

Chapter Twenty-One

The End of the Day

What is life? It is the flash of a firefly in the night. It is the breath of a buffalo in the wintertime. It is the little shadow which runs across the grass and loses itself in the sunset.

These were the last words of Crowfoot, the great Blackfoot warrior and orator; and they are as true today as when he breathed his last breath in 1890. We are only on this earth for a relatively short time; no one knows which day may be their last. I have a passion for helping people to find joy and fulfillment in their professional and personal lives, and I truly mean it when I say to them, “Life is too short not to do everything you possibly can to enjoy the life you have now.”

My hope is that you will take these words as a call to action—for you to be the light you want to see in the world. As I write this book, I feel a tremendous sense of urgency to help individuals and team leaders to take a look around—at their teammates, co-workers, colleagues, and significant others. What is going on right before you that you have not noticed before? Do you believe you are the only one who wants to find greater meaning and purpose in your daily moments and your life’s work? The odds are that you aren’t alone. But you must

take the risk of believing that it is possible to make a difference, and that you do have it within you to cause a change, even if it is as small a change as that caused by the proverbial wing of a butterfly. For as Mahatma Gandhi once said, “We must become the change we want to see.” You might be the spark that takes hold throughout your organization.

What is one thing that inspired or intrigued you from this book, and what are you going to do about it? These bullets (along with the handy chapter references) will remind you of the various stops on our journey and some of the most important tools and techniques you read about, all for the improvement of your team’s effectiveness.

- ***Was it the belief that we all have creativity within us? (Chapter 2)*** Did you identify with this new definition of creativity—“To be original . . . to do something no one else would think of.” If so, then take a risk and find your unique creativity—writing, painting, developing a new process, or discovering problems and opportunities that others didn’t know existed. Remember something that made you special as a child. Look for those creative sparks throughout your day, then do something with them.
- ***What about that new role of leadership? (Chapter 3)*** Do you like the idea of no longer relying on command and control, but instead truly leading through inspiration and collaboration? If so, then look at your current behaviors and determine which are helping you to achieve your vision for leadership through engagement, and which are holding you back. Start small—and stick with it.
- ***Do you think there is untapped talent and unspoken knowledge on your team? (Chapter 4)*** If you do, then have your team members take the HBDI to help you to learn more about each other’s strengths and areas of potential development. Then discover ways to use these talents to the team’s advantage. You just might find that along the way, you have improved the creative thinking ability and communications effectiveness on your team.

- **How would you currently rate the level of trust on your team? (Chapter 5)** Not what you might hope for? Consider suggesting a get-to-know-you-better warm-up exercise at your next team meeting—ask about a hidden talent, a first job, where team members grew up. Or have a group milestones dinner and go a level deeper by sharing a significant person or event in your life, and the impact that it (or they) has had on you. Take time to recognize the ways people contribute to the work of the team. Learn from each other using feed forward. Step out of your comfort zone and invite the newest, least-connected team member to join you for lunch.
- **Is conflict on your team a source of creative abrasion? (Chapter 6)** How diverse is the thinking on your team? How are you capitalizing on those different perspectives to address critical team challenges? Begin with the mindset that conflict is natural, expected, and yes, even desired. Acknowledge and discuss the conflict that everyone knows is currently occurring. Keep the team's focus and energy on the real competition—the one in the marketplace. Deal with that ferocious firefly. Eliminate trustbusters like sarcastic humor. Consider taking your team through “The Jungle Escape.” Find a way to reconnect with those who are distant, disengaged, or just plain dismal.
- **How much of your team's energy is wasted with irrelevant, personality-based infighting? (Chapter 7)** In that last high-conflict one-on-one situation, did you ask yourself, “Why would a reasonable, rational, and decent person act like this?” Use what you learned from the individual HBDIs to see how much of the team conflict is simply a failure to communicate. As a leader, what kind of example are you setting? Let the optimal flow and coaching from others help you to resolve it. Remember, don't be ruled by the tyranny of the “or”; seek out the third way. Learn about a day in your co-worker's life.
- **Do you know what the vision for team success is, and how you will know when you get there?**

(Chapter 8) As a team, dedicate time to focus on the future. Create a common understanding of the critical role that the group plays in the overall company's success. Make sure everyone sees how each role contributes and is interconnected and interdependent. Break down those silos that keep you from working collaboratively. Understand the barriers and challenges facing the team.

- **How do you turn this vision picture into a concrete plan? (Chapter 9)** Determine tangible, clear measures for success. Focus on the critical few. Make those tough strategic decisions—not only what you *will* do, but just as importantly what you *won't* do. Engage your critical stakeholders. Monitor and course correct. Celebrate your successes.
- **What would it take to make this the best team you were ever a part of? (Chapter 10)** Ask people to share their prior team experiences, and use these inspirational stories as the foundation for designing the four to six guiding principles for how this team will work together. After you create them, live up to them and expect everyone else on the team to do the same.
- **Is your team meeting the most exciting time of the week? (Chapter 11)** No? What would it take to make it so? Don't give in to the common thinking that all meetings are bad and ineffective, because that doesn't have to be the case if you commit to doing the hard work that will make it better. Find out what people expect and want from these meetings, and then redesign the agenda to deliver that. Create an environment for fully engaged participation by all team members, and permit nothing less. Don't allow a select few to dominate (especially the team leader). Spice up your meetings with variety—in the location, the topics, the process, and at least in the seating! Start using a timer. You may laugh, but I—and my clients—swear that it works.
- **Does your team have really productive discussions that end with clear decisions, actions, and accountabilities? (Chapter 12)** Start today

by figuring out which items on the meeting agenda require a decision to be made, construct a clear and explicit decision-making process, and understand the rationale for the path chosen. Create conflict norms that will ensure that all voices are effectively heard. Send information out in advance to promote informed participation. Balance inquiry and advocacy. Keep a curious mind-set. Flip chart *Who? What? and By When?* Ask who needs to know what you all just decided and figure out how to communicate with them effectively. Remember WIFM.

- ***Is the team leader keeping too tight a lid on the jar? (Chapter 13)*** If you are this team leader, then you can directly impact this *if* you think making a change is important enough and you commit to doing what it takes. Beware any dominating behavior in team meetings. Share your opinion last. Let small, breakout groups discuss controversial or sensitive topics before a large group debrief. Learn how to manage yourself and lead the team effectively through high-conflict situations and bring a discussion to closure, with full commitment from all team members to fully implement the final decision.
- ***Do your team members hold themselves accountable for living up to their commitments? (Chapter 14)*** If you don't have a common picture of what great personal accountability looks like, then start there and create one as a team. Make sure that you delegate and follow up effectively. Celebrate the right behaviors in the right way for each person on the team. Use team meetings as a showcase for members to uphold their commitments to each other and to you. Conduct an accountability assessment as a team, pick a few areas to improve upon, and then do it. Remember: "We give ourselves credit for our intentions; but hold others accountable for their results." Learn . . . then coach.
- ***What is your team doing to spark creativity in addressing the critical problems and opportunities it sees? (Chapter 15)*** Set aside time for

creative problem solving. Pick problems about which people feel passionately. Be specific with the problem; it really will release more creative juices than leaving it wide open. Make it safe to make a suggestion. Get familiar with the creative problem-solving process I shared with you. Heck, use your creativity to improve upon it and make it your own!

- ***Are there tools and techniques that your team should become familiar with and use on a regular basis? (Chapter 16)*** Get each person to bring one creativity toy to the next problem-solving session. Try out the mind-mapping tool if you are left-brain oriented; or let the right-brainers give the brain-writing technique a chance. Use the impact/effort grid to aid your next decision; it is an easy and inventive way to ensure the entire team's collaboration on solving a specific problem. Employ a decision matrix for those tougher, more complex choices.
- ***When was the last time your team got out of the office for a creative excursion? (Chapter 17)*** Ask each person to bring one suggestion for an expedition to your next meeting. Go with an open mind, and come back with new ideas. Debrief what you learned and how you can apply it. Make it fun . . . make it happen.
- ***Which department, division, or business unit does your team have the greatest conflict with? (Chapter 18)*** And what kind of impact does this conflict have on your business results and theirs? Bring the leaders of the two groups together so that you begin on the same page. Find out what they are held accountable for and how your team can proactively help them to achieve their goals and vice versa. You both might be surprised by what you discover. Then make sure you both make good on your commitments.
- ***Do you see the spark of creativity going on around you, perhaps that others aren't seeing . . . yet? (Chapter 19)*** Be on the lookout for good things going on around you. I always have believed that you find what you look for. I know there are synchronous fireflies in your backyard waiting to be discovered by you. Call them best

practices if you prefer; but look for them, share them with your team, adapt them to help all of you to excel.

- ***Do you like being the changer better than being the changee? (Chapter 20)*** Think about how many change initiatives you currently have underway. Be sure that the purpose of each, as well as how it supports the larger organizational strategy, is clear. (Remember the rain cloud metaphor?) Communicate your compelling change message over and over, using a variety of vehicles. Use the optimal flow to create it. Go out on a limb—try the collage exercise for one of your most difficult change initiatives.

Answering the above questions will help to light a fire under yourself and your team, and become the light you want to see in the world. Take the first step on the path to change, and simply start where you are. Your life and the life of your team can be different because of the actions you take. Pull out a sheet of paper. Write down just one thing from the list above that you really want to do—not what you think you *should* do, but something you *want* to do. Put your creativity to work to figure out how to get it done. Put a due date on it. Share it with one other person that you trust. Hold yourself accountable for achieving it. If you are the leader of a team, be the role model of someone you would want to follow. When you feel the positive reinforcement that one action causes, you will want to do it again. Start a movement—make it happen!

I am an avid believer in the power of paying it forward. You can recapture a lost dream and make a difference in the world. I have seen the wondrous things that occur when one unselfishly gives to another without thought of how or when repayment will be made. I am sure you have found this to be true on at least one, if not multiple occasions in your own personal experience. When you give to others, you receive so much more in return. My hope is that you have found something worthy of remembering from this book, and that you will pass it on to another . . . like the spark of the firefly which magically illuminates a dark night.