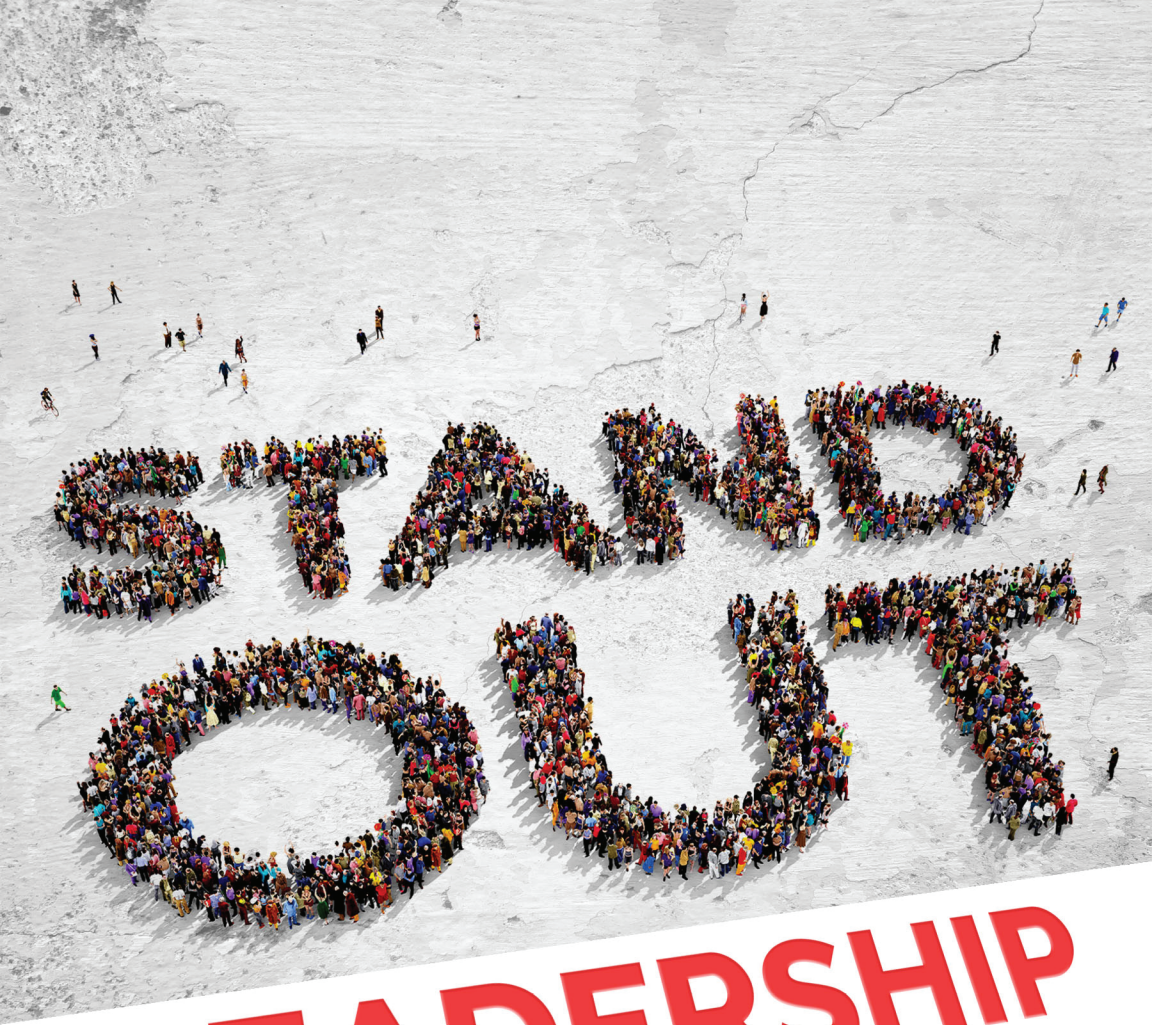




LEADERSHIP

JEAN GATZ

Standout Leadership

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STAND OUT Leadership

How to Positively Influence Others to Make Change Work

Most people think that leadership is all about being in charge. That's not always the case. True leadership is not about bossing others around. It's about creating an environment where everyone feels empowered and engaged. Memorable leaders realize that the opportunity to influence others exists in every situation, relationship, job and activity. So they constantly strive to STAND OUT as better leaders, better influencers, and better people.

We've all heard the term "born leader." Even though leadership may come naturally for some, developing strong leadership skills takes thought, practice, and hard work for others. While it's true that some people fall into a leadership role more easily than others, it is definitely possible to develop the abilities that

will help you take charge, influence others in a positive way, and be the leader successful people are proud to follow.

Leaders whose actions influence others in a positive way have certain strengths in common. So what are they? It's important to identify them, because if you don't believe you possess good leadership qualities, you'll miss countless opportunities to demonstrate your added value and to influence others in a positive, dynamic way.

Two of your most important leadership assets are your willingness and ability to navigate through difficult times, fluctuating economies, continuous growth and significant change. Do you model the attitudes and behaviors others would choose to imitate and respect? Does your performance make you a STAND OUT leader among your peers?

CHANGE is a constant today – for healthcare, business and industry, education, government and organizations – both profit and non-profit. No matter where you work and what you do, “Leadership as usual” is no longer enough. Now, more than ever before, leaders need every competitive advantage to think and act strategically so they can STAND OUT from the Crowd.

Here is the all-important question: How will YOU lead Change to deliver results?

Your role as a Change Leader isn't defined by your title, your credentials or your years of experience, but by your ability

to influence others in a positive way. The choices you make and the actions you take as a result of those choices reflect your personality, values, beliefs and character. **STAND OUT Leadership** starts with utilizing your strengths, adding to your skill set, taking responsibility and making the commitment to model the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors you expect from those you lead. That's how you build trust and accountability at every level.

And remember, before anyone else will recognize you as a Leader and Influencer, you must first see yourself in that role. Never forget that you have the opportunity – and the power – to **INSPIRE** others in a positive way and lead them to success. Your leadership has the potential to **INFLUENCE** the thoughts, behaviors, ideas, and attitudes of the people around you.

To succeed in an environment where dramatic change and new business strategies are the norm, you must out-think old ideas and out-shine past performance. I've written this book to give you a wealth of ideas you can put to immediate use to lead with a voice that inspires, influences, and achieves results.

The rest is up to you!



Powerful or Powerless – It's Your Choice!

Experienced any changes in your workplace lately? (In the last year...or the last hour?) No matter where you work or what you do, it's obvious that "business as usual" is no longer enough. If you want to be taken seriously, be seen as a strategic partner, earn the respect of your co-workers and colleagues, and STAND OUT from the Crowd, you must be able to handle change.

Easier said than done? Not really. You see, CHANGE is not the problem. It's been around forever. The real problem occurs when we're unwilling to accept change and integrate it

into our lives because we feel afraid, uncomfortable, unsure, overwhelmed, inadequate or indifferent.

“Why can’t things stay the same? I don’t mean to be negative or resist new ideas. But just the thought of having to adjust to more change upsets and worries me.” Does this sound vaguely familiar? Are you hearing it from your team...or in your head?

That’s a very natural reaction when you’re staring CHANGE in the face. All of today’s organizations need people who willingly choose to keep their skills current, stay open to new ideas, and lead the way for others. But most people don’t want to admit that their ability to integrate new ideas, technology and business strategies might require talents they don’t have, resources they haven’t tapped into, or skills they haven’t yet mastered.

The honest truth is this: Resisting change will not keep it from taking hold. It simply makes the process longer and more painful.

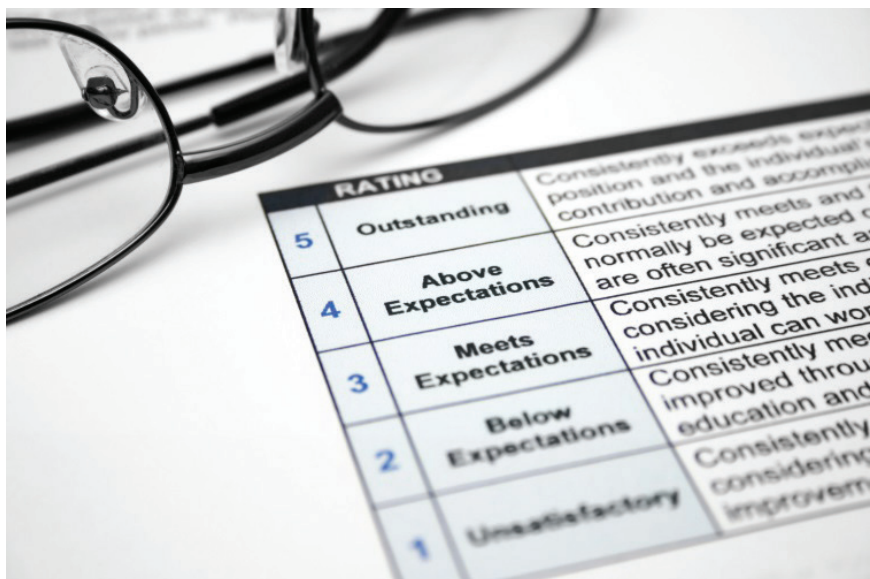
When it comes to your success as a leader, there are two ways to look at change...and at your life in general. You can choose to feel powerless...or powerful. You can choose to *react* to change – and to life – or you can choose to take a *proactive* approach. Your choices are important to your future because no one can motivate, teach, coach or train you to maintain an attitude that will positively impact your co-workers, your customers and the bottom line. Your attitude is totally “an inside job.”

As a leader don't forget one important fact. There is seldom a circumstance in which you are completely powerless – unless you choose NOT to take action to deal with the situation to the best of your ability. TAKING CHARGE means looking for solutions instead of making excuses, solving problems instead of complaining and blaming others, asking for help if you need it, and being accountable for your choices

To STAND OUT in a positive way, you must do more than “endure” change. You can choose your approach, outlook and attitude. And that applies to change in your personal life as well. Maybe you're thinking, “But my attitude is my business. As long as I'm doing my job, what does it matter what I'm thinking inside?”

It matters much more than you realize – because your attitude is obvious to every person who interacts with you. It's a visible indicator of your thoughts, ideas, perceptions and opinions about CHANGE...and about everything else happening in your workplace or your personal life.

Your attitude is reflected in your conversations, tone of voice, facial expressions and actions. It affects how others perceive you, evaluate you, cooperate with you, work with you, relate to you and communicate with you. Think about it this way. Your attitude influences your Thoughts > your Behaviors > your Performance...and ultimately the RESULTS you deliver. In other words, your attitude about Change...can change EVERYTHING. Make sure you choose well.



Your Change Inventory

Smart Questions to Ask to Help You Lead Change

As a leader you must model the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors you expect from those you lead. That's because everyone is watching to see how YOU are handling Change. They will follow your lead. To honestly determine how wisely you are handling change – in your job, your department, your organization and your field, answer these questions. They will give you a clear picture of how you feel about change – whether you're feeling powerful or powerless.

Then you must ask yourself THIS ONE all-important question: What attitudes and behaviors are you willing to change to become a better leader, colleague and team member?

1. Do I see myself as a change agent for my team?
2. Am I spending my time complaining about change?
3. Do I realize that some of my job duties may change?
4. Am I taking time to update my skills and stay current?
5. Do I spend time wishing for “the good old days”?
6. Am I willing to adjust to change, but at my own pace?
7. Do I believe my attitude won’t make a difference?
8. Do I share my ideas to make the transition easier?
9. Am I resisting change because of fear?
10. Is my attitude affecting the quality of my work?
12. Are there things I could do to increase my enthusiasm?
13. Do I recognize that change often brings problems?
14. Am I willing to help solve those problems?
15. Do I see change as bringing opportunities for growth?
16. Have I developed tunnel vision?
17. Do I understand the overall big picture of change?

18. Am I proactive about keeping pace with change?
19. Am I comfortable expressing my fears and concerns?
20. Am I keeping up with trends that will affect our future?



Change Can Be a Bumpy Ride!

Flying to Wyoming to keynote a healthcare conference, we started our descent into Jackson Hole. Strong winds began to rock the plane. Clutching my arm in a death grip my seatmate whispered in a panic-stricken voice, “We’re all going to die!” Although I tried to reassure her that we were safe, she remained highly agitated. In an attempt to distract her I tried to engage her in conversation. “Is this your first flight?” I gently asked.

“Not exactly,” she replied sheepishly, “I’m a flight attendant.”

What??? If a flight attendant was in a panic, I obviously wasn’t worried *nearly* enough for my own good! Seeing the

look of alarm on my face, she began to calm down a bit. “I do tend to overreact, so maybe we should check to see how my husband is handling this. He’s seated right across the aisle.”

“Why would that matter?” I asked. She replied, “Because he’s a pilot.”

That pilot and flight attendant reacted very differently to rapid change. One was calm and in control, and the other was panic stricken and fearful. In today’s environment, the pace of change seems to be accelerating exponentially. Because change can bring uncertainty and fear into every department within an organization, your role as a leader is critical. Your employees are looking to you to remain calm, set the tone, and help them through the process.

To be effective, you must first decide how you personally feel about the impending changes. Were you comfortable with the changes when they were first announced to management? You’ve probably had some time to deal with your thoughts and feelings. So don’t expect your staff to instantly acquiesce when you break the news to them. Although time is a luxury when it comes to accepting change, it’s important to provide time for them to ask questions, adapt and adjust to new situations.

As a leader of change, are you sending mixed messages? Are your words and actions congruent? Your staff is smart enough to know if you’re simply chanting the mantra sent down from above, or if you really understand the impact these changes will have on your department. Are you communicating what

needs to happen, along with the plans in place to implement the necessary changes?

Make sure you encourage employees' comments and feedback and allow them to express their concerns. When you're leading change, panic and fear aren't wise choices. Open, honest and inclusive communication can go a long way towards getting the commitment you expect – and need – from your staff to make change work.

The people you lead are counting on you to embrace change and help facilitate change – without resorting to anger, complaints, apathy or fear. The ride may be bumpy, but you will survive! Most important, as you model the attitudes and behaviors needed to handle change, do your team members see you as the pilot...or the flight attendant?



You're in the People Business!

Well, I didn't mean to point out the obvious or insult your intelligence, because you already *know* that you're in the people business. I've found, however, that many leaders are so focused on processes and procedures that they forget about "the people component" involved in their leadership role. *Teamwork* is a popular buzzword in today's workplace. And it sure looks easy when we watch an exciting sports event with a team that works so well together.

But if you ask those who have ever coached a team, they will tell you how challenging it is to take a group of individuals and teach them to work together, trust one another, and support one another. An effective coach – and leader – knows how to

build good relationships so that individuals care more about the good of the entire team than their own personal glory.

So exactly who are the people that count? This is an easy answer, because there are only two main categories: your employees and your customers (however you define them)! Good leaders know it's the customer who ultimately determines the success of any business, based on the level of service they receive. Whether they're working directly with a customer or with someone who is, good leaders understand that the definitive goal is to create an outstanding product or service that customers want and need.

Good leaders also know it's the employee who has to feel excited, valued, knowledgeable and confident enough to help create an environment where quality products and outstanding customer service are the end result. It takes an excellent role model to influence people in such a way that a healthy, safe and productive work culture develops and thrives as a result of their leadership.

Smart leaders treat their customers AND employees (aka "followers") with dignity and respect, and are committed to helping others feel better about themselves.

Organizations that want to STAND OUT from the Crowd know that employees who feel valued and important will treat their customers the same way. So they are constantly looking for people who understand that no matter what their job title, where they work or what they do – they are first and foremost in "the people business."



Leading Change for Maximum Impact and Minimum Stress

The managers filed into the room, anxiety written all over their faces. Because their organization was going through tremendous change, these leaders had come together to learn how to manage the process. I began the session with a detailed (and anonymous) list of worries, fears and concerns their employees had shared with me.

At this point one manager spoke out rather gruffly. “Well, this is all news to me. Where did all this come from? How did you get this information?”

With a smile I replied, “I just asked questions and listened to what your people told me.”

Every concern was a valid one. We spent the next several hours addressing the issues and developing a plan to facilitate

change with minimum stress for all involved. Our goal was to help management and support staff *work* together and *stick* together through the entire process.

Whether you're leading change within your department or your entire organization, you've probably already noticed that team members are struggling with questions. And they're not alone. You've got your *own* list – and it grows longer every day! How will you have to think and act differently? What new attitudes and behaviors will you have to model? How will you communicate openly, honestly and inclusively as appropriate? What is your plan to strengthen teamwork and deliver results?

If you look at some of the synonyms for *change* - *transform*, *adjust*, *adapt* – you can see why it's an uncomfortable concept for many. Leaders have to face the fact that most people don't *like* change and don't *want* to change. Your job is to help your people accept change and move forward. Utilize these success strategies as you develop your plan.

1. Your leadership team must speak with one voice. Discussion – mild, heated, or somewhere in between – must first take place among your leaders. Consensus must be reached before anyone takes information down the line. If you're speaking with more than one voice, confusion and chaos will surely follow.
2. Your staff doesn't know as much as you know. When there is no information forthcoming, people invent their own. Gossip and rumors run rampant. Open, honest,

direct and inclusive communication can stop hearsay before it has a chance to work its way through every department and division, spreading confusion and chaos as it goes.

3. No one can read your mind and know what you need or want from them. It's your job to clarify roles and responsibilities, set ground rules for achieving goals, and communicate the time frame in which those goals must be accomplished.
4. You may have had time to digest certain information and get comfortable with it, but your staff probably hasn't had the same opportunity. Be prepared to explain (clearly, concisely and honestly) what needs to happen and how the process will work.
5. Remember that everything you say and do sends a message. Since actions do speak louder than words, don't send mixed messages. If your words and actions don't match – if they aren't congruent – people realize they can't trust you. Once trust breaks down, communication breaks down. At that point, effective leadership is no longer possible.

To make change work, you must develop a plan to manage the dynamics of change at every level. It's about taking the lead to ensure that management and staff work together. I've worked with leaders at every level in healthcare, business

and industry, government, education and associations to successfully lead their people through change. The Good News is that they all survived! And so will you!



Leaders Are Idea Magnets

Everyone has heard the phrase “knowledge is power.” But SMART leaders know that knowledge is power... only when it is shared. So they are constantly attracted to new ideas and new ways of doing things. But they don’t stop there!

Because they believe there’s an abundance of good ideas to go around for anyone who has the willpower, initiative and confidence to go after what they want, they are excited to share their information with others. As a result, people are attracted to them because they radiate such enthusiasm about new possibilities and opportunities.

Always interested in attracting opinions and ideas other than

their own, they view healthy debate as a privilege. In addition to sharing their own ideas, good leaders are ready and willing to listen to others' ideas and learn from them. And they make sure to acknowledge and value the contributions of others. In doing so, they give credit where it is due – to the person who created, manufactured, initiated or put into action whatever new business strategies or plans have helped the organization to grow.

Ever on the lookout for the latest, most innovative ways to communicate new ideas, they stay up-to-date with current trends and are always ready to meet new people who can give them a different and unique perspective. And they are secure enough – and confident enough – to step out of the spotlight once in a while and give others a chance to shine.

While some people get caught up in the power of leadership and begin to confuse issuing orders with influencing thoughts and behaviors, smart leaders know the difference between influencing others in a positive way and just bossing someone around. They are committed to solving problems, not causing them. Do any of those traits describe you?

In my work as a motivational keynote speaker I've met leaders from all across the world who are information and idea magnets. How many have you met?

How many of those leaders are in your organization?

And if I asked your team members that same question, would they mention ***your*** name?



Give Others a Turn to Lead – and Shine

In my last semester of college I needed one more Physical Education credit to graduate. Not being a big fan of P.E., I chose a class that sounded like fun and would provide a useful skill for later life. As an added bonus, I learned a lot about leadership in the unique environment of Dance 101.

In the continuously evolving roles of men and women, much has changed. But the rules of dance remain the same. Just like in the sixth grade, the boy still leads and the girl still follows. Dance 101, however, was different. Since there were no guys in the class, the girls had to take turns leading. I

quickly learned that this plan worked fine in class, but it didn't go over well at fraternity parties. About halfway through each "slow song" my dance partner would look at me, smile and ask, "When do I get a turn to lead?"

In your leadership role how many times have you wished there was someone on your team who could take on more responsibility to help lighten your load? Look around. You may discover several staff members with great potential who would welcome more responsibility. Maybe you haven't been tuned in to their unspoken question: "When do I get a turn to lead?"

Just because you can do it all, doesn't mean you should do it all. Delegating tasks can help, as long as you're secure enough in your leadership role to delegate responsibility as well. Employees want to feel empowered to do their jobs without having to check in with you at every turn.

Leadership is not always about being in charge. It's about creating an environment where everyone feels empowered and engaged. In addition to sharing their own ideas, good leaders listen to others' ideas and learn from them. When appropriate opportunities arise, they're willing to step out of the spotlight and give others a chance to lead. Your reputation as a leader depends in part on your employees' abilities to make decisions when you're not around. So after you teach them, you must be able to let go and give them a chance to perform – and to shine.

Dance 101 gave me a new appreciation for those brave sixth grade boys who had to work up the courage to ask a

girl to dance. Taking on more responsibility often requires bravery and courage, too. Today's workplace demands that all employees learn new skills outside their areas of expertise and use them to support other team members, even when it's not part of their job.

Part of *your* job as a leader is to identify those employees with leadership potential, teach them, encourage them and give them an opportunity at the appropriate time to try out their wings.

Look around once more. Pay close attention to the people on your team. By their words and actions, who is asking the question: "When do I get a turn to lead?"



What's the #1 Goal of Every Organization?

Everyone's got a different opinion when it comes to answering this question. But the answer is relatively simple. Perhaps you can relate to this story in one of your own customer service experiences.

Enjoying an evening out with three other couples, we were seated around a U-shaped table as our young chef put on quite a show of slicing, dicing and tossing utensils while he prepared our meal. Then he asked us to hold out our plates so he could serve us. Because he miscalculated portion size as he served everyone else, there was no food left on the grill by the time he got to me.

“Well, how’s he going to handle this?” I wondered. “Maybe he’ll go into the kitchen and prepare something really special just for me.” Nope, I wasn’t that lucky. Glancing at my empty plate and then back at the empty grill he shouted, “Wait! Don’t anybody eat yet!”

Picking up each plate from my dinner companions, he scraped some of their food onto my plate. Then he handed it back to me, smiled weakly, and told me to enjoy my dinner. My friends sat in stunned silence, but I was laughing as I thought about what a great customer service story this would be to share in my keynotes about leadership and teamwork.

When I ask audiences the #1 goal of successful organizations, they call out a multitude of intelligent and creative answers. Then I tell them that it really comes down to this: No matter who you are, where you work and what you do, your organization’s #1 goal is to *stay in business*. Slogans about satisfied customers and happy employees are nice, but to survive in today’s economy every organization has to find ways to make money and save money while they deliver absolutely outstanding service.

How do you demonstrate that you, your job, and the way you do your job are linked to that #1 goal? For our young chef that evening, delivering outstanding service was not a priority. And it probably wasn’t even his fault. That’s because no manager, supervisor, or anyone else in a leadership position ever communicated and trained him as to how to avoid this situation in the first place.

It's easy to see why communication about service can fall through the cracks. Everyone's busy. Leaders who don't have time to train staff assume that everyone knows how to deliver good service. They often fail to follow up to see how that level of service is actually functioning.

Other leaders have an attitude about service that sends a definite message to their employees. They SAY that outstanding service is important but their attitudes, behaviors, policies and procedures don't support their words. In today's competitive environment, leaders have to practice what they preach.

"So what's the worst that can happen?" you might ask. "One customer got treated poorly, and a few other customers saw what happened. Big deal." But then you wouldn't think or say that because as a leader you know it's not that simple. When customer service doesn't measure up, it's rarely the fault of one person. Everyone is accountable. As service declines, so does customer loyalty.

People have lots of choices as to where they spend their money on products and services. And they love to share their stories about bad customer service with everyone they know. So what IS the worst that can happen? This restaurant is no longer in business. They managed to put themselves out of business – one customer at a time.

How would you describe the level of service in your organization? Are leaders, managers, supervisors and employees working together and communicating about

what's important? No matter who you are, where you work and what you do, delivering absolutely outstanding service is *everybody's* business.



Everyone Needs Applause!

I recently came across a program from a concert my husband and I attended during the holidays. Although we both enjoyed a rousing performance of Handel's "Messiah," we were obviously not as intensely involved in the experience as the young couple seated next to us. I knew this because we hadn't brought our own sheet music for the entire performance . . . as they had.

Always curious about why people do what they do, I struck up a conversation during intermission. Since they were both majoring in music at LSU, they had brought their own sheet music so they could follow along. And "follow along" they did – waving their conductors' mini-batons (*aka* pencils). Totally captivated, their eyes darted back and forth from the music on the stage to the music on the pages in their laps. They

smiled, nodded and whispered phrases that included words like *awesome*, *magnificent*, *brilliant* and *wonderful*.

When the concert ended with the traditional “Hallelujah” Chorus, the audience rose to its feet in a well-deserved standing ovation complete with heart-felt cheering and thunderous applause. The two students, however, didn’t applaud at all. Instead, they snatched up their programs and sheet music and began to crawl over audience members who were still standing at their places. As they squeezed by us, one of them said to the other, “Move faster. If we hurry, we can beat the traffic.”

What truly amazed me was their lack of comprehension that they should have taken time to add their own applause. But they were so focused on themselves that they never stopped to think about recognizing others for a job well done.

Before you start shaking your head and muttering, “Kids today...” think about how this scenario could apply to your life at work and at home. Let’s look first at your workplace. Juggling multiple priorities and working on an endless “to do” list, it’s easy to become so focused on your own needs that you miss opportunities to thank others for their dedication and hard work.

When you’re busy, it’s easier to assume that they *know* you appreciate their efforts instead of taking precious time to *tell* them. But the people on your team cannot read your mind. So it’s up to you to let them know. Tell them. Show them. It could be something as simple as a nod, a smile, a “thumbs up” or a

few encouraging words. You could acknowledge their efforts at a team meeting, or jot down a few words of thanks and support. The possibilities are endless – and affordable.

In today's competitive global environment in which everyone is expected to work harder and faster with fewer resources, a little credit and a bit of sincere praise can go a long way. A word of thanks and some well-deserved recognition can be very cost-effective ways to boost morale and improve productivity on your team.

Then we leave the workplace and go home to the people who are supposed to be the most important ones in our lives. But we often leave our good manners at work. We can just “be ourselves” at home, right? No one cares. No one notices if we're not at our best. This attitude makes no sense at all to me, even though I'm guilty of it myself at times.

Why do we smile and thank a total stranger for holding a door open, then just assume that those closest to us know we appreciate all they do for us? Why do we apologize for bumping into someone in a crowded store or on a busy sidewalk, yet find it hard to apologize when we've hurt someone's feelings or damaged our relationship by a thoughtless comment?

When is the last time you thanked someone for cooking a great meal, cleaning up after you, cutting the grass, or taking out the trash? How much longer do you have to wait to show your appreciation?

If you're looking for an easy way to make yourself AND others feel good, this just might be it! And the good news is that you don't have to wait for a special event like a holiday concert. Today is the perfect day to begin!



Role Models in the Game of Life

Arriving at the school gym to pick up our daughter after volleyball practice, I saw the team sitting in a circle, listening attentively to their coach. “Girls, you’re the District champs and our school heroes on the court. But remember that you’re heroes off the court too. Those first graders you see up in the stands when they come to watch you play? They look up to you. They respect you. And some of them want to be just like you when they grow up. So you have to do more than play a good game. You have to set a good example, both on and off the court.”

Hearing her words, I wondered how many times I had been a role model for someone and didn’t even realize it. How about you? Has that thought ever crossed your mind?

A healthcare leader once asked me how an organization could teach values to its employees. I answered, “You can’t teach values. You have to model them.” As a leader you’re “on stage” every day, from the time you arrive at work until the time you leave. People are watching to see how well you “walk your talk” and model the attitudes, behaviors and values you say are important to you and the rest of your team. If your leaders say that honesty and integrity are cornerstone values of your organization, then everyone in a leadership role must model those values.

Sometimes, however, the people we hold up as role models disappoint us by their words or deeds. Thankfully these people don’t represent the vast numbers of honest, hardworking leaders who are giving their best – not just when it’s convenient, but every single day. Trust, honesty, integrity and a sense of values can’t be taught. Instead, they must radiate from every leader at every level to create and maintain the character, the heart and the soul of the organization.

Being a leader is hard work. It’s impossible to do a perfect job because we’re all human and we all make mistakes. It’s critically important, however, to reflect on your position as a leader and the impact you are making on others every day.

Here are three questions to think about as you consider your leadership role:

1. Who’s watching to see how you “walk your talk”?

2. How would your employees describe you as a role model?
3. If you had to choose a role model, would you choose someone like you?



Never Forget! You're in Sales!

Did this statement take you by surprise? Maybe not. But I'll bet there's been at least one moment when you were having a particularly bad day at work, and you tried to make yourself feel better by muttering under your breath, "Things could be worse. At least I'm not in sales!" Sorry to burst your bubble, but as a leader you are definitely in sales!

Good leaders know that no matter what their job title, position or job description, they are first and foremost in the business of SALES. They understand that "selling" is about persuading others that what they offer is worth time, energy, money and trust. Always aware that their actions and attitudes are constantly being evaluated by others, they have

the confidence to convince others that they are a credible resource because they integrate good leadership skills into every area of their lives.

Their confidence and belief in themselves helps them prove to others that they are worth the trust and investment that their organization, employees, colleagues and customers put in them. They understand that their ability to motivate and persuade others to make good choices, work together as a team, be innovative, take risks and adapt successfully to challenging situations is a huge part of a strong leadership package.

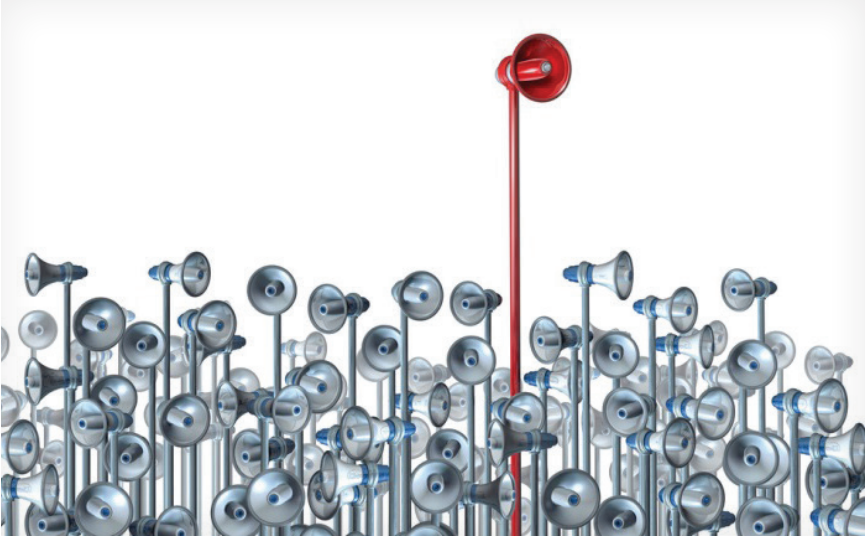
Every time I walk on stage as a keynote speaker, I work hard to convince my audience to accept new and creative strategies that can help them in their careers and their lives. I'm definitely in sales! Think about your job as a leader and how it connects to sales, even if you're not actively selling a product or service. Every time you search for just the right words to present your ideas to get the buy-in you need from others...you're selling.

Whenever you persuade someone to see something from your point of view...you're selling. Influencing others, getting people to think differently or even change their minds about an issue, a concept, a project or an idea – that's selling. We all "sell" our ideas every day – with customers, coworkers, colleagues, friends and family.

Now think about the successful salespeople you know. Notice how they work hard to nurture relationships built on mutual

trust and respect, take time to learn what's important to others, and listen to learn instead of doing all the talking. Knowing how to sell yourself, your ideas, your passion and your beliefs are vital to your success as a leader – in your personal and professional life.

If you want to gain the competitive advantage you need to **STAND OUT** as a leader, never forget that “you’re in sales”!



Communicate for Success!

To be a successful leader in today's fast-paced workplace, you must be able to communicate effectively with a variety of people, each with their own unique communication needs. Unfortunately, the busier you are the easier it is to make mistakes. Here are some strategies you can use to be more successful in the communication process.

1. Clearly define in your mind what you need, want, desire or expect from others. Remember that no one in your workplace is a mind reader. So you must be able to clearly articulate those needs, wants, desires and expectations to others. In an effort to save time, leaders often convince themselves that others know

what they need to know, and do, without adequate explanation. Confusion, wasted time and effort, and poor results often follow.

2. You must do more than tell your staff what to do. They must understand why what they do is important to help create the impact your department will have on the overall bottom line of your organization. Keep them in the information loop. The more they know the better job they can do for you.
3. While telling your staff what you need is crucial, it's also essential to take time to ask questions. Good communicators make sure others understand what's needed by asking questions to confirm that understanding. Closed questions are answered with a "yes" or a "no." Open ended questions help clarify the "who, what, when, where and how" of a conversation, as well as what's supposed to happen after that conversation takes place.
4. If you're taking time to ask the right questions, you must also take time to listen actively. Provide good eye contact, make appropriate comments as needed, and don't try to multi-task while someone is talking. Demonstrate by your body language, facial expression and tone of voice that you are actively listening to the other person's comments, suggestions or questions because they are important to you.

5. Analyze the feedback you've received in the listening process and make changes as appropriate. If one person in your department is confused by your explanation of a project, you may need to try a different approach with that individual. If several people raise the same questions or concerns, you may need to rethink your method.

One way to do this is to reflect on what you want to say and how you will phrase your message. Then ask yourself, "What questions might people have when I'm finished speaking?" Write down the questions you think people might ask. If you come up with only one or two, you're on the right track.

But if you can foresee a multitude of questions being asked repeatedly (because you thought of them yourself!) you must work harder to express yourself and convey your ideas in a more thorough and understandable way.

Effective communication is certainly hard work for all of us! These strategies will make the process easier and the outcome more successful, for you and for everyone on your team.



Who Needs to Hear from You Today?

What if everyone in your workplace made a conscious effort to re-invent “business as usual” by taking time to recognize each other for a job well done? And what if you – as their leader – led by example?

Every day presents countless opportunities to thank and encourage others, but they often slip by unnoticed. In today’s workplace, it’s easy enough to see how that can happen. Juggling multiple priorities and endless to-do lists, you’re focused on getting the job done. So it’s easier to assume others *know* you appreciate their efforts instead of taking precious time to *tell* them.

But your colleagues and coworkers are not mind readers. (And on some days, that's a very good thing!) It's up to you to let them know by telling them and showing them. It could be something as simple as a nod, a smile, a "thumbs up" or a few encouraging words during or after a team meeting. Everyone appreciates having his or her hard work acknowledged.

Maybe you're thinking, "Hey, everybody has to work hard around here. That's why they call it **WORK**. They don't need to be thanked for doing what they're supposed to do." True... but consider this. Workplace stress is on the rise. People are feeling over-worked and under-appreciated. In the midst of our fast paced daily routines a little credit and a bit of sincere praise can go a long way. Simple words of thanks and some well-deserved recognition can boost morale, improve productivity, and contribute to workplace success. The possibilities are endless and affordable.

Awards and certificates of appreciation are given out at company banquets every year. But a year is a long time for employees to wait before they hear any encouraging words. As a leader, what message are you sending? Make the commitment to spend five minutes a day observing your colleagues and coworkers who are doing their best and giving their best. Then ask yourself one question. "Who needs to hear from me today?"

When we stop taking people for granted and let them know how much we value them, we can have an impact more powerful than we ever imagined. When all is said and done,

encouraging words are never wasted. But if the words are never spoken, they will never be heard.



Why Isn't Anyone Listening?

“I give up! Why should I bother to share ideas about how our company can improve our products and services, be more successful, and increase profits? Nobody ever listens anyway.”

I hear some variation of this comment wherever I deliver my keynotes and workshops. It's usually followed by a remark that goes something like this. “I wish my boss (manager/supervisor /leader) could hear you talk about how we ALL can learn from each other.”

Successful leaders get the point. They know that whether they're working directly with a customer or they're working with someone who is, the ultimate goal is to create an outstanding

product or service that customers want and need. In addition to sharing their own ideas, they're ready and willing to listen to others' ideas and learn from them.

Recently I was privileged to keynote a corporate client's annual conference. Instead of the usual sales meeting format, they expanded their event to include those in leadership positions at every level in every area of the company. I gave all of them an assignment before they arrived. They were to come prepared with feedback gathered from their own departments on specific issues. This means they had to take time in advance to communicate with every team member in person, by phone or by email, asking for their input and suggestions as to how the company could improve its products, increase profits and deliver better service.

We talked about leadership, communication and managing change. Between sessions people had the opportunity to interact, discuss issues, solve problems and figure out how to work together more effectively. Leaders in this company gave more than lip service to the phrase "our people are our most important asset."

They shared their vision for where they wanted to take the company. Then they asked questions about how policies, procedures and customer service could be improved to help them do that. Everyone gained valuable skills they could implement when they returned to their teams. They had the unique opportunity to rethink how they could help the people in their respective departments meet and exceed their goals.

Unfortunately, this scenario is not typical of most organizations. Some leaders get so busy “leading” that they forget to communicate what’s important. They assume others know as much as they know. They don’t ask questions, listen, or act on others’ feedback – no matter how valuable it is. Let’s face it. No one wants to be left out of the loop, misunderstood or surprised by information they should have already had. Strong and confident leaders share information, are open to new ideas, and are committed to creating a culture that is trusting and productive.

How would you describe communication in your organization?

Is it open...honest...direct...responsive...and inclusive?

What did your last leadership meeting look like and sound like?

Do your leaders bring people together to talk about how you can help each other reach your goals – for now and for the future?

Are your leaders open to listening to new ideas from smart, creative and dedicated people, no matter what their job title happens to be?

Remember, good leaders never miss an opportunity to learn, and to let others know that someone really IS listening.



Technology: Friend or Foe?

You might answer that question differently on any given day, depending on your love/hate relationship with technology at that moment. It can *definitely* be a challenge. Emails are a great example of technology that can get out of control in no time at all. Here are some of the most frequent email complaints and frustrations that employees shared with me in our training sessions, along with some suggestions. As a leader, could you be unknowingly contributing to these problems? If so, they're easy to fix.

An attendee sighed, "Our manager wants to keep us in the information loop, but all 25 people in our department don't need – or want – to know all the details of every decision she

makes. I wish she would quit wasting my time with her emails and let me do my job!” (I’m sure you’ve figured out that her manager was not in this session!)

Suggestion: Busy people get frustrated wasting time reading emails they don’t need to see, and being pulled into email conversations where they don’t belong. Before you send that next email ask yourself, “Who *really* needs to know/see this?” And when you respond, does it really need to be “reply to all” or should you respond only to the appropriate people?

Another comment had lots of heads nodding. “In our company we use email as the primary means of communication – even to announce major changes. Sometimes all the facts are not explained as thoroughly as they should be. Then some people get upset and overreact when they misinterpret the message.”

Suggestion: Decide if a quick meeting, a face-to-face conversation or phone call could keep confusion to a minimum. Planning ahead with *all* forms of communication helps prevent miscommunication – and stress levels – from escalating.

A manager spoke up. “My emails seem perfectly clear to me. But someone often misunderstands and goes to a colleague for clarification instead of simply coming to me. Or they overreact and send me an angry email. Or they send me a list of 20 questions. I don’t have time for questions. Why don’t they understand what I mean?”

Suggestion: What makes perfect sense to us doesn’t always come across that way to others. When you finish composing

your message ask yourself, “What questions might people have after reading this?” Then tweak as needed to provide clarification before you hit “send.” And don’t forget to take “difficult personalities” into account as you create your messages. (You know who they are, don’t you?)

One person mentioned a frustrating issue for many. “Email is driving me crazy. People outside of work who never write or call have put me on their email list. They’re sharing everything that’s going on in their personal lives, and we’re not even close friends. So leave me alone already!” That comment evoked lots of laughter, along with agreement that the “delete” button is a very valuable tool.

Like any other form of technology, email communication can help or hinder productivity and create more problems than it solves. If you saw yourself in any of these scenarios, try these suggestions to improve your e-communication. If you recognized any of your team members here, this topic could be a valuable discussion at your next team meeting. And it could go a long way towards resolving some very sticky situations!



Who Are the Squirrels in Your Attic?

Our troubles began one morning with the pitter-patter of little feet in our attic. This worried me because, as far as we knew, no one was living in our attic at the time. We soon discovered that a crafty mother squirrel had come in through a loose vent and built a cozy nest for her babies. Les wasn't too worried. He was convinced they would leave when they were ready. That never happened.

Several weeks later he trapped and relocated them to a park across town. Don't laugh! Several people told us that squirrels have very good memories and would find their way back if we didn't take them far enough away! While she was in residence, mother squirrel's instinctual behavior included chewing

through some electrical wiring and causing problems that were expensive to repair. Because we didn't take appropriate and immediate action, a minor problem eventually became a major one.

As a leader, who are the “squirrels in ***your*** attic”? Is a colleague's difficult behavior impacting customer service, teamwork, morale and productivity? Is there a difficult person on your team who enjoys being a whiner, complainer, gossip or tattletale? No matter who they are, how much longer can you afford to avoid the issue and make excuses for difficult behavior because the problem isn't serious enough.... yet?

While you're not responsible for others' behavior, you *are* responsible for addressing that behavior when it negatively impacts you or the people who depend on you for your leadership. We don't have the power to change other people, but we DO have the power to decide how we will respond to them. We always have options. We can choose to ignore the problem, avoid the issue, make excuses, acknowledge the problem, do nothing, or take action. In any given situation, you have to decide which option works best for you.

When addressing difficult behavior:

- ✓ Do your homework and be prepared.
- ✓ Stick to the facts
- ✓ Don't allow your emotions to take over.
- ✓ Don't be disrespectful.

- ✓ Set boundaries.
- ✓ Let others know they must respect those boundaries.

How will you deal with difficult behavior, as necessary and appropriate, before it leads to more serious problems? Who are “the squirrels in *your* attic”?



Managing the Soap Opera Star

“**W**hat can I do with my problem employee? Her life is a soap opera, and every day she brings the latest episode to work!” This urgent plea came from an audience member. She continued, “As her manager I’ve tried to be a caring and empathetic listener. But she thinks she’s the only employee in the company who has personal problems, and that it’s OK to bring them to work and talk about them non-stop. She’s affecting our productivity. And morale is going down the drain.”

If you’re also struggling with this sensitive issue, these four talking points can help:

1. You understand that serious situations can develop unexpectedly and impact an employee's productivity. But you have certain expectations and cannot accept a drop in performance from employees for every trivial event or stressful day that comes along.
2. Remember the fable of the little boy who cried, "Wolf"? Some employees treat every minor problem like a major catastrophe. When people make *everything* a crisis, no one takes them seriously when a *real* crisis comes along. Everyone must learn to separate the big problems from the little ones and respond accordingly – with common sense.
3. In serious situations, it's OK to ask for help. In fact, that's often the smartest thing to do. But most people resist. They think that asking for help is a sign of weakness. In my work with organizations I've found the exact opposite to be true. It's the strong and confident people who want to take charge, deal with the issue and find a workable solution as soon as possible. When they realize they can't do it alone, they reach out to get the help they need. That's a true sign of strength, no matter what the circumstances.
4. You're more willing to help if you're apprised of extenuating circumstances before they impact morale, productivity and customer service. In the vast majority of cases it's not your responsibility

to solve your employees' problems for them. They must step up, get involved, be willing to do their part and work with you as necessary and appropriate.

We all know that life isn't perfect. As soon as we fix one problem, there's another one waiting for us right around the corner. Leaders and team members must work together to solve problems before they negatively impact the workplace. Today's organizations certainly need "stars" at every level — but not the "soap opera star variety."



Handling Complaints from Angry People

With stress levels of customers, coworkers and colleagues constantly on the rise audience members often ask me, “How do I handle the angry people in my life?” As grown-ups we know how to use calm words and controlled behavior to express anger, seek satisfaction and get results in a professional, assertive and adult manner. But angry people don’t always act exactly like grown-ups, do they?

Think back to the last time you had an argument with a frustrated or angry three-year-old – and won. Having trouble calling that victory to mind? Don’t worry. You’re not alone.

It probably wasn't easy, even though you're older, wiser, and certainly bigger than your young opponent. When angry people behave like little kids, it's almost impossible to communicate as adults because of their childish – and often irrational – behavior. These strategies can help bring “the little kid” up to your adult level so you can talk calmly and work together to resolve the issue at hand.

Assess. Allow time for the person to “have her say” or “get it off his chest.” After a few moments of listening, you may be ready to jump in with a logical solution and solve the problem. But “the little kid” doesn't want to hear from you yet. Don't interrupt. Let him or her talk – within reason. Sometimes, as we all know, people just want to be heard.

Acknowledge the problem as they see it. Listen actively and give them your undivided attention. Even if you think they're exaggerating or over-reacting, it's important to validate *their* perception of the situation.

Agree to the extent you can. You don't have to agree on who's right and who's wrong, but you can agree that there's a problem or that the person is upset. Use appropriate phrases that demonstrate your empathy and concern.

Apologize to the extent you can. Sometimes it's appropriate to apologize, even if you're not at fault because it's the *professional* thing to do. Any time you ARE at fault, you should apologize because it's the *right* thing to do. Know the difference between accepting personal responsibility

and offering a sincere but blameless apology if that's part of your job.

Act within your authority. If you can't solve the problem or offer some help, find someone who can. In certain situations no one – including you – can fix what's wrong. But you can choose to offer your understanding, empathy and support as necessary and appropriate.

Assess again, or re-assess. Take time later to reflect on the outcome of your conversation. Was the person in a better frame of mind – or more upset? What did you say or do that helped the situation? What did you say or do that made matters worse? Reflecting on your words, actions, and outcomes will help you be more effective next time.

Remember, your “three-year-old in adult disguise” may simply be annoyed, irritated, frustrated or scared. Most angry people are not dysfunctional beings who are out of touch with reality. But unfortunately, some of them are. It's not your job to accept abuse of any kind – at work or at home. If that's your issue, talk with someone in HR at work, or with a trusted friend or family member in your personal life to help you decide how to handle the situation.

And take heart! The more you practice these techniques, the easier it will be to deal with the angry people in your life – no matter how old they are!



You're in the Driver's Seat

Did you take family vacations growing up? Summer always reminds me of our annual pilgrimage to Virginia for our family reunion. Without air conditioning, the 24-hour trip in our trusty station wagon was long and hot. Excited to see all of our cousins again, my siblings and I were generally cooperative on the way there. The trip home was a different story. By the time we were 200 miles from home, all four kids were whining and complaining about a myriad of sibling injustices taking place in the back seats.

Our parents handled our negative behavior differently. My mother would sigh, cajole, and plead with us to behave. My father took another approach. His hands never left the wheel as he made eye contact with us in the rear view mirror and spoke

one simple sentence in a calm voice. “Don’t make me have to stop this car.” If you’re having personal flashbacks of being in that car, you know that phrase always worked wonders!

Today’s workplace can be as stressful as a long, hot road trip. Departments are short-staffed and everyone is working harder, often in close quarters. Problems happen. Coworkers make mistakes. Customers are demanding and unreasonable. Days are long. Thankfully, most employees handle these challenges as true professionals because they understand what’s expected.

But every team usually has at least one whiner or complainer on board. You know the drill. They complain about everything, and nothing is ever their fault or their responsibility. While you can’t change difficult people, you can choose how to handle problem behavior from colleagues, coworkers, friends, and... yes...even difficult family members.

Winers and complainers try to get you emotionally involved so you will reward them by giving in and asking less of them. To be effective you must take a direct, calm and firm approach. It’s easy to get caught up in someone else’s anger or frustration. Remove the emotion from the situation so you can deal with the facts. Maintain self-control. Just like smart kids, difficult employees know what buttons to push “to get you worked up.” When that happens, you lose control of your ability to respond in a rational and logical manner.

Winers have excellent memories, and they like to complain about things that happened long ago, even if the issue has

been resolved. Don't allow them to pull you back into the past. Focus on their present behavior and the problems it's causing for others.

My dad didn't reward us for our negative behavior. Instead, he held us accountable. It was not his job to keep us happy. *His* job was to get us home safely, and *our* job was to keep distractions to a minimum so he could do his job. As a leader, what's YOUR job? Holding difficult people accountable for their behavior puts you in the driver's seat!



Sharpen Your Focus

Standing on my hotel balcony before I went downstairs to deliver my conference keynote, I watched the early morning beachcombers as they searched for seashells. Suddenly I noticed several dolphins putting on quite a show about 100 feet from shore. Surely one of the shell gatherers would notice them and alert everyone else to this spectacular sight! But no one ever looked up. They plodded along, heads bent in concentration, eyes focused only on the task at hand. Even though no one could hear me above the sound of the waves I started shouting, “Hey! You’re missing the dolphins!”

Today’s organizations are looking for every competitive advantage they can find. That includes streamlining the ways work gets done. While this approach can have a positive impact on the bottom line, it can have quite a negative impact

on employees. Profits are not achieved through streamlining alone, but also through the impact of the attitudes and behaviors of the people who get the job done. Do the attitudes and behaviors of your team members – and your attitude as their leader – give you a competitive edge?

If your organization is going to STAND OUT from the competition, it's time to take a look around. Observe how management and staff interact with customers and with each other. How are they handling change and dealing with increased pressure to produce? How are their attitudes and behaviors impacting morale and productivity – individually and as part of the team? What choices are they consciously making to contribute to team success? As their leader, what can you say and do to encourage them?

Remember, we all get to **choose** how to respond to our daily challenges. While you may not be in charge of everything that happens in your workplace you are in charge of the attitudes and behaviors you bring to work every day. You can choose to come to work with a positive attitude, support and encourage each other, and refrain from gossiping, tattling and complaining. You can choose to work together, stick together, and take pride in the work you do, both as an individual and as part of a strong team.

The ability to STAND OUT from the Crowd depends both on what you do and how you do it. To improve leadership performance, increase personal accountability and encourage your people to accept and embrace change, you need to be aware of negative attitudes and behaviors – whether they're

coming from one department or one person. You must pay attention to long term goals while you're focusing on short term projects.

It's easy to get so caught up in the daily routine of short term goals that you fail to see problems, or take time to celebrate successes.

How are your leaders, colleagues and co-workers doing?

Are you so focused on short term goals that you're missing the bigger picture?

Where are your attention and effort being channeled?

Are you so busy gathering seashells that you're missing the dolphins?



Build a Team of Advocates and Allies

Smart leaders know they can't do the job alone, so they make sure to surround themselves with great people. They realize that in order to stay employed, be promoted, and build and maintain a successful career, they must align themselves with people who will:

- Trust them
- Support them
- Go to bat for them
- Be honest with them and help them succeed

Good Leaders realize the importance of having strong and supportive relationships at work, at home and in the community. So they choose to associate with people whose fair and honest values and standards coincide with theirs. These invaluable people are their advocates and allies who can help them succeed.

In my travels as a leadership speaker I've met many advocates and allies in organizations across the country. How many people like this do you have in your life? I'm asking because you definitely need your own advocates and allies in your corner. They will stop you when you're headed in the wrong direction, let you know when you've gone too far, offer helpful feedback when needed and influence you in a positive way. In today's uncertain world, having people around you who can help you achieve your goals puts you at a definite advantage.

Most important, your advocates and allies will fight for you because they believe in you! They can be found everywhere – in all departments, divisions, offices and teams. They can be your customers, your co-workers, your employees or members of your leadership team. If you are really strong at building relationships you can even develop advocates and allies outside your organization. These are all important relationships in a competitive world where people often have to fight to be noticed and recognized. The important thing to remember is this...

**YOU DON'T CHOOSE YOUR ADVOCATES.
THEY CHOOSE YOU.**

Now is the time to make a list of your advocates and allies inside and outside your organization. But before you can make your list you must answer these questions.

- Are you the kind of person others believe in enough to offer guidance, help, support and encouragement when you need it the most?
- Do people stand by you in difficult times?
- Do you ask for help and get help when you ask?
- If you answered “No” to any of the above, what can you do to start cultivating more positive relationships? (Hint: You will have to make some changes in yourself to make it work!)

Who are the people you can count on to work with your best interests in mind? Because they can’t win the battle for you, it’s your responsibility to give your advocates the help they need to go to bat for you by providing them with positive and solid documentation of the value you bring to the organization.

That’s not bragging and boasting. That’s just smart personal branding!



Take Networking to New Levels

Now that you've got your list of advocates and allies...what needs to happen next? Good leaders understand that such supportive relationships don't magically appear when you need them. They must be cultivated and continually nurtured. And that process starts by understanding that in order to build your list of advocates and allies you must network with people all over the world – not just across town.

Good leaders know they can't accomplish everything on their own. So they realize the importance of getting involved with other people, using every available resource, sharing ideas, listening to differing opinions and exchanging services. Do

you realize that networking is a powerful tool for building relationships that can propel you forward? Understanding how it works and using it to your advantage can expand your connections in ways you never imagined possible!

Networking is certainly different than it used to be. These days it's not only *who* you know, but who you don't know *yet* that can make a difference. Swapping business cards at professional functions, talking to everyone you meet about what you do (or wish you did) and churning out resumes is no longer the most efficient way to network. There are a myriad of other ways!

One word of advice: If you decide to take advantage of the multitude of networking opportunities available to you, don't get carried away! Even though writing, texting and e-mailing seem to be the easiest ways to go, never underestimate the power of face-to-face communication.

In today's fast paced world face-to-face interaction often becomes more difficult for people who are accustomed to communicating instantly through social media. In my experience as a keynote speaker I've learned that no matter how many devices, programs, systems or tools are invented that will allow you to communicate without ever speaking directly to another person, your ability to converse face-to-face with someone can make or break the relationship.

Networking is not a one-way street. It's a relationship based on creating opportunities for *both* people. Savvy networkers know that the strongest alliances are created between parties who are interested in helping each other succeed.

How good are you at networking?

Could you benefit by putting some time and effort into doing it better?



Good Leaders Are Good People!

Shakespeare had it right when he said, “All the world’s a stage.” That’s because every person you meet, know and communicate with is a member of your *audience*. “Good leaders are good people” sounds like a no-brainer, right? From your own personal experience, however, I’ll bet you’ve learned that’s not always the case. All leaders are NOT always good people! And worse yet, they think that no one notices.

What separates good leaders from the rest is their wisdom to know that no matter how difficult the situation, they must model the behaviors they want to see in others and always treat others

with respect. They understand that people do NOT work harder, become more creative, share ideas or take responsibility when they are constantly criticized, bullied, ridiculed, scared, worried or treated badly. The same holds true for parenting, family, and personal relationships.

Audience members often ask me, “But what about leaders who aren’t good at any of those things? In fact, they aren’t very good leaders at all!” Unfortunately, it’s true that there are many people in powerful leadership positions who exhibit few, if any, “good” traits. But honestly, are those the leaders you would CHOOSE to follow? Do they exhibit the behaviors you want to see in yourself, your children, your colleagues, family and friends? Of course not!

There will be times when you will have an important choice to make about the people you allow to influence your life. So make sure you choose wisely. Good Leaders make good choices without compromising their values or the values of others. Look for those kinds of leaders in your life. And CHOOSE to be that kind of leader for others.

While it’s often easy to confuse power with leadership, they don’t always go hand-in-hand. Your “role” as a leader isn’t defined by your title, the size of your office, or how many initials and credentials come after your name. Your responsibility as a leader doesn’t revolve around your education level, years of experience on the job or your expertise in your field.

True Leadership is reflected in the choices you make and the way you decide to live your life. Effective Leaders are

committed to being assertive, setting fair boundaries and consequences, letting people know where they stand, evaluating with objectivity and treating others RIGHT!



Making Tough Decisions

As heavy rains caused the Mississippi River to rise to unprecedented levels in Baton Rouge, our local news station carried a story of a ship captain who was trying to reach the docks to unload his cargo before the river was closed to traffic. According to his calculations he could pass safely under the bridge with 12 inches of clearance to spare. But instead of proceeding, he turned around. He realized that after the cargo was unloaded, his ship would sit much higher in the water and he couldn't pass back under the bridge to get home. With no easy choices and a tough decision staring him in the face, he made the right call.

While we all have to make tough decisions to get through life, it's not always easy to make the right call. And finding excuses to procrastinate is a lot easier! "This isn't fair! Why do I have to decide now? If I wait long enough someone else might make the decision for me, or the problem may resolve itself." Sound familiar?

Depending on the situation, any or all of these outcomes could be valid. Some problems have a way of resolving themselves if we're patient enough to wait and see how things turn out. But at other times we don't have the luxury of waiting. The problem is not going to resolve itself. It might only get worse. So we do the best we can with the choices we have. And we move forward – without any guarantees that we made the right call.

Over your lifetime you'll make countless important decisions – and most of them won't come with any guarantees. Maybe you're facing some tough choices in your personal or professional life – having a conversation with a difficult employee, starting or ending a relationship, making that long overdue doctor's appointment, starting a new business, moving to a new town, going back to school, contemplating a career change or retiring from the job you have. While it's easier to procrastinate, it's usually better to do *something* to move forward instead of remaining stuck in the same place.

We all have to make many important decisions alone, but we can also ask for help when we need it. While no one can make every decision for you, there are people you respect

who can lend an ear, act as a sounding board and offer their wise counsel to help you focus in the right direction.

When faced with *your* next difficult decision, here are some questions to ask yourself:

- Who is stopping me?
- What is stopping me?
- Who needs to act?
- Who needs to get out of the way?
- How much longer can I afford to wait until the *easy* choices come along?

Once you answer these questions honestly the issues – and answers – will become clear. Then you'll know what choice you need to make. And as we all know, sometimes there are NO easy choices. But like that riverboat captain, we must always do our best, rely on our inner strengths, use good judgement, draw from past experience, and maintain our confidence to make the right call.



What's Your Staff *Really* Thinking?

Here's some very powerful feedback I've gathered from support staff with a wide variety of my clients. In my sessions with them, with no leaders present, I asked them how their supervisors and managers could be more effective leaders. Their suggestions were perceptive and insightful and can definitely impact your success as a leader. Here are some of the comments they shared. Do any of them sound familiar?

Don't manage me. LEAD me.

Let me know what's expected.

Let me know how I'm doing.

Give me enough positive feedback so I can handle constructive feedback.

Make yourself available for face-to-face time.

Don't play favorites.

Treat me fairly.

Don't dismiss my ideas right off the bat.

Leave your drama at the door.

Don't make decisions too quickly.

Give me updates on what your priorities are, so I know how to best utilize my time.

Say "Good morning" instead of ignoring us.

Plan out the work you want me to accomplish and let me know what you want me to do. Tell me what you need. I am not a mind reader.

Give me more continuity with projects instead of jumping around from one to the next.

Be honest.

Show interest in your employees.

Don't be so negative all the time.

Don't treat me like your child. You are not my parent.

Take my feelings into account.

Don't talk down to me.

Be able to accept constructive feedback as well as give it.

Listen to me.

Be open to my ideas.

Recognize my efforts.

Respect the work I do.

I want to be proud to have you as my leader and proud to work with you.

How could this feedback impact the way you interact and communicate with the people YOU lead? You don't have to be a mind reader to know that there's always room to improve your listening skills AND your leadership skills.



Blending the Art and Science of Leadership

After getting involved in a personal fitness program that left me less than “fit,” I met with an orthopedist to repair my “frozen shoulder.” Like we all do when faced with such an important decision, I chose a doctor who came highly recommended. With an excellent reputation for being knowledgeable in his field, combined with a high success rate with his patients, he obviously excelled at the *science* of medicine. On my first visit, however, it was very evident that he practiced the *art* of medicine as well.

He came into the exam room, smiled, extended his hand and introduced himself. Rather than keeping his eyes focused on

my chart, he looked at me when he spoke and showed me the common courtesies we all appreciate. Listening patiently as I explained my injury, he asked questions to learn more. He welcomed my questions and translated his diagnosis into terms I could understand. Then he explained a variety of options for my treatment, and together we decided on the best plan. In everything he said and did, he treated me like a person instead of just another patient to be hurried along so he could see as many patients as possible before the day ended.

Through a combination of people skills and communication skills, he blended the art and science of medicine to become a master of his craft. As I continued to see him for several months as my shoulder healed, I thought about how each of us could be more effective if we practiced both the art and science of our craft. Being an effective leader requires such a blending process.

Today's leaders have developed skills in the *science* of leadership. They know how to delegate, prioritize, schedule, plan and coordinate. But there's a lot more to being an effective leader than simply following the mechanics. Those who practice *both the art and science* of leadership know how to promote and improve the performance of others to impact their customers, coworkers and the bottom line.

Good communication is the key. How are you working to develop and improve your skills to practice the art and science of leadership? Successful leaders communicate in an open, honest and direct manner. They want to know all there is

to know, and they want to share that knowledge with their employees as necessary and appropriate.

Before I keynote a conference I ask the meeting planner a myriad of questions about the organization and the people who will be in my audience. As I explain it, “Keep me in the loop because the more I know the better job I can do for you.” Your employees can do a better job for you if you keep them in the communication loop whenever possible.

How good a communicator are you?

How are you at listening?

Would your staff describe you as a leader who extends the common courtesies we all appreciate?

Do you welcome questions and involve your staff in decisions whenever possible?

When you’re choosing a physician, you want someone who practices both the art and science of medicine, because you deserve nothing less than the best. The same holds true for the people you lead. They deserve nothing less than the very best leader you can possibly be. And *that’s* a tried and true Rx for leadership success!



Leadership Skills Are LIFE Skills!

Where can STANDOUT Leadership take you? The answer is simple. On the Road of Life, Leadership skills are LIFE skills that can take you wherever you want to go! So here's what else you need to know!

Many people who described the most effective leaders in their organization mentioned words like *perseverance* and *determination*. Leaders keep working to be the best they can be. They are high achievers who constantly strive for excellence. Focused on their goals, they keep things in perspective and realize there is always room for improvement. Continually reaching to learn more about themselves and their jobs, they integrate excellence into every task.

A good leader must have a strong desire to be the best by providing outstanding customer service and working hard to create an excellent, cohesive and productive work force. How strong an achiever are you? Do you see yourself as striving to set new standards of excellence for yourself and your organization?

Good leaders are versatile. They use their unique combination of strengths and learned skills to positively impact every area of their personal and professional lives. Leadership is a strong part of their personality and shines through in everything they do and with every person they meet.

Good leaders are great role models. They realize that the opportunity to impact people in a positive way exists in every situation, relationship, job and activity. Therefore, they always do their very best to model the behavior, attitudes and values that others would choose to imitate. They are constantly looking for ways to be better leaders, better people and better influencers.

And here's the best part. All of the work and effort you put into developing your leadership skills will extend far beyond the workplace. You have opportunities to exhibit good leadership skills every day. Being a good leader is a 24-hour a day job. Incorporating STANDOUT leadership skills will make a positive difference in your personal and professional relationships, and a positive impact on your employees.

Think about the CHOICES you make about how you live your life, communicate, act, respond, handle change, deal with

stress, negotiate, cope with difficult people and work with a team. These choices all reflect your character and represent your core values and beliefs to others.

Do you live the kind of life that others would choose to imitate, follow and respect? If so, then you are an INFLUENTIAL person.

LEADERSHIP SKILLS ARE LIFE SKILLS that can take you wherever you want to go!

I trust that you've found this book helpful and that you'll go back to specific chapters as needed. No matter which strategies you choose to put into practice, remember this:

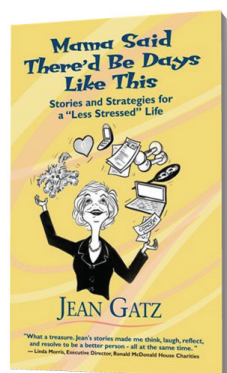
If you want to be...Healthy, Happy, Successful, Confident, Empowered, Energetic, Innovative and Trusted... then you must work hard to surround yourself with people at work and at home who are safe, supportive, honest and respectful. Your personal and professional relationships impact *every* area of your life. So make sure your relationships are the very best they can be! You deserve nothing less!

Looking for more strategies to help you deal with stress, manage change, reduce conflict and handle life's challenges? Check out my other books at <http://jeangatz.com/shop/>

Mama Said There'd Be Days Like This!

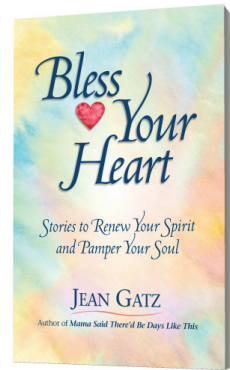
Does your day begin with promise – until you get out of bed and begin it, and then it's downhill from there? Do you feel pulled in a dozen different directions at once? Do you have colleagues, customers and kids who are getting on your last nerve? If so, this book is for you! Jean blends entertaining yet true

stories with insightful strategies to help you handle change with more flexibility, make tough decisions with more clarity, communicate more effectively, and deal with difficult people – without becoming one yourself.



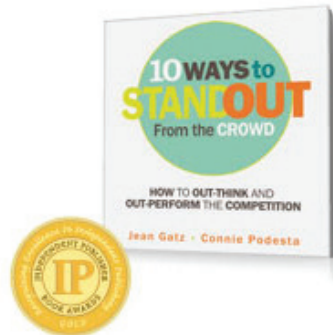
Bless Your Heart

You don't have to be a Southerner to appreciate the versatility of that simple yet powerful little phrase, "Bless your heart." Jean's stories will make you laugh, think and reminisce about your own life experiences. When you open your mind and heart to look at life from a fresh perspective, you can renew your spirit every single day. And that will qualify you as an honorary Southerner even if you weren't born and raised in the South... Bless your heart!



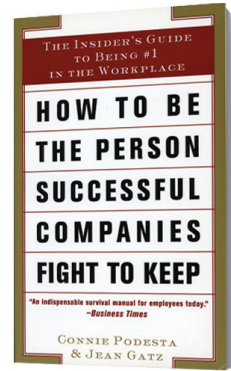
10 Ways to STAND OUT from the Crowd

To be successful today, you must STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD. The question you must ask is: "What do you bring to the table that's so unique and memorable that people CHOOSE to be your customer, colleague, coworker, employee, leader, partner or friend?" Jean's award-winning book gives you the tools you need to OUT-THINK old ideas and OUT-SHINE past performance in your personal and professional life. If you're ready to STAND OUT in a positive way, this is the book for you!



How to be the Person Successful Companies Fight to Keep

Jean doesn't just talk about taking charge of your career. She literally wrote the book on it! From interviews with hundreds of decision makers, Jean learned how they determine which employees they would fight to keep. Jean will help you look at your future and understand what today's organizations expect from employees at every level. With insight and humor, Jean shares the skills you must demonstrate to remain employable and marketable in challenging times. Keep your options open and develop a plan to build the career you want ... and deserve.



Wait! There's more! Keep reading!

If you enjoyed this eBook, be sure to visit my website at www.jeangatz.com. It's jam packed with lots of additional free resources, quizzes, articles, videos, ideas, strategies and solutions to help you create and sustain the life you want to have – now and into the future.

And if you ever need me to deliver my message “in person” at your next event, I'm only an email or phone call away!

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