

Don't Fire Them, Fire Them Up

Motivate Yourself and Your Team

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STUDY GUIDE

INTRODUCTION: THE FIRST RULE OF WAR AND BUSINESS

In this book, you're going to be reading all about a business turnaround and a comeback. The purpose of this book is basic and practical: to demonstrate we did it; how in one year, Xerox's northeast Ohio district went from nearly dead last, in terms of sales and revenue, to first in the region and fourth nationally; and, most importantly, how it can be done in cities and towns all over America no matter what the industry or product line—despite the odds, despite ferocious domestic and international competition.

Hard Core

Today's hottest theories acknowledge that people are a corporation's most precious asset. What's the linchpin of a service economy? You've got it—people. Furthermore, only people generate intellectual property: the ideas, the applications, the innovations that will be the lifeblood of future business success. Everything else is merely a commodity that can be purchased by anyone—including your competition—thereby destroying any temporary advantage gained by a technological edge or an ingenious process. Yet we continue to manage these assets as though they were in fact the commodities—easy come, easy go. As of 1992, American companies spent a miserly 1 ½ percent of total payroll on employee training and education. Meanwhile, the process, the product, and the mechanics of the organization itself are given paramount importance. And they are important—but not as important as the right people in the right places, with the right skills, attitudes, motivation, and dedication.

Chapter 1: Making A Statement: The Last Shall Be

First Make Changes Immediately

I believe in the power of personal example. You can rant and rave and threaten, but the most effective way to get results is to show someone what you want done. And that's an important point that must be made right here. The new manager doesn't need to arrive on the scene with a sharp ax and a chopping block. No matter how shaky the operation, the first order of business is to start *doing business* again. A reign of terror, an immediate housecleaning, is only going to get in the way of the objective. Set a blistering pace at the outset and there will be no confusion as to what each person needs to do to keep his or her job. When there is no ambiguity—and no alternative—people usually either get with the program or select themselves out. The house cleans itself.

Tip number one: Come in and make a statement. Put a stake in the ground with a can-do attitude that has no gray area whatsoever. It's a matter of leadership. My working assumption is that everyone wants to succeed. It makes sense, doesn't it? But why don't they succeed? There are three reasons: deficiency of skills, lack of desire, or poor leadership. Many times— probably most of the time—it's poor leadership. Making a statement early—an actions speaks louder than words statement—puts everyone on notice that the leadership vacuum has been filled. In itself, that's powerful and reassuring news. Even more important is the central message of this truism—if you don't know where you're going, you'll never get there. Troubled organizations don't know where they're going, and the uncertainty is corrosive.

Job one: Tell 'em where they're headed!

Back To The Future

Achieving the plan is like paying a cover charge at a fancy nightclub. You get in the front door, but to buy a few drinks and a steak dinner takes additional cash. Just making plans isn't enough. The object is to beat the plan to advance beyond a meager subsistence existence. The system won't work, however, if management panics and imposes unrealistic expectations on a district. A classic error is to rely on past performance. Conditions in today's marketplace change rapidly. Booms can flatten out and bust within a matter of weeks. If you're not paying attention, or living in a dream world, the wake-up call comes in the form of hardworking managers and reps who are wildly undershooting their plans through no fault of their own. Since compensation is based on achieving the plan, and exceeding it, the salespeople end up being deeply frustrated and demoralized. Conversely, writing off a seemingly lackluster territory as a perennial loser doesn't take into account long-dormant business conditions that may be on the verge of blossoming again. To avoid both traps, learn everything about the area in which you are doing business; raw data, anecdotal evidence, analysis, gossip, even educated guesswork by the right people.

Chapter 2: Start Here: *The Will To Win*

Outcoaching the Coach

Don't hold your people back. Promote them, move them, make them successful as fast as you can. The logic is simple. The more people you put on the fast track, the more fast-track talent will be attracted to your operation. It's tempting to get a death grip on good people, to make the most of them as long as you can. However, in the end, you're betraying them— and they know it.

The Will To Win: A Checkup

When you take over a new, troubled business organization it is safe to assume that the will to win is either absent or badly depleted. The series of questions below will help determine the extent of the problem.

- **Do your people arrive late for work and/or leave early?** Consistently showing up late for work indicates the individual is losing his or her enthusiasm for the job. Leaving work early is similar. It could mean the person would rather be somewhere else, or is letting demands outside of the job take precedence.
- **Is the activity level erratic or low in volume?** An erratic activity level is a sign that your people are waiting for the next boom in the market. They have got to be out in the marketplace on the move. Otherwise, boom-and-bust cycles will wreak havoc on your business.
- **Do they talk mostly about problems, disappointments, difficulties?** Listen closely to the shop talk around you. Those with a well-developed will to win aren't talking about problems, they're talking about opportunities.
- **Can they tell you what the competition is doing in detail?** In a competitive marketplace, you must keep track of the competition. If a rep doesn't know and doesn't care what the competition is doing, he doesn't know and doesn't care that it's being done to him.
- **Are the same mistakes being made repeatedly?** When the same mistakes are repeated over and over again, it's confirmation that something other than winning has assumed primary importance in an organization.
- **Are you hearing praise from the customer? Complaints? Nothing at all?** If I'm not hearing from the customer, something is wrong. A silent customer is not a delighted customer. Delighted customers show it.

Chapter 3: Leadership: Passion and Premeditation

Are you a manager or a leader? There's a difference, a big difference. In this chapter, I will show you what I mean. Along the way, I hope to prove a favorite contention of mine: Most businesses are over managed and under led. That's why they get into trouble. There's got to be a balance. Right now, in most places, leaders aren't particularly welcome. They're looked on as flaky and unpredictable.

You've got to combine the best of both roles to be really successful. Every organization needs a process, and that process doesn't get executed by itself. It takes planning, decision making, supervision, and follow-up. But I believe that an

effective leader can pick up a good manager's process and wring another 10 to 20 percent out of it in terms of overall performance. And the right leader can needle a mediocre process into producing 50 to 100 percent gains.

Respect For People

To succeed in a turnaround situation, you need respect. Respect for people. If it's not there, please do something else with your career. Forget management.

Leadership starts and ends with people. You don't have to be a saint to be an effective leader. Leadership can actually stem from seemingly selfish roots. Whatever the reason, I'm extremely competitive—to the point that I come close to being physically ill when I lose.

Therefore, I've got very personal reasons for wanting to be an effective leader: I want to win.

Hit The Road

Know the names of new managers and reps before starting day. Review their business backgrounds and acquaint yourself with important aspect of their lives. By hitting the road with the reps immediately after the first meeting, I did two things: one, I let them know I was going to be a hands-on manager—a leader—who gets out in front of the customer, and two, that I intended to stay in close personal contact with the reps and managers.

Plan To Win

If you don't plan to win, you plan to lose. The very best salespeople and the very worst do the same thing—they improvise. The best, because they don't think they have to plan: "I've got this customer right where I want him." The worst, because they don't think planning will make a difference: "I'll just go in there and give it a shot; nothing ventured, nothing gained."

No Sale

I've found that a common customer complaint is, "I never see this person unless they are trying to sell me something." If the contact with the customer is nothing but sales calls, I conclude the reps are really only living for today. You've got to water the garden and weed it if it's to remain productive. The rep should be there not just as an order taker but as a resource for the customer. I like to think I'm going into business with my customers, that we're partners.

Arts And Crafts

Two words come to mind to describe effective leaders: passion and premeditation. Leadership is not the process of superimposing one big ego on a lot of little egos. When I try to define leadership, I keep coming back to, "I'll know it when I see it." And that may provide the best working definition of leadership. If we know it when we see it, what are we seeing?

A leader is:

- Willing to share power and responsibility,
- Ready to recognize the contributions of others,
- Willing to give feedback, quickly and explicitly,
- Able to serve as a positive role model.

Chapter 4: Breakthrough: *High Fives In Six Months*

What is the number one priority in business? The customer. If your business is in trouble—or you're trying to stay out of trouble—rediscover the customer pronto!

Truth Serum

Don't create a fool's paradise by isolating yourself from the customer. It's so easy to make that mistake. You'll get rosy secondhand reports from the field because nobody wants to bring the boss bad news. You'll have to go out and find it yourself. Once you do, there's an instant readout on the accuracy of the information you've been receiving. Right away, honesty will be established as the best policy. Tell everyone that a surefire way not to win points with the boss is to withhold unpleasant information.

Caught In The Middle

It's impossible to be a friend and a leader. Leader and friend—okay. The role of leader always comes first. On the job, we make good friends, we love and care about them, but when the time comes for being tough and delivering bad news, we choke. A leader must step up to this responsibility even if it means erecting a wall that inhibits friendship. It's one of the hazards of the job.

A leader mediates the interests of the group or organization against the interest of the individual. He or she must be an honest broker. And that's not an impossible task as long as you're fair and honest. A good mediator offers counsel and perspective, and poses alternatives when there is a conflict. It is rarely an all-or-nothing situation.

The mediator's function is one of the things that make being a leader worthwhile. Without a mediator, there's nothing but a no-man's-land, a killing

zone, between the company and its employees. It's characteristic of a leaderless organization.

Chapter 5: Team Building: *All In, All-Out*

A Tool For Saving Time

The Major Suspect List Review (MSLR) is like a divining rod. Instead of discovering underground water, it points out the business that is right under your nose. And, even better, it finds the right people to put in the right places at the same time.

The results of the MSLR will give you an instant profile of the kind of personal and professional qualities that are essential if an organization is to succeed. You should see right away what makes your strongest rep stand head and shoulders above the others. I've found that three common characteristics that stand out:

- Depth of knowledge
- Confidence
- High energy

Crazy Lady

The hardest, most rewarding thing a leader is called on to do is build a team. The flashiest rhetoric, slickest, marketing strategy, and most sophisticated management techniques are useless without an effective team.

A well-built, well-run team is a self-perpetuating organism. It is constantly renewing itself. When you finally put team together you'll know it, not just from the improved business that results but because you'll feel the loyalty, the togetherness, and the we're-all-in-this-together attitude.

Pass The Power, Please

Empowerment is important, but it isn't a "first thing." First you find good people—then you empower them.

The idea of empowering untrained, unmotivated, untested people is ridiculous. You're inviting disaster. It's bound to fail, and when it does, those who are skeptical about the whole notion of empowerment say, "See, it doesn't work."

It does work. I want my people to act as though they were independent entrepreneurs. If this was your business, if you'd invested your life savings in it, how would you operate?

Chapter 6: Communications: *Listen Up*

Effective listening is where effective communication starts. Are you a good listener? I'll bet your answer is yes. And I'll also bet your answer is wrong.

Word Processing

Most people aren't deaf or hearing-impaired. Many are listening-impaired. The words aren't being processed. If you make a habit of instantly documenting what you've heard and learned, your listening ability will improve immensely. The brain is like a filing cabinet. What's immediately important is selected and put into the "hot file" up front; the rest is pushed toward the back into the subconscious. It's there but we just can't access it readily.

The physiological explanation for what's going on is that we are "chunking" or making patterns of the incoming data in order to retain it in our active memory.

Wired Up

You can have the most powerful vision and the greatest process, but without effective communication, you're dead.

The problem is that business communication is carried out on so many different channels or circuits that it's easy to lose track of important information because you were literally listening in on the wrong line. You've got to "surf" through all the channels constantly. Just tuning in on your managers or the home office isn't enough. Managers who limit themselves to a few channels of communication are always in danger of being fed misinformation—advertently or inadvertently.

I believe the essence of leading or managing is knowing your people. Do you understand what makes them tick, what drives and motivates them, and what worries and distracts them? How about their feelings toward the company, their careers, and their families? Do they want more recognition, more money, more fun, and fulfillment? Take the time to find out. After all, the people who work for you are as much your "customer" as the person or organization buying the final product. If you don't know those "customers," how are you going to meet their requirements? And how are you going to meet the requirements of the external customer? You're not.

Ask your employees questions, preferably out of the office and in a relaxed setting. Their answers can give you more usable and valuable information than

any personnel file. Asking questions will tell you a lot about an individual and provide key clues on how to motivate and work with him or her.

Chapter 7: Top Ten Tips: *And Ten More*

When I was profiled by *The Wall Street Journal*, the newspaper's editors ran a box beside the story displaying my top ten tips. I'm still getting requests for copies of those tips, and I'm told they've been spotted on office bulletin boards around the country. This chapter takes a look at them one by one.

- 1. Prepare customer proposals on weekends and evenings.** Salespeople belong in the field. If they spend a major portion of the day in the office writing proposals then they aren't in front of the customer.
- 2. Never say no to a customer—everything is negotiable.** Look for ways to accommodate both sides of the deal. The old win-win concept is the key to success. The two parties should each walk away with something of value.
- 3. Make customers feel good about you, not just your product.** Look for a way to make a personal connection when walking into a customer's office for the first time. By doing so, you're selling yourself along with the product.
- 4. Meet customer requirements, even if it means fighting your own bureaucracy.** Don't be afraid to be the customer's advocate. Jobs may come and go, but if you're good at sticking up for customers you'll never go without business.
- 5. Do things for customers you don't get paid for.** Don't let yourself get compartmentalized and step back from situations and say, "Not my job." Make it your job. The customer probably doesn't have the name and number of those people in your company that handle specialized problems. But he does have your name and number. Don't wait to be asked directly for a favor. Customers tend to be indirect. Listen closely and you'll hear what they need.
- 6. Know your competitor's product better than your competitor does.** By knowing what the competition's product will do and won't do the rep is able to customize his presentations and proposals.
- 7. Be early for meetings.** By arriving early, I'm saying to customer, "You're important to me. I'm prepared and ready to go."
- 8. Dress and groom yourself sharply so you "look like a superior product."** Clothes don't make the man or woman. They make the message about the man or woman. The message may be accurate or absolutely misleading—but it's a message nonetheless. I want this message: "I'm a professional." Nothing more, nothing less.
- 9. When it's time to go home, make one more telephone call.** This rule is a simple way to make sure that you put in a little extra effort each

day. If you want to be great, you have to pay the price—and the price is effort.

10. If you stay in the shower a long time in the morning because you don't look forward to work—find another job. Inertia is the enemy of excellence. We all have the talent to succeed at something. The challenge is finding that “something.” The long sessions in the shower are a sure sign that inertia has set in. We simply spend too much time on the job not to enjoy it.

Chapter 8: Power Surge: *Creating Energy and Electricity*

Do Or Die, And Other Options

Consequences—You'll never have a high-energy, high-voltage workplace without consequences. This doesn't mean that successful management comes down to issuing bloodcurdling ultimatums. Between “do” and “die” there are several options. One way is through rankings. I want the reps and managers to know how they stack up against their peers. And I make it public knowledge. While effective, it needs to be used with caution. Watch out for unhealthy competition. When you throw everybody into the shark tank, it can bring out the best and worst instincts. I often head off trouble by suggesting the strongest performers help those who are struggling. This helps foster interaction between colleagues. The point is to dissolve and merge the isolated pockets of excellence and mediocrity. Also, the attitude that success comes at the expense of one's colleagues can be held in check.

Chapter 9: The Customer: “No” Is A Four-Letter Word

The best and simplest definition of quality is satisfying the customer. As you know by now, to make sure I hit the target, I always raise my sights. Hence, my personal definition is slightly different: quality is *delighting* the customer. You don't need much more than that.

Go Looking For Trouble

One of the great things about quality is that it teaches a corporation how to make a fetish out of problem solving. Being small doesn't mean a company is immune to the diseases that have been sapping the strength of our major business institutions. Quality concepts and tools work effectively no matter what the size of the company. But you can't just talk about quality— you've got to go do it.

Chapter 10: The Bonus And The Bell Curve: *Surveying Customer And Employee Satisfaction*

Swatting The Repeat Offenders

Empower your people to take action on the spot to satisfy a customer. Customer satisfaction starts with you. It isn't a game of hot potato.

The Gold Standard

A leader has to provide role models for the behavior he or she wants to see in action. The reason our customer satisfaction figures were poor was that the three partners were poor role models on the issue. When we got our acts together, everyone else did too.

Chapter 11: The Night Before Christmas: *Even Santa Has To Ask For The Sale*

Every Day Is Sunday

The president of Xerox U.S. Customer Operations—the BOSS, visited my district, and at the end of the day he spoke to the troops. He picked up on my theme of being number one, but cautioned the group not to become fixated on internal competition and forget about going after the external competition.

It was an excellent point. In many ways it's easier to evaluate yourself against your brothers and sisters than it is against the guy from the neighborhood who is the real threat to the family's well being. You may be the biggest kid in the house but the smallest outside in the real world.

Here's a tip: Never let the brass come and go without exposing them to a question-and-answer session with your people. It's good for the boss, good for them.

Chapter 12: Fine-Tuning: *Hiring, Firing, and Finessing*

Based on your understanding of this book so far, what is the most important word a manager and leader should always keep in mind that begins with the letter "P"? The answer is people.

SNIP the snap decisions

In troubled organizations, the holdovers are blamed for the mess and promptly executed. The slaughter is indiscriminate and unproductive. Before going down that road, ask yourself three questions:

- Is it a process problem?
- Is it a leadership problem?

- Is it a people problem?

Don't jump to conclusions. Find out. It could be all three combined. But you've got to find out before you apply a drastic solution that doesn't address the real circumstances of the situation.

Reap What You Sow

Make recruiting a top priority, and don't delegate it to others or expect the personnel department to handle the dirty work. If you were a major-league sports team, you wouldn't think twice about spending huge amounts of time and money on recruiting athletic talent.

There is no difference between sports and business when it comes to the hiring process. Slipshod recruiting will give you a slipshod organization. What are your five biggest business headaches? Which of them would never have occurred if the right people had been hired in the first place? We put the wrong people in the wrong places and expect to get by using a process, hard-nosed management practices, or the latest flavor-of-the-month business concept. It doesn't work.

Chapter 13: Cold Comfort And A Hot Product: *No surrender, No Retreat*

If you are not providing training to your people—shame on you! If your people aren't gulping down every morsel of training you provide—shame on them! The return on investment in training is astronomical. I've seen figures that show every dollar spent on training yields something like a thirty-dollar dividend. Companies are shortsighted to begrudge their employees adequate training.

On the other hand, workers who resist training aren't showing a lot of smarts either. Corporate America is crawling with know-it-alls. They sit back at seminars and roundtables, saying, "What else is new?" The outright hostility to educational enrichment and training is astonishing.

Training must be an ongoing process, otherwise skill levels become spotty.

Chapter 14: Bell Ringers: *Self-Conceit And Self-Destruction (Almost)*

Filling In The Blanks

If it's had to get out of bed or out of the shower in the morning, it's time for a new job. Burnout may not be the problem, however. For a leader, every day is a new day. What worked to motivate and to energize your team yesterday may not work today. The challenge is to constantly come up with something new. It's probably the most demanding part of the job.

The danger is not so much that the leader “hits the wall,” as much as that he is “drawing a blank.”

Here's the bottom line: Keep It Fresh.

Meeting Malaise

A dull meeting means two things: you're having too many of them, and they aren't accomplishing anything. As far as I'm concerned, meetings are a last resort. I only call them if there is no other way of achieving the objective.

Chapter 15: Tough Love: A Letter Home

This chapter breaks out some of the tips and techniques and presents them, by chapter, outside the text and narrative. Be sure to realize that when you hire people, you must believe that they can do the job you have hired them for. One of the greatest mistakes of a Manager, is believing that the employee can do a job that they have never been trained for. Quite often we make wrong decisions when placing the wrong people in the wrong working place. As a Manager and a Leader, it is your responsibility to always keep in mind that people don't always understand what they hear you saying, and what you are saying is not always what they hear.