

WHAT NOT TO DO IN BUSINESS

*The leadership and
management survival guide*

Thomas Berarducci

Introduction

Leadership is a privilege. It is a singularly unique opportunity given to a select few individuals who, if they apply it properly and are lucky, can effect great change. Change in their teams, change in their companies, even change in themselves. If they are very lucky, they can effect great change in the world.

But, in order to effect great change, the leader must learn discipline. Before he can ever hope to discipline others, he must first learn to discipline himself. Since any team or company is ultimately a reflection of the person leading it, an undisciplined leader will ultimately spawn an undisciplined team. And a leader incapable of effective focus will spawn a disorganized, cluttered, and unfocussed team, which will be totally useless to himself and to his company. It is this lack of effective focus that must be avoided at all costs. It is this lack of effective focus that can dilute your team's efforts to the point that, to the outside observer, you all look like a bunch of tourists at an amusement park: you expend a great deal of energy, have some fun, but at the end of the day, you return home tired and broke. It is this lack of effective focus that, when done with flair, clearly exemplifies What Not to Do.

I chose to write this book after nearly three decades of corporate life for many reasons. Chief among them was to help others learn from my mistakes. When I was a young manager, I had startlingly few good mentors, and was given very little formal training. I was essentially thrown in the deep-end of the management pool and expected to fend for myself. I (eventually) learned the lessons I write about in this book (and am still learning believe me). But these lessons were not learned easily, nor did this knowledge come without extracting a price. I learned, but not until after many, many failures.

My goal for this book is to provide a practical guide to leadership and influence that addresses many of the issues anyone will face when they find themselves in a position of leadership. A guide anyone can use, almost as a workbook, to improve whatever level of skill they currently possess. So you won't have to fend for yourself. So you can leapfrog over those who are flailing around, trying to learn by themselves. I only wish someone had pulled me aside when I was new at all this and let me in on these issues, and how best to deal with them. These are the things they don't teach you about in MBA school. The things that they don't teach you in management training. Yet, these are the things that could make or break your career. And the things companies need to focus on much, much more than they currently do.

Many people probably wonder why companies have such trouble getting things done. I know I did. Many years ago, as a young engineer working for Eastman Kodak, I had

the good fortune to get the opportunity to talk one on one with George Fisher, former CEO of Motorola in the days of the first cell phones. At the time, Mr. Fisher was CEO of Kodak, a company struggling to find its way in the transition from film to digital imaging. I was having lunch with Mr. Fisher in the 9th Floor cafeteria of Building 7, Kodak Office, and the world headquarters for the Fortune 500 Company. Being young, headstrong, overly simplistic in my thinking, and naive, I did not know why Mr. Fisher, the CEO of the company, was having such trouble turning the company around. "I don't understand the problem." I said. "You're the boss." "You are in charge." "Why can't you simply tell everybody what to do to solve the problems?" Mr. Fisher smiled a little smile, leaned over toward me, and simply said, "I have all of the power, and yet, I have none of the power." It took me a journey of more than 15 years before I figured out what he was talking about.

It's not about power. It's about influence.

This book is not about power. If we all had absolute power our jobs would be easy, yet our world would be in ruins. Instead, this book is about what is needed most in business, how to wield influence effectively. How to manage. How to direct. How to avoid making all the common mistakes that plague companies over and over again.

This book is about doing what's right. Unfortunately, doing what's right is almost always harder than doing what's easy. That is where problems start. And that's

exactly where this book begins. Each chapter is about what happens when the easy road, instead of the right road, is taken.

But more than that, this book attempts to give my opinion about what each of us can do to move in the direction of doing what's right. To take the high road. To be brave. To succeed where countless others have failed.

When I was a child, I was very inquisitive. I asked about everything. Like most children, I loved asking "why". My mother had a standard answer for questions she, for whatever reason, did not feel like answering. Whenever I asked such a question, she would always say, "Are you writing a book?" I would answer, "Well, no." And that would be that. After a while of this, and being somewhat of a smart-ass, I decided I would "get her". So one day I asked one of my typical inquisitive, probing, annoyingly detailed questions of my dear mother. To this she responded, "Why do you want to know? Are you writing a book?" But this time I quipped, "Yes I am!" Hah! I had her now. She would be totally embarrassed and forced to acknowledge my question.

Upon hearing this, my dear mother simply said, "Well, leave that chapter out."

Curses. Foiled again.

This book is a compilation of all those "left out" chapters in all those business books. Chapters that should be read first, not ignored altogether. Chapters of subjects that most

people never talk about, but should. As evidenced by simply looking at the state of American business today, it is exactly these topics that are most in need of discussion.

Do I have all the answers? Heck no. Have I done everything perfect in my career? No way. In fact, I'm positive I have committed each and every one of the detailed infractions listed in this book at least once (and some multiple times) in my illustrious career. The purpose of this book is not to judge others so much as it is to observe the human condition; to reflect upon what I have learned about business over the nearly three decades I have been so fortunate to be a participant in this game.

No, my goal is not to judge, but to help illuminate the issues. I'm sure that, if you read this book, you will see in it examples of behavior typified daily all around you (and perhaps by you).

The book is organized into four parts: What Not to Do when making decisions, What Not to Do regarding strategy, What Not to Do regarding tactics, and What Not to Do in leadership. The parts and chapters are not sequential. You can scan the table of contents and jump right to the chapter that interests you most without worrying about losing continuity. In each chapter, I try to present what happens when people take the easy route instead of doing what's right in that specific area of business. I discuss alternative approaches and give contemporary examples to illustrate my points. I close each chapter by presenting a list of helpful hints and tips you can apply to your job situation

right now to hopefully prevent falling victim to that particular form of What Not to Do.

I chose to approach the book from the principle point of view, laying key learnings out for the reader at the end of each chapter in summary form. Because of this, I hope the book has more staying power than many of the “how to” books of the day. The examples may become dated, but not the message. Details are fleeting; principles last forever.

My goal is to present an edgy, passionate, perhaps irreverent, opinionated viewpoint that teaches how I think companies and businesses should be run from the principle level, told in a compelling and (hopefully) entertaining manner. If in the process someone takes the 100 or so recommendations I make, and becomes even a little better, then I will have succeeded.

Only you will be able to truly judge my level of success. It is curious to note that, when you are not famous and have a “different” opinion, you are considered “cynical”. But when you are famous and have a different opinion, you are called “irreverent”. Read the book and decide for yourself.

Some folks may consider the content of this book to be merely the ranting of an angry person. I hope you do not. Please take the time to read the book with an open mind. Consider the thoughtful suggestions at the end of each chapter. Try to think about the possibility that your business may benefit from them. If you do all this, I will be

truly surprised if you do not get some value from what is written in these pages.

If for some reason someone feels insulted or otherwise harmed by the contents of this book, I truly apologize. It is not my intent to harm anyone. I purposely waited one year after writing the bulk of the book before publishing it. I wanted to read it a year later, with a fresh perspective, to see if I still agreed the content was relevant and valuable. I can honestly tell you that I wholeheartedly do. I can only hope you feel the same.

Finally, please accept my sincere thanks for taking the time to read this book. For, as any business is ultimately a reflection of the leader at the top, this book is a reflection of me. I hope it wears well with time, and that you use it to become the leader you were truly meant to be.

Tom Berarducci

Tom@tnbtechnologies.com