Introduction

The Truth Will Set You Free

A problem cannot be solved with the same consciousness that created it. One must reach to truth outside the system in order to change it. It is the function of consciousness to reach for the truth. – Albert Einstein

According to The Big Shift, a worldwide study published by Deloitte University Press, “The success of the modern organization will depend upon its ability to create an environment that cultivates learning and accelerated performance improvement.”

In his best seller, The Purpose Driven Life, Rick Warren provides a parallel conclusion: “The world needs contribution. We don’t just need communication, compassion, and consideration. We need people of action and a bias for achievement.”

An American Management Association survey of 800 executives concluded, “The emphasis over the past years has been on high tech skills like math and science, but what’s missing is the ability to collaborate and make key decisions at lower levels.”

Why CEOs Fail, a FORTUNE magazine cover story (June, 1999), investigated the firing of thirty-eight Fortune 500 top executives. All were smart and had great vision. A two-pronged weakness brought them down: failure to put the right people in the right jobs and not fixing people problems in time to prevent negative outcomes.
Harnessing the Power of Doers

Companies that rely solely on the CEO to navigate the uncharted waters of global competition are floundering.

The validity of this bold assertion is supported by three best-selling business books each based upon the findings of a Stanford University research team headed by professor/author Jim Collins:

Good To Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap (2001). Compared 1,400 companies once listed on the Fortune 500 to find only eleven that met the criteria necessary to qualify as “great.”

How The Mighty Fall: And Why Some Companies Never Give In (2009). Amidst the desolate landscape of fallen great companies, Jim Collins began to wonder: Can decline be detected early and avoided? How can companies reverse course?

Great By Choice: Uncertainty, Chaos, and Luck; Why Some Thrive Despite Them All (2011). A nine-year study analyzed 20,400 companies and identified only seven that have what it takes to succeed in tumultuous times.

These revealing discoveries provide ample evidence it is time to consider a new way of getting results that fully utilizes what Doers bring to the workplace. Positioning them as problem solvers, peer coaches, and change agents will ensure a prosperous future for the organization savvy enough to do so.

Doers are the driving force for innovation; those disruptive game-changers envied and feared by competitors. They
supply the initiative for new ideas and the positive energy behind better outcomes. When provided with reasonable opportunities Doers will deliver amazing things.

The survivability of a competitive enterprise hinges upon its ability to harness the power of Doers. Deployed strategically Doers can halt decline and restore prosperity.

Doers hold the key to sustainable success in today’s workplace. Regrettably, however, these highly desirable people are in short supply and are also hard to recognize. As you sort through applicants keep an eye out for prospects who are known to:

- Reach across departmental boundaries to build coalitions and create alliances.
- Motivate others by their propensity to enjoy what they do and have fun doing it.
- Operate independently with little direction and limited supervision.
- Accept difficult assignments that others cannot or will not do.
- Seek opportunities to grow personally and develop professionally.

Those charged with executing the corporate vision need to hear the truth from those directly involved in the production of goods and services.

Doers are in the best position to recognize performance, productivity, and process problems and to recommend pragmatic solutions to those with the authority to take corrective action.
Doers are willing to point out what is not working and why, but they must first be assured that they are not putting themselves at risk of retaliation and that they are not wasting their time voicing their concerns.

The following examples demonstrate how the collective voice of the Doers was applied to achieve positive results in four challenging situations:

- A Midwest manufacturer converted $800,000 in monthly product waste into an equivalent amount in new sales by forming Doer-guided Process Improvement Teams in all departments. Their recommended changes in the production and engineering processes resulted in a significant improvement to the bottom line.

- A public sector Family Support Division formed Doers into Performance Management Teams to develop an in-house training program. The results raised their previous ranking of 52nd in productivity to 1st among 53 competing agencies. Their astonishing 491% improvement won national and statewide recognition.

- The largest medical imaging center in the nation successfully downsized three times over three years without damaging its world-class reputation for diagnostic excellence. Management formed a Transition Monitoring Team of Doers from each department to advise the Board of Directors on the reduction in force.
When the founder of a children’s center serving 3,000 families of children with Down’s syndrome retired after 30 years, a Doer-lead Strategic Management Team implemented a future-focused planning process that enabled management and staff to hold fast to the founder’s vision while the Board selected her replacement.

**Hiring Doers Requires Special Effort**

Using traditional interview panels whereby those candidates who make the best impression get hired is not likely to bring many Doers to the surface.

LinkedIn founder Reid Hoffman, author of The Alliance, believes employers put too much weight on interviews and too little weight on references. “References actually tell you how people work, what their work ethic is. That is a critical piece of data that cannot be put aside or done casually.”

In Work Rules, a new book disclosing Google’s hiring successes, Laszlo Bock promotes a peer-guided selection process that digs deeper into behavioral patterns, work history, personal accomplishments, and growth potential in order to find the most suitable candidates.

Finding good people and keeping them requires that you are known in their network as a place where Doers flourish [They spread the word to other Doers].

The enduring workplace attractions are opportunities to grow in their profession, to make a noticeable difference that matters, and to accomplish something within your company that they could not achieve where they are.
Doers seek assurance that honesty counts and that they can speak truth to authority without fear of retribution. They trust a mistake can be corrected without fear it will be held against them.

Bringing Doers on board may sound positive, but there are costs attached which the organization must take into account. Each of these tendencies has the potential to be problematic:

1. **Doers confront authority, question ambiguity, and expose inconsistency.**
   They challenge directives whenever they believe their way is better. Such behavior may seem irreverent and disrespectful until you consider the benefit of receiving honest feedback from those fully vested in the outcome.

2. **Doers risk losing personal influence and peer support when promoted.**
   Moving them up the career ladder may jeopardize the respect, admiration, and cooperation they receive from coworkers. Creating reward systems for Doers based on their accomplishments rather than on their position can minimize the negative effects of advancement.

3. **Doers may seek opportunities elsewhere when dissatisfied with the lack of enjoyable assignments.**
   This is the most critical factor in keeping doers from jumping ship. Doers network to stay current on job openings. Lacking the potential for personal growth and professional development, Doers are known to seek such opportunities elsewhere.
Be prepared, attracting Doers is not going to be easy. It is a job seeker’s market. The best candidates will check out your track record before they agree to interview. The challenge is to establish a reputation as a place where they are eager to come and have reason to stay. Publicly recognizing the value of what Doers have to offer will increase the prospects for bringing in high impact talent.

**What This Book Has to Offer**

This book presents an exciting new line of thought that focuses on the critical role Doers play from launching an organization to keeping it from running aground. The chapters that follow address the challenges facing Doers and those who employ them.

Readers from the boardroom to the break room are provided with the ways and the means to make the highest and best use of their desire to do the right thing the right way for the right reason.

Managers will come away with a better understanding of why the success of their organization will be determined by the way these high performers are supervised.

If you have employees under your supervision that fit the descriptions above, you are now primed to take advantage of your good fortune. This book will show you how.

Should you feel that your personal achievements are unappreciated, unrecognized, and undervalued, or worse yet, get you into trouble with your peers and those higher up, this book will help you understand why that happens and how to avoid it in the future.
Additionally, it shows small business owners how to make the best use of what Doers bring to their workplace by teaching them how to treat the employer-employee relationship as an economic equation where each side’s contribution is given equal weight.

Regardless of who you are, where you work or what your position in the hierarchy might be, if you are truly interested in doing a better job, you too will benefit from what this book has to offer.
Chapter 1 — Relationships

The true measure of a good relationship is not that you know and like each other, but rather that you can accomplish more collaboratively than individually.

People come and go so quickly these days that you do not get to know them well enough to build a relationship before they are history. Plus, you have no idea whether or not those who do stick around understand their jobs the same way you understand yours.

Adding to the difficulty is the rising level of hostility that has replaced civility in many workplaces. The resulting frustration has placed a strain on relationships. Such antagonistic behavior is not only bothersome; it is also highly disruptive to the normal flow of work.

You sometimes feel as if you are the only one who is able to cope with these distractions and still do your job right. Sandwiched in between the challenge of doing your work well and finding others to work well with, is your feeling that nobody higher up seems to notice or care.

It is a challenge to get the job done right despite the difficulty you may face trying to get along with those around you. Any time you stop to think about your feelings towards the people in your work setting, their personalities are bound to get in your way. This is why it is so hard to work with someone you do not know, do not like, or do not trust.

Rather than groaning about how difficult it is to get along, remember that the only thing that really matters to your boss is how well you do your job. The greatest value you can add to your organization is the ability to work well with others.

Focus on the Bottom Line

Business is not just about managing people, it is also about using fewer resources to produce greater results, which means you and your coworkers are expected to increase production, reduce errors, and provide better customer service.

The reason you were hired is to help the enterprise make the highest and best use of limited resources. It is not who you are that counts; it is what you do that truly matters.

The problem is that you are expected not only to excel at your job, but also to work well with others while you are doing it. Success is measured in terms of your ability to get things done through others, which means that you will be expected to achieve results regardless of how well you get along with your peers.

Relationships must be formed quickly and produce measurable outcomes in short order. Seldom is there enough time to truly get to know a colleague before you are both called to action. The work needs to get done regardless of how you feel about each other.
Although it is not easy, you can learn to work collaboratively with almost anyone once you understand the guiding principles that contribute to a good relationship. To start with, you will need to accept that people bring differing points of view to the same task.

Seeing things differently is just one of many barriers that drive people apart when they should be pulling together. Breaking down these barriers and forming collaborative relationships requires that you consider new ways of thinking about the people who do not agree with you.

At the end of this section, you will read about a set of simple practices that will help you to build a healthy working relationship with just about anyone—even those you think are idiots. But before we get to that, let us first look at some typical personalities that will drive you nuts unless you learn how to work with them.

**Working with Quirky Personalities**

**Whiners**

Somebody always seems to be whining about something. Before you tune out a whiner, however, be aware that whining is a sign that someone is having a problem and is asking for help. Given the fast-paced, demanding nature of the modern workplace, where everyone is expected to adjust rapidly and respond accurately under pressure, it is a wonder more people are not whining.

Whiners are sometimes just looking for attention. For many, it is the safest way they know to convey their unhappiness without pointing the finger at someone directly.

What you would really like to do is tell these whiners to grow up and get back to work. That would not likely do any good even if it were an accepted behavior. What you need to do instead is get these folks to join you in solving the organization’s problems rather than their own.

**Slackers**

As a rule of thumb, the more important meeting goals and producing quality work becomes, the more Doers are likely to complain about their backsliding coworkers.

As tempting as it is to plug the leaks in the payroll or get rid of the dead wood; firing people for nonperformance usually is not effective. That is because when slackers get wind that their performance is being monitored, they will pick up the pace just long enough to survive close scrutiny. Once the threat has passed, they return to business as usual.

Slackers have mastered the art of just getting by so do not expect them to give much constructive thought to improving their relationships with you or with their coworkers.

**Misfits**
Does the same problem keep coming back to you despite your coworker’s promise to take care of it? Welcome to the world of misfits where people turn in work that is partially completed or poorly done, hoping someone else will take care of the problem.

Other misfit-type behaviors include coworkers with harmful habits, poor organization skills, or no self-confidence. Misfits also have a history of making bad personal choices. Although such behavior is not new to the workplace, it is becoming more commonplace and increasingly difficult to manage.

Misfits lack the trust to deal openly with coworkers, so they resist structured activities, tend to avoid responsibility, and prefer to be left alone to work at their own pace.

Loners

Like most Doers, you probably take it for granted that your coworkers will form teams and work together cooperatively. The truth is that a significant number of today’s workers do not know how to collaborate—it is something they have never been taught.

Some people respond to being taught collectively and tested individually by becoming self-reliant. Seeking opportunities for individual achievement, they sign on for a job valuing only what they can do for themselves—cooperating with you holds no importance.

Loners believe that asking someone for help is cheating. As far back as they can remember anyone caught collaborating was punished both at school and at home.

Building Task-Based Relationships

Forming productive relationships by removing the impediments that separate you from the quirky personalities of your teammates is not likely to happen naturally. The tenets of teamwork described below provide guidelines for building task-based relationships, so that when you encounter whiners, slackers, misfits, or loners the focus is on their task and not on their personalities.
Figure 1 — Tenets of Teamwork

**Collaborative Spirit**

*You can accomplish more by working together than you can by working alone.*

Before you decide to join forces with another person, you have to ask yourself the question: How do I benefit from this relationship? At first glance, there may appear to be very little benefit other than making the other party happy. You may have to dig a little deeper before you discover that you really need what the other person brings to the table. It helps sometimes to list the skill sets you have and compare them to what you know about the other person.

Even if you believe the other person to be incompetent, you will never know for certain until you work along side him or her long enough to confirm your suspicions. Think of it this way: a coworker brings to the job a unique set of abilities, which when matched with yours has the potential for improving the odds that you will both succeed.

Something heartwarming and emotionally uplifting happens when two individuals complete a difficult task that neither could have accomplished without the other. A collaborative spirit emerges that was not there before. Your desire to continue the relationship increases and you all feel motivated to aim higher on the next project.

**Common Purpose**

*Work on the same things at the same time.*

Problem solving and decision-making are two separate functions. Working simultaneously on both will create confusion and divert team energy. Solving a problem calls for people who are comfortable recalling intricate details, and remembering forgotten bits and pieces that may help to solve the mystery. It makes sense to begin the search for a solution by sharing your collective memories of what could have caused the deviation from expectations.
Making decisions is more about setting a new course to change in the future. This requires people who are good at thinking forward. In order to develop a common purpose from which to make their decision, teammates must agree to refocus their attention to what lies ahead.

The priority in working with others is to establish a common purpose and focus before you pool your knowledge and begin your work. Without first determining a common purpose, much time and energy will be wasted arguing over who is right and who is wrong. It also increases the chances of missing the point or doing something stupid.

**Mutual Respect**

*Accept and value what others bring to the relationship.*

First impressions are not always the ones you want to rely upon when it comes to working with others. You really do not get a clear sense of what another person has to offer until you have given her or him a second and third look.

What others bring to the relationship is a valid expectation of how the task should be accomplished. Something you could not possibly understand unless you invite them to share what they know without fear of being judged prematurely.

The objective is to focus on the sources of the differing viewpoints and not to persuade others to change their way of thinking. After all, you cannot change what others think unless you first understand the basis for their thoughts. It is important to understand how the views of others were formed.

A mutual exploration of individual expectations is an opportunity to clarify everyone’s position while gaining a better understanding of what each person anticipates will happen when the actual work begins.

**Productive Communication**

*Clarify what you mean and what actions you expect others to take.*

Everything you say or do not say has meaning. The challenge is to communicate in a manner that clearly conveys your intentions and leaves no doubt as to what you expect from others.

Task-oriented relationships thrive on accurate information, so it is important that you say what you mean, mean what you say, and not make any commitments you unable or unprepared to keep.

Accurate information travels best with those you know to be reliable transmitters and receivers. It is critical to identify others who are trustworthy and communicate with them directly rather than through intermediaries.
Tell them you want to know the truth about what they are hearing from other sources. Let them know that if you find out they modified or withheld the facts, you will not rely on them again.

**Neutral Attitude**

*When faced with disagreement, avoid taking a position until you know the whole story.*

Conflict is a sign that something critical to the relationship is missing. Rather than argue over what you think you know, wait until you have updated each other on what has transpired since you last joined forces. People and circumstances change, so there is a good possibility that you may be lacking current information.

When a conflict occurs, listen first in order to establish a clear understanding of what is keeping you apart. Start looking for sources of new information to help you form new opinions. If you cannot resolve the issue quickly, set it aside and do not let it interfere with completing the task.

Disagreements provide a natural opportunity for teammates to identify their differences. The key objective is to agree to disagree until subsequent clarification is forthcoming.

**Benefits**

Doers often disparage workplace relationships because they do not know, do not like, or do not trust the people with whom they work. Applying the tenets of teamwork when building a task-based relationship objectifies rather than personalizes individual performance. This shift in focus attracts Doers because it is now clear to them what, not who, needs to be fixed.

What follows, then, is the assurance that your efforts are recognized, your contributions are valued, your job is more fun, and your organization really is a great place to work. Strained relationships, which were once a source of pain, now become a source of pride and joy.

**Promoting Doer Dialogue**

Once the tenets of teamwork are put into practice and the team formation process begins to take shape, the next step is to develop an on-going dialogue between and among the Doers within each team. The purpose of the React—Respond—Reflect process model outlined below is to encourage more listening and less speaking during Doer team interactions. Those who practice this process find that they become an even more effective performer by being quick to listen and slow to speak.

React! Suppress first impressions or impulses. Expressing your feelings and thoughts prematurely shifts the focus away from the speaker and discourages rather than encourages a more thorough exploration of the issue. The temptation to react when a thought crosses your mind is natural, but it should be held in check to encourage the speaker to continue.

Respond! Answer positively or affirmatively. The appropriate time to respond will become obvious once the speaker has expressed what is foremost on his or her mind. A positive response
not only acknowledges that you have heard what has been said thus far, but also encourages the speaker to respond more openly to your questions and concerns.

Reflect! Suggest alternatives or resolutions. The opportunity to reflect on alternative outcomes and explore potential solutions will surface naturally when critical judgment is suspended and the dialogue is free flowing between all participants. At this point, you can hold up the mirror so that everyone benefits from seeing the situation through multiple sets of eyes.

Achievers draw their sense of purpose and pride of accomplishment from their team-based relationships in a high performance workplace. In a dysfunctional organization, however, where their achievements matter little, relying on the same support system to meet their personal needs can be risky.

Attending To Your Needs

During a period of organizational unraveling, with people moving up, moving down, and moving out, it is critical to your health and welfare to have a personal support system in place to help you cope with the challenges of change.

Counting on those around you for support is not always useful if they are also caught up in problems of their own. As your organization and the people it employs grapple with marketplace demands, you must look to other sources to reaffirm your own relevance and purpose.

In his book, Healing the Wounds: Overcoming the Trauma of Layoffs and Revitalizing Downsized Organizations, David Noer refers to the concept of having all of one’s needs met by the organization as the “taproot strategy.” Noer poses several thought provoking questions, including, “What happens if the taproot gets cut? If who you are is where you work, what are you if you lose your job?”

Organizationally dependent people, he says, “rely on an employer to nurture all aspects of their life. Their self-esteem, identity, and social worth are nourished by a single organization.” When released from their jobs or moved to unfamiliar assignments, these people see no meaning to their lives.

Another thing to bear in mind: as you change, your support system must change with you. People in your current support system, if you have one, support you because they like who and what you are right now— they may not want you to change. In fact, they will frequently work against you if you try to change.

So, how do you get the support you need if you can no longer count on people in the workplace? You build your own support system—one that meets your needs.

Support System: Functions And Players

Assembling your support system takes time and requires a great deal of thought. Think of it as a series of “casting calls.” People audition and you carefully consider who would be the best person
to play each part. The process works best if you let people know what role you would like them to assume, and, should they agree, what you expect them to do when you call on them for support.

Unlike mentoring or networking, your support system will focus on you as a person, rather than on your job or career. The primary mode of communication between yourself and the “players” in your support system should be one-on-one. At times, the level of interaction can be intense, particularly during periods of doubt and confusion.

Often, when you are not sure of what is really “bugging” you, exploring the deeper aspects of problems with someone in your support system will bring the real issue to the surface so you can face it honestly. This is particularly helpful when you are struggling to overcome your own misgivings and misconceptions.

The following descriptions of support system roles were developed from the research and writings of pioneers in the career development field. The six roles presented here have been specifically selected to fit the needs of Doers who might be suffering and are in need of confirmation and clarity.

Confidence Builder: The key function of a confidence builder is to provide encouragement when you need a lift. Choose people who respect you for who you are, not for what you do. People who know you well are better able to sense when your spirits need a boost. Most Doers rely on their own self-confidence to get them through the rough spots. However, when the rough spots turn into tough times, it is comforting to know people who can supply you with the assurance you need to get back on track.

Challenger: This role requires someone who will question your flight plan if they think you need a course correction. You frequently need a sturdy sounding board to test your notions, thoughts, and ideas. The stronger your convictions are, the more people you will need to fill this role. Finding people who will say no, if no really is the best answer, is not an easy assignment. Just as you demand much of yourself, so must you demand much from the challengers in your support system. You will place demands on their time to listen to you, on their intellect to take you seriously, and on their willpower to refute your assumptions.

Motivator: Doers need relationships with people who stimulate their thinking and prompt them when they need a reality check. Motivators are like a starter on an engine—particularly useful when, after a period of idleness, you need a quick burst of energy to get moving again. Pick people who inspire you and build you up. They do not have to know you to be helpful. Authors, artists, poets, preachers, prophets, gurus, or just about anyone who provides a positive influence qualifies as a motivator.

Sustainer: The sustainer is concerned for your welfare and your wellbeing. Just like the body, the mind needs nourishment to grow and develop. When your mental health sags, you need someone who will not just prop you up, but lift you up. You need to know that there are people
who care what happens to you. Helping you look for opportunity in adversity is one way that sustainers can help you to broaden and develop your horizons.

Friend: Friends are people who care for you and admire the way you are. They see you as a special person and do not try to change you. You can trust them to respect your point of view, even if they disagree with it. They openly discuss their personal concerns and easily express their frank opinions. Spending time with your friends provides a source of satisfaction and stimulation rarely found in any other relationship.

Reflector: These are people who think like you, have the same interests as you, and agree with you on important issues. Because they are like you in many ways and value many of the same things you do, they serve as a “mirror” reflecting your thoughts and feelings. You are comfortable bouncing ideas around in their presence without fear of judgment or criticism. They accept your faults and forgive your mistakes because they respect you.

Career development authority, Beverly Kaye, recommends limiting the number of support roles you assign to any one person. The convenience of going to a single source for a variety of support needs is overshadowed by the possibility of stressing out that special person by expecting him or her to wear too many hats.

Finding people willing to provide the support you need right now should be a priority. Take the time to fill in a partial list of potential candidates for each category and keep it updated as your need for support changes. The time you invest in building a support system can provide you with a great source of independent strength and courage as you strive to overcome the challenges facing you in the ever-changing workplace.