15 Leadership Voices
From Oregon State University
In the year
2016
Compiled By New Vibe Training
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An Essay On The One Thing: The Surprisingly Simple Truth Behind Extraordinary Results

Written by: Gary Keller with Jay Papasan
Published by: Bard Press
Date of Publication: 2012

Report Written By: Paul Biwan
Personal overview of the theme of the book

Achieving extraordinary results requires a disciplined, focused approach to our work and non-work lives. When we apply this disciplined approach in a systemic manner, over time we’ll see improved results. Gary Keller takes the Pareto Principle (80-20 rule) to the extreme. The 80-20 rule makes the case that 80% of personal and organizational results come from 20% of our activities. Gary asserts that narrowing the 20% of activities to the “one thing” that truly matters accelerates a person’s ability achieve extraordinary results. He illustrates this through principles, tools and examples. This approach has a multiplying effect in that more actually gets accomplished by focusing on the one thing.

Relevance to leadership and workplace coaching

The relevancy to leadership includes influencing and working to realize a greater immediate and long-term future, for managers it’s developing their people while driving organizational results, and for individuals it’s helping them find work that is meaningful in which they can utilize their talents to achieve consistent results.

How was your learning deepened? How do you support this topic, and why?

The ideas provide tools to affect individual and organizational effectiveness. I have new insights to bring greater focus and intentionality to increase effectiveness while minimizing overwhelm. Too many people are in a state of overwhelm and have too much on their plate. The result is being behind, working in reactionary mode, justifying how busy they are and doing most things at an inadequate level.
Name 3 key points to guide and promote workplace coaches.

1. A great question is essential for focused action. The authors ask, “What’s the ONE Thing you can do this week such that by doing it everything else would be easier or unnecessary?” (p 9). They are “recognizing that not all things matter equally and finding the things that matter most” (p 10) will have a multiplier effect. The ability to go small is where big results emerge from. Going small “has only one purpose – to ultimately get you to the point” (p 11).

2. Multitasking is a lie. The authors cite the research of Clifford Nass, a professor at Stanford, who studied this with the presumption that frequent multitaskers would perform better. “‘I was sure they had some secret ability but it turns out that high multitaskers are suckers for irrelevancy, said Nass. They were outperformed on every measure. Although they’d convinced themselves and the world that they were great at it, there was just one problem, ‘Multitaskers were just lousy at everything’” (p 44).

3. Worklife balance is a myth. “When you act on your priority, you’ll automatically go out of balance, giving more time to one thing over another. The challenge becomes how long you stay on your priority” (p 82). “Your work life is divided into two distinct areas – what matters most and everything else. You will have to take what matters most to the extremes and be okay with what happens to the rest. Professional success requires it” (p 83). In your non-work life, devote your time to the activities that are important and that you enjoy so you have separation from work. “An extraordinary life is a counterbalancing act” (p 83).
How do you see this book being applicable to your ongoing professional work improvement?

Personal mastery requires a systemic effort over time. Applying the ideas in this book require a disciplined routine, intentionality, a method to handle the distractions that arise and a focus on what truly matters to achieve consistent and exceptional performance.

Give a real world scenario where these concepts can be applied.

I have begun incorporating these ideas into the one-to-one formal coaching provided to support OSU employees at all levels of the university.
An Essay On The 8th Habit, From Effectiveness to Greatness

Written by: Stephen R. Covey
Published by: Free Press
Date of Publication: 2004

Report Written By: Shane Turner
The 8th Habit picks up where Covey’s first bestselling book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* left off. Where 7 Habits was all about improving oneself, The 8th Habit is about developing and using one’s voice of influence to inspire others to find their voice. Covey develops a model for finding one’s own voice based upon our intrinsic needs and the simple principle that we are whole people (body, heart, mind, and spirit).

He states that we have a need to live, to learn, to love, and to leave a legacy. Emanating from these needs are four intelligences: physical intelligence, mental intelligence, emotional intelligence, and spiritual intelligence. It is from these intelligences are our unique voices that are based upon our vision, discipline, passion and conscience. Because we each bring a unique mix of these intelligences, our voice is as unique as our fingerprint. Covey insists that by finding our voice, we are positioned to fulfill the greater purpose of empowering others to find their own voice.

This book is keenly relevant to leadership and workplace coaching. Covey’s 7 Habits was a watershed moment in self-coaching. This book follows on course by demonstrating the promise of coaching in the workplace and society. Through the exhaustive use of anecdotes and synthesis of current leadership theories, Covey weaves a compelling course of action for anyone wishing to systematize the dramatic improvement of their leadership skills.

This book helped to deepen my learning by first reinforcing several of the concepts that were covered in the course, such as emotional intelligence, crucial conversations, dealing with an individual as a whole person, and of course, components of Covey’s 7 habits. However, he takes the narrative beyond these topics and shapes them into a cohesive plan of action in a way that each of them standing alone were not. The ultimate goal of this process is in close alignment
with the goals of coaching that is to unleash human potential in ourselves and in others that is limited by the failure to view people one dimensionally instead of as whole persons.

Key takeaways from the book are that each one of us brings unique strengths or intelligences to the world. When recognized and honored, these intelligences shape our authentic voice. By using our authentic voice, we demonstrate a leadership that empowers others to find and use their own strengths-based voice and unleash their potential.

As I look to strengthen the bench of my department, I can see significant value in this book. Using it as a roadmap for action, I will be able to develop my staff and their leadership capacity. This effort will prepare us for the upcoming transitions involved in our current reorganization and make them more resilient.

This book serves as a capstone for the learning that we’ve completed in this course. Drawing from many of the theories we’ve discussed, it presents a roadmap for realization of the benefits of coaching, both for myself and for those within my sphere of influence. I see it as a natural continuation of the work we’ve completed in this course.
An Essay On Coaching At Work: Powering Your Team with Awareness, Responsibility and Trust

Written by: Matt Somers
Published by: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
Date of Publication: 2007

Report Written By: Aviva Rivera
Coaching At Work by Matt Somers is written very similarly to Brilliant Coaching by Julie Starr wherein the author provides the general framework for their coaching theory and then provides real world applications. Another commonality is both authors recognize there may be situations where coaching is not the appropriate method. They both make it clear you need to be able to discern when it is better to use the director or “tell” style and when the coaching method is superior. I think this is where I find the information to be impactful, it provides real-world ways I can apply these skills within my team. Furthermore, it provides ways I can apply the coaching approach to everyday interactions with peers, leaders, family and friends. Building a community of positive language, responsibility, trust and awareness benefits all. The main takeaway: Matt Somers asserts that coaches see potential and convert to performance. Who would not want that ability?

The book is divided into three sections: the first two discuss the theory and application, while the last section is intended to develop your holistic management approach abilities. Sprinkled throughout each section are coaching laws, these set the stage for the Peak Coaching Model: potential minus interference equals performance (Somers, 2007, p.19). Interference consists of internal and external factors: blame culture, restrictive policies and procedures, and ideas that are not accepted. The two that resonated with me were negative self-talk and fear of failure. This hit home with me because often I don’t realize the voice inside my head is negative. Replacing that voice with positive language was an immediate win in promoting self-coaching. I encounter fear of failure daily when talking with my team. I combat this by assuring them we are in this together and that we support each other. Empowering each and every person eliminates the fear of failure and creates a healthier atmosphere. Somers then adds the PLE triangle, or the second law: “We need Performance, Learning and Enjoyment, but we must keep them
balanced”. (Somers, 2007, p. 47). PLE adds motivation and self-awareness to the equation; establishing trust and accepting responsibility round out the model. The main takeaway from this section: focus follows interest (Somers, 2007, p. 80). Eureka! It’s so much easier to simply remember this mantra. As I engage in conversation I need to be present, listening, and my voice inside my head needs to be positive, open, and approachable. If I drift, I can simply pause, repeat the last statement made or summarize the conversation up to that point to help me focus. Somers summarizes this section neatly with the ARROW method, ask open-ended questions to establish aims, consider current reality, reflect and adjust, generate options and commit to a way forward (Somers, 2007, p. 130). He concludes the second section stating, “In fact nothing could be more intuitively sensible than coaching people towards their best or we’d all still be tying our children’s shoe laces for them.” (Somers, 2007, p. 132).

Finally, he focused on how to apply coaching in situations he experienced in sales. This section was harder to relate to but the critical variables were quite valuable to me. A critical variable is anything that changes each time a task is undertaken that can impact how well the task is performed (Somers, 2007, p. 164). He emphasizes promoting awareness, trust, and responsibility to combat this. As I sit with my team, and we work through a process improvement or discuss policy we implement I can listen, probe with questions and discover appropriate critical variables to focus on, no memorization necessary.

In summary the book was easy to read due to its wit, humor and practical applications. It was clear this wasn’t a how-to book but rather a way to encourage the development of a natural coaching approach. It provided practical applications and while not all were relevant to the higher education setting it added a refreshing freedom in approaching conversations as I realized as I coach I am not fixing issues, rather encouraging awareness.

Written by: Michael Bungay Stanier
Published by: Box of Crayons Press
Date of Publication: 2016

Report Written By Carolyn Warfield
Michael Bungay Stanier’s *The Coaching Habit: Say Less, Ask More & Change the Way You Lead Forever* (Box of Crayons, 2016), asserts that while leadership coaching’s recent move into the mainstream may mean it is familiar to the reader, most such coaching lacks efficacy. Stanier’s solution lies in seven key coaching questions that reinforce coaching best practices. Stanier also guides readers in development of a coaching habit and offers brief “masterclass” takeaways to reinforce desirable coaching behaviors.

The author argues that leadership coaching (differentiated from performance coaching) benefits both coach and participant, and offers it as a solution for overwhelmed, disconnected managers whose teams rely too heavily on the manager for solutions. Leadership coaching, says Stanier, “…lets you work less hard and have more impact.” (9) Such statements appeal almost universally to managers, including those at Oregon State.

My summation of Stanier’s seven questions and “Question Masterclass”: Ask open-ended questions one at a time, listen without prejudice to the answers, and speak as little as possible. The questions themselves are simple (“What do you want?” is Question Four) and easily memorized, which is always useful for busy people. The book is easily read and understood, and Stanier encourages readers to practice steps rather than attempt to absorb all of the book at once.

In addition to the seven Key Questions, other practical takeaways from *The Coaching Habit* include five basic steps to establish a new habit. Chapters focused on a particular “key question” are followed by brief habit-related exercises, each closing with a commitment to action. Though sometimes overly simplistic, these practices encourage readers to immediately visualize applying the preceding learning, as in Chapter 5 (“The Lazy Question”), which discourages coaches from providing solutions, requiring instead that the coach help the seeker find his/her own solutions. The exercises follow a pattern of replace-old-with-new, a useful and
easily understood pattern.

Another learning of particular interest to this writer is found in Question 6, “The Strategic Question: If you’re saying Yes to this, what are you saying No to?” As leaders and employees, we’re trained to always say yes without considering consequence. Stanier reinforces that yes may successfully accompany no, particularly when time, engagement or energy are in question. This concept is relatively novel and could be adopted at OSU and other professional environments to combat the “more is more” work product. For example, an employee approached me recently in search of ideas to grow her understanding of the HR profession. I utilized Question 6 as written. The employee responded that it had never occurred to her that she could choose a focus, rather than trying to learn everything. Before reading The Coaching Habit, it would not have occurred to me to ask such a simple but powerful question.

While I found The Coaching Habit useful as a learning tool, the book’s poor scholarship somewhat undermines Stanier’s intent. In Chapter Four, for example, Stanier references the work of Peter Block (Flawless Consulting), Marshall Rosenberg (“creator of Nonviolent Communication”), and neuroscientist Evan Gordon. However, no particular work products or studies are cited, and Stanier does not differentiate between peer-reviewed, evidence-based research work product like Gordon’s and that of “lifestyle” writers such as Rosenberg. In many professional environments, Stanier’s lack of rigor may be irrelevant. However, as OSU employees, we work with researchers who value the scientific method’s rigor. Utilizing works published outside these standards can unintentionally undermine managers’ attempts to effect positive change. For this reason, I do not recommend The Coaching Habit to individuals within the academic community. Those managers interested in leadership coaching for whom scholarship is less important (i.e., everyone else!) will likely find it a useful tool.
An Essay On

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People

Written by: Stephen R. Covey
Published by: Free Press (Division of Simon & Schuster, Inc.), New York, NY
Date of Publication: 1989, 2004

Report by Curtis Flynn
Overview
Our character derives from habits that we have developed throughout our lives. With sufficient
effort, we can change our habits. A habit comes from our knowledge, skills and motivations. We
can change ourselves from being dependent, to independent, and eventually to becoming
interdependent, which requires the skills for positive human relations outcomes.

The first three habits of effective people involve self-mastery and attaining private victories:

**Habit #1** is to Be Proactive – more than taking initiative. One must take responsibility for his/her
life, instead of blaming circumstances and other persons. Our response to such stimuli is what we
choose and can control. We must focus on what we are able to influence.

**Habit #2** is to Begin With the End in Mind – everything is created twice. First, something is
visualized, and second, it is created. Therefore, put much care in the visualization of everything
that you can control and wish to create or change. Leadership comes first, then Management.

Paradigm is the source of attitudes and then resulting behaviors.

**Habit #3** is to Put First Things First – the perfect paradigm for time management and fighting
procrastination. One tool is the Time Management Matrix, which forces the user to assign each
task to one of the following boxes: Urgent/Important, Not Urgent/But Important, Urgent/Not
Important, and Not Urgent/and Not Important.

The next three habits of effective people involve successfully working-with-others, which leads
to public victories:

**Habit #4** is to Think Win/Win – constantly seeking mutual benefit in human interactions. This
results in all round satisfaction among all involved parties and more buy-in and commitment to
the action plan and fewer problems later on. This is because hidden agenda issues, resentments,
fears, etc. are already resolved. This leads to effective teamwork and productivity of teams.
Habit #5 is to Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood – this is Empathetic Communication. This requires the self-discipline to resist our strong desire to first be understood and instead to simply hold that back and just listen to the other person proactively. We should also be mindful of our perceptions and how they color how we filter what we are listening to. When we move to the seeking to be understood, we must remember to be thoughtful of the elements of communication including nonverbal, intonation, gestures, etc. Also, our credibility influences how the other person accepts our communications.

Habit #6 is to Synergize – results in effective cooperation. This involves all of the previously listed habits while also recognizing and valuing diversity among those we are working with.

The final habit is to create an upward spiral of growth:

Habit #7 is for Self Renewal or “Sharpen the Saw” – one should internalize the first 6 habits to truly make them habitual. The result is true independence and true interdependence. The four dimensions of renewal are the physical, social/emotional, mental, and spiritual. These must be balanced for proper renewal.

Relevance to Leadership and Workplace Coaching
Virtually everything in this book is included in the Workplace Coaching course. Here is a short list of a few commonalities:

1. Strong character and integrity in the coach to foster credibility and trust.
2. Taking responsibility for oneself instead of blaming others, the environment, or circumstances.
3. Visualizing is a technique in questioning to get a person to start facing and conquering a challenge.
4. The **Win/Win** is the paradigm that practically defines Coaching, i.e. positive psychology, solution based conversations, etc.

5. **Seek First to Understand** is one of the core methods in coaching, by asking questions, strong proactive listening, and rapport.

6. **Self-Renewal** is also promoted in Coaching by promoting care of self, and personal/professional growth.

**Increased Learning**

While I have already learned much from the Coaching Course, this book augmented and reinforced many of the concepts covered in the course.

**Three Key Points for Workplace Coaches**

1. **Seek First to Understand**

2. **Be Positive**

3. **Seek Win/Win**.

**Applicability to my Professional Work**

Mostly, I have been utilizing the positive questioning method much more than before, and it is working quite well.

**Scenario in Which These Concepts May be Applied**

I have five team members who come to me with complaints about customers and each other. I will apply proactive listening, with positive questions, and I will direct the questions toward win/win solutions.
An Essay On Coaching
For Improved Work Performance

Written by: Ferninand F. Fournies
Published by: McGraw-Hill
Date of Publication: 2000

Report Written By: Penny Wright
Coaching For Improved Work Performance by Ferninand F. Fournies discusses the specific beliefs managers have about their employees, about themselves as bosses or facilitators and about the seemingly undefinable processes called management and motivation. And then it deals with techniques you can use as a manager to modify people’s performance. (Fournies, page xiii)

I felt Fournies discussion on why manager fail as coaches, why employees do what they do and finally his techniques to modify people’s performance was excellent. His techniques and tools for coaching are insightful and something I plan on sharing with others and using in the future.

When I first read the title I thought the book was geared towards how to improve employee work performance. As I read the book I realized the improved work performance was not only on how to motivate employees to keep them more focused, productive, satisfied and happy, but also to look at the supervisors attitude and understanding of the pitfalls supervisors fall into, how supervisors can be set up to fail as they are not offered or required to take supervisory or coaching classes. Fournies explains in a humorous, but often too truthful way, how people become managers. “What happens is that you are called in and asked to kneel down. The big boss touches your shoulder with Excalibur and says the magic words: “I now pronounce you manager; go thither and yon and do it.” You (supervisor) jump to your feet and smile happily, saying, “Yes, I will go thither and yon and do it.” (Fournies, page 5) The supervisor may have been excellent in his/her previous position, but have little to no skills in this new role as supervisor, however, since they were just knighted by the big boss, they must now know how to be Sir Supervisor. Frequently knighthood leads to failure.

In the first part of this book Fournies offers many examples of when you are not trained to be a supervisor or coach how supervisors can misinterpret lack of training and behavior management
as an employee with a bad attitude, lack of enthusiasm, lack of experience, etc., and without proper position descriptions and expectations of job duties, employees fall into self-destructive behavior.

The second part of the book goes into managing people. He explores why employees don’t do what they are supposed to do (top three being: they don’t know what they are supposed to do; they don’t know how to do it; and they don’t know why they should do it); the importance of writing position descriptions to the duties of the job and not the requirements of the position. He goes into detail on the magic of feedback and states 50 percent of what appear to be motivational problems in business are actually feedback problems. He further states lack of specific and frequent feedback is one of the most common causes of inappropriate performance, giving specific feedback is the quickest, cheapest, and most effective intervention for improving performance. (Fournies page 103)

There are lots of good suggestions and ideas in this book, perhaps my favorites are in Chapter 9, Coaching Analysis. Here Fournies shares how managers go into self-destructive behavior of applying solutions to correct nonexistent reason for poor performance. In this chapter he offers a step-by-step analysis to use which helps to identify the problem and appropriate corrective action. (Fournies, page 109 Fig. 9.1) Often the analysis determines reasons for poor performance are; they don’t know what they are supposed to do (tell them); they don’t know how to do it (train them); or they don’t know why they should do it (explain the importance). If after you get to the bottom of the 17 yes or no questions and the answer is a coaching discussion, Chapter 10, Coaching: The Face-To-Face Discussion, goes into complete detail on how to prepare for this conversation and the steps involved (Fournies, page 157, Fig. 10.1)
In summary the book was easy and entertaining to read. It was thought provoking and offered good tools and techniques.
An Essay On Integrity, the courage to meet the demands of reality

Written by: Dr. Henry Cloud
Published by: Harper Collins Publishers
Publication date: 2006

Report Written By: Mark Johnson
Personal Overview (Theme of the book)

Dr. Henry Cloud addresses the question of what it takes to be successful, particularly why some people are not successful even though they are intelligent, capable, highly educated, and have excellent training and experience in their field. He operates under the premise that people who become successful leaders have three qualities: 1) They are competent in their field or discipline, 2) they are alliance builders, forming relationships with others that are mutually beneficial, and 3) They possess integrity of character.¹ Dr. Cloud would say it’s often the absence of this 3rd quality that holds people back from reaching their potential. He says “who a person is will ultimately determine if their brains, talents, competencies, energy, effort, deal-making abilities, and opportunities will succeed.”²

Integrity is the integration of our character, or wholeness of character, that allows us to make the most of our strengths.³ Dr. Cloud identifies six aspects of character that he believes must be integrated to create this wholeness of character. They are:⁴

1. “The ability to connect authentically (which leads to trust).
2. The ability to be oriented toward the truth (which leads to finding and operating in reality).
3. The ability to work in a way that gets results and finishes well (which leads to reaching goals, profits, or the mission).

¹ Dr. Henry Cloud, Integrity, the courage to meet the demands of reality (Harper 2006), pp. 4-6
² Ibid, p. 8
³ Ibid p. 33
⁴ Ibid p. 35
4. The ability to embrace, engage, and deal with the negative (which leads to ending problems, resolving them, or transforming them).

5. The ability to be oriented toward growth (which leads to increase).

6. The ability to be transcendent (which leads to enlargement of the bigger picture and oneself).

He believes that if people can learn to successfully integrate these six aspects of character into their lives, they will be successful and have a positive impact on others and their organizations.

**Relevance to Leadership and Workplace Coaching**

While a person’s character is the most important part of their skill set, it often receives the least amount of attention in the workplace. This creates opportunities for coaching, particularly in the area of attitude.

**How was my learning deepened?**

Understanding foundational traits for success from a more holistic perspective as part of my identity.

**How do I support this topic and why?**

I have often noticed how many people, who possess intelligence and excellent technical skills, fail at being good leaders. By coaching people in this often-overlooked topic of character, we can help them to be more successful.

**Key Points to Guide and Promote Workplace Coaches**

1. Success and good leadership is not the product of intelligence and great technical skills alone. 2. Character is a key element to any successful leader. 3. The integration of key
character elements is a life-long process of learning and growth, and requires a safe place to monitor, provide feedback, and challenge to grow.

How do I See this book being applicable to my ongoing professional work improvement?

While I possess some of these character aspects in varying degrees, successful integration of all of them is a life-long pursuit in my own life and career. Further, as I continue to grow in these aspects of character, I can coach others to grow in character integration as well.

**Give a real-world scenario where these concepts can be applied.**

Coaching staff and managers in my division to grow in these character elements to become more successful as leaders and potential leaders.
An Essay On The Servant: A Simple Story About the True Essence of Leadership

Written by: James C. Hunter
Published by: Prima Publishing
Date of Publication: 1998

Report Written By: Jack Breen III
This book report on The Servant: A Simple Story About the True Essence of Leadership\(^5\) was prepared as an aspect of New Vibe Training’s Certified Professional Coach Training.\(^6\)

**Overview of the theme of the book**

This book (The Servant), applies to communication styles in personal and professional relationships. The premise is that leadership is a product of authority that leaders earn through the enhancement of relationships, serving others and being selfless in our interactions with others.

**Relevance to leadership and workplace coaching**

The book *Brilliant Coaching* devotes a chapter to “look at how one of the big barriers to coaching other people is our own sense of self (our ego).”\(^7\) The Servant indicates, “Authority is about who you are as a person, your character, and the influence you’ve built with people.” The training materials in New Vibe Training’s Certified Professional Coach Training manual emphasize “positive and solution based language” and moving away from the traditional management practice of “telling people what to do.” The Servant similarly moves away from interacting with others in an authoritarian style. It enhances the ability of the coach to use positive language, build rapport, and support employees (e.g., patience, humility, etc.). Historically, I have had a workplace perspective based on how I can serve others so I found this perspective easy to accept. Like the coaching materials, it allows the reader to look introspectively.

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Key questions and my responses include the following:

**How was your learning deepened? How do you support this topic, and why?**

I found The Servant to be easy to read and very insightful because it reinforced proper demeanor for a workplace coach. I support the concepts because they enhance relationships in the workplace.

**Name 3 key points to guide and promote workplace coaches.**

Three quotes from The Servant and related key points include:

1. “… a leader is someone who identifies and meets the legitimate needs of their people, removes all the barriers.” Workplace coaching allows the employee to understand their own needs and remove barriers.

2. “True commitment is a vision about individual and group growth along with continuous improvement.” Workplace coaches need to have a focus on continuous improvement.

3. Quoting George Washington Carver – “Be kind to others.” The Servant encourages workplace coaches to focus on how they behave, not how they feel.

The Servant is applicable to my ongoing professional work improvement in that it amplified on concepts that I already felt were important in the workplace, including patience, kindness, humility, respectfulness, selflessness, forgiveness, honesty, commitment and results (service and sacrifice). These are good reminders and allows me to encourage others in these areas.
As a specific example, The Servant encourages people to understand and accept change.

The application of these concepts are important during recent changes.

**An Essay on**

**Crucial Conversations**

– *Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High*

Written by: Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan & Al Switzler

Published by: McGraw-Hill

Publication Date: 2012
The authors’ findings are based on research involving over 20,000 people in hundreds of organizations over twenty-five years, making it relevant in numerous settings. They found the individuals who can get things done while also building on relationships are those who can master crucial conversations.\(^8\) Crucial conversations are those that are important day-to-day conversations that affect a person’s life. They involve a discussion between two or more people where 1) stakes are high, 2) opinions differ, and 3) emotions run strong.\(^9\)

We encounter crucial conversations in the workplace and in our personal lives all the time. When we are not comfortable handling these difficult conversations, we often avoid them or even when we do have them, we handle them poorly. This book outlines a process that leads to greater success at holding critical conversations. It presents tools to more successfully have open dialogue, set up how we think about problem situations, and how best to prepare for them. This book helps develop a skillset that can positively affect every area of our lives.\(^10\)

**Relevance to leadership and coaching & assisting with professional improvement.**

The skills and topics addressed in this book are very relevant to leadership and workplace coaching. The individuals that can master crucial conversations are those that are most influential in the organization and are able to have more honest, open conversations that helps create more significant bonding and can transform people, situations, and relationships. The

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\(^9\) Ibid, pp. 1-3

\(^10\) Ibid, p. 17
authors claim “at the heart of almost all chronic problems in our organizations, our teams, and our relationships lie crucial conversations – ones that we’re either not holding or not holding well.”\textsuperscript{11} Mastering these skills would greatly assist in improving relationships and the work environment to move the organization forward in areas critical for success.

**Deepened learning and support for this topic.**

Many of the concepts tie very closely with coaching concepts. Being able to have open, honest dialogue and being able to successfully manage crucial conversations with positive results would have far-reaching positive impacts throughout our work and home environments.

**Three key points to guide and promote workplace coaches.**

First, when you feel yourself becoming defensive and adrenaline kicks in (page 5), ask yourself questions about what you really want. This has a physical impact because the body sends blood to the parts of our brain that help us think, taking it away from parts of our body that help prepare to fight or take flight. Asking these questions also helps keep us focused on our goal. “What do I want for myself, the other person, and the relationship?”\textsuperscript{12}

Second, it is important to be aware and be able to identify when a conversation changes from a routine conversation to a crucial one. Being aware of this period of transition helps you begin to utilize some of the skills, which in turn helps improve the odds of it being successful. This realization comes in various ways and is often experienced differently from person to person, so being alert and aware is important to identify when this transition occurs.\textsuperscript{13}

Third, we need to master our stories, which are our interpretations of the facts. We make an observation of fact, then we add our theories and create a story that makes sense of what

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid, p. 9
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid, pp. 41-45
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid, p. 54
happened. These stories often come with emotions. We need to be aware of when we create these stories and try hard to distinguish between facts and your created story.\textsuperscript{14}

**Real life examples.**

There are numerous examples given throughout the book. In particular, chapter 10 addresses seventeen specific tough situations that are real-life scenarios, such as somebody sharing they are feeling harassed at work, co-workers are failing to live up to agreements, and dealing with team members that show no initiative.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, pp. 109-115
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, pp. 190-200
This book provides an extensive analysis of specific traits which leaders possess, as well as an analysis of how those traits can complement – or be complemented by – the strengths of others (including followers). The various strengths are not presented in degrees of preference or the likelihood that they will lead to success, but rather in themes and as simply differences that make each individual leader unique in style, skillset, and approach. A fairly comprehensive group of 34 themes are broken into four major themes: executing, influencing, relationship building, and strategic thinking. The book also provides a profile of a successful leader with strong natural abilities in one of each of those four themes.

The book also highlights how specific strengths can best be utilized and how they most effectively intersect with others who possess similar strengths, and those who possess very different strengths. Contrary to what often occurs in the workplace, leaders, the book asserts, tend to be far more successful when they surround themselves with people whose strengths are different from their own. The strongest teams often consist of individuals with different strengths and which organize themselves in ways which capitalize on all members' natural strengths. In addition, however, to emphasizing leadership skills, the book also addresses the leader-follower interaction from the follower’s perspective. I haven’t read many books or articles through that lens, so that was an insightful addition. That portion of the book focused on the simple concept of why followers choose to follow - or not follow - a leader. I found that to be a critical piece, as any given leader – well intended or not – will only be as effective as the degree to which followers find him/her to be worthy of following.
The book cites billionaire Warren Buffet as saying "A leader is someone who can get things done through other people" (Rath & Conchie, 2008, p. 79). After conducting extensive interviews, Gallup found a remarkable consistency with which followers described specifically what they find most important in a leader. Cited most frequently were trust, compassion, stability, and hope. Leaders who are able to authentically convey those messages and characteristics are likely to be highly effective in impacting and motivating people to follow.

I found this book to be most enlightening in explaining the often understated value of being very intentional in establishing roles of team members in a work environment. Individuals are often hired or promoted into positions based on technical competence, with little regard given to natural strengths in less tangible areas, such as interpersonal relationships and visionary thinking. I found myself wondering which strengths each of my team members possess and whether I was truly capitalizing on each one's most natural talents.

I pondered this about my team members both because I am committed to each person's growth and development, but also because I know I will be most successful as a leader if I have team members whose strengths will best complement mine and compensate for my own shortcomings. For instance, one of my top five strengths is futuristic, and indication of strong vision and strategic thinking capabilities. However, I believe I would benefit from having at least one team member strong in themes of executing because I sometimes have difficulty in identifying and accomplishing the incremental steps required to achieve my vision. This is apparently not unlike Wendy Kopp, one of the leaders profiled in the book, who said, "In the end, the big idea was important and essential. But it would only work with a lot of attention to the nuts and bolts of effective execution" (Rath & Conchie, 2008 p. 91).
I fully support this topic and had a bit of an epiphany in thinking about my own effectiveness through this lens. While I wouldn't typically have a strengths assessment for all potential new employees I might consider hiring to be part of my team, I think a very real application of the concepts covered in this book would be to have team members take the strengths assessment and potentially shift job duties with that assessment in mind. At a minimum, even if no tasks assignments were changed, it would be helpful for all team members to have some insight into others' strengths.

In summary, I found this book to be very applicable to workplace coaching. As evidenced throughout the book, the natural individual strengths of any leader, as well as those whom they lead, if used most effectively, can make a significant and positive impact on employee engagement, team and individual morale, and organizational success and productivity.
The author John C. Maxwell is currently one of the foremost leadership experts in the world. He has written many books that focus on leadership and coaching in the workplace and for individuals who want to enhance their personal lives. His book How Successful People Think: Change Your Thinking, Change Your Life teaches you how to use critical thinking to focus on the big picture and while using your thoughts, drive creative thinking. The format of this book allows for a quick read that provides bite-size chapters that emphasizes different types of thinking and techniques that encourage creative, realistic, strategic, and shared thinking.

Some of the key areas that the author points out that may help guide and promote workplace coaches are: make time for critical thinking, think creatively by asking the right questions, and utilize shared think when possible.

As our lives get more and more busy, the need for critical thinking keeps increasing. The information age we live in is always pushing news, data, and other forms of information during all hours of the day. With the constant pressure and information there is no time for critical thinking unless one intentionally makes time for it. This book is eye-opening to the severe lack of time most give to critical thinking and planning day-to-day. A leader cannot successfully lead a team if he/she does not plan and commit to critical thinking and looking forward to what is coming down the road.
Brainstorming or working in a team to find solutions requires asking the right questions. The author provides a list of questions including: Why must it be done this way? What is the opposite? Who has a different perspective on this? These types of questions encourage critical thinking and can be especially helpful when coaching an employee or peer through a challenge or issue they are facing. Therefore, the right questions will also allow meetings and conversations to move along more efficiently for all parties involved while getting a more productive outcome.

Shared thinking is also important to aid in the critical thinking process. Valuing others ideas and acknowledging the importance of the thoughts they bring to the conversation is vital to maintaining an effective team. The diversity of opinions, experience, and thoughts will lead to more varied and effective solutions than compared to solo thinking.

In summary, utilizing many of the key concepts of this book, a person should be able to see how this can be applied to many aspects of their daily life from being more intentional to practicing mindfulness and being more thoughtful in interactions in professional and even personal environments. If someone is looking to understand how to increase their own critical thinking skills then this book serves as a great resource for useful techniques and application to use in their daily life.
An Essay on Lincoln on Leadership

Written by: Donald T. Phillips
Published by: Grand Central Publishing
Date of Publication: January, 1992
Phillips provides an insightful analysis of Abraham Lincoln’s many leadership skills, most of which were demonstrated during his presidency from 1861 until his assassination in April 1865. Before he took office as the country’s 16th president, he was not widely regarded as a skilled leader. In fact, many people considered him a second-rate country lawyer who was ill-equipped to be president. I found it interesting that a national crisis that almost ripped the country apart was what also drew out the best qualities of Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln took office mere days after southern states voted to secede from the union and many, including Lincoln himself, believed he might be the last president of the United States. Instead of presiding over the demise of the country, Lincoln succeeded in its unification and is now regarded as one of the world’s foremost leaders of all time. While Lincoln is well know for his important achievements as President, this book examines his unique and diverse leadership abilities and applies them to modern day organizations.

This analysis and in-depth look at Abraham Lincoln’s personal philosophies and actions as President helps us understand some of the many complexities of leadership. The discussion considers basic human nature and a person’s reaction to certain leadership styles, which is just as relevant for leaders of today’s organizations as it was for Lincoln during the U.S. Civil War. Lincoln had a great understanding of people and their needs. This is an important, maybe even essential, compliment to the specific skills and philosophies that made Lincoln a great leader. It
may be that this inherent and deep understanding of human nature is what is needed to bridge the gap between good and great leaders.

Analyzing specific actions and behaviors of a great leader is an excellent way to learn from the best and grow your own leadership skills. Each of us has a unique combination of strengths that contribute to our overall performance in the workplace but it is not usually immediately obvious from outward appearances what makes great leaders great. By systematically identifying and categorizing Lincoln’s strengths, Phillips provides a tool we can use to help examine our own strengths and determine how to best incorporate those into today’s work environment. Lincoln’s personal leadership philosophies are broken down into four main categories by Phillips, which helps provide a framework to better understand them and how they relate to each other.

Lincoln’s four years in office marked an important turning point for our country, one that could easily have gone a very different way and shaped a much different history for the U.S. and the world.

Lincoln had so many important points that could guide today’s workplace coaches, but I think three of the most powerful are; 1) Get out of the office and circulate among the troops, also know today as managing by walking around; 2) Build strong alliances, or be a good listener and develop effective interpersonal relationships; and 3) Preach a vision and continually reaffirm it, which is to say, provide a clear, concise statement of the direction of your organization and justify the actions you take.

Phillips categorized Lincoln’s leadership principles into four themes; people, character, endeavor and communication. With this, he created an easy reference tool for coaches to access and apply proven leadership actions to a wide variety of current day workplace situations. This book is going to become a useful resource for me going forward. I will be referring to it often both when
self-coaching and when I am coaching others. Every one of the 15 individual characteristics identified in this book is as applicable today as it was in 1861. For example, Lincoln’s philosophy to build strong alliances is one I already use. The nature of my work today requires my team to collaborate with many stakeholder groups who often have conflicting business needs. Solid relationships and good interpersonal skills are essential for success in this environment.

An Essay on How To Win Friends & Influence People

Written by: Dale Carnegie
Published by: Pocket Books
Date of Publication: 1936, Revised 1981
This classic work of interpersonal and leadership development has been in print now for over 75 years, making How to Win Friends and Influence People by Dale Carnegie a timeless and foundational work in the study of human interactions – at work and in life. This book has stood the test of time as the principles and ideas put forth are every bit as relevant to today’s workplace as they were at the time of the initial writing.

The first volume was published in 1936 and has since gone through a number of revisions. Fortunately, the editors have preserved many of the colloquialisms and the anecdotes from the original work, thus preserving not only the wisdom, but the charm and readability of the book. The book is largely comprised of stories and anecdotes that exemplify each of the defined principles contained in each chapter. These include, improving interpersonal relationships, building more effective teams, enhancing leadership, and otherwise succeeding in all manner of social interactions. Stories included reference the famous, such as Abe Lincoln, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Charles Schwab, as well as day-to-day experiences of Carnegie’s many students who were enrolled in his now famous classes.

The book is organized into four parts that explore fundamental principles and techniques to build rapport, influence others, enhance leadership and manage change. Each section focuses on a single core principle. The sheer simplicity of these is at times misleading – many have
become “givens” in today’s study of leadership, management and positive psychology. The many exemplar stories used liberally throughout bring each principles to life in a unique and motivating way. These stories lend a distinctly practical and refreshing feel to the work.

Dale Carnegie began his career in 1912 teaching courses on public speaking to business professionals. His emphasis shifted to the art of getting along with others when he realized the universal and consistent demand for these particular skills. Carnegie’s work grew out of a ‘laboratory’ of human experience, drawing upon history and the experiences of his students to exemplify common struggles and shared successes when managing human interactions, a challenge that is as relevant now as it was in the early 20th century. Carnegie’s own research revealed that even in technical fields, around 15% of an individual’s success can be attributed to technical knowledge; the remaining 85% corresponds to one’s ability to successfully manage and lead people. Carnegie makes a bold claim that the principles he puts forth are, in fact, rules that “work like magic,” with the promise of revolutionizing people’s lives if the readers are diligent in follow his advice.

Standout principles include simple techniques, such as avoiding criticism, taking a sincere interest in others, making subordinates feel important, even the power of smiling. These approaches capture key coaching principles, including active listening and questioning, finding win-win approaches, seeking to understand others, and simply letting others do the bulk of the taking. The final section addresses leadership, including graceful allowances for mistakes, encouraging self-directed improvement, and deploying healthy competition to inspire growth. Throughout the book Carnegie emphasizes the need for both sincerity and consistent practice.

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This book will certainly strengthen my own coaching skills, particularly in relation to supervision of my direct reports. The unit I oversee is undergoing significant changes at present, with the expected threats to morale and fear of change. Each technique, skill and principle brought forth in this book will inspire and support my efforts. This book will be a staple on my nightstand with the goal to review regularly and implement each principle. This will ensure success in my transition from my current role as “the fixer,” to one more engaged in growing and supporting and empowering others to create their own transformative growth.

An Essay on The Solutions Focus: Masking Coaching and Change SIMPLE

Written by: P. Jackson and M. McKergow
Published by: Nicholas Brealey International Publishing Company
Date of Publication: 2007
The primary premise of this book is that organizations can be much more effective and create a positive and engaging culture by identifying and building on strengths and what works rather than focusing on what doesn’t work. So what does it really mean to be “solutions focused”? According to Jackson & McKergow (2007), “it means being absolutely clear about what you want, discovering what is already working well, than encouraging the processes that strengthen these positive forces” (p. 2). By focusing on the solution as opposed to an emphasis on the problem, energy and effort are on developing action steps towards the solution.

A solutions-focused approach has three primary tenets: 1) Don’t fix what isn’t broken; 2) find what works, and do more of it; and 3) stop doing what doesn’t work, and do something else. While a straight-forward, empowering approach to solving challenges of any magnitude, “solution focused” is contrary to our conventional way of operating. Our training – formal and informal – has been to focus on what is wrong. Imagine focusing on what’s right, what’s working, what’s going well, and on the strengths (rather than the weaknesses) of people, processes and organizations. How would employees respond? What would interactions be like
among staff and with customers? What level of discretionary effort would employees give in service to the team? How would this approach impact the culture of your team?

**A New Tool Set**

Solutions-focused thinking relies on a handful of tools or concepts. The first is the **Platform**, or the problem, which is simply the launching pad for change. Second, is a vision of **Future Perfect**: If you woke up tomorrow and a miracle had happened to solve this problem, how would you know; what would this new situation look like? Third are **Counters** – those skills and resources that “count” in moving toward a solution. As the authors point out, “one of the most valuable is ‘When does the solution happen already?’” (Jackson & McKergow, 2007, p. 18). Fourth and fifth are a **Scale** for measuring progress and **Affirmation** for recognizing what people are already contributing toward the solution. Lastly is **Small Actions**. Well-chosen small actions can have enormous impact. Think of tools three through six as a continuous loop, adding value and continuous improvement.

**Three Key Points to Guide Workplace Coaches**

Applicability of this approach to workplace coaching is tremendous, and there are many coaching principles and techniques imbedded in the solutions focused methodology. Three of these principles are: reach people where they are; nurture and respect the wisdom and inherent value of every individual; and seek improvement (or growth) continuously. For example, as a leader who may be focused on the future state and possible solution, it is important to recognize that this is not a natural place for everyone to focus. While a detailed understanding of the problem is usually of little help in arriving at the solution, many people need to start at this “platform-building” (Jackson & McKergow, 2007, p. 27) point. This need cannot be disregarded. The job here is for the leader to listen for elements that may be Counters, Scales, or
lead to Small Actions. It is an opportunity to listen for what is going well and efforts that can be Affirmed. By using coaching techniques such as asking open-ended, possibility inspiring questions while acknowledging the expertise and resourcefulness of team members, leaders can help shift the conversation to solutions. One such question to ask during this platform-building phase is “when does this problem not happen?” Ultimately, the solution is found in examining what one knows, the existing and needed resources, and in learning how to improve continually.

**Conclusion - Using This Methodology into the Future**

Workplace coaches will find chapters 9 (*The Complete Toolkit*), 11 (*Managers Coach Their People to Solutions*) and 12 (*Team Coaching*) particularly helpful resources. They provide a succinct review of the tools and demonstrate practical application of them in the workplace. Examples provided include coaching an individual to improve job performance, and coaching teams to improve processes or develop new techniques for working with challenging customers. The applicability of this methodology in the workplace is endless.