet with your team

During your first week, you should spend at least fifteen to twenty minutes individually with each member of your team, from secretaries to senior sales people. Ask probing questions. Get to know what they perceive as issues, along with any positives and negatives they perceive occur at the office.

In addition, you need to get to know them as individuals—where they live and what their life is about. I recently had a top sales rep talk to me about his manager. I ran into the rep, Brad, in a hallway at seven in the evening at the office, and we ended up talking for twenty minutes, after I asked how he was doing. The conversation turned quickly to his boss, who worked for me.

“Andy is a really good guy, and I like him just fine,” said Brad. “But his big failing is he doesn’t know about any of us. I got married two weeks ago and he didn’t even mention anything to me. I honestly believe he couldn’t tell you where I live or whom I married, or anything about me that makes me an individual.”

Andy, the manager, did talk with his team—but only about things that interested Andy. Most employees want their boss to know about them—their life and their individual personal situations. No one is really interested in you—they want you to be interested in them.

If you asked me about the 250+ people who worked for me, I could probably come very closing to telling you where each lived, if they were married, and what their ultimate ambition was. It’s important to them to have me know something about them and remember it.

My dad’s strongest asset—and one I envy greatly—is that he never forgets a name. If you meet him once, he’ll remember your name. Casual acquaintances come up to me

and remark on this all the time. What an attribute that is in a manager or executive! If you can walk into an office and call everyone by his or her name, or go to a company picnic and call spouses by their first name, the respect for you increases exponentially.

Now that you're aware of how critical it is to get to know your team as individuals, make sure to sit down with each of them, ask them about their situation, and then turn it into business:

- ◆ What do they want from a manager?
- ◆ What do they want changed and what do they want to stay the same?
- ◆ How can you as a manager help them succeed?
- ◆ What are their career ambitions and goals?

It's really important to know what your employees want from their manager, because you will need to adapt to their needs. I worked with a fellow sales rep who needed attention from her manager all the time—she worked in an office with me, about eighty miles from our boss. Tracy called him on the phone four or five times every day for lengthy conversations. The subjects were all over the place—she just wanted him to know what she was doing and how hard she was working.

At the same time, I talked to my boss only once a week—that was all I needed from him. Tracy was amazed that I talked with him so infrequently, but I knew the boss would be there for me when I needed him—I just preferred a lot of independence, and she wanted constant attention. As salespeople, we were both well over quota—but both of us needed entirely different management styles from our boss.

The second question—what do you want changed—is a time to find out what you can do to help your employees and

also what it is that frustrates them. You may not be able to implement all the changes an employee desires (and make sure never to over-promise on what you can and cannot deliver), but you're going to get a sense of what is on people's minds.

When I was in college, there was an annual musical and comedy show, and all of the fraternities, sororities, and dorms each produced a twenty-minute skit. Part satire, and often a little raunchy, the skits could really skewer university life. The university president was always in attendance, even though he was often the butt of most of the jokes. When I asked him why he put up with that, he told me, "It's the one chance I get every year to really find out what's on the students' minds."

As a manager, the third question—how you can help an employee succeed—is very powerful if the employee is honest with you. As a manager, you are in a situation where you can greatly influence someone's career—for the positive or negative. Many people may need time to think about what you can do to help them—give them that time. Get their follow up—you'll be surprised at the answer but make sure to continually update them on this issue.

That last question can help you more in your job than perhaps any other. If you know what your people want to do, and if you help them achieve it, they will do just about anything for you.

Setting Expectations of Your Team

Now that you have input from your boss and your subordinates, it's time to figure out what your expectations are. Keeping in mind the core values you have, and the needs of the office, it's time to take pen to paper.

Setting the expectations of your team is critical, because this is essentially what you hope to accomplish in your term as a manager. Among the issues that need to be addressed include:

Production

Do you want it increased, and if so, by how much and how soon? This is a dicey proposition. Unless corporate goals differ from your own, your boss almost certainly wants you to increase production over what it currently is. Yet you can't set a random figure ("Each staff member is to increase production 20% over last year"). By talking with your team, you've discovered strengths and weaknesses in the office that should help you determine an appropriate number. Remember, you're setting expectations here and not saying how you are going to get there. We'll do that later.

Honesty and Integrity

I strongly believe these elements must be included in any formal or informal expectations of both you and your team. The sooner your team realizes you are committed to conduct your business and manage your team with the utmost honesty and integrity in all facets of business, the better. And there's no more opportune time to get that in front of your team than when you set your expectations of them. The statement can be as simple as "Each team member will conduct their business with the utmost integrity and honesty." What more can you ask of someone than this? And what easier thing can you ask of someone? At the core of this expectation is asking simply asking a team member to do the right thing. If they have a doubt, then they should ask you.

Ask for—and expect—a high level of performance.

Of the hundreds of people who have worked for me, I would estimate that all except for one or two could improve the level of their performance. That doesn't mean working more hours or skipping lunch; it means improving what they do when they do it.

Actually, I don't believe the adage that many hours is the only path to success. On the contrary, I admire those who get the job done in as few hours as possible. It's not about hours worked; it's about efficiency during the hours you work.

I had an sales rep work for me—"Scott"—who was an outstanding producer—consistently in the top ten out of 600 company-wide. The hours he put in, however, were probably in the bottom 25%. Scott got to work at eight a.m. and his wife liked him home no later than 5:15 p.m. But he got the absolute most out of those nine hours. Hardly any time was spent socializing. Scott usually ate lunch at his desk, and he was incredibly efficient at handling the mundane paperwork that would kill other salespeople.

Watching Scott led me to understand a major principle of sales management—it's not the hours you put in; it's what your results are that count.

Another thing I realized from Scott, although it's not related to this topic: He was not a prototypical "salesperson." Quiet, subdued, and conservative, he didn't fit the mold of a plaid-jacketed used-car salesman in days gone by. But because of his amazing discipline and focus, he became a highly successful person. The lesson I learned? It's not personality that sells; it's a focus on discipline.

Ask for a commitment.

Finally, make sure you ask your team for a commitment. It's not enough telling them what you want—you need to gain their assurance that they will commit to what you want.

Whenever I give a motivational speech, I always conclude with identifying what I want, then asking the audience if they will commit to what I asked for. “Stand up if you will commit to this goal!”

Most people will stand up. And there’s no difference with your set of expectations. There’s nothing wrong with asking them to commit to your expectations. If someone is unwilling to do this, you immediately know you’ve got a problem.

Sit down with the individual and ask them why they are unable to commit. Again, you need to ask probing questions.

- ◆ “Why can’t you commit to this?”
- ◆ “What are your concerns about this commitment?”
- ◆ “What can I do to help allay your concerns?”

In my experience, the reluctant team members fall into two categories: Those who are afraid of committing, and those who know they can’t do it. In either case, you’re going to have work to do.

The primary reason an employee is afraid of making a commitment to succeed is they actually are afraid! It may be that they’re concerned you’ll make an issue out of it when it comes time for a performance appraisal or evaluation. I had one employee who said, “But if I don’t do it, you’re going to hold it against me.” I told her that it had nothing to do with “holding it against someone.” I believe that getting a commitment—whether or written or oral—provides a necessary impetus for getting people to step up and get you what you need.

If you get any other excuse, it’s virtually certain that team member knows in their heart they can’t do it. Now, no one is going to tell you, “I can’t do it.” The excuses will manifest themselves in many different ways. Again, you need to

find out what their reasons are. And, if you're convinced they cannot do it, you're on the road to either helping that person succeed, or helping that person find a new career opportunity.

Setting Expectations of Yourself

While the expectations you have of your team are *where* you want to go, the expectations you have of yourself determine *how* you are going to get there.

Each of us is blessed with unique gifts that allow us to help others. The key in this case is to know what you can and can't do to help your team succeed.

A trite interview question is always, "Tell me about your strengths and weaknesses." While we'll get to that later, it is crucial that *you* clearly know what *your* strengths and weaknesses are.

I'll tell you a little secret that will help you succeed no matter what: *Always know what your strengths and weaknesses are. And always play to your strengths while minimizing your weaknesses.*

My weaknesses are (as anyone who's worked directly for me can attest) disorganization and, for lack of a better expression, lack of attention to detail.

But those weaknesses are fine for two reasons: (1) I know what my weaknesses are, and (2) I find people to work with me who are strong in the areas of my weaknesses.

The best assistants I've ever had are totally organized and have a command of detail. That way, they can remind me of things I've forgotten, and help me focus on my strengths, because I don't have to worry about my weaknesses. Come to think of it, I also appreciate most those team members who conduct the minutiae of their business independently, which allows me to focus on big picture stuff.

What you're asking of yourself, when setting expectations, is to maximize your strengths.

What can your team expect of you?

I always use this opportunity to emphasize the most important things I bring to the table—my ability to function for them as a rainmaker, allowing my team the freedom to work as independently as they can, running interference for them so they can be free to sell, and any other thing I can think of.

In addition to subtly mentioning your strengths, you should also identify the opportunities your team will have to communicate with you.

There's not a manager I know who doesn't boast, "I have an open-door policy." But what the heck does that mean?

To me, an open door doesn't begin and end with your office. An open door means you're available 24/7 to help them. (It doesn't hurt to remind your team to use your cell phone judiciously.) But the days of the manager working in the office from nine to five ended with the Reagan administration. Managers today must be available more than nine to five, since the demands upon us are clearly more than nine to five.

Tell your team when you're available, how they can contact you, and when it's appropriate to contact you.

I recently had a new manager who was hired without a lot of experience. But his reputation was as a solid administrator with a great work ethic. "Mark" started in his district at a time when I was incredibly busy. I spent as much time with him as I could, but it wasn't enough. I gave Mark my cell phone number and told him he should always call that number any time he had a question.

Sure enough, I'd be at dinner, or in the shower, or in a meeting, and he'd call. But I never told him I'd call him back. To the contrary, I was thrilled that he would call me because that was emblematic of how much he wanted to succeed.

Another of the most important things your team wants is a manager who "stands up for them." This can take the form of several guises, but most often it's with either a client who complains or internal bureaucracy that prohibits one of your employees from increasing productivity.

In either case, your team needs to believe that you are standing up for them. Your challenge is to accomplish that while ensuring your business objectives (customer service, or needs of the organization) are met.

Most clients who complain about one of your team members believe that it was the employee who caused the problem. In my experience, this is hardly ever the case. Instead, it tends to be internal corporate issues, or the client's fault, or miscommunication.

Whatever you do, always make sure to sit with your employee before you make any judgment on fault. Find out the employee's perspective on the complaint; it's virtually certain the employee will have a different version of the story than the client.

After you make your decision, and notify your client of the resolution, make sure to minimize the employee aspect of the problem. And if you determine it was the employee's fault, make sure to sit with him or her and offer a better way of handling the situation.

Another common problem is with an internal bureaucracy in a large corporation (read: politics) that makes you do things you or your team don't necessarily want to do.

My boss was on vacation once, and I got to spend two weeks in his shoes, frequently answering to the senior guy. It

was a great learning experience for me until one day when the senior guy said, “I need more of your sales trainees to become full reps immediately.”

Upon hearing this, my training manager had a fit. She wasn’t ready to let trainees become full-fledged reps until they were thoroughly trained. “Letting them out too early will be disastrous,” she said. So I was caught between a rock and a hard spot. I needed to stand up for my manager, while at the same time appease the needs of the senior guy.

The solution? I let the training manager call the senior guy directly and voice her concerns. Why let me be the conduit for her arguments and his? She appreciated the direct connection to the top, and the senior guy was surprised at the issues she raised, which he had never thought of. She got her way.

On the following pages are expectations I set for my team—there are three sets: one of my expectations of each team member, another for my expectations of myself, and, lastly, what each person could expect of me. Every year I change the expectations, but every year they are always framed in my office.

Sample Expectations

Eric's Expectations of You

Each sales rep will:

- ◆ Be committed to achieving all goals in all lines
- ◆ Be committed to achieving team goals
- ◆ Have average annual sales rep income of \$XX,XXX
- ◆ Believe in and perform two-way communication with management and attend all meetings on time
- ◆ Be as committed to the concept of customer service as new business acquisition
- ◆ Take ownership of complaints and refer as few complaints as possible to management
- ◆ Understand that it is not how many hours worked, but results that count
- ◆ Develop and adhere to a comprehensive business development plan to achieve mastery in all areas of business management
- ◆ Contact and report on all marketing leads within forty-eight hours

Remember that the most important psychological part of the job is to have fun!

And...our theme:

“Work Hard, Play Hard!”

Eric's Goals

- ◆ Be recognized as the top district in the company
- ◆ Attend sales conference
- ◆ Have at least four salespeople qualify for conference
- ◆ Allow zero customer complaints from this office to reach the next management level
- ◆ Have fun
- ◆ To the extent possible, have peace and harmony in my job

What You Can Expect from Eric

- ◆ A commitment to give you as much information to help you do your job as possible
- ◆ Open-door policy
- ◆ Formalized monthly one-on-one checkpoint meetings with each agent to review production and set goals for the upcoming month and quarter, and to discuss any issues and needs (but you're always welcome to talk at any time)
- ◆ An atmosphere of fun
- ◆ Risk taking—as long as it is ethical—and whatever else it takes to increase production and make everyone more money
- ◆ Frequent and positive recognition for tasks well done, for production, and for exceeding personal bests
- ◆ “Rainmaker”—a consistent approach to helping you with production
- ◆ Zero tolerance for complaints, non-returned phone calls, and unanswered go-backs
- ◆ Removal of as many obstacles as possible from you selling
- ◆ Every day, a commitment to “Work Hard, Play Hard!”

Let's have a great time!

Setting Goals

You've set your expectations, and you have your core values. Now it's time to put your plan into action by establishing goals.

Goals have a purpose, they are specific, and they have a due date. That's what makes them different than expectations.

I'm a huge believer in goals. I have never accomplished anything significant in my life without them. This is true both personally and in my professional life.

When I was thirteen, I set as a goal to become an Eagle Scout when I was seventeen. It happened.

When I was in my early twenties, I was having a lot of fun traveling inside the United States. I set a goal to set foot in all fifty states by the time I was thirty-five. It happened.

Obviously, I had to have professional goals. In 1987, I set out to be the top-producing sales agent in my office. It happened.

In 1997, I set out to make my sales team the top-producing office in my region. It happened.

But when my goals were ill-defined, vague, or non-existent, it didn't happen. In the early 1990s, I wanted to advance my career and make more money. I did so, but without a specific goal in mind. In 1995, I was floundering in a job I was ill suited for. Then, out of the blue, a regional sales manager asked me to lunch. He told me he thought I'd make a great sales manager—a job I had never thought about. He offered me a job and two weeks later, I was managing a team of twenty people and was on my way.

It took me a short while to find my footing, and I did well in 1996. Then, I got back to specific goals.

In 1997, I set out to make my team the top-producing office in my region. It happened, and I've never looked back.

So when my goals have been vague or not present at all, nothing has happened. When there were specific and with a deadline in mind, I have always succeeded. The same thing applies to you.

Raising the Bar

Whatever you're doing, and whatever it is you decide to do, the most important thing to do is "raise the bar." This means doing better than has been done before. You are going to want to improve results over the previous regime.

Whether it's production, or efficiency, or customer satisfaction, it's critical to show improvement. At the end of the day, a manager is measured on results—and not how good a person he or she is. What does not matter is your sincerity, the time you put into your job, or the activities you conduct. What matters to the boss is results. You start creating better results by raising the bar.

And no manager has ever been able to raise the bar by *lowering* goals or expectations. A successful manager has to target an increase by raising goals and, as we've just seen, expectations.

So, the first step is to identify the areas in which you can improve and set the goal. Then, specifically state what you want to accomplish and the time by which you want it accomplished. This is a lot easier in sales than in a service business, but the idea is the same. You need to find a measurable area that is ripe for improvement, then set a goal and get it done.

Like your expectations, you want your goals written down, easily communicated, and reasonable to attain. Likewise, the buy-in you get from your team is critical. Like a drill instructor conducting a review, you need to make sure

they know what the goals are. They need to be able to repeat your goals verbatim and assume your goals as their own. “They’re our goals.”

I once worked for a very enthusiastic manager who was almost as goal-oriented as I. Each time we had a meeting we began by reciting the team goals, and even though this was many years ago, I can still recite them by memory:

“Be the number-one team in the company. The average agent will earn \$60,000 [remember, this was a long time ago!]. And our customers will rate us a ‘nine’ on our customer-service surveys.”

It can’t get simpler than that. And, boy, we really remembered those goals, because our manager checked it out every time he came by our desks. It may sound corny, or something you hear about in basic training for the armed forces, but it has a way of working.

The Power of Visualization

By now you realize that I’m a believer in writing things down, especially expectations and goals. Always write down your goals, look at them daily, and review in your mind every step you need to take to get to where you’re going. To be highly successful, you need to live and breathe your goals. In the morning you should be thinking of them. Before you go to bed at night you should be reciting them.

Have you ever sat at home with a lottery ticket when the jackpot is huge—say sixty or seventy million dollars? Did you fantasize about what you’d do if you won? The exact same concept applies here. It’s the power of visualization.

I've seen many of my peers spend hours developing a comprehensive business plan, present it to the boss, and get it approved, only to never revisit it again until it's time to update it next year. A good business plan is a road map for you and your team to get to your goals.

But any plan and your goals have to be revisited every day. Whether you look at them first thing in the morning, or right before you go home every night, you should always be visualizing your goals.

- ◆ “What am I doing today to accomplish my goals?”
- ◆ “What is my team doing today to get to our goals?”
- ◆ “What do I need to do to help my team get there?”

Your day should always be planned to answer those questions.

Chapter Four

Communication: The Key to Success

The only thing that TV and film directors have in common is the need to communicate with people. You need to communicate with your people in order to get your ideas across and to get your vision to the audience.

— *William Friedkin, director of The French Connection*

There is no more important component to success in management than communication. In my experience, most managers fail because they couldn't adequately communicate with their team.

Management begins and ends with communication. And while effective communication is the most important part of successful management, ineffective communication will sabotage you every time.

It is not so much *what* you say, but *how* you say it that counts.

I had a manager working for me recently who was—to put it mildly—challenged when it came to people skills. A very smart guy, Andrew nonetheless had major trouble communicating with his team. One afternoon, he called me and said that one of his employees—Nora—might be calling me with

a complaint about a “discussion” Andrew and Nora had had recently.

Knowing something about Andrew, I asked him to describe what had happened. It turns out that Nora was supposed to be answering the phones but left to take a bathroom break without finding a temporary replacement. Andrew said, “I asked Nora what she was doing walking to the bathroom and not answering the phones. She said, ‘I’ve got someone to replace me for a minute.’ But there was no one there, so I told her to go back to her phone until she could find someone to replace her. Nora got mad and said she was going to call you.”

Nora called me a few minutes later and she was indeed upset. When I asked her what happened, she quoted the conversation virtually word for word as Andrew had. But she said, “Andrew was screaming at me. He turned red and for a minute I thought he was going to hit me.” That was all I needed to hear. I drove up to the office and discussed anger management with Andrew. When he realized what he had done, he immediately went to Nora and profusely apologized. He learned the most important lesson—it’s not what you say, but how you say it.

If Andrew had been calm and talked to Nora in a normal tone of voice, the incident would not have happened. Nora took offense to his tone, and not the content.

I spent some time with both of them, asking them to explain the rationale behind why they did what they did. Andrew was surprised that Nora thought he was going to hit her—“I just raised my voice because I was a little irritated,” he said. “I wasn’t that upset.”

After everyone had a chance to talk things through candidly, the situation diffused itself.

The art of communication is one area where I do feel comfortable from an academic standpoint. I took a number

of communications courses in college, and learned a great deal about interpersonal communications. And the most important thing I've learned is that communication is not necessarily a natural talent—it can be learned. So even if you feel your communication skills aren't the best, you can always improve them.

As a manager, you need to become a master of communication, both formally and informally in these three areas:

- ◆ One-on-one communication
- ◆ One-to-group communication
- ◆ Written communication

Communicating one-on-one

My advice for everyone who communicates with anyone is the same:

- ◆ Be as direct as you can.
- ◆ Be as blunt as you can.
- ◆ Don't mince words—directness only helps you in the end.
- ◆ Know whom you're talking to.

In dealing with your team individually, you've got to first identify the needs of each individual. As you get to know your team, you'll discover what each person requires in the way of communication.

When you meet with each person on your team, ask him or her what he or she expects of you. Then, make sure to follow up with informal conversation as often as you can.

I tell new managers they should be spending at least 60% of their time away from behind their desk. Sit with your

team members while they work—not to put pressure on them, but to find out how they do what they do. The reason you were promoted to management was because you have something to offer—make sure to provide suggestions on how your team can improve.

While sitting with a team member, it's also a good time to ask questions about what they do and how they do it. People generally love talking about themselves or their job. This is a great way of bonding with your team. This intimacy becomes extremely important when it comes time to ask your team to do something for you. And make no mistakes—there will be a time when you need them to do it for you.

I had a boss—Earl—who absolutely despised communicating with his team. Earl was a brilliant man, but did not want to spend any time talking to people. As a result, people were literally intimidated by him—a condition he did nothing to discourage. And when it came time to ask for a “step up” in production, the team either could not or would not deliver for him.

A peer of Earl's, whom I'll call Susan, was exactly the opposite of Earl. She had teams in multiple locations and spent at least 80% of her time “with the troops in the field.” And her team loved her. She actually was her own best line supervisor. And at her team meetings, the fun and esprit d'corps was incredible. Her team ended up doing anything for her; they'd have taken a bullet for her. She knew everything about each individual—and not just personal items, but also their strengths and weaknesses. She was able to call upon her on experience to help them with their weaknesses, and no one was better at touting their strengths, which she'd shout to all who would hear.

A couple of minutes every day can be all it takes. People want to know—crave to know—that their boss cares about them. But you have to legitimately enjoy it; otherwise you'll come across as contrived and phony.

One-to-group communication

Equally critical to communications success is your ability to effectively communicate in a group situation when you're in charge. Whether there are a few people in the room or you're giving a presentation in front of 400 people, this type of communication terrifies even the most hardcore manager.

Yet a major component of successful communication is the ability to communicate in this format.

My best advice is to think before you speak. You may only get that one opportunity to properly tell your story.

I am a veteran of meetings. Oh boy, am I ever a veteran of meetings. I spent days in a row where I never saw my office—meeting after meeting all day long. I've been in meetings with a hundred people that lasted five minutes, and I sat in one memorable meeting with twenty other people where an actuary explained the way he determined insurance rates. It lasted nine hours.

The first step is to plan. Even for the smallest meeting, develop an agenda and make sure to follow it. I also recommend giving all the participants a copy of the agenda so they feel part of the meeting as well.

Volumes have been written on conducting a successful meeting, so I'll limit this to a few areas that have been proven successful for me over the years.

Lessons I've Learned about Conducting Meetings

I've been very fortunate in my career to have had the opportunity to spend hours conducting meetings and making presentations. Three years in training, speaking to groups of thirty to forty people. Eight years in management conducting team meetings. And I've given speeches to

groups of up to 500 people. Here are the lessons I've learned.

1. It's OK if you schedule an hour-long meeting that only lasts thirty minutes. Don't waste anyone's time if you don't have to. Never schedule a thirty-minute meeting that will last an hour; everyone will be upset and behind the rest of the day.
2. Schedule the meeting with plenty of advance notice. I worked for a person who would send us an e-mail on Friday afternoons for a Monday morning meeting. Since many of us were coming from far away and had busy schedules, it was difficult to accomplish and, quite frankly, rude. Another boss I had was the opposite—he'd send an e-mail asking everyone to give him four or five days that we'd be available for a meeting two months away. That's treating people with respect, although sometimes a little cumbersome.
3. Set expectations. I always expect my team to come to my meetings on time and with their calendars and a pad to take notes. One of my all-time pet peeves is a team member who shows up late to a meeting. It wastes everyone's time. Once, I was co-chairing a meeting. At the appointed time, only four of twelve people were present. My co-chair nonetheless started the meeting on time and told the four, "I never punish the punctual." It's a point I always remember, and so should you.
4. Always start your meetings with some form of recognition. Even if you have to struggle to find a reason to recognize someone or something, do it.
5. Always conclude your meetings with an open forum. Encourage each person to express his or her views or concerns or opinions. You'll be surprised how some people—who will never talk about concerns with you in an

individual setting—will express their views in a meeting. And, if others agree, you'll have stimulated an opportunity for improvement. Or, at the very least, your team will have vented some frustrations.

6. When you want to make an important point, always make sure to pause at the end of your statement and ask if everyone is clear.
7. When meeting with your team, schedule the team meeting on the same day and time each month. That way, your team can make their own arrangements in advance, knowing there will always be a meeting, for example, at eight a.m. on the first Friday of every month. I always scheduled my team meetings on the first Friday of the month so I could review the previous month's production, acknowledge the top producers, and get everyone on the same page for the upcoming month.

Lessons I've Learned from Giving Speeches

Some day I'll write another book on this topic. I'm not like a lot of people; I enjoy speaking in public and in front of large groups. I'm also fortunate that I don't need to memorize a speech or read from notes to adequately communicate what I want to say. I usually just have a key word or two and go from there. So here is my "Top Ten" list of suggestions.

1. You have to work at it to be successful. One of the most flattering comments I've ever received from anyone was after a presentation I made to 400 managers and executives at my company. A colleague walked up and said, "It's so easy for you. You're a natural." I want to tell you: there is nothing natural about standing up in front of

400 people, including every boss you've ever had, and speaking extempore for twenty minutes. It's about preparation.

2. Slow down. The most common problem with novice speakers is they get nervous, which in turn gets them to speak way too fast.
3. Become a master of your topic. You have been asked to speak because you know more than your audience does. Use that to your advantage. You're the expert and your audience is not. (This is a variant of the old "imagining your audience in their underwear" gag, something I've never subscribed to.)
4. Say what you want to say in as few words as possible. I've heard thousands of speeches from work and community leaders over the years, and the one thing the great speakers have is the ability to say what they want to say and get out. If you don't believe this, read the Gettysburg Address or Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech. Lincoln and King both gave two of the most memorable speeches in history and both lasted less than five minutes. Do not be verbose. You can be verbose when you write a book because people have the leisure and the ability to edit as they read. They don't have that luxury when they're sitting in the middle of an auditorium.
5. Don't try to be funny. There is nothing more irritating than a speaker who tells a lame joke or thinks they are an amateur comedian. Be pleasant, be direct, and be friendly, but don't be funny.
6. Don't spend time telling people what you're going to say. All the so-called "experts" tell you to spend the first few minutes outlining what you're going to talk about. Why? Don't tell people what you plan on saying later—just tell them what you want to say now!

A Word about E-mail

Do not be misled into thinking that e-mail is an appropriate communication tool. It isn't! Everyone is now using e-mail as a substitute for interpersonal communication, and it is greatly harming business and personal relationships.

- ◆ E-mail does not replace the need for verbal communication.
- ◆ E-mail should never be used when expressing any form of displeasure or dissatisfaction.
- ◆ E-mail is too often substituted for one-on-one conversations and discussions.
- ◆ E-mail should only be used when disseminating information to a lot of people very quickly.

I'm always amused by those people who tell me e-mail is an indispensable management tool. But just a few years ago, e-mail was not around at all. How did these geniuses get along with out e-mail then?

The answer? They communicated. Now e-mail is taking the place of a conversation, or a meeting, or a discussion, and it's a tragedy.

A boss of mine managed a dozen managers and over twenty facilities. And he would spend six hours every day on his e-mail. Everything: bad news, good news, FYIs would pop up on e-mail. Think I'm kidding? I'd work on Thursday, go on a three-day vacation and come back to the office on Monday at six a.m. to find over a hundred e-mails—all from the boss.

What is especially funny about this is that when e-mail first came out, this boss had to hand-write his messages and have his secretary send the e-mail because he didn't know

how to use the system! Once he learned it, however, it was brutal on all of us.

Unfortunately, he used e-mail as a substitute for visiting his team in remote locations, so he was never able to visit personally with his troops—they only knew of him by e-mail. Once, I asked him how he got along prior to the advent of e-mail, and he couldn't come up with an answer.

One of my boss's peers, Dan—a manager I admired greatly—took the opposite approach, which was viewing e-mail as a necessary evil. He spent virtually all of his time in the field with his troops, returning to the office at night to review his e-mail and return phone calls. He had a policy of not leaving for home until all his messages from e-mail and voice mail were returned.

Dan never sent a group e-mail when things were bad, or when he was displeased. Instead, he got his management team on a conference call. So his communication style was much more personal, and he got much more done than my poor boss who spent six hours a day on e-mail.

E-mail should be a time saver and not a time waster.

The worst thing about e-mail is that poor managers believe it is a substitute for interpersonal communication. There's nothing wrong with sending a note to congratulate a top performer or to motivate someone who needs cheering up. But I believe the best way is still a hand-written note from the boss, followed up by a personal visit or at least a phone call. As we continue to grow in an electronic age, employees will more and more value the personal touch.

Chapter Five

Inspecting What You Expect

We've spent the first four chapters of this book talking about core values, expectations, and goals, and how to communicate them.

None of these skills will do you a bit of good unless you're able to ensure what you've asked is being done. You have to inspect what you expect.

If you ask for something, you've got to make sure it gets done. If you don't follow up, people will assume it was unimportant. And trust me, the more you do this, the easier it gets.

I worked for an executive named Bill. Bill was very well liked and respected by all of his team for his work ethic and great people skills. But as Bill got busier and busier, he developed the habit of taking all of his paperwork and memos home on Friday nights and reading them during the weekend. And we got used to having a pile of stuff on our desks every Monday morning with "See me on this!" or "Please perform an evaluation on this and get it to me by lunchtime on Monday." There were twenty of us in the department, each with five to ten "to-do's" from Bill. As you can imagine, that meant every Monday was like a ten-hour-long fire drill, with people running around, trying to get

information and writing reports to get done by Bill's deadline.

Then something funny happened. Someone said, "I went to see Bill this morning and he couldn't remember why he wrote, 'See me' on this paper." Well, that gave the rest of us the idea that if Bill couldn't remember all of the things he wrote us over the weekend, he couldn't possibly need everything he asked about for Monday morning.

So one Monday, we all tried an experiment. None of us turned in any report by Monday at lunch. And nothing happened! A couple of days later, Bill asked a couple of people if they had finished a certain report yet. They quickly determined that that specific report was the real priority for the boss, and they promptly turned it in.

So the lesson we learned was: unless Bill asked for it again, it must not have been that important to begin with. And we ignored all of those Monday morning "to-do's" and got on with our jobs. Bill's lesson was: if you ask for it and expect it, you need to inspect it.

Remember Where You Came From

This lesson becomes increasingly important as you move up the chain of command. I remember when I was first promoted, in 1990, from sales agent to sales trainer. My fellow agents and I used to always joke about the management and executives at our company, and the worst thing we could think of was that they "forgot where they came from," meaning that they didn't understand our jobs the way they used to when they had our jobs.

So, when I got the promotion, all my friends said, "You better not forget where you came from." Of course, that's easier said than done. Because as you become more and

more removed from the line job, the easier it is to forget what that job was really like on a day-to-day basis.

Look, you can't help but forget where you came from when you're doing another job. But you can recognize this problem and do everything you can to control it.

The best way to remember where you came from is to spend time with the people who do what you used to do—inspecting what you expect at all times, and observing what your team members do.

An important side benefit of this is you will get renewed respect from your team when they realize you really do understand what they do.

I saw many executives rise to the top of the ivory tower, only to become so immersed in the activities in that ivory tower that they lose empathy and compassion for the problems of the rank-and-file. When I saw this, I vowed—and so should you—never to forget where I came from.

Chapter Six

Instilling Passion

I'm not a great fan of the word "motivation." First of all, it implies something you do to someone else that they may not want in the first place. Secondly, I believe you cannot motivate someone; they can only motivate themselves.

Think about it: How often have you been able to force someone to do something they didn't want to do? I don't have children, but I've observed my friends try to do this with their children. Even though the parents have the authority, getting the kid to do something the kid doesn't want is pretty brutal; the parents resort to bribery or begging or some equally demeaning activity.

It's the same with adults. People are all motivated to do *something*; your job is to discover what it is that motivates them.

So my preferred term is "passion." I believe it is the job of every manager to instill passion in their team—a passion for doing their job, for living their life, etc.

The interviewer Larry King was once asked who his favorite person to interview was. I'll never forget his answer: "Anyone who has passion, regardless of who they are or what they do. If they have a passion for what they do, they are a great interview."

Passion Defined

The first reaction from most people when they hear the word “passion” is to think of it in the romantic sense. But I’m using it here in the sense of enthusiasm, zeal, excitement, and delight.

Here’s a question to ask yourself. I ask it of myself all the time and frequently ask it of my team:

Why would you spend your life doing something you don't truly enjoy?

You spend at least a third of your life at work. Maybe more. Obviously you get paid for what you do, but there are a lot of jobs out there and a lot of companies that would happily employ you. So why do you do what you do and where you do it?

I sincerely hope it’s because you enjoy what you do, because if it isn’t, you should look for another job. Life is too short to not enjoy it.

So I firmly believe you must be passionate about what you do. You must look forward to going to work and making decisions and helping people and achieving goals and succeeding. This can’t be made up; you have to be genuine about it. I spent a long time trying and hoping, planning to get where I got. So when I got there, I was going to make the most of it.

It Comes from Within

First, last, and always, passion comes from you. You cannot possibly expect anyone else to have the passion unless you’ve genuinely got it yourself. You set the tone for your

team. Your mood and attitude will always dictate the atmosphere in the office.

Susan, a manager I respected greatly, called it “always being on stage.” Whether you know it or not, whether you *believe* it or not, people are always watching you and judging you when you’re a manager. You set the tone with every statement you utter and every gesture you make.

It’s all about attitude. Your team responds to your emotions and your beliefs, whether you think you’re hiding them or not.

When I was in sales training, I prided myself on being entertaining. (I wasn’t a very good trainer, but I tried to be fun.) I was training a class over the course of a couple of weeks, and I was enjoying the class and it was pretty obvious they were responding to me as well. Then one day, I went into work in a foul mood (fortunately my memory has blanked it completely out as to why this was). I took a deep breath before walking into the class and promised to keep my problems out of the class.

I thought I did well; the class laughed at my jokes and was reasonably involved. No one ever said anything to me.

But when the class ended, I reviewed the instructor evaluations. I got good marks, except that several students wrote “Eric is the best trainer—when he’s in a good mood.” That really stung, and all that time I had no idea that anyone knew I was in a bad mood.

It was a great lesson—you have to be genuine and you’re not allowed to be down. It’s all about attitude, and a smile from you will always improve the passion of your team. Always be positive, and try never to show any weakness. Your team looks to you to be a leader, and you must demonstrate to them every day that you act like a leader.

The Mirror

You have to determine the best way to instill passion in your team, but I'll share with you some of the words and themes I use when talking about passion with my team, and those of others. You can use these by yourself, in determining the level of passion you have, or with your team to attempt to increase their level of passion. You've probably seen flecks of this and that, spread throughout this book, but it's consolidated here.

I call this technique the mirror, because passion, pride, and motivation cannot possibly come from anyone else than the person in the mirror. I live in America, and in America no one can force you to do anything—especially to want to do your job better.

Therefore, it is up to you to succeed. You must enjoy what you do. Ask yourself the following questions. And be as brutally honest as you can with yourself when answering them.

- ◆ Are you having fun in your job?
- ◆ Do you take pride in the job you're doing?
- ◆ Are you eager to go to work every day?
- ◆ Do you want to win?
- ◆ Do you have the drive to succeed?

If you can't answer "yes" to each of these questions, find another job. Life is too short to spend your time here doing something you don't love. And make sure to tell that to your team members who aren't meeting your expectations!

The Drive

In the final analysis, it's not about obstacles; successful managers find ways of overcoming any obstacle (or, at least, minimizing the most difficult ones). It isn't about a fancy office, or corporate changes, or anything else. It is about the drive. And the drive only comes from within.

Following are the characteristics of people who have "the drive."

Endurance

Excellence, passion, drive, and spirit are easily given and manufactured over a short period of time. Yet the truly outstanding people demonstrate this consistently, over a long period of time. I always admired the sales people who, year in and year out, excelled. Anyone can put together a good month or good quarter or good year—but it's those who do it over a long period of time who get my respect.

Passion

As I've said, if you don't have passion for what you do, you shouldn't do it. I've known people—good people—who simply didn't have their heart in their job, and they could not find a way to succeed. Do not waste your life doing something you don't truly want to do.

Perseverance

Most businesses I've observed are cyclical. And unquestionably there will be tough times as well as good. Successful people find a way to maneuver through the ups and downs that are inevitable in business. The long-term view—rather

than immediate gratification—allows these people to succeed.

Patience

One of my worst characteristics is impatience. I've seen it on my performance reviews, heard it in comments from my teams and bosses, and even my parents have given me grief over it. I need to be more patient than I am. And so do a lot of people I know. Patience, to some degree, equates to maturity. Maturity indicates the wisdom to know that the vagaries of everyday work should not dictate your mood, change your optimism, or ruin your day. Patience means you rise above the little things in life to become the best.

On the other hand, there are times where patience must naturally run thin. Some examples:

- ◆ Long-term performance continues to stagnate or decline
 - ◆ A chronic underperforming employee
 - ◆ A team that is underperforming or consistently unhappy
- In these cases, good managers create a sense of urgency.

Creating a Sense of Urgency

How many times have you either had this conversation with an employee, or had it with a superior?

"We have to do better."

"How?"

"I don't know, but our production is down and management is on my case to improve things right away."

Sound familiar? This conversation, or variants of it, takes place in business every day.

There are a myriad of problems with the above statements (we'll talk about taking ownership in the next chapter), but the one to focus on here is the attempt by the manager to create a sense of urgency. It must be done. Set deadlines and follow through to make sure those deadlines are met.

Adversity Doesn't Breed Contempt

Adversity, if managed properly, can breed more success than a manager ever dreamed of. Great leaders don't avoid or fear trouble; they embrace it. President Clinton often remarked his legacy would be incomplete without a major world conflict or trouble.

In sports, championship teams often become more closely bound during a losing streak or lonely times on the road. Many great coaches know this and use it to their advantage.

I'm not a mathematician, but here's a formula that I advocate and believe in:

$$\textit{Adversity} + \textit{Discipline} = \textit{Success}$$

The path to greatness almost always must go through some adversity. Once a team—whether it be your team or the Los Angeles Lakers—hits a snag in the road, it's up to the leader to direct them out and towards success.

But, with proper management and a strong sense of discipline, adversity is the first step towards your success.

So what adversity does you and your team face? Identify what that is, and make sure everyone on your team is aware of it. Make sure to get their agreement that whatever the problem is, it is indeed serious. These problems could be:

- ◆ A new corporate policy that will result in lowered production
- ◆ An increase in workload without additional staff to perform it
- ◆ Inheriting a team that has never excelled

Now it's time to make a plan that takes you from trouble to triumph.

Strategically Instill a Fear of Loss

What are the ramifications for your team members if what you think will happen, happens? Lowered commissions, more working hours, more stress, less opportunity for advancement?

Let's take a look at the three problems listed above and instill a fear of loss as a result of them.

A new corporate policy that will result in lowered production

This is near and dear to my heart, because I've had to manage this situation many times in my career. Here are a couple of options:

1. Determine how much money your team members could lose because of the new policy (there's the loss). Spend a weekend with a yellow legal pad, writing down every way you can think of to increase income through other means. Talk to your peers—get their ideas as well. Then discuss with the group ways you can mitigate the damage of the policy.

2. Set the table with a doomsday scenario. If your team does not adapt these new ideas, what will the concrete results be? What does a 20% production loss mean in terms of lost commissions or wages? Sit with each person who works for you, and do the math. Can they afford to maintain the status quo, or do they need to change?

One of my managers, Jason, had poor production in a product line that didn't generate much income, but a part of his job and those of his team was to achieve quota in all business lines. I was constantly grinding on Jason, asking what he was doing to increase the production in this product line. Finally, I couldn't stand it any longer, and went to his office to meet with him and each of his reps individually.

Prior to meeting with a veteran rep, Jason and I reviewed his production over the past year. "George" was a long-term rep but only an average producer. And in the product line I was concerned about, George was ghastly. Jason went on to say that even though he was an average producer and making decent money, he was married to a woman who made a substantial amount of money. In addition, George had inherited a beautiful home near the beach. So George was not greatly concerned about money, and he generally came into work around ten and left around four.

When George walked into the conference room, we asked him about his production in the specific product line. George said that it was just too hard to write and not worth the trouble it took to write. What Jason did next made me proud.

Jason: "You understand that it's part of your job requirement to write this line?"

George: "Yes, but it's just not worth it and too difficult."

Jason: “OK, here’s the deal. I want to find out how hard it is. You do a decent job for me in everything else, but I’ve been talking to you about this for months. I’m not kidding around—if you don’t have four widgets in this product line by the end of this month, then you’re going to spend two nights a week with me soliciting this business until your production improves. I’ll work right with you, getting you leads and helping you contact and sell prospects. In fact, I’d be happy to work with you. But I suspect you’d rather get it on your own.”

George (after a very long silence): “I’ll see what I can do.”

George ended up with six widgets that month and continued on after that. I asked Jason why he did what he did.

Jason said, “He values his lifestyle a great deal, getting home early and spending time with his family. I knew the reason he wasn’t writing the product was because he’s lazy. I gave him an alternative that would alter his life, and I knew he didn’t want to change his life.”

Jason strategically instilled a fear of loss with George. He was polite, professional, and direct with George. And both of them got what they wanted: Jason got his production and George maintained his lifestyle.

An increase in workload without additional staff to perform it

One of my managers lost two of his four support staff in an office that could barely manage even with all four people. Obviously, his first priority was to hire two additional people, but the process took a few weeks, then—once hired—those people needed to be trained for another month.

During the two months he was short staffed, Mike was scrambling trying to be able to serve the threefold needs: client service, support of his team, and support to and of the two remaining staff members.

Everyone on Mike's team—his sales people and existing support staff—was deeply concerned about how the office could function. Anticipating the problem in advance, Mike and I developed a plan of action during those two months.

First, we held a meeting with the team. Mike outlined the problem. I told the team I was there and involved because I believed it to be a serious problem and one that would require everyone's support. We painted a picture of what would happen if the team did not change their focus during the next couple of months. Lowered production, decline in service quality, and additional pressure on the existing support team were just three of the areas which we mentioned.

During the meeting, we outlined our plan of attack, which included several areas, including getting support staff from nearby offices on the busiest days and deferring many incoming phone calls to those offices as well.

But we needed buy-in from the team in several areas. Since the office got extremely busy during the traditional lunch hour, we asked the two remaining service reps to delay their lunch until after two p.m. We asked the outside salespeople to help cover the service work when times got exceptionally busy. We assured them we would get the replacement team members hired and trained as quickly as possible.

We made sure to consistently praise everyone who helped out. Mike spent a lot of hours answering phone calls and doing service work. He was also in constant communication with the support staff—making sure they were OK, not overworked or underappreciated. We even threw a barbecue

lunch for the team at the end of the first month to show thanks for their effort.

What happened during those two months was a classic example of adversity breeding success. Everyone pitched in and helped out. The team became closer. Production did not suffer, and service quality remained the same.

The critical component to success was getting the buy-in of the team. Once assured that top management was aware of the problem and sincerely working to solve it, the team knew that it was ultimately up to them to succeed.

Inheriting a team that has never excelled

I know a lot about this from two perspectives—one where I made it work, and one where I did not.

Let's start with when I didn't. I changed companies and inherited at the same time a team that hadn't excelled in several years. There were various reasons and excuses for it, but it just hadn't happened. From the existing team, I heard every possible reason—poor marketplace, bad product, lack of support, etc. After accepting the position, I realized how serious the position was and remembered a serious tenet of management—you're only as good as the people you work with. After meeting individually with the team, I met with my boss and advised him that the situation was bad—and would probably get worse before it got better. Needless to say, that's not what he wanted to hear!

I divided the team into two categories: (1) people who were trying but not succeeding, and (2) people who were not trying.

I simply got rid of those who were not trying. If someone does not want it, there is literally nothing a manager can do—you can't do the job for someone else. I focused my attention on those who were trying and helped them do bet-

ter. Where I went wrong was in the hiring of replacements. Those people ultimately didn't want to succeed as much as I did.

When your team does not succeed, it may not be your fault, but it is your responsibility.

When you do get the turnaround, the opposite effect occurs; however, make sure not to take the credit, but rather spread it around your team. People know that the team is succeeding—they admire it when their leader points credit at the team. Joe Torre, the manager of the New York Yankees, is particularly adept at this. When the team goes well, he gives all the credit to the players. When the team is playing poorly, he shoulders the blame.

I worked once for a manager who was renowned for getting his people promoted. Hubert was very tough to work for—highly demanding and a workaholic. He lived two hours away from the office, but he'd be in the office every morning at six a.m. and left after seven p.m. But to those of us who shared his drive—we loved working for him because he never took credit for anything—he gave all the credit. He once called me into his office with a training idea and asked me to develop it. A couple of weeks later, he surprised me by bringing me into a group of top corporate executives and explained to them that this program was terrific, it was my idea, and I was the one who developed it. Soon after that, I received a major promotion.

I wasn't the only employee that happened to. By not taking credit, Hubert made sure that his people got promoted. The benefits to Hubert were twofold: With a reputation like that, everyone in the company wanted to work for him. Also, throughout the company, there were dozens of people in management who were extremely loyal to Hubert. By not taking credit, Hubert built himself a very long and very successful career.

Chapter Seven

Taking Ownership

Treat Your Operation As If It Were Your Own

Success means treating your business as if it were your own. That's true for everyone—from the greatest entrepreneur to a switchboard operator.

Imagine for a moment that it's your business that you're running, that you had the final decision-making power for every decision and could not be questioned, second-guessed, or overruled. What would you do differently? What cost controls would you put into place? What incentives would you provide for your workers? What attitudinal changes would you implement? Who would you hire or fire?

You must treat your team as if you owned the business and were not “merely” an employee. Every decision you make needs to come from this perspective. Oh, I can hear your objections already. Let me try to refute them.

Well, it's nice to think I own the company, but since I have to report to someone, I can't make unilateral decisions on my own.

Possibly you can't make every decision on your own without direction from above. But I've never met a competent manager who didn't encourage their team to be proactive—to voluntarily make suggestions. After all, my managers see their day-to-day operation at ground level. And as much as I'd like to think I'm totally a "hands on" manager, my line managers know more about their business than I do. So I welcome their decisions and suggestions, and unless it's cost-prohibitive, I'll always approve their suggestion.

My senior boss—Frank—had a great reputation as a sales-oriented executive. And any time we came to him with a suggestion, he never said "no." What a wonderful attitude in an executive! He'd let us make the decisions (of course, we ended up living or dying by those decisions, but that's only fair).

Frank's weakness was he wasn't exactly a long-range thinker. I asked him about it once and he said he wasn't even a good short-range planner. For several years, Frank held an annual three-day meeting in Palm Springs. That was the upside. The downside? It was always held in the middle of August, when the average temperature was about 110 degrees. And, unfortunately, he never got around to planning the agenda until the week before the meeting. As a result, for three years in a row, Frank would ask me and my three peers to put together a one to two hour presentation for all of the management team, on a subject he chose—"Adding Value," or "Advanced Sales Management." And we were given about three days to do it. That meant sixteen-hour days putting together a strategy, getting it on paper, getting executive approval, and then putting together a PowerPoint presentation. Needless to say, they were three hectic days.

When the annual meeting was approaching for August, I sent Frank an e-mail in early June, asking him if it would be OK if the four of us met and recommended a topic for our

August presentation. Not only did he say yes, but he even asked me why it took me so long to be proactive! It was a valuable lesson: the best managers *encourage* proactivity.

I worked closely for a few years with an operations manager at my company. His job was to literally manage about sixty people and a large operation for about 7,000 clients. Located in a marketplace a long way from most places, he was the ultimate example of running his operation like his own. In fact, the branch was called “Jack’s Branch,” not the location name, because he ran it his way and not the corporate way. I once teased him about that, and instead of joking in kind, he responded seriously: “If the company is telling me to run the business as if it’s my own, then that’s what I’m going to do. I know the clients and this market better than the people at our regional office or corporate headquarters, and I’m going to do it the way I see best.”

It may come as no surprise that Jack’s branch was one of the best run in the nation. He won awards for having the lowest employee turnover year after year and the highest client retention as well.

Jack’s other advice, in the same conversation, was about “owning versus renting,” a concept advocated by management gurus over the years. You either own your business, or you’re renting, and anyone who rents is not going to treat their business or property the same way as someone who owns it. Jack was entrenched in this area—great home, good schools, and he had no intention or desire of ever getting a promotion that would remove him from his life. He believed that contributed to his success: “If you know you’re only going to be in a position—any position—for a short while, you’re going to make decisions impacting your success for the short term. You will not be as successful in that position as you will if you know you’re in it for the long haul. When I make decisions, I’m thinking how it will impact me for the

long term. If you know you're going to be gone soon, there's no way you're going to make those same decisions."

I wish I had the authority to hire and fire people, but I have to get approval from Human Resources and Legal to do this. It isn't easy.

Most managers don't have autonomous authority to hire (or, in some cases, fire). So what can you do in this area to treat the business as your own?

By communicating, observing, and reviewing results with your team, you have a good sense of who is qualified for promotion and who isn't cutting the mustard. That—in itself—is a great start.

Once you've identified the people who have an opportunity for advancement, use that to your advantage. Spend additional time with them. Be direct—tell them that you have an eye on them for the future. Ask them if advancement is what they want. And then provide them with additional challenges and projects that can test their mettle. When they interview for a new job, they can truthfully say they've handled advanced tasks. Make sure to praise them to your superiors as often as appropriate. As we've seen from Hubert, getting a reputation as a manager who gets his people promoted is a great reputation to have.

At the same time, there are going to be team members who aren't getting the job done. Without disciplinary action, or termination, you can also help those people on their way. Be direct—tell them they aren't getting the job done, and offer concrete examples of why. Ask them if they are happy in their job, or if they'd be happy elsewhere. Create a sense of urgency by telling them the truth—if you don't see improvement, the writing will be on the wall. Most employees who aren't doing well know it, and once they hear that

statement from a manager, they'll "find opportunities elsewhere."

You'll be surprised how well most people react to this conversation—if you handle it properly. It cannot be a one-way conversation—it's critical you get as much input from the person as possible. You should repeat one question over and over: "What can I do to help you with what you want?"

If the team member wants to find opportunities elsewhere, you should do some career counseling—offer suggestions for other jobs, based on your assessment of their strengths and weaknesses. If you have contacts with other companies, offer to call those people. This technique is called "counseling out." It's an effective way to get rid of someone without the hassle and potential liability of firing someone.

If the team member is happy in their job, then they need to clearly understand your expectations if they are to stay in that job. Every time that person does something inappropriate, or does not meet your expectations, you immediately need to correct that behavior.

Do not finish the meeting until you are completely satisfied that both you and your team member are on the same page. Reiterate what was said and both of your action plans. Conclude by setting a time—perhaps a week from now—when you'll get together to review progress.

"It's Not My Decision"

There's no easier way of losing the respect of your team than to not take responsibility for a decision.

There are very few people in corporate America who can make unilateral decisions. All of us—even senior management—have to take orders now and again. And some of those orders aren't going to be ones that you like!

You've got three choices:

- ◆ Say that you don't agree with the decision
- ◆ Say it was a bad corporate call
- ◆ Say "let's work together and find a way of making this work"

I hope you realize that the third option is clearly the way to go. If your team discovers that you are merely an order-taker, a conduit between superiors and associates, then you will immediately lose their respect.

Team members want their manager to be a decision-maker and to take responsibility for those decisions. No one wants to believe their boss is merely a pawn for the executive staff. "It's not my decision" indicates you don't have authority. And that's the worst decision you can make.

Chapter Eight

The Big Lie

I can't tell you how many times I've sat in a Human Resources meeting, or a management seminar, and heard the speaker say something to effect of:

“Always make sure to treat all of your employees exactly the same.”

Nonsense! This is one of the biggest fallacies in management today. People *do not* want to be treated the same; they want to feel special.

I've seen lots of places where workers are treated the same: they're found in aging factories on assembly lines, in Third World countries, and in sweatshops. And none of those businesses can adapt to the changing needs and demands of today's worker.

All people want and need different things from their manager: some want to be left alone, some want constant reassurance, some want public recognition, and others need only private praise.

I distinctly remember the day I learned this lesson. I was a new manager, supervising a team of twelve outside salespeople and five inside reps. At my second team meeting, I singled out several people for outstanding performances dur-

ing the previous month. I was particularly effusive in praise for Adele, an excellent rep who won virtually every corporate contest and was one of the top reps in the company. I vaguely noticed at the time that Adele wouldn't look me in the eye when I was talking about her, but didn't pay much attention to it.

Later that day, I really noticed Adele was very quiet, so I walked over to her office and asked her if everything was OK. She said no, and asked to see me in my office.

When we settled in, she told me, "You really embarrassed me by talking that way in front of the whole team. It made me totally uncomfortable."

I was completely surprised and told her so. "You're one of the top reps in the company, and you had a fabulous month. I thought you'd appreciate the fact that I was singling you out for praise. And when I was a rep, I loved having that type of attention."

"No, that embarrasses me. And I think it makes my peers jealous of me. When you're happy with what I do, I want you to notice it, but just tell me in private—not in front of everyone else."

I learned my lesson fast—and never again made a fuss about Adele in front of the team. But the true lesson was that people are not the same, and therefore want to be treated differently.

Another of my reps at the time, Rob, was a rebel. He was a true rocker, complete with long hair, a goatee and earring. In a company that was very conservative, he went against the grain with dark purple dress shirts and fancy shoes. He was an exceptionally talented salesperson, but had been struggling during the past couple of years.

When I took over the district, my boss told me about Rob and said, "You need to make him more corporate. I want to see his hair cut and wear white dress shirts." I was dreading

that conversation with Rob. So I turned the tables a bit on him.

During our first one-on-one meeting, I told Rob that I was under some pressure to get him to become more corporate. But I said, “I don’t care a whit about that. If you can get your production up, you can keep your hair at any length you want. But if you can’t do the job, I’m not going to have a choice.”

And that was the beginning of a great business relationship. He appreciated my candor, and I appreciated his production. That year, he finished in the top 10% of the company.

Did I treat Rob differently than my other people? Absolutely. Did I get from him what I needed? Absolutely.

The key to remember is that you need to ask everyone on your team what he or she wants from you. Then, you have to deliver.

So make sure to treat people differently—they need it.

Now that I’ve ranted about treating people differently, there is a kernel of truth about all those Human Resource-types who talk about treating people the same.

Swenson’s Rule of Managing People Successfully is:

You can treat people differently, but make sure to treat them consistently.

When you properly treat people differently, you leave yourself open to accusations of favoritism. No one wants a manager who plays favorites—it creates a very poor environment in the workplace.

You can easily dismiss charges of favoritism the way I did, by telling your team in a meeting:

“Yes, I play favorites. If you’re making your numbers, you can do whatever you want as long as it’s legal and ethical. If you’re not making your numbers, you’re going to be treated differently.”

I first learned this lesson in 1986, working for my first manager. Allan, at that time, was sixty-seven years old, a product of the mines in Ohio and West Virginia. And after thirty-five years in management with the company, Allan was accustomed to getting his own way—he terrorized everyone: employees, his superiors, customers, everyone. He was a legend in the company, and no one wanted to work for him. (Naturally, as a tenderfoot right out of college, I didn’t have the luxury of knowing this in advance). We would have meetings where he would have half the team in tears. When he got on a roll, people had to look out. Screaming, yelling, hand waving—all of these were elements of a standard Allan meeting.

He could never make it as a manager in today’s environment, where the slightest misspoken word can lead to a lawsuit or where many employees go running to Human Resources or their attorney without much justification.

But the one thing Allan did was to treat everyone the same. If we did our job, he left us alone. If we didn’t, there was no end to the grief he caused us. And although no one in the company wanted to work for Allan, everyone who worked for him (and was successful) totally respected him. Out of fourteen reps in that office, five ended up in management and all of us learned a lot of valuable lessons.

Chapter Nine

Mistakes

I tell all my employees about my philosophy about mistakes, which goes like this:

There are a lot of people who have never made a mistake. Almost always, they are the people who have never risked anything in their lives. Always give me people who are willing to make a decision on their own, as opposed to people so scared of making a decision they wait until the boss is around.

I want risk-takers working for me. As long as they don't make the same mistake twice, they are welcome to make decisions with the possibility of error.

A valued colleague of mine says, "I would rather finish first, while being 80% right, than finish second while being 100% right."

At the end of the day, it's where you finish, not how you got there.

Be a Decision-maker and Take Responsibility

Mark, a new manager whom I inherited, had been a twenty-five-year assistant manager before finally being pro-

moted to his first management position. He also went from essentially a bureaucratic position into a sales management position, which demanded a lot more creativity and instant decision-making than he had been used to. I spent hours with him, reviewing the position and the details of what he was going to do. I finished up with my philosophy on making mistakes. “You’re going to make errors,” I said. “Don’t worry about them—that’s the only way you’re going to learn.”

When managing managers in multiple locations, I’m always reluctant to spend a lot of time with new managers in their office; it creates an appearance that I’m babysitting someone not yet competent enough to do the job. So I generally contented myself with one phone call to that manager every day.

But in Mark’s case I was besieged by phone calls from him almost immediately: “Is it OK to sign this form?” “Is OK if I spend money on this?”

After a week of spending my time making decisions he could easily have made for himself, I traveled over to his office to see what was going on. I was immediately accosted by several of his representatives.

“What did you give us?”

“What do you mean?” I responded.

“We need someone who can make a decision right away, and he has to wait for you on every decision. Doesn’t he have management authority?”

Oops.

I sat down with Mark and asked him what was going on. “I’m just not comfortable making these decisions until I have all the information I can get,” he said.

I empathized with his situation; after all, he had spent a quarter century never making a decision on his own without management approval.

“The reason you’re in management is so you can make these decisions right away,” I said. “I have eleven managers and 300 reps; I can’t make all those decisions for you.”

We spent some time talking about specific examples of where he could make decisions. Over the next several months, he started to become more independent. Sure, he made some mistakes, but I never overruled one of them. We talked about different ways he could improve his authority, but he was never comfortable with it.

Eventually, he went back into a bureaucratic job, because he never felt comfortable taking responsibility for those decisions. I was happy he made that decision.

What Is Innovation?

Innovation is the attempt to try something new in an effort to achieve a goal. The key word in that definition, of course, is “new.”

When you’re faced with a situation or challenge, the last thing you want to do is reinforce the old ways of doing things. The reason the previous methods have failed is either they are no good, or times have changed to a point that the method is no longer useful.

In either case, you need to get a good, new idea on how to solve your problem. If you can’t think of one, how are you going to get an idea?

Use Your Peers

Under the heading, “There are no new ideas, only borrowed ideas,” your peers are a great source for innovative ideas.

As a senior manager, I got my managers and line supervisors together at least once per quarter for an off-site meeting. The only topic on the agenda is “innovation.”

At the meeting, each manager brings a list of three areas in which they have a “challenge.” It could be a difficult employee, or low production in a certain area, or office morale. The manager presents his/her problem, then each of the other managers indicates how they would handle the problem or—better yet—the other managers use their own similar experiences, and discuss how that challenge was solved.

In 1996, when I was still a line manager, I participated in a brainstorming session with my peers at a hotel near Santa Barbara. It was a relaxed atmosphere that contributed to the candor with which everyone spoke. At the time, my district was doing very well in all areas with the exception of one product line that didn’t generate much revenue for the company or income for my reps. But achieving the annual goal in that product was essential.

I presented that sad saga to my peers, and ended up writing down eight ideas to increase production. We implemented four of them and made up my deficit and achieved the annual goal. I went back and thanked my colleagues for their advice, and each one shrugged it off; it turned out that each of them had received those brilliant ideas from someone else!

There’s nothing wrong with obtaining ideas from other sources—if it works for them, it can work for you.

Use Your Team

Another good way of getting innovative ideas is by talking to your team members. After all, they’re the ones on the front line and know better than anyone how to fix things.

A couple of days prior to a team meeting, send an e-mail to your team reminding them of the meeting date and time. Also mention something like this:

“Our production in blue widgets this year is below goal. I have some ideas to correct this problem, but I’d like each of you to think of a new idea we can put into practice to correct this.”

Also encourage your team to come to you every time they have an idea. And make sure to find a way to make their idea work, instead of immediately “pooh-poohing” it. You’ll gain respect. What’s more, if you employ a team member’s idea, they’ll be your best sales person when it comes to selling that idea to your whole team.

Adapting to Change

Change is one of the most misunderstood and feared actions in business. No one knows how to deal with it well. When things are going well, you don’t want change. When things are going badly, change can’t happen fast enough.

To employees (including managers), the fear relating to change is simply the fear of the unknown. People get into comfort levels and resist mightily when someone or something attempts to break that comfort zone.

Regardless of whether it’s good or bad change, it rests upon management’s shoulders to incorporate the changes with a minimum of difficulty.

Recently, a major change occurred in my company, one that would obviously result in lower production, which meant less commission for my sales managers and sales reps (and me, come to think of it). My boss asked me to evaluate

the change prior to its announcement. I analyzed the change and made estimates on the production that would be lost, the commissions reduced, and the emotional effect it would have on my team.

I presented my findings to my boss, who immediately led me in to an executive meeting, where the top people in the company were sitting. They reviewed my memo and the senior executive threw it down and said, “I’m not paying you to tell me what’s going to go wrong; I’ve got analysts and product managers to do that. I want you to tell me how you’re going to manage this situation to minimize the problems.”

That was a bit harsh, but it re-opened my mind to what my responsibility was—to incorporate change with a minimum of difficulty. I spent the next few weeks figuring ways within my power that I could regain some of the lost business. When the change was finally announced, I was able to also announce several programs designed to increase other types of business

The Constancy of Change

No one likes change, yet change is the only constant there is. Because you are the leader, you’re expected to both manage and lead change. So the first thing you must do is deal with it! You don’t have any other option. You must absolutely accept change when it occurs, because if you don’t truly accept change, your team will see through you like a window.

When change occurs, you don’t have a choice. You must deal with it—so do so. Then foster that same attitude among your team. I’ve spent many years analyzing and studying all of the options you have when change occurs,

whether you agree with the change or not. Following are all of those options:

1. Deal with it.
2. Quit your job.

That's it—those are truly the only options! Notice that complaining is not an option, being in a bad mood is not an option, and performing at a lower standard is not an option.

So, unless you want to quit your job, you have to find a way to deal with it.

Dealing with Change as a Manager

The first thing to do is find a way to make the change work for you and your team. What can you do within your power to mitigate the negative aspects of the change? How can you emphasize the positive aspects of change, if any?

Next, realize that you're a leader. You are on stage. Your team will know your nuances, so you're not allowed to show frustration or weakness in front of them. Leaders lead—they say “Here is the way I believe we need to go,” and then go. This is the attitude you must take when managing change.

In your professional life, you will always have to adapt to change. You'll get a new job, there will be a new corporate change, and you'll have different team members to deal with. The point I'm making is that nothing stays the same, despite your most strenuous efforts to the contrary.

I've had ten different jobs in thirteen different locations in seventeen years (granted, that's with only two companies, but it's still a lot). In a six-month period, I had a turnover in my sales force of 30% (more than fifty employees). That's substantial change.

The best way I know of dealing with change is a three-step process.

- ◆ Accept it.
- ◆ Embrace the best parts of it.
- ◆ Change your focus.

Some people never accept change. They are the ones who have to leave or they will become so jaded and negative that they no longer are functioning members of your team. When change happens, it happens. End of story.

Virtually any change breeds opportunity—the key is *finding* the opportunity and acting on it. Focus on the positive.

Finally, any corporate change requires you to change. This isn't as complex as it sounds. You just have to change your focus. When corporate changes in my company resulted in a number of resignations, my focus—and that of my managers—changed from the management of reps to the recruiting and hiring of new reps. One manager complained, “I’m not a manager, I’m a recruiter.” I agreed with him.

“For the time being, a recruiter is exactly who you are,” I told him. “We can’t move forward until we can get back to full staff. Nothing else matters until that happens.” So for several months, up to 50% of my time and that of my managers was devoted to recruiting, interviewing, hiring, and training. When that period ended, we were able to change our focus back to other things.

Adding Value

A trend developed in the 1990s for salespeople. The MBAs and management consultants called it “value add” or a similar term. At its core, a value add was something that

added value over and above the cost of an item or service. Products at Nordstrom, for example, costs a lot more than at Macy's. But people go to Nordstrom in droves because they perceive the value makes up for the additional cost.

Value is defined as benefits minus cost. Value is what you provide that makes the cost worth the money you paid.

It's far cheaper to send a package through the post office than via an overnight courier—but sometimes, the courier is worth the extra cost.

It's far cheaper to buy inexpensive vodka than premium vodka—but many people believe the premium vodka is worth it.

You can get a pair of pants for a lot less at JCPenney than Bloomingdale's—but the quality of the product and service provided may make Bloomingdale's worth it.

As a manager, you can add value to your team the same way Nordstrom or Bloomingdale's add value to their product.

Employees today, as I mentioned earlier, crave value from the managers and supervisors.

What do you do that adds value to the professional lives of your team? And what can you do that adds value to your team? Hopefully, many of the concepts and techniques mentioned in this book will help you in adding value.

As a newly transferred senior manager, I spent the first few weeks in my new position visiting my various offices getting to know the reps. In one office, I was shocked what the reps had to say about their manager. Some of the comments:

“I don't know what he does all day.”

“He's a nice guy, but he's useless.”

“He doesn't do anything for us.”

“We'd be better off with no manager than him.”

Obviously, my first priority became fixing that office. After spending time with the manager, it became evident to

me that James was not practicing any basic management skills at all. James was indeed working, but he was mostly doing administrative work and did most of that away from the office. James was very good at talking with his team, and all of them consequently thought he was a nice guy, but not a good manager.

I started by asking James some personal questions about his reps. Where does she live? Is he married? James was unable to answer any of those questions, even though he'd worked with this team for over a year. Turns out I knew more about his team that he did.

Then I went to more penetrating questions. "When was the last time you had a one-on-one business review with your reps?" Answer: "Uh, a long time."

"How recently did you ask your team what they wanted from you?"

"Um, I don't remember actually doing that before."

What James failed to do was exactly what his team wanted him to do—find out their needs and then deliver on his promises. James was working, but he wasn't working for his team. And his team wasn't performing for him.

A great lesson in adding value is that your team will do for you in direct proportion to what you do for them.

How You Can Add Value

The first step in adding value is performing a needs analysis. That's a fancy term for asking the members of your team what you need them to do. It's as simple as, "What do you need from me to make you more successful?"

The answers may surprise you and will always vary by individual. Some people need a manager to help expedite processing problems, or to function as an "ear" for their personal concerns. Others will need additional training or support.

It's pretty simple after that—find out what they need from you, and make sure to do it for them. Don't delegate this to someone else unless you absolutely have to. It's critical that they see you doing it. They're asking you for help because they don't feel they can get that help from anyone else.

So, as you periodically evaluate yourself as a manager, you should ask yourself these questions: "Am I adding value to my team? Is my team better off, more successful, and happier because I'm here?" If you can't answer this question, make sure to ask your team and request their full honesty. Feedback—candid feedback—is crucial to your success in adding value as a manager.

Committing to Your Success

When you get a moment, take a step back and look at your team. Which ones are committed and which aren't? Do the same thing with your peers and your bosses.

I'll bet it's easier than you think to identify who's committed and who isn't.

Employees and managers who are truly committed work harder, show more evidence of success, and display a desire to win that isn't evident in those who aren't committed.

You can never be successful unless you fully commit to your success and the success of your team. That means you can't have doubts about where you're working, what you're doing, or whom you're doing it for. Commitment means you are thrilled to be doing what you're doing, you don't have a second career, and you don't have a half-written novel in your desk drawer.

Pure and honest commitment means you've vowed to do whatever it takes in order to succeed. And you won't stop until you've succeeded.

Take a look at professional golfer Tiger Woods, who completed the Grand Slam of golf earlier than anyone in history. At just twenty-four he was—by a drive and a three-wood—the best golfer in the world. His talent and prodigious drive are truly awesome. But what impresses many golfers the most is his commitment to his game. No one practices more or works harder on his game than Tiger. Many golfers practice chipping out of the rough; they place the ball in the rough and hit the ball. Not Tiger. He steps on the ball, giving it the worst possible lie, and then spends an hour hitting those balls. And when the time comes for him to hit a ball in that lie in a tournament, he's prepared. Woods's commitment to success is sincere and obvious to all around him.

The best thing about commitment is that it's an *acquired* trait and not inherited. Anyone with desire can make a commitment. Always give me someone with a desire and commitment to succeed, rather than someone who has better credentials but doesn't have the commitment. It's impossible to imbue someone with desire. Either you want to or you don't. It's that simple.

Recently, our company opened a new office in a new location. It was a prototype office—something the company had never done before—offering new services and not offering traditional ones. The whole company was focused on the success of the office—the CEO was asking about it constantly.

In staffing the office, the most important decision I had to make was who the supervisor would be. Six long-time employees applied, and this would be a solid promotion for each of them. Five of the employees had substantial experience in the areas we were looking for and had solid backgrounds as well.

Yet, I hired the sixth candidate—an employee with fourteen years in the company, but only a few years of experience

in our specific industry. The reason was that she clearly had the most enthusiasm and passion and therefore would make a commitment in her heart to the job that no one else could. Why was that important? Because in a critical, visible position like that, I needed someone who could quickly adapt to change, roll with the punches, deal with a great amount of pressure, and react to the unforeseen problems that always occur when a new project or office is launched.

And she succeeded, as I knew she would. The lesson is that commitment and passion are better predictors of future success than any résumé can provide. Her enthusiasm allowed her to learn and gain more experience faster than someone with theoretically stronger credentials.

If you truly want to succeed, first make the commitment in your mind. Nothing less than full success will do.

Become a student of successful people

Spend time with your peers who are successful and whom you admire. What do they do that works? You have to eliminate pride. There are always people who do well and there's nothing wrong with finding out what their keys to success are.

One of my finest managers—Ann—was a young lady with a good mind, rooted with sound business sense and solid street smarts. She came from a moneyed family, which ordinarily would mean she didn't have to work hard to have a comfortable lifestyle. But Ann had something to prove—to herself, to her family, and to a boss (not me) who didn't promote her the first time she applied for management.

But when she was finally promoted, she took off. No one worked harder than Ann did—I'm talking eighty to ninety hours a week. She micromanaged all of her reps and developed new training seminars to increase sales. She aggressive-

ly worked outside fairs and sporting events to sell products. But most of all, she demanded no less of her reps than she demanded of herself. It became natural for her reps to put in extra hours because Ann was there. Half of her team was there on Saturday mornings, because Ann was there. Nowhere else in the organization was this dedication and commitment so evident.

Within weeks, her team, one of the greenest and under-achieving teams in the company, became highly successful. Ann soon became the highest paid sales manager in the company. Her reps earned more than reps anywhere else. Reps in other offices begged to get on Ann's team.

Instead of finding out what Ann was doing to be so successful, her peers became jealous. According to her peers, her success was due to "favoritism" (from me) and more favorable working conditions than anywhere else. I ended up having each of my other managers spend an entire week with Ann—fourteen to fifteen hour days. Plus Saturday and Sunday—so they could see for themselves what commitment was all about.

Don't become jealous of someone's success—become his or her student. An organization becomes successful when everyone succeeds. One of my fellow senior managers said it best. He said, "I want all of our regions to make their goals—then, I want to be a little bit better than anyone else." Don't root for someone to fail—it's better when we all succeed, and you put your ego in your back pocket and learn from success.

Learn self-discipline

For me, self-discipline is the hardest task to learn. My parents, to name two people, would tell you I still haven't learned it. Yet self-discipline is critical if you're to fully commit to your success.

An executive whom I've worked with closely over the years, and whom I admire greatly, defines self-discipline this way:

Self-discipline is doing what needs to be done, when it needs to be done, whether you feel like it or not.

Self-discipline is about the commitment you make to yourself and your team. It's about following through on your promises to yourself, your boss, and your team. Self-discipline is doing what you said you would do.

The heart of self-discipline is self-respect. You must have enough respect for yourself, your values, and your talent to constantly commit to the promises you make. There is no way to get self-discipline without self-respect.

Abraham Heschel once said, "Self-respect is the fruit of discipline: the sense of dignity grows with the ability to say no to oneself."

The part of management I despise the most is terminating employees. Eventually, all managers have to do it; there's no avoiding this problem.

When it was time to terminate an employee, I'd find any reason I could to delay the process. I'd invent meetings, or get too late of a start on my drive, or decide that the next day was a better day to do it.

Actually, what I was doing was a disservice to that employee. I needed to get it over with faster—for both my benefit and that of the person about to be terminated. When I was in doubt about whether to pull the trigger or not, I'd imagine myself going home and going to bed with the nagging problem ahead of me—I have to fire someone tomorrow. I'd sit in my office and think, "Do I really want this hanging over my head for another day and night, or do I just want to get this over with?"

That's a fairly selfish attitude to be sure, but one that motivated me to get the job done sooner rather than later.

Following Through on Your Commitments

A frequent complaint I hear from employees is, “My manager said he/she was going to do [something] and they never did.” A key to your success is being able to follow through on the commitments you make—to anyone, actually—but in this case I’m referring to your team.

If you say you’re going to do something, you have no alternative but to do it—and the sooner, the better. The fastest way to lose respect is not to follow through on a commitment.

Think of it this way: if your boss asks you to do something, don’t you take every step possible to make sure it gets done promptly? You should feel the same way when an employee asks you to do something.

I tend to judge people not by the way they treat their superiors or their peers, but by the way they treat their subordinates, or a waiter in a restaurant. Successful people treat everyone with equal respect, and successful managers treat requests from their team with the same priority and verve they handle orders from their boss.

Planning to Succeed

In previous chapters, we’ve talked about the need to develop action plans and expectations for your team. A list of goals and a road map are critical for success.

Thus, you must have a plan to win. This plan cannot be reactive; you must be proactive. And once the plan is in place, everything else is scrap. Any good time-management consultant will tell you that scrap is the anathema of success.

When you establish and set goals and expectations, and you have a plan for winning that you believe in, never let anything else get in your way.

A good idea is to create an annual theme. At both companies I worked for, we had a deluxe trip for the top sales people. The top salespeople and managers and their guests would fly to a location like Hawaii or Tahiti, and stay in five-diamond hotels for several days. That made it easy to create a theme.

When a new vice president took over my division in the mid-1990s, he made sure that everyone knew his annual theme. He'd have an annual "State of the Union" speech where he'd launch his theme, and then recount it through the year. When he sent an e-mail, his e-mail signature would include the theme. This is a helpful tool to keep your plan and your ultimate goal in front of your team throughout the year.

Cut to the Chase

There are better time managers than I am. Just ask any assistant who's worked with me! But even I know that efficiency is the key to improving your plan to succeed. Remember: the most efficient way to get where you want to go is...a straight line! Don't deviate from the line. Most managers can easily be diverted into issues that don't get you where you need to go. Don't be one of these managers! It's your job to point the team in the right direction and keep them going in that direction.

A friend of mine understands "the big picture" better than anyone I know. Stan is co-owner of a company that owns and manages tens of thousands of apartment and business rentals throughout Southern California. I have great respect for his business acumen, but even more respect for how quickly he grasps the heart of an issue. When I sit with him on committees, or consult with him on my managerial problems, he always focuses on "the big picture." When a

mutual friend became president of a prestigious organization, I sat with Stan and the new president and listened as Stan gave his best advice:

- ◆ Think big thoughts.
- ◆ Write them down.
- ◆ Take a balanced approach.
- ◆ Plan to succeed.
- ◆ Have a purpose.
- ◆ Be specific.

These are excellent points for any executive or manager to remember. If you live by these ideals, and can communicate them with authority, your success will be easy to come by.

Key Characteristics of Outstanding Managers

I've spent most of this book talking about methods you can learn to become a great manager. Obviously, there are people who possess innate personal characteristics that help them naturally succeed. I've spent many years watching and learning from many of them, and I'll share with you now the key characteristics they possess that haven't been learned, but are ingrained in their personality nonetheless.

Outstanding managers innately possess:

1. The desire to win
2. The ability to adapt to change
3. An open mind
4. No preconceived notions
5. Vision
6. Leadership

7. The ability to treat everyone equally and consistently
8. The ability to honestly self-evaluate each day
9. World-class communications skills

Do you have each of these characteristics? I certainly don't, but I try as hard as possible to live up to these ideals in my everyday life.

Two Keys to Understanding Success

1. The world is a mirror.
2. You become what you think about.

One of my favorite and best-received speeches is a presentation simply called “The Mirror.” It’s a program designed to focus attention on the one person in the world you can motivate—the person you see in the mirror.

And the world is a mirror. It’s your mirror. No one else can get you to do what you want to do.

What an empowering thought! It’s also a scary thought—your success rests entirely upon your shoulders.

Winners want that burden—they encourage it. Michael Jordan always wanted the ball at the end of the game. Winners always want to take the last shot.

I’ve played competitive sports all my life and I’ve been in dozens of last-second situations. None could compare to a particular moment a few years ago. I was the captain of my four-person paddle tennis team in a huge tournament. When the championship match went to a tiebreak format, only two players could be drawn to complete. Two of my teammates were selected at random, and not me.

I had to sit on the sidelines and watch helplessly as my teammates played in the tiebreaker. I was incredibly nervous watching them, and I never had that feeling when I was on the court—only when matters were taken out of my hands.

It's an awful feeling. I want to be the one at "crunch time," the one who makes the big decision. If you want this as well, you're a winner.

Never be afraid to fail. Be afraid of not trying.

Winning Is Habitual

When I first started in sales, all of the experienced reps and my management team spent hours working with me on attaining my goals for the quarter and the year. Those reps who achieved annual goals were sent on a wonderful trip—usually Hawaii. What these people told me was the same: once you go on this trip, you'll do anything you can to go every year.

And it's true! The same people who went to the trip one year were there every year—they found a way to succeed, and winning then became habitual.

In 1998, I was planning yet another promotion for our reps. I tried to have five or six promotions and contests a year, in addition to the corporate competitions. I finished the proposal and, after reviewing it, my boss called me in. After a few preliminary questions, he got right to his big concern: "I'm tired of seeing the same people win all of these contests. What guarantee do you have that some new people are going to be here?"

I was really surprised, and went back to review previous promotions. And he was right: no matter what the reward (trip, cash, luncheons, or dinners) or the contest—if it was for top production or quality service or teamwork—the same people always ended up winning.

One rep told me, "I just like to win. It doesn't matter what the 'carrot' is; I like to know for myself that I can do it."

Everywhere I've been there are always a group of reps and managers who reliably will achieve all of their goals. Those are the winners—the ones who know how to win and have made a habit of it.

Only the carrot motivates other people. For example, many salespeople love cash. If there's a sufficient cash incentive for a contest, people unaccustomed to winning will make an effort to achieve. Those aren't the people I'm referring to. We're looking for the people who are there every day of every week of every year, committed to success. So is your boss. So should you.

Appendix

What To Do When You Get There

What you need to do the first day you're there

1. Be the first one in the office.
2. E-mail your team with your schedule for the upcoming week. (And call them “your team.”)
3. Walk around and introduce yourself to everyone on your team (or personally say hello to them if you've already met them).
 - a. If any of them have a concern or issue, make sure to resolve it today.
 - b. Make sure to let them know how excited you are to be there.
 - c. Ask your team if they prefer morning or evening meetings.
4. Have your peer managers introduce you to their teams.
5. Take your assistant, if you have one, out to lunch.
6. Repeat with your second office, if you have multiple offices.
7. Be the last one in your office.

What you need to do the first week you're there

1. Recognize and reward the top performers.
 - a. If you don't have a lot of top performers, invent a category that someone has succeeded in.
 - b. Create wins.
 - c. Find a reason to praise people.
2. Set your expectations.
 - a. What you expect from them
 - b. What they can expect from you
 - c. What your goals are for the team in the coming year
 - d. Your "pet peeves"
 - e. Get the numbers:
 - i. Where they've been
 - ii. Where you're going
3. Establish a regular monthly team meeting date and time (for example, the first Friday morning of each month).
4. Establish dates for one-on-one business reviews.
5. Identify one person in each office that has the potential for doing better. Sit down with that person right away and let them know they have that potential, and determine what you can do to help them succeed.
6. Identify the leaders in the office. Get them on your side by asking their future goals. If it includes management, tell them you'll help them get there—and make sure to follow up on it!

What you need to do the first two weeks you're there

1. Conduct one-on-one meetings of thirty minutes each with each person on your team.
 - a. First question: What do you need from me?
 - b. Review of their performance—solicit their opinion of their performance
 - c. Career path
 - i. If they're in sales, how can you help them get to their earnings goal?
 - ii. What is their career goal?
 - Five years
 - Long-term
 - How can you help them get to their career goal?
 - d. Identify needs
 - i. Marketing support
 - ii. Underwriting help
 - iii. More leads
 - iv. Better time management
2. Sit with each member of your team for twenty minutes.
 - a. Observe their interactions with their peers and clients.
 - b. Offer suggestions for improvement.
 - c. Ask them, "How would you run this office?"

What you need to do the third week you're there

1. Deliver on the needs identified last week.
2. Take the leaders in the office out to lunch.
 - a. Tell them you are counting on them to lead and explain why it's so important that they do so.
 - b. Offer them incentives for their leadership.
3. Work on the "front lines" with your team, doing their jobs with them. This establishes your credibility.

What you need to do the fourth week you're there

Complete a comprehensive business plan for your team and review it with your boss.

- After revisions are made, present it to your team during a business meeting.
- Get buy-in from the team on the different areas of your plan.

Things to do each and every week

1. Be the first one in the office at least twice a week.
2. Be the last one in the office at least once a week.
3. Always remember: you are always on stage.
4. Always remember that you cannot expect more from your agents than you do from yourself. If you want them to work hard, you have to work harder.
5. It is not about the hours you put in but the results you get.
6. If you have a sales team, identify your underperformers and meet with them once per week.
— Tell them: “I’m going to help you make more money than you ever have before.”
7. Totally commit to the job. It is not nine to five. It is how many hours it takes to succeed.

Acknowledgements

There are few good original ideas, but most are good ideas we've learned from others and adopted as our own.

The concept behind this book is to discuss what I've learned in almost twenty years in sales, training, and management. Many lessons are those I've learned on my own, by making good and bad decisions and learning from them. The vast majority of thoughts in this book, however, are those I've learned from others. Working with other managers who were my superiors, my peers, or my friends truly formed the core of my management beliefs and theories.

This is not a scholarly work based on years of detailed research. Instead, this book is about the lessons I've learned by actually being there in the trenches. One of my beliefs is that the most valuable lessons you learn are from observing other managers in action. You don't need a professional speaker or a college professor telling you how to manage; you need to watch others. Find people whom you respect and watch them in action, in meetings, and in repose, and you will learn more over a period of time than in any management class. That's what I did.

I'm extraordinarily grateful, therefore, to the following managers and leaders from whom I've learned so much. Many of their actions and theories are in this book.

In that vein, I wish to thank Robert Bouttier, George Clarke, Rory Fitzpatrick, Chris Hans, Gary Newhall, Michael

O'Steen, Sharon Neiman, and Tiffany Perrucci. I never worked for Dave Jones, but I was privileged to work with him in a variety of capacities and learned management lessons—both in quantity and quality—from him every day.

I'm also grateful to Rocco Muratore, Steve Hanson, Ted Haase, and Jack van Etten for their wisdom and experience.

And friends like Jay Eagan, Steve Fowlkes, and Greg Hickey have spent a great deal of time with me on a personal level, giving incredible advice on leadership and management from their own highly successful professional experiences.

I wish to thank Kirsten Hansen for her wonderful, critical eye in reading and reviewing the numerous drafts of this book and her varying levels of patience in tolerating me over the years.

Finally, I wish to thank my parents for their faith.

Eric Swenson
November, 2003
Los Angeles, California