



What Got You Here Won't Get You There How Successful People become Even More Successful

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Publisher: Hyperion

Copyright year: 2007

ISBN: 1-4013-0130-4

Author's Bio: Marshall Goldsmith is corporate America's preeminent executive coach. Goldsmith is one of a select few consultants who has been asked to work with more than eighty CEOs in the world's top corporations. He has helped implement leadership processes that have impacted more than one million people.

Author's big thought: In this wonderful book Marshall discusses the key beliefs of successful leaders and also the behaviors that hold them back. He addresses the fundamental problems that come with success and the twenty habits that hold people back.

Notes:

Part 1: The Trouble with Success: In which we learn how previous success often prevents us from Achieving more success

Chapter 1: You are Here

- Marshall works as an executive coach with successful people who have a dented sense of proprioception which is the sense of how you are perceived by others. They look at the map of their life and career. It tells them, "You Are Here." But they don't accept it. They may resist the truth.
- Marshall shows these people what their colleagues at work *really* think of them. It's called feedback. It's the only toll needed to show people, "You Are Here."
- It doesn't take much to get people oriented and back on the right path. The problems we will be looking at in this book are not life-threatening diseases (although ignored for too long they can destroy a career). They're not deep-seated neuroses that require years of therapy or tons of medication to erase. More often than not, they are simple behavioral tics – bad habits that we repeat dozens of times a day in the workplace – which can be curd by (a) pointing them out. (b) showing the havoc they cause among the people surrounding us, and (c) demonstrating that with a slight behavioral tweak we can achieve a much more appealing affect.

- Were talking about people who do one annoying thing repeatedly and don't realize that this small flaw may sabotage their otherwise golden career. And, worse, they do not realize that (a) it's happening and (b) they can fix it.
- Here is a place where you can be a success in spite of some gaps in your behavior or personal makeup. That's why you want to go "there." There is a place where you can be a CEO who is viewed as a great leader because he didn't get in the way of his people.
- Look at you own personal map. Trace the distance between your vision of here and there. You have to understand that what got you here won't get you there.

Chapter 2: Enough About You

- There is no correlation between an individual's standing in the corporate pyramid and what his coworkers think of his interpersonal skills. Middle managers are no less immune than CEOs to being perceived as arrogant, inattentive, rude, and unfoundedly omniscient.
- Marshall trains people to behave effectively in the workplace – by enrolling them in a simple but brutal regimen.
- First, he solicits 360-degree feedback" from their colleagues – as many as he can talk to up, down, and sideways in the chain of command, often including family members – for a comprehensive assessment of their strengths and weaknesses.
- Then he confronts them with what everybody really thinks about them. Assuming they accept this information, agree they have room to improve, and commit to changing that behavior, then he shows them how to do it.
- He helps them *apologize* to everyone affected by their flawed behavior and ask the same people for help in getting better.
- He helps them *advertise* their efforts to get better because you have to tell people that you're trying to change; they won't notice it on their own.
- Then he helps them *follow up* religiously every month or so with their colleagues because it's the only honest way to find out how you're doing and it also reminds people that you're still trying.
- As an integral part of this follow-up process, he teaches people to *listen without prejudice* to what their colleagues, family members, and friends are saying – that is, listening without interrupting or arguing.
- The only proper response to whatever they hear is *gratitude*.
- Finally, he teaches the miracle of *feedforward* which is his special methodology for eliciting advice from people on what they can do to get better in the future.
- After 12-18 months, they get better – not only in their own minds, but ore importantly in opinions of their coworkers.
- This book is aimed at everyone who wants to get better – at work, at home, or any other venue.

Chapter 3: The Success Delusion, or Why We Resist Change

- All of us in the workplace delude ourselves about our achievements, our status, and our contributions. This delusional belief instills us with confidence, erases doubt, and blinds us to the risks and challenges in our work.
- Our delusions become a serious liability when we need to change and when someone tries to make us change our ways.
- First we think the other party is confused. Second we go into denial mode. The criticism does not apply to us, or else we wouldn't be so successful. Finally we attack the other party and discredit the messenger.
- Those are just the surface responses – the denial mechanisms. Couple them with the very positive interpretations that successful people assign to (a) their past performance, (b) their ability to influence their success (rather than just being lucky), (c) their optimistic belief their success will continue in the future, and (d) their sense of control over their own destiny (as opposed to being controlled by external forces). And you make it tough for us to change.

Belief 1: I have succeeded

- Successful people believe in their *skills and talents*
- Whatever the evidence, if it has a happy ending that makes us look good, we'll replay to ourselves and retell it to anyone who'll listen.
- No matter how much they respect their teammates, when the team achieves great results, they tend to believe that *their contribution* was more significant than facts suggest. This "I have succeeded" belief, positive as it is most times, only becomes an obstacle when behavioral change is needed.

Belief 2: I Can Succeed

- Successful people believe that they have the capability within themselves to make desirable things happen. Successful people literally believe that through the sheer force of personality or talent or brainpower, they can steer a situation in their direction.
- People who believe they can succeed see opportunities where others see threats. They're not afraid of uncertainty or ambiguity. They embrace it. They want to take greater risks and achieve greater returns. They see success for themselves and others as largely a function of people's motivation and ability – not luck, random chance, or external factors.
- One of the greatest mistakes of successful people is the assumption, "I am successful. I behave this way. Therefore, I must be successful *because* I behave this way!" The challenge is to make them see that sometimes they are successful *in spite of* this behavior.

Belief 3: I Will Succeed. (I have the motivation to succeed)

- Successful people have an unflappable optimism. As a result, they tend to pursue opportunities with an enthusiasm that others may find mystifying. It explains why successful people tend to be extremely busy and face the danger of over-commitment.

- Over-commitment can be as serious an obstacle as believing you don't need fixing or that your flaws are part of the reason you are successful.

Belief 4: I Choose to Succeed

- Successful people believe that they are doing what they choose to do, because they choose to do it. They have a high need for self-determination. The more successful a person is, the more likely this is to be true. When we do what we choose to do, we are committed. When we do what we have to do, we are compliant.
- Successful people have a unique distaste for feeling controlled or manipulated.
- I "choose to succeed" correlates perfectly with achievement in virtually any field. People don't stumble on success, they choose it.
- The more we believe our behavior is a result of our own choices and commitments, the less likely we are to want to change our behavior.
- Cognitive dissonance refers to the disconnect between what we believe in our minds and what we experience or see in reality. Yet cognitive dissonance works in favor of successful people when they apply it to themselves. The more committed we are to believing that something is true, the less likely we are to believe that its opposite is true, even in the face of evidence that shows we may have chosen the wrong path. It's the reason successful people don't buckle and waver when times get tough. Their commitment to their goals and beliefs allows them to view reality through rose-tinted glasses. That's good in many situations. Of course, this same steadfastness can work against successful people when they should change course.
- These four success beliefs – that we have the skills, the confidence, the motivation, and the free choice to succeed – make us superstitious.
- Superstitious behavior comes from the mistaken belief that a specific activity that is followed by positive reinforcement is actually the cause positive reinforcement. If something good happens after we do it, then we make a connection and seek to repeat the activity.
- Virtually all of us are superstitious, attaching too much value to bad behavior that we confusedly associate with our success. Getting out of this superstition trap requires vigilance. You must constantly ask yourself, Is this behavior a legitimate reason for my success or am I kidding myself.
- People will do something- including changing their behavior – only if it can be demonstrated that doing so is in their own best interests as defined by their own values.
- When you take self-volition out of the equation and forces beyond your control are involved, natural law applies. In order for me to get you to do what I want, have to prove that doing so will benefit you in some way, immediately or somewhere down the road. This is natural law. Every choice, big or small, is a risk-reward decision where your bottom-line thinking is, "What's in it for me?"
- Most people's resistance to change can be overcome by invoking natural law. Everyone, even the biggest ego in the room, has a hot button that can be pushed – and that bottom is self-interest.

- If you press people to identify the motives behind their self-interest it usually boils down to four items: money, power, status, and popularity. These are the standard payoffs for success.

Part two: The Twenty Habits That Hold You Back from the Top

In which we identify the most annoying interpersonal issues in the workplace and help you figure out which ones apply to you

Chapter 4: The Twenty Habits

- Peter Drucker said “We spend a lot of time teaching leaders what to do. We don’t spend enough time teaching leaders what to stop.”
- The funny thing about stopping some behavior is it gets no attention, but it can be as crucial as everything we do combined.
- In an organization, there is no system for honoring the avoidance of a bad decision or the cessation of bad behavior.
- Very few if any people can institute that many positive changes in their interpretation actions all at once. They can handle one at a time.
- The beauty of knowing what to stop – of achieving this state of inspired neutrality – is that *it is so easy to do*.
- Think of it in terms of a box. Being a nicer person requires you to fill up the box with all the small positive acts you perform every day to establish the new you. It takes a long time to fill up the box, and even longer for people to pay attention and notice that your box is full.
- On the other hand, ceasing to be a jerk does not require learning new behavior. You don’t have to fill up the box with all your positive achievements you simply have to leave it empty of any negatives.
- What we’re dealing with here are challenges in interpersonal behavior, often leadership behavior. They are egregious everyday annoyances that make your workplace substantially more noxious than it needs to be. They are transactional flaws performed by one person against others.
- Correcting them is the best way to enlist people as or allies – which in the long run is a much more promising success strategy than defending behavior that alienates people.
- These faults are simple to correct although it’s not easy. You already know what to do. We just lose sight of the many daily opportunities to employ them, and thus get rusty/
- Whittle the list down to one or two vital issues and you’ll know where to start. The reason the author devotes so much energy to identifying interpersonal challenges in successful people is because the higher you go, the more our problems are behavioral. All other things being equal, your people skills (or lack of them) become more pronounced the higher up you go.

As we advance in our careers, behavioral changes are often the only significant changes we *can* make.

1. *Winning too much*: The need to win at all costs and in all situations – when it matters, when it doesn't, and when it's totally beside the point. This is easily the most common behavioral problem – it underlies almost every other behavioral problem. If we play favorites, it's to win over allies and give "our side" and advantage and so on.. If you've achieved any modicum of success, you're guilty of this every day. When you're in a meeting at work you want your position to prevail. When you're arguing with your significant other, you'll pull out all the stops to come out on top. If the need to win is the dominant gene in our success DNA – the overwhelming reason we're successful – then winning too much is a perverse genetic mutation that can limit our success. We can become more successful if we appreciate this "flaw" and work to suppress it in our interpersonal relations.
2. *Adding too much value*: The overwhelming desire to add our two cents to every discussion. It is extremely difficult for successful people to listen to other people tell them something that they already know without communicating somehow that (a) "we already knew that" and (b) "we know a better way." You may improve the content of someone's idea by 5 percent, but you've reduced their commitment to executing it by 50 percent, because you have taken away their ownership of the idea.
3. *Passing judgment*: The need to rate others and impose our standards on them. There's nothing wrong with offering an opinion in the normal give and take of business discussions. You want people to agree or disagree freely. But it's not appropriate to pass judgments when we specifically ask people to voice their opinions about us. Grading people's answers, rather than just accepting them without comment, makes people hesitant and defensive. Extend a mission-neutral attitude in dealing with people trying to help you. You are not allowed to judge any helpful comment offered by a colleague or friend or family member. No matter what you privately think of the suggestion, you must keep your thoughts to yourself, hear the person out, and say, "Thank you."
4. *Making destructive comments*: The needless sarcasms and cutting remarks that we think make us sound sharp and witty. They serve no other purpose than to put people down, hurt them, or assert ourselves as their superiors. We don't think we make destructive comments, but the people who know us disagree. Only 15 percent of us do it to the point where it is a problem with our colleagues. To avoid destructive comments ask yourself these questions before speaking: Will this comment help our customers? Will this comment help our company? Will this comment help the person I am talking to? Will this comment help the person I am talking about? If the answer is no. Don't say it.
5. *Starting with "No," "But," or "However"*: The overuse of these negative qualifiers which secretly say to everyone, "I'm right. You're wrong." Nothing productive can happen after that. The client is never aware of this behavior. That's the moment a serious talk about changing behavior begins. Stop trying to defend your position and start monitoring how many times you begin remarks in this way.
6. *Telling the world how smart we are*: The need to show people we're smarter than they think we are. The problem here is not merely boasting about how much we know. We're insulting the other person. You're better off hearing them out and saying nothing. Stopping this behavior is not hard – a three-step drill in which you (a) pause before

opening your mouth to ask yourself, “Is anything I say worth it?” (b) conclude that it isn’t, and (c) say, “thank you.”

7. *Speaking when angry*: Using emotional volatility as a management tool. When you get angry, you are usually out of control. It’s hard to lead people when you’ve lost control. The worst thing about anger is how it stiles our ability to change. Once you get a reputation for emotional volatility, you are branded for life. You may need years of calm, collected behavior to shake such a reputation/ Anger is rarely someone else’s fault. It’s a flaw that’s solely our own. You have to suppress your initial inclination and bite your tongue. Once you appreciate the payoff of saying nothing – that if you’re silent, you cannot make an ass out of yourself or make an enemy out of someone else – then you might have a chance of getting better. The next time you start to speak out of anger, look in the mirror. In every case, you’ll find the root of your rage is not “out there” but “in here.”
8. *Negativity, or “Let me explain why that won’t work”*: the need to share our negative thoughts even when we weren’t asked. “negatrons” are people who are constitutionally incapable of saying something positive or complimentary to any of your suggestions. Negativity is their default response. “Let me explain why that won’t work” is unique because it is pure negativity under the guise of being helpful. Over time, we avoid negatrons – we stop working with them and refuse to help them. If you catch yourself saying that, you know what needs fixing. The more revealing clue would be to take a personal inventory of how your colleagues deal with you. How often do they come to you with helpful suggestions – without you having to ask? Seeing how people relate to you provides proof that your flaw is serious, that it matters to people, that it’s a problem.
9. *Withholding information*: The refusal to share information in order to maintain an advantage over others. Intentionally withholding information is the opposite of adding value. We are deleting value. Yet it has the same purpose: To gain power. The problem with not sharing information is that it rarely achieves the desired affect You may think you are gaining an edge and consolidating power, but you’re actually breeding mistrust. In order to have power, you need to inspire loyalty rather than fear and suspicion. Withholding information is nothing more than a misplaced need to win. There are unintentional or accidental ways we withhold information. We do this when we’re too busy to get back to someone with valuable information. We do this when we forget to include someone in our discussions or meetings. We do this when we delegate a task to our subordinates but if we don’t take the time to show them exactly how we want the task done. More often than not, we don’t withhold information out of malice. We do it because we are clueless. Cluelessness is easy to change. Many of us withhold information because we are too busy and we fail to get around to it. Over time it begins to look as if we are *withholding* information. Make sharing information a higher priority and schedule time for people. You will not only improve your communication. But you’ll be proving that you care about your coworkers – demonstrating that what they think matters to you. It’s not often we get such an obvious two-for-the-price-of one solution to our challenges. But making the shift from withholding information to sharing information is one of them.

10. *Failing to give proper recognition*: The inability to praise and reward.. In withholding your recognition of another person's contribution to a team's success, you are not only sowing injustice and treating people unfairly, but you are depriving people of the emotional payoff that comes with success/ Instead they feel forgotten, ignored, pushed to the side – and they resent you for it. In depriving people of recognition, you are depriving them of closure. Successful people become great leaders when they learn to shift the focus from themselves to others. Of all the interpersonal slights we make in our professional or private lives, not providing recognition may be the one that endures most deeply in the minds of the slighted.
11. *Claiming credit that we don't deserve*: The most annoying way to overestimate our contribution to any success. Claiming credit is adding to the injury that comes with overlooked recognition. We're not only depriving people of the credit they deserve, but we are hogging it for ourselves. It's two crimes in one. When someone you work with steals the credit for a success that you created, they're committing the most rage-inducing interpersonal "crime" in the workplace. It creates bitterness that is hard to forget. The best way to stop being a credit hog is to do the opposite. Share the wealth. For one day, make a mental note of every time you privately congratulate yourself on an achievement, large or small. Then write it down. Once you've assembled the list, take apart each episode and ask yourself if it's in any way possible that someone else might deserve the credit for "your" achievement/ As you go through your list, consider this make-or-break question: If any of the other people involved in your episodes were looking at the situation, would they accord you as much credit as you are claiming for yourself? Or would they hand it out to someone else, perhaps even themselves?
12. *Making excuses*: the need to reposition our annoying behavior as a permanent fixture so people excuse us for it. The author divided excuses into two categories: blunt and subtle. The blunt excuse sounds like this: "I'm sorry I missed our lunch date. My assistant had it marked down for the wrong day on my calendar." Blame my assistant, not me. The problem with this type of excuse is that we rarely get away with it – and it's hardly an effective leadership strategy. The more subtle excuses appear when we attribute our failings to some inherited DNA that is permanently lodged in us. "I'm impatient" or "I am horrendous at time management." The next time you hear yourself saying "I'm not good at..." ask yourself, "Why not?" If we can stop excusing ourselves, we can get better at almost anything.
13. *Clinging to the past*: The need to deflect blame away from ourselves and onto events and people from our past; a subset of blaming everyone else. Understanding the past is perfectly admissible if your issue is *accepting the past*. But if your issue is *changing the future*, understanding will not take you there. Clients who cling to the past – who want to understand why they are the way they are- remain the author's toughest assignments. It takes a long time to convince them that they can't do anything about the past. They can't change it, or rewrite it, or make excuses for it. All they can do is accept it and move on. Stop blaming others for the choices you made – and that goes with double emphasis for the choices that turned out well.
14. *Playing favorites*: Failing to see that we are treating someone unfairly. If leaders say they discourage sucking up, why does it dominate the workplace? These leaders are

generally very shrewd judges of character. Yet they still play favorites. The simple answer is: We can't see in ourselves what we can see so clearly in others. If we aren't careful, we can wind up treating people at work like dogs: rewarding those who heap unthinking, unconditional admiration upon us. What behavior do we get in return? A violent case of the suck-ups. You're encouraging behavior that serves you, but not necessarily the best interests of the company. Worse, it tilts the field against the honest, principled employees who won't play along. You're not only playing favorites but favoring the wrong people. Leaders can stop this behavior by first admitting that we all have a tendency to favor those who favor us, even if we don't mean to. If we're honest with ourselves, our recognition of people may be linked to how much they seem to like us rather than how well they perform. That's the definition of playing favorites.

15. *Refusing to express regret*: the inability to take responsibility for our actions, admit we're wrong, or recognize how our actions affect others. Expressing regret, or apologizing, is a cleansing ritual. But like many things that are fine in theory, it's hard for many of us to do. Whatever the reasons, refusing to apologize causes as much ill will in the workplace (and at home) as any other interpersonal flaw. The irony, of course, is that all the fears that lead us to resist apologizing – the fear of losing, admitting we are wrong, ceding control- is actually erased by apology. When you say "I'm sorry," you turn people into your allies, even your partners. The first step the author takes with every successful person is to teach them to apologize – face to face- to every coworker who has agreed to help them get better. Apologizing is one of the most powerful gestures in the human arsenal. It irrevocably changes the relationship between two people. It compels them to move forward into something new and perhaps, wonderful together. The best thing about apologizing is that it forces everyone to let go of the past. An admission of guilt, an apology, a plea for help – is tough for even the most cold-hearted among us to resist. When you declare your dependence on others, they usually agree to help. And during the course of making you a better person, they inevitably try to become better people themselves. This is how individuals change, how teams improve, how divisions grow, and how companies become world-beaters.
16. *Not listening*: The most passive aggressive form of disrespect for colleagues. This is certainly one of the most common complaints. When you fail at listening you're sending out an armada of negative messages. You're saying: I don't care about you; I don't understand you; You're wrong; You're stupid; You're wasting my time; all of the above. The only time people actually see that you're not listening to them is when you're displaying extreme impatience. The reality for leaders of the past and leaders in the future is that *in the past very bright people would put up with disrespectful behavior, but in the future they will leave!* Stop demonstrating impatience when listening to someone. Stop saying (or thinking) "next!" It's not only rude and annoying, but it's sure to inspire your employees to find their next boss.
17. *Failing to express gratitude*: The most basic form of bad manners. Like apologizing, thanking is a magical super-gesture of interpersonal relations. It's what you say when you have nothing nice to say – and it will never annoy the person hearing it. Yet people have trouble executing this rudimentary maneuver. Whether they are receiving a helpful suggestion or unwanted advice, or a nice compliment, they get confused about

how to respond. They'll do practically everything but the right thing: Say "Thank you." If you don't know what to say, your default response to any suggestion should be "Thank you." When somebody makes a suggestion or gives you ideas, you're either going to *learn more* or *learn nothing*. But you're not going to *learn less*. Hearing people out does not make you dumber. So thank them for trying to help. Gratitude is a skill that we can never display too often. Gratitude is not a limited resource, nor is it costly. Of all the behavioral changes this one should be the easiest to conquer.

18. *Punishing the messenger*: The misguided need to attack the innocent who are usually only trying to help us. Punishing the messenger is like taking the worst elements of *not giving recognition* and *hogging the credit* and *passing the buck* and *making destructive comments* and *not thanking or listening* – and then adding *anger* to the mix. It's the small responses we make throughout the day whenever we are inconvenienced or disappointed. Until someone points it out to us, we're not aware how we punish the messenger all day long. If your goal is to stop people from giving you input- of all kinds – perfect your reputation by shooting the messenger. On the other hand, if your goal is to stop this bad habit, all you need to say is, "Thank you."
19. *Passing the buck*: The need to blame everyone but ourselves. Passing the buck is one of those terrifying hybrid flaws. Take a healthy dose of *needing to win* and *making excuses*. Mix it with *refusing to apologize* and *failing to give proper recognition*. Sprinkle in a faint hint of *punish the messenger* and *getting angry*. What you end up with is passing the buck. Blaming others for our mistakes. A leader who cannot shoulder the blame is not someone we will follow blindly into battle. We instinctively question that individual's character, dependability, and loyalty to us. And so we hold back on our loyalty to him or her. Passing the buck is one of those obviously unattractive personal habits – everyone notices – and no-one is impressed. We don't need other people to point out that we are passing the buck. We're well aware of it. We do it anyway. No one expects us to be right all the time. But when we're wrong, they certainly expect us to own up to it. How well you own up to your mistakes makes a bigger impression than how you revel in your successes.
20. *An excessive need to be "me"*: Exalting our faults as virtues simply because they're who we are. Each of us has a pile of behavior which we define as "me". It's the chronic behavior, both positive and negative, that we think of as our inalterable essence. It would be easy for each of us to cross the line and make a virtue out of our flaws – simply because the flaws constitute what we think of as "me". This misguided loyalty to our true natures – this excessive need to be me – is one of the toughest obstacles to making positive long-term change in our behavior. It's an interesting equation: Less me. More hem. Equals Success. Keep this in mind when you find yourself resisting change because you're clinging to a false – or pointless – notion of "me." It's not about you. It's about what other people think of you.

Chapter 5: The Twenty-First Habit: Goal Obsession

- Goal obsession is one of those paradoxical traits we accept as a driver of our success. It's the force that motivates us to finish the job in the face of any obstacle – and finish it perfectly.

- A valuable attribute much of the time. It's hard to criticize people for wanting to do things 100 percent right. But taken too far, it can become a blatant cause of failure.
- In its broadest form, goal obsession is the force at play when we get too wrapped up in achieving our goal that we do it at the expense of a larger mission.
- It comes from misunderstanding *what we want in our lives*. In obsessing about making money, for example, we might be neglecting our loved ones.
- It also comes from misunderstanding *what others want us to do*. The honorable pursuit of a difficult goal set by someone else may transform us into cheaters, for example. Goal obsession is not a flaw but a creator of flaws. It's the force that distorts our otherwise exemplary talents and good intentions, turning them into something we no longer admire. Our quest for a successful outcome may end up doing more harm than good to our organizations, our families, and ourselves.
- The solution is simple but not easy. You have to step back, take a breath and look. And survey the conditions that are making you obsessed with the wrong goal. Ask yourself: When are you under time pressure? Or in a hurry? Or doing something that you have been told is important? Or have people depending on you?
- Probable answer: All the time. These are the basic conditions of the goal obsessed. We confront them every minute of every day

Part Three: How We Can Change for the Better

In which we learn a seven-step method for changing our interpersonal relationships and making these changes permanent

If you step back and look at most of the interpersonal flaws, they revolve around two familiar factors: information and emotion. We all have an overwhelming need to display and share what we know – and we do it excessively. Marshall calls this *information compulsion*.

Sharing or withholding. They are two sides of the same tarnished coin.

When dealing with information or emotion, we have to consider if what we're sharing is *appropriate*. Appropriate information is anything that unequivocally helps the other person/ But it veers to inappropriate when we go too far or risk hurting someone.

The same with emotion. Love is often an appropriate emotion. Anger is not appropriate. But even saying "I love you" can be inappropriate if we employ it too often or at awkward moments.

When sharing information or emotion we have to ask *is this appropriate and how much should I convey*.

Chapter 6: Feedback

- Confidential 360-degree feedback is the best way for successful people to identify what they need to improve in their relationships at work.
- Successful people have two problems dealing with negative feedback. However they are big ones: (a) they don't want to hear it from us and (b) we don't want to give it to them.
- Basically, we accept feedback that is consistent with our self-image and reject feedback that is inconsistent.

- Negative feedback focuses on the past, not on a positive future. Negative feedback exists to prove us wrong (or at least many of us take it that way).
- More than anything, negative feedback shuts us down. Change does not happen in this environment
- Feedback is very useful for telling us “where we are.” Without feedback we wouldn’t have results. We all need feedback to see where we are, where we need to go, and to measure our progress.
- When Marshall works with a coaching client, he always gets confidential feedback from many of his client’s coworkers at the beginning of the process. (between 8 and 31 people). Before he begins these interviews, he involves his client in determining who should be interviewed. Each interview takes about an hour and focuses on the basics. What is the client doing right, what does the client need to change, and how his (already successful) client can get even better!
- Since the clients pick the raters, it is hard to deny the validity of the feedback.
- Each of the coworkers is then enlisted to help. They are presented with four requests which he calls The Four Commitments. They need to commit to:
 1. Let go of the past.
 2. Tell the truth.
 3. Be supportive and helpful – not cynical or negative
 4. Pick something to improve themselves – so everyone is focused more on “improving” than “judging.” This creates parity, even a bond between them and the other person. Getting other people involved- especially the part where they are committed to changing something too enriches the whole experience.
- Change is not a one-way street. It involves two parties, the person who is changing and the people who notice it.
- To choose the interviewees, the client makes a list of the last dozen or so people with whom they’ve had professional contact. They could be colleagues, subordinates, customers, clients, even long term competitors. As long as they are people who can make legitimate observations about their behavior, they’re eligible. The next step is to run the four commitments against each name. If any of them qualify on all four commitments, they’re as good a place to start getting feedback as any.
- Treat every piece of advice as a gift or compliment and simply say, “Thank You.” No one expects you to act on every piece of advice. If you learn to listen – and act on the advice that makes sense- the people around you will be thrilled.
- Marshall also has his clients fill out a leadership questionnaire. Sometimes the questions are customized to reflect the company’s values and objectives.
- Interpersonal behavior is the difference-maker between being great and near-great.

Feedback comes in three forms: Solicited, unsolicited, and observation.

- The best solicited feedback is confidential feedback because nobody gets embarrassed or defensive. The only problem is: This is virtually impossible for one person working alone to pull off. To maintain the confidentiality (and avoid the emotionality) you need an unbiased third party to do the polling.

- People will not tell the truth if they think it will come back to haunt them – and in a power relationship subordinates have no guarantee that the unvarnished truth won't anger the boss, and then send them to the end of the line, or worse, get them fired.
 - In soliciting feedback for yourself, the only question that works- the only one! – must be phrased like this: “How can I do better?”
 - Pure unadulterated issue-free feedback that makes change possible has to (a) solicit advice rather than criticism, (b) be directed toward the future rather than obsessed with the negative past, and (c) be couched in a way that suggests you will act on it; that in fact you are trying to do better.
 - If we're lucky, every once in a while something or someone comes along who opens our eyes to our faults – and helps us strip away a delusion or two about ourselves. They are the moments when we get blindsided by how others really see us, when we discover a truth about ourselves. These blindside moments are rare and precious gifts. They hurt, perhaps (the truth often does), but they also instruct.
 - We need these painful unsolicited feedback episodes, when others reveal how the world really sees us, in order to change for the better. Without the pain, we might not discover the motivation to change.
 - It is a whole lot easier to see our problems in others than it is to see them in ourselves.
 - Even though we may be able to deny our problems to ourselves, they may be obvious to the people who are observing us. What is unknown to us may be well-known to others. We can learn from that.
 - If we can stop, listen and think about what others are seeing in us, we have a great opportunity. We can compare the self that we want to be with the self that we are presenting to the rest of the world. We can begin to make the real changes that are needed to close the gap between our stated values and our actual behavior.
 - Observational feedback – unsolicited, less than explicit, hard to prove – is important feedback, nevertheless.
 - Feedback from one person, however abstruse and vague, can be just as important as formal feedback from a group.
 - Not all feedback comes from asking people (solicited) or hearing what they volunteer. Some of the best feedback comes from what you observe. If you accept and act on it, it's no less valid than people telling you the same thing at point-blank range.
 - Every day, people are giving us feedback, of a sort, with their eye contact, their body language, their response time. Interpreting this casual observational feedback can be tricky; learning that something's not right is not the same as learning what's wrong and how we can fix it.
 - Here are five ways you can get feedback by paying attention to the world around you.
1. *Make a list of people's casual remarks about you.* Any remark that, however remotely, concerns you or your behavior, write it down. At the end of the day, review the list and rate each comment as positive or negative. Eventually you'll compile enough data on yourself – without any of your friends and family members being aware that they're giving you feedback – to establish the challenge before you.

2. *Turn the sound off.* This is an exercise in sensitizing yourself to colleagues' behavior. Ask yourself what is going on around you. See how people physically maneuver and gesture to gain primacy in a group setting. They lean forward toward the dominant figure. They turn away from people with diminished power. It's no different than what people are doing with the sound on except that it's even more obvious with the sound off. A variation on this is to make sure that you're the earliest person to arrive at a group meeting. Turn the sound off and observe how people respond to you when they enter. What they do is a clue about what they think of you. The "sound off" drill doesn't tell you what you need to change, but at least you'll know where to start asking, "How can I do better?"
3. *Complete the sentence.* Pick one thing to get better at. Then list the positive benefits that will accrue to you and the world if you achieve your goal. What's interesting about a sentence completion exercise is that the deeper into it the answers become less corporately correct and more personal. You start off by saying, "If I become better organized, the company will make more money....my team will become more productive...and so on." By the end, however, you're saying, "If I become more organized, I'll be a better parent...a better spouse... a better person." As the benefits you list become less expected and more personal and meaningful to you, that's when you know that you've given yourself some valuable feedback – that you've hit on an interpersonal skill that you really want and need to improve.
4. *Listen to your self-aggrandizing remarks.* It seems that the stuff people boast about as their strengths more often than not turn out to be their most egregious weaknesses. The same lesson might be on display when you make *self-deprecating* remarks. These too might be giving us feedback about ourselves.
5. *Look homeward.* Your flaws at work don't vanish when you walk through the front door at home. Anybody can change, but they have to want to change- and sometimes you can deliver that message by reaching people where they live, not where they work.
 - The action plan for leaders (and followers): If you want to really know how your behavior is coming across with your colleagues and clients, stop looking in the mirror and admiring yourself. Let your colleagues hold the mirror and tell you what they see. If you don't believe them, go home. Pose the same question to your loved ones and friends- the people in your life who are most likely to be agenda-free and who truly want you to succeed. We all claim to want the truth. This is a guaranteed delivery system.
 - Feedback tells us what to change, not how to do it. But when you know what to change, you're ready to start changing yourself and how people perceive you.

Chapter 7: Apologizing

- Marshall regards apologizing as the most magical, healing, restorative human gesture beings can make. It is the centerpiece of his work with executives who want to get better – because without the apology there is no recognition that mistakes have been made, there is no announcement to the world of the intention to change, and most important there is no emotional contract between you and the people you care about.
- A compelling reason to learn the magic of apology is this: It is so easy to do.

- Once you're prepared to apologize, here's the instruction manual:
 - You say "I'm sorry."
 - You add, "I'll try to do better in the future."
 - And then...you say nothing. Don't explain it, don't complicate it, and don't qualify it. You only risk saying something that will dilute it.

Chapter 8: Telling the World or Advertising

- After you apologize, you must *advertise*. It's not enough to tell everyone that you want to get better; you have to declare exactly in what area you plan to change.
- It's a lot harder to change people's perception of your behavior than it is to change your behavior. The odds improve considerably if you tell people that you are trying to change. Suddenly your efforts are on their radar screen. Your odds improve again if you tell everyone how hard you are trying and repeat the message week after week. Your odds improve even more if you ask everyone for ideas to help you get better. Now your coworkers become invested in you.
- Eventually the message sinks in and people start to accept the possibility of a new improved you.
- It's not enough to merely let people know what you are doing – you have to advertise relentlessly- as if it's a long-term campaign.

Chapter 9: Listening

- 80 percent of our success is learning from other people is based upon how well we listen.
- The thing about listening that escapes most people is that they think of it as a passive activity. Not true. Good listeners regard what they do as a highly active process.
- Basically, there three things that all good listeners do:
 1. *They think before they speak.* Most people think of listening as something we do when we are not talking. Listening is a two part maneuver: There's the part when we actually listen, and there's the part when we speak. Speaking establishes how we are perceived as a listener. What we say is proof of how well we listen
 2. *They listen with respect.* To learn from people, you have to listen to them with respect. It's not enough to keep our ears open; we have to demonstrate that we are totally engaged.
 3. *They're always gauging their response by asking themselves. "Is it worth it?"* The trouble with listening for many of us is that while we're supposedly doing it, we're actually busy composing what we're going to say next. When someone tells us something, we have a menu of options to fashion our response. Asking "Is it worth it?" forces you to consider what the other person will feel after hearing your response. When you don't ask that question, people not only think you don't listen, but you have instigated a three part chain of consequences: (1) they are hurt; (2) they harbor ill feelings toward the person who inflicted the hurt; and (3) in the predictable response to negative reinforcement, they are less likely to repeat the event (i.e. they won't speak up next time).

- The ability to make a person feel that, when you're with that person, he or she is the most important (and the only) person in the room is the skill that separates the great from the near-great.
- Listening requires the discipline to concentrate. Try counting to fifty without letting another thought intrude into your mind.
- Here are the key tactics:
 - Listen
 - Don't interrupt
 - Don't finish the other person's sentences
 - Don't say "I knew that."
 - Don't even agree with the other person (just say thank you"
 - Don't use the words "no," "but," and however
 - Don't be distracted – don't let your eyes or attention wander elsewhere while the person is talking
 - Maintain your end of the dialogue by asking intelligent questions that show you're paying, attention move the conversation forward, and require the other person to talk (while you listen
 - Eliminate any striving to impress the other person with how smart or funny you are. Your only aim is to let the other person feel that he or she is accomplishing that.
- If you can do these, you'll uncover a glaring paradox. The more you subsume your desire to shine, the more you will shine in the other person's eyes.

Chapter 10: Thanking

Chapter 11: Following Up

Chapter 12: Practicing Feedforward

Part Four: Pulling Out the Stops

In which leaders learn how to apply the rules of change and what to stop doing now

Chapter 13: Changing: The Rules

Chapter 14: Special Challenges for people in Change

Recommendation: This book is an entertaining and informative read for successful people and for coaches.

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About the reviewer: Frumi Rachel Barr, MBA, PhD

Many CEO's find themselves asking "What now?" to sensitive situations that only an experienced former CEO can understand. Frumi is brought in to solve problems and often remains to work with you, as your confidante and secret weapon. She has an uncanny knack of getting to the heart of your corporate climate and maximizing your team's performance, profitability and sustainability.

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