



Bridges

A bi-monthly newsletter from Meridian Consulting, Inc.

Building Bridges to Success

May/June 2005

In this issue:

- **Featured Article:** *Are You Getting The Results You Want?*
- **Book/Article Review:** *First Break All the Rules*
- **Featured Service:** *Coaching Services*

Quote:

"People don't change that much. Don't waste time trying to put in what was left out. Try to draw out, what was left in. That is hard enough."

Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman

Featured Topic: *Are You Getting The Results You Want?*

Convergence, every once in a while seemingly unrelated pieces of information just seem to connect in a way that makes sense and makes a connection. Here are two such pieces of information.

First, in Malcolm Gladwell's very fascinating book Blink, the depth of our subconscious mind is explored. The primary conclusion is that the subconscious is more active and has more capacity than the conscious mind. In fact the subconscious may be solving problems and resolving dilemmas without any conscious effort on our part. When something seems clear, but you don't know how you arrived at that insight, it may be the work of your subconscious and is known as "rapid cognition" or "thin slicing."

One of the important aspects of *thin slicing* is that it can affect our behavior in ways in which we're not cognizant. For example, the author describes a study where certain words were hidden in simple sentences and the subjects were told to re-arrange the sentences to make sense. One group was given sentences with aggressive words like *interrupt* and *impatient*. The second group had passive words woven into their task, words like *patience* and *polite*.

When they groups were done with their simple task they were to report to the *test administrator*, but the test administrator had someone in the doorway of

their office talking about trivial matters. In the majority of instances, those who worked with the aggressive set of words interrupted the conversation or simply pushed past the person in the doorway. On the other hand those whose sentences included the passive words invariably waited patiently in the hall. The researchers put a 10-minute time limit on the experiment and those with the *passive* words waited the full 10 minutes. Those with the *aggressive* words in their sentences generally waited just a couple of minutes before interrupting.

The conclusion of the study was that an individual's subconscious picks up clues from the environment around them and that the subconscious processing has a profound impact on behavior. The lesson here is that *rapid cognition* is taking place in those around you. Their actions are a reflection of their subconscious interpretations of what is taking place. You may tell people they are empowered, but if the system or your actions demonstrate a lack of trust that is what will guide their actions no matter what you say or what the published guiding principles say. After all, two of the stated guiding principles of Enron were *Respect* and *Integrity*.

Second, in their breakthrough book First, Break All the Rules, by Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman, one of their most important findings was that a person's immediate manager has more of an impact on individual performance than any other single factor. This fact is so influential, that people in identical situations but with different managers, can have dramatically different perceptions about their jobs and their level of job satisfaction. Which, as you know has a dramatic impact on factors such as productivity, turnover and effectiveness.

As Buckingham and Coffman put it, "The management role is the company's power supply."

The manager's role is the catalyst, bringing together the needs and objectives of the enterprise, with the skills and knowledge of the worker to achieve the desired results. As a manager, your ability to build relationships, mentor subordinates, and build an environment that encourages the full and authentic participation of those around you, is the difference between just getting the job done and doing an excellent job.

Keeping in mind the nature and impact of the subconscious and the power of your management to influence perceptions and behavior, you must constantly be aware of the direct and indirect messages you send everyday.

- If you want people to give their best, you must give your best everyday.
- If you want others to act responsibly, you must take responsibility for your own actions.
- If you want people to show up and be present and fully engaged, then you must do the same every day.

As a manager you are the difference maker and your actions "prime the pump." In order to get the water to flow, you must first put some water in. You get out what you put into it; it is as simple as that. There was a time when the perceived role of management was to tell people what to do and make sure they did it. But in truth, there are limits to the adequacy of verbal instruction, realistically, people learn from example and direct experience. To play on the

words of Gandhi, you must be the attitude you want to see in others. Mastery of self must precede the leadership of others.

Book Review: “*First Break All the Rules*”

By Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman

For everyone who has had the idea that there must be a better way to manage people and perform work, this book is for you. The authors make a clear case for a common sense approach to managing an organization, large or small, and their recommendations are backed by a solid array of data as well.

One of the key findings is that it is an individual's immediate manager who makes the most significant difference in a person's perceptions about the workplace and their resulting performance. They found that no matter how generous its pay or great the training, the organization that lacks great frontline managers suffers poorer overall performance.

This book has the data to prove the link between employee opinions and productivity, profit, customer satisfaction, and the rate of turnover. In addition, the authors provide you with the “Q12” tool for collecting valuable information that gives you the key to attracting and retaining your best people.

One of the great aspects of this book is the ability of the authors to clearly explain the difference between *skills*, *knowledge*, and *talent*. With this insight into the basics of developing individual performance you are better equipped to develop the individuals in your work group, improve the capability for your team, and increase your own level of job satisfaction.

One of our Bridges' subscribers has put into action the lessons from this book. When asked how he knew that this approach worked, he replied “*We have had 55 consecutive months of profitability since we implemented the lessons from this book and there is no end in sight.*” The authors have presented sound data demonstrating that organizations are successful with using this approach, AND the employees have a higher sense of commitment and greater sense job satisfaction.

Great book, we think you'll find it valuable too.

Featured Service: *Coaching*

Coaching is a sound business investment. It provides the opportunity to focus on *what's important*, *move to action*, and *achieve the desired results*. Coaching can help you achieve insights, growth, and results faster and easier than doing it by yourself.

One-on-one coaching benefits a range of situations:

- You have just been promoted or stepped up to a new level that requires different skill sets.

- You want to leverage your strengths.
- You are being held back by one or two challenges.
- You want to re-engage your career.

Meridian Coaching Programs are designed with you in mind. I can structure your coaching program to meet your budget, schedule and objectives. With that in mind, I help you develop a program that is tailor-made for your situation, work style and learning needs.

What My Clients Say

"We would all like to believe in our capability to resolve issues and handle difficult situations by ourselves, but my Coach helped me achieve significant improvement. Angela provided me with insightful guidance, relevant information and actionable tools that helped me significantly improve my leadership and management effectiveness."
VP of Marketing, Financial Industry

"Angela pulled me out of the doldrums of 'nothing will change around here' and into the possibilities that exist when I finally realized on a 'gut level' that all change starts and ends with me. She turned my cynicism into 'I can' do something about this—starting with working on developing more effective management skills. She kept me focused on my area of control and helped me improve my communication skills. Now I spend my time working in areas where I truly can make a difference. I am more successful in getting my ideas across. I have been able to influence outcomes because I can talk in a way where people with different values can listen."
Program Officer, U.S. Military

"As my Coach, Angela has helped me with difficult employee problems, as well as helping me cope with the pressures that accompany that type of problem. We have worked on goals very successfully and she always delivers. She has the ability to identify the heart of the issue so that I can truly resolve problems and make progress."
VP of Risk Management, Financial Industry

"Things do not happen. Things are made to happen." John F. Kennedy

If you or your organization are looking for an effective method to develop new skills sets, see things in new ways, internalize new behaviors and overcome obstacles, then contact Angela C. Gonzalez today for a **free** coaching session.

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