EFFECTIVE
MANAGEMENT
20 keys
TO A WINNING CULTURE

A. Keith Barnes

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Acknowledgments

I must express deeply felt gratitude to all the mentors who influenced my personal and professional growth and development; yes, there have been many. But in particular, I am grateful to my older brother, John— my first personal mentor—and especially Jack Cole, my first workplace mentor. Jack was an incredible tour guide for the journey through life. But the truth is that I learned something of value from almost everyone I have ever known: colleagues, students, friends, and my incomparable and loving wife, Judy.

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It is especially rewarding to be associated with the American Society for Training & Development. For decades, the products, services, and programs of ASTD have aided in the development of human talent in an impressive array of situations around the world.

I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to their efforts.

KB

Foreword

By Greg Horn, MBA

CEO, Essentient Inc., and former CEO of General Nutrition Centers (GNC)

Culture is the single most powerful force in determining the performance of an enterprise. It is what shapes strategy and determines the level of effectiveness in its execution. Culture serves to attract talent to an organization—matching and reinforcing talent that ensures progress in kind—and it fosters the development of the products and services that attract customers. Culture defines "who we are" and "why we do what we do" as an organization, and it is thus the nucleus of branding and the touchstone for all marketing. Culture can also attract (or repel) strategic and capital partners, and underlies the success or failure of those relationships.

Shaping culture and harnessing its power to achieve the desired results in an organization is a crucial function of management at all levels. This aspect of management is more art than science, yet—especially given its importance—there is surprisingly little practical information available on how to actually create and cultivate a winning culture, though much theoretical work has been done.

To illuminate the subject in a succinct and practical way, Dr. Barnes draws from rich experience as both a successful management practitioner and management professor. He developed his management skills as a senior executive at a Fortune 500 industrial corporation, later bringing his real-world perspective to the university classroom, mentoring and inspiring students to advance into productive and rewarding business careers. I am one of those students.

When we first met, I was a 20-year-old business major trying to learn as much as possible before going out into the real world of work. In Professor Barnes, I found a teacher who had not only managed businesses successfully, but—in what was a significant personal economic sacrifice—was also willing to share his knowledge and experience with the next generation of managers. He became one of my most important mentors, and his insights made an indelible impression on me and helped me develop my own approach to leading and managing everything from turnarounds and startups to multibillion-dollar corporations.

With this book, Dr. Barnes provides insights into effective management and directly usable advice on the creation and sustenance of a winning culture. The guidelines and edicts you'll find in his book can help you become a better manager, and his advice and perspective are presented in a format that is immediately usable, easy-to-digest, and can benefit every practicing manager, from department head to CEO. Read it, keep it handy, and refer to it often; it is that good and that useful a resource.

GH

Introduction

In the everyday life of managers, in businesses large and small—and for that matter, in the nonprofit sector—there occur challenges and threats, opportunities visible and obscure, all variously significant in their impact. Much of the time, in all but the rarest of circumstances, the most serious challenges could have been prevented—or, at least, foreseen and dealt with proactively. Of course, opportunities need to be contextualized in order to assess the latent pitfalls and develop lasting improvements. That requires know-how and insight in leaders familiar with their own industry specifics, but it also calls for a system-wide alertness and a commitment to the development of the human organization…**a winning culture**.

These are sweeping statements, I realize, as many might say that "things just happen," but bear with me and you'll see that I am not talking of the need to be prescient, or even unusually smart. What I'm getting at in these pages (and hoping to help you with) is the all-important process of building and maintaining an organization made up of people who are committed, fully in touch with the products and services your business offers, and also the marketplace in its entirety:

the customers, the competitors, the dynamic circumstances, and the industry milieu.

The use of the word "culture" needs some explanation perhaps, as the most common usage refers to people of common heritage, ethnicity, or race. For purposes here, however, I consider "culture" to be the commonalities that exist among people who have shared interests, such as within one organization, or even within one department of an organization. It is easy to see why the men and women who work in a marketing department (as one example) see their world and their collective challenges in significantly different ways from those in say the accounting function. Dealing with those kinds of potential conflict are addressed herein. But the whole organization, in order to function smoothly and effectively, needs to cohere and set aside petty turf wars of the lesser kind. This book shows ways of meeting that objective: building a coherent team that is alive, awake, attuned, and committed…**a winning culture**.

Here you will find directly usable ideas and guidelines, for what I believe are the keys to creating an effective and efficient team of players at every level who will rise to the occasion most of the time. These people will solve problems even before they become dangerously negative, and will be proactive in taking advantage of positive opportunities presented. The results will include growth, improved profits and other measures of efficiency, and the creation of an enjoyable, rewarding culture for all those on board, as well as the delivery of fair and equitable value (goods and services) to your customers or clients.

Much has been written about "stakeholders," and there is little doubt that forward-looking enterprises are keenly aware of all the

various parties directly or indirectly involved in or affected by the processes and products of any organization. But the truth is that there are key players on the inside of any team, individuals who set the tone and build the culture—for better or worse. Key players are not just the top managers; but the edicts, guidelines, methods, and suggestions found in these pages are primarily directed at the key players in an organization. Some people may be tempted to label them "leaders," regardless of the title or rank, and they are certainly that, but they are much more…they are the lynchpins to success. At whatever level they exist in your organization, their consistent adherence to the specific recommendations and the general tenets and philosophies of this book will transfer to others under their influence…and **a winning culture** will develop.

I have written this book as a practical guide, not as an academic treatise, and yet all the guidelines are heavily based on real-world experience as well as research and academic theories. All of the content is tempered by my personal experiences in taking on management challenges in organizations large and small, and creating **a winning culture** in some of the most difficult circumstances. Those who wish to read more in the realm of theory, or see reference materials on all the subjects contained herein, can see my prior book, *Management Maturity: Prerequisite to Total Quality Management.*

Most of the chapters in this book are directed at human processes and the various interfaces between people in the workplace. On the more technical aspects of management and leadership—identifying specific steps to be taken, tasks to regiment within your team—I offer a few approaches, methodologies, and systems that will tighten up your

operation in the most critical areas. But between the lines of even these technical contents you will find the human factors stressed. Critically so! Management is primarily about people.

Regarding all those decisions managers face on a day-to-day basis that are not directly related to human organization, I certainly acknowledge their existence and yet I affirm the need for effective management approaches on them too. Such decisions may have to do with products and services offered, facilities and locations, supplier problems, union challenges, local regulations and obligations, and a great many other things. But here's the truth: On all such issues, from the management team and even employees who do not supervise other workers, there will be responsive and responsible actions taken in an organization wherein the guidelines and edicts of this book have been followed, making the decision process more effective. I have always advocated the need to build an organizational ethos in which people at every level do not go to their boss with problems, seeking answers. Instead, they go to their boss to report a problem already solved—or at least with a recommended solution to one proactively recognized. Such is **a winning culture**.

In no case have I written more than the basics on each topic covered, and as you read on you will soon learn why. It would be impossible to do more in an accessible book of this sort—after all, it is not a textbook—but also it would contravene my own philosophy of allowing people to adapt ideas and suggestions, blending them into their own circumstances. You have your own abilities to apply these basics in your setting, so use them according to your own experience

and understandings, adapting them to serve your organization, your purposes, and your personal goals.

I make no claim that this collection is complete. There are many similar or related topics for managers and supervisors to address, to understand, and to apply to their particular unique circumstances. But I have chosen this set with one thing in mind: applicability to the widest array of settings. These topics certainly apply (or can be adapted) to every organization except perhaps the very smallest—yet many of them can also be of value there!

At the end of most of the chapters you will find a "Day in the Life of…" exercise. Each of these is in the form of a vignette; a scenario that forms part of a continuing story illustrating an emergent problem or two for key individuals in a fictitious organization. Occasionally in these stories there will be evidence of things done well. The problems and the positives are directly related to the chapter content in each case. These will be restricted; they will not address all of the chapter contents. Rather, they will highlight one or two key topics, giving you an opportunity to respond, observe, and record your thoughts and reflections appropriately. You are invited to make notes and suggest ways in which the problems could have been prevented or alleviated, or to identify what was done right. The most evident things should occur to you readily, but dig a little deeper and see what latent evidence you can identify. The author's notes on these same exercises can be found at the end of the book, with expanded descriptions into topics of relevance when necessary.

Chapter 11
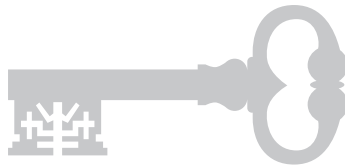
Trust Building

In an earlier section I discussed the tendency of many managers to spend more of their time with selected individuals: usually the winners on their team, the high achievers, or those with whom they share common interests. While this is natural, it is generally unwise and can be quite damaging in subtle ways. A perception of favoritism is created, and often that perception is valid. There is nothing more valuable in building and sustaining any relationship than trust. And do not mistake trust for predictability, though there are some commonalities.

Everyone wants their automobile to be trustworthy, to start and run without difficulty day in and day out. Predictability is hugely important in this form of trust. Similarly, in a personal relationship and under a given set of circumstances, predictability is critical—but there's

a catch. An entirely predictable relationship can be boring for many people. Change and excitement—or at least freshness—can make such a difference to any relationship, working or personal, so spice up your predictability with a little imagination to produce some level of freshness and joy. Be creative.

But the one thing that must not be undermined or weakened is loyalty. Two-way loyalty in all relationships, personal or otherwise, is vital for mutual enrichment and satisfaction. Loyalty develops slowly and is based on mutual trust…but it can be fragile, and can evaporate rapidly. So how is such mutual trust built and sustained? The four most common errors made in the workplace that undermine trust in an organizational setting are:

Inconsistency. People need to be treated in consistent ways on all the things that matter most. Any one of us can have a bad day, and based on mood alone we can be unpredictable, but if we allow (yes, it is a choice we make) this to significantly alter the way we treat others in ordinary exchanges then trust is potentially undermined.

Insincerity. If a manager frequently praises an employee—with no criticism on any aspect of their work—and then in a formal performance review makes only critical observations, such a reversal will result in the loss of trust. So be sure you deliver no surprises in a negative direction, as they reflect insincerity. Surprises in a positive direction are always welcomed and often of value.

Secrecy. In every organization there's need to be appropriately careful about certain kinds of information, but erring on the side of openness is always better than the opposite. When people feel left out

they invent their own information and will often spread potentially damaging misinformation in the form of rumors. This is one of the most insidious manifestations of a lack of trust.

Favoritism. We all have favorites. To deny this is to deny human nature, but in the workplace all evident forms of favoritism seriously undermine the winning culture. There's no room for it—no exceptions. People who achieve must be recognized, of course, but when you do this be certain of the justice and the justifiability of such recognition and reward. Spell out your rationale openly, or the worst will be assumed. Think carefully about how you treat all of your people. Equally importantly, communicate your concerns on this topic openly with all the other supervisory personnel about this form of openness, and welcome feedback from others.

The other problem with spending more time with the winners on your team is that it takes time away from those who need your attention the most. Highly productive people need less supervision, generally, and even a little less encouragement than those not doing quite so well, so you should see to it that your time is apportioned on the basis of need. I know it is a hackneyed saying, but it is nevertheless true: A team is only as strong as its weakest player, so build your team's overall effectiveness by strengthening those less able, less confident, and less experienced.

Some might see these recommendations as being too soft, and that behaving in the ways I suggest will invite employees to take advantage of you. There is always a risk of being "used" in any open system. I acknowledge this reality, but despite such risks the benefits

far outweigh the negatives. Furthermore, some people are more fragile than others, and some respond to uncertainty and challenge better than others. So do any fine-tuning that seems indicated in your setting, by all means, but you can be certain of one thing: If you are guilty of any of the above listed trust-busting behaviors, your hopes for a winning culture will evaporate.

A Day in the Life of Gerry and John . . .

Gerry asked John to join him at his golf club for lunch one day, and he raised a subject that had come up before, several years back, but in vague terms. Now it sounded much more concrete:

"How would you feel about us giving our attorney a small percentage of ownership in the business, John? She does such a great job on our taxes and such, and, well, I'm not talking a big percentage."

"She already gets a fat fee for everything she does, Gerry—as all lawyers do."

John barely knew the attorney Gerry was talking about, and yet he knew that Gerry spent a lot of his spare time with the woman, and played golf with her at least twice a month.

"Well, here's the thing. If she gets a percentage, say just 5 percent, she said she would reduce her fees on everything she does for us."

"Wait a minute. You've already discussed this with her? Without my involvement?"

Gerry looked alarmed. "Well just in tentative terms, John. And I told her I'd have to get your agreement on it anyway. We have talked about having others become minority shareholders, you know that."

"Ages ago, Gerry. We talked about it so long ago I thought it was a dead issue. Now…you've sure surprised me, Gerry. I thought we communicated well enough that surprises like this would never be a problem between us."

"Look, I'm sorry. I should have asked for your input first. But it came up spontaneously, and…I really am sorry. Let's not spoil lunch. We can think about it some, on our own, and then talk again in a few days. Okay, pal? Waiter, bring me the check please."