

BLACK ISSUES bookreview

The African American Book Publishing Authority

May/June 2007

THE ROUTE TO RICHES

**BUSINESS STRATEGISTS AND
ENTREPRENEURS MAP THE WAY
TO MAKE MORE GREEN IN A
RECENT CROP OF BOOKS.**

BY ANDRIA Y. CARTER

MOST PEOPLE ADMIRE THE BUSINESS ACCOMPLISHMENTS of Warren Buffet, Bill Gates, Dick Parsons, Russell Simmons and Oprah Winfrey. Each of these individuals achieved their success with vision, perseverance, talent, and a strong will coupled with a little bit of luck. But while those character traits may have gotten them on the playing field, their business success came largely through their effectiveness in managing and leading people in the game.

The ability to affect others positively in the workplace is a carefully crafted skill acquired over time. As a leader, the messages you send—overt or subtle—can either inspire or demoralize your staff. Stephen Young, author of *Micromessaging: Why Greater Leadership Is Beyond Words* (McGraw-Hill, 2006), wants to make managers aware of how they can maximize inspiration and minimize the missteps that depress staff morale.

Actions Speak Louder Than Words

“Micromessaging” is the new corporate buzzword describing how managers and workers send subtle, often nonverbal messages through phrases and tone, attitude and gesture. A classic negative example of micromessaging is the blunder Senator Joseph Biden committed when he described his colleague Senator Barack Obama as “articulate and clean.” Articulate and clean are not descriptive words typically used to describe white candidates or elected officials, so covertly they seem to refer to Senator Obama’s race.

“While most of us are unaware of the 2,000 to 4,000 micromessages we send each day, these micromessages determine short- and long-term performance, employee loyalty and organizational culture. The intrigue is how senders are mostly unaware of receiving them, how mysteriously they are sent, and most importantly acted on, blindly altering workplace performance and collegial relationships,” Young says.

Actions speak louder than words. Sitting in a meeting where everyone is watching how the manager reacts to various questions, comments and presentations, you subtly learn who is favored, who is tolerated or who not to bother with. For example, a manager introduces two of his staffers to a colleague. The first worker introduced, the manager just says his name and what he does in a



clipped tone, while the other worker is introduced with a more praiseful tone and the manager actually looks at him while the introduction is being made. Right way you know who is favored and who is not.

Young says he first encountered micromessaging while working for a manager who left him shaking after each contact. She would say the exact same thing to different people, but he always came away with a negative feeling. It wasn't until someone leaned over to him one day in a meeting and said, "I am so tired of her microinequities." He realized then that he was not alone in receiving the undercurrent messages his manager was sending out.

In a study conducted by Merck six to nine months after their employees attended one of Young's MicroInequities seminars, 90 percent of employees said they were aware of the micromessages they send and receive; 55 percent indicated they had conversations with others at work regarding a micromessage resulting in improved work team norms, communications skills, and meeting norms; and this resulted in an 85 percent reported improvement in business relationships.

A "greater awareness of your [leadership] style and your team's style" is a plus for building your company," points out Randall Pinkett, in his book *Campus CEO: The Student Entrepreneur's Guide to Launching a Multimillion-Dollar Business* (Kaplan Publishing, February 2007). The chairman and CEO of the consulting firm BCT Partners and winner of the TV's *The Apprentice 4*, points out that you can more effectively delegate tasks and work as a team the better you understand each person's unique leadership style.

Kenneth Arroyo Roldan, CEO of Wesley, Brown & Bartle Company, a minority recruiting firm, offers readers his cultural insight into moving up the corporate ladder in *Minority Rules: Turn Your Ethnicity Into a Competitive Edge* (Collins/HarperCollins, 2006). Arroyo says that leadership comes from perseverance, understanding your company's culture, effective networking and political savvy. Indeed, leadership is about affecting people and getting the best results possible. This skill is especially crucial now in the business world as the global marketplace becomes more diverse and competitive.

Finding Your Unique Path to Success

In *The Real Pepsi Challenge: The Inspirational Story of Breaking the Color Barrier in American Business* (Wall Street Journal Books/Free Press, January 2007), author Stephanie Capparell provides an insider's view of the rivalry between Pepsi-Cola and Coca-Cola.

The book is more of a blueprint of how 12 African Americans struggled to market Pepsi, but also how a leader, Edward F. Boyd (who recently died at the age of 92), was able to use his vision to inspire a team to grow a niche market and create a new revenue stream for the company. The contribution of this team paved the way for future generations of African Americans in the corporate world. "To ranks of the unsung civil rights pioneers, add Pepsi's first special-markets sales staff," Capparell writes. "Instead of schoolrooms or lunch counters, their struggles and victories took place in offices, storefronts, and factory floors."

Although the team existed for a short period of time, from 1947 to 1951, they helped shape the corporation into a contemporary brand that not only integrated the workplace, but also revolutionized the strategies of niche marketing.

In writing *The Real Pepsi Challenge*, Capparell says she wanted to provide readers with a bigger picture than just the horror stories of the time with the salesmen dealing with Jim Crow laws and racial discrimination. The book is an opportunity to showcase the legacy Pepsi began and continues today with women and minorities have more management roles within the company.

"It takes both sides to achieve," Capparell says. She adds, "Personally, it [the book] taught me the journey to personal achievement or personal best might not be rewarded. But going through the process you make yourself ready and capable and that is your own reward."

There is no one-size-fits-all blueprint for success. Everyone has to use a different philosophy and find a niche they are comfortable with to obtain the success they seek.

"You will find that when you have a vision, you don't see the road to the vision; you just see the vision" are the opening lines to Michele Hoskins's book *Sweet Expectations: Michele Hoskins's Recipe for Success* (Adams Media, 2004). Hoskins's success with her company Michele Foods, Inc. is based upon a honey-cream syrup created by her great-great-grandmother America Washington in the 1860s. Washington, born a slave, created the syrup for the plantation family she served. It was the basis for an entrepreneurial dream that has turned into a multimillion-dollar corporation.

When Hoskins decided to form her company, she knew little about the food industry, knew few people in the industry, and she needed capital. But she had passion. Her perseverance got her through the rough times and having a mentor helped her to meet basic challenges in starting a new business.

"There are no failures, only quitters," according to Russell Simmons in *Do You! 12 Laws to Access the Power in You to Achieve Happiness and Empowerment* (Gotham Books, April 2007). In his book, Simmons offers advice for business building and personal, spiritual strengthening.

"In over twenty-five years of riding out the highs and the lows of the entertainment business, I've learned a lot of important strategies for success. But I can honestly say that few of them are as important as the law that teaches there are no failures, only quitters." Simmons writes.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, minority groups and women are increasing their business ownership at a much higher rate than the national average. While the number of U.S. businesses increased by 10 percent (23 million from 1997 to 2002), the rate of growth for minority- and women-owned businesses was far higher, ranging from 67 percent for businesses owned by native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders to 20 percent for firms owned by women.

In 2002, there were 1.2 million African American-owned businesses, up 45 percent from 1997. Their receipts were \$92.7 billion, up 30 percent from 1997. "Everyone is not meant to own their own company," says Melvin J. Gravely II, Ph.D., author of *When Black & White Make Green* (Impact Group Publishers, 2003) and managing director of the Institute for Entrepreneurial Thinking.

Gravely says most businesses fail because entrepreneurs try to do too much instead of staying focused on their core business. Or they achieve limited success, continue to lose money and give up. "Four out of five businesses do not make it past the first five years," he says.

Achieving business success is for those who can make hard decisions fast. Many African American businessowners like to include a social agenda in their business that will benefit the community but not their bottom line.

Entrepreneur, speaker and author Robert L. Wallace, author of *Strategic Partnerships: An Entrepreneur's Guide to Joint Ventures and Alliances* (Dearborn Trade Publishing, 2004), believes African American businessowners must leave their social agenda behind them and master the art of building partnerships to allow their businesses to grow.

In today's economy, the cultural philosophy of pulling yourself up by your bootstraps to find success is no longer operative for African Americans. The idea of getting a good education, getting a good job and keeping your nose clean is no longer good enough in this society. "No one else in the world still operates in this old paradigm. The paradigm has shifted and for one to be successful today you got to master the art of building strategic partnerships. If you don't do it, you are going to fail," Wallace says.

"I don't do any deals unless I have a partnership on the deal. No solo stuff. Everything I do has a partnership," says Wallace, who has founded three companies: Bith-Group Technologies, Entreat Learning Systems, LLC and Techcom, LLC. "Business is a relationship sport. A contact sport."

Wallace is working with businesses in China to form a partnership so he can be on the ground floor of that country's exploding economy. His company, The Bith-Group, has contacts all over the world in Shanghai, Beijing, South Africa, Tanzania, Kenya, Ghana and San Paulo, Brazil.

"The global economy is real and things are starting to happen," he says. "I want to make sure our feet are on the ground and relationships are in place. That is why I travel extensively. It is costing me money and time, but the investment is worth the risk."

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