

## The Greatest Gift You Can Give

By Steven Gaffney

There is nothing more important than remembering to acknowledge and appreciate people. It is the greatest gift that you can give someone.

My grandfather, Giulio Orefice, lived in a nursing home during the last several years of his life before passing away at 99 years of age.

During one of my visits to see him, a nurse pulled me aside and told me what a "great man" my grandfather was. Appreciative, I asked why she thought so. She responded, "He is the only person here who always says "Thank you."

Wow! Just two simple words in the English language! That does not seem like a lot, but it means so much, and to this nurse it meant everything.

My grandfather always acknowledged people. He acknowledged small things. During my last visit with him, he thanked the nurse for helping him with his hearing aid. He acknowledged large things, such as referring to

his daughter, my mother, as an angel for visiting him daily and making him feel loved and inspired to face the challenge of another day.

We do not have to throw a party or organize an awards ceremony, although it never hurts. We just need to acknowledge and appreciate people for the large and small things they do for and with us.

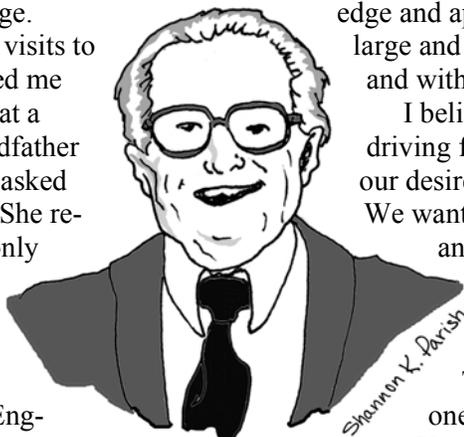
I believe the number one driving force of human beings is our desire to make a difference.

We want to see our lives count and we need to feel like we matter to someone, that we are noticed and important.

To acknowledge someone is to say, "I see you."

You are significant. I admire you." Who doesn't need to hear these things?

Many of us work extra hours, often for no additional money or benefit. Why? We just want to make a difference in our jobs or help someone out. That is why many of us have a hard time saying "No."  
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## Good News

Begin every meeting you attend, whether it is at work, school, church or in your community, with three minutes of "Good News." Just ask anyone in the meeting to share any good thing that has happened to them on the job, in their family or community.

The results are dramatic. Not only are the meetings more positive and productive, but they are shorter! People come on time because they don't want to miss the good news. They learn things about one another they never knew before.

Since most meetings are focused on what is going wrong, what a joy it is to begin with what is going right! We all need to be more positive people in our workplaces and focus on the good we have done.

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## Lessons from "The Apprentice"

By Kristin Arnold

Reality TV is a voyeuristic view of teamwork. The producers take willing subjects, throw them together with a simple premise and let the fireworks begin. Each segment is a fascinating case study on team dynamics where we have the opportunity to see the good, the bad and the ugly.

My favorite show this season is "The Apprentice," a multiple-week job interview where sixteen wannabes vie to be hired by Donald Trump with a "six figure salary." Each week, Trump gives the team(s) a task. The teams are then evaluated and one member is "fired" with the last person left getting the job. There are several lessons on teamwork to be learned:

**Be Clear.** Trump is explicit about his expectations. Each week, he provides a "dossier" or team charter with a clear objective and some guidance. For example, one objective was to "earn the greatest profit by using the flea markets of New York". The team who makes the most money "wins" and someone from the "losing" team will be sent home. It's an intriguing microcosm for Donald and his two advisors to evaluate their business acumen, team skills and potential.

*"If you want to do something really special and memorable for someone, buy a card and write down the lessons you have learned from having him or her in your life, and then give it to that person."*

*Steven Gaffney*

## **The Greatest Gift** *(continued from page 1)*

Some people ask me, "Is it possible to over-acknowledge people?" Perhaps, but the issue is more likely to be the quality of the appreciation—whether our sincerity is the acknowledgement—not whether there is too much of it. In fact, I have never heard of someone leaving an organization because he or she was acknowledged too much. I have never heard of anyone ending a marriage because there was just too much love and appreciation. I have never heard of a child growing up dysfunctional because the child was acknowledged too much. But, of course, we have all heard of people leaving organizations, ending marriages and remaining upset about their childhoods because they were not acknowledged enough.

**ISOS** is The Key to Acknowledgement. Make sure your feedback is:

**Immediate.** Even if it is over the phone or email, express it now. (You can always do something really special for them later).

**Specific.** What specifically are you acknowledging?

**Often.** You cannot harm someone by over-appreciating them.

**Sincere.** Say it if you only mean it.

Give the greatest gift that you can give someone: Tell someone what a difference he or she has made in your life. Then watch the difference you make in that person's life.

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## **The Apprentice** *(continued from page 1)*

**Be Timely.** After each task is completed, Trump immediately assembles the teams and evaluates the results. The teams know instantaneously how they did, where they stand, and what he thinks of their performance. (Note to all team leaders: he didn't send them an email; he gave the good and bad news face to face).

**Be Decisive.** Donald Trump is known for being able to make decisions swiftly. After gathering input from his advisors, he alone makes the decision as to who will be fired.

**Align with the Culture.** Since Trump is decisive, direct and results-oriented, it can be challenging to operate differently, especially when you're in a television fishbowl.

**Build Your Team.** Ultimately, Bill's success was inextricably tied to the ability of his team to achieve the expected results. Bill simply picked a better team. Regrettably, Kwame picked the fickle Omarosa and failed to deal with her performance issues.

Unfortunately, reality TV also has to pander to the gritty, ugly side of teamwork. These are lessons I hope you DON'T learn:

**Poor Team Skills.** When given a task, the teams typically lack any process to assess their strengths to accomplish the task, brainstorm solutions, build a consensus and create a plan forward.

**Lack of Consensus.** Kristi acknowledged that she "led by group consensus and that was one of my biggest mistakes." Yikes! She floundered, grabbed an idea and desperately urged her teammates to agree. Since they were pressed for time, her team responded with the obligatory dashboard "bobblehead" nod of agreement.

**More Than Money.** Although the ultimate bottom-line, short-term objective is about making a profit, there is more to life than making money. What are you willing to do (or not) for the sake of a buck? Consider long-term implications for today's actions.

**Vicious Gossip.** The show encourages team members to talk trash about their teammates for the camera. There simply is no place for this kind of disparaging behavior in a high performance team.

**Spring 2004**  
**Vol. 9 No. 3**

A newsletter designed to facilitate discussion and share tips and techniques to help your teams to be extraordinary.

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**The Extraordinary Team** is a quarterly publication distributed to clients, friends and partners of Quality Process Consultants, Inc. Articles are welcome and encouraged. We sincerely would like to know what you are doing.

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“Kristin’s Practical Team Activities are exciting, fun and thought provoking. The activities engage people, inspire them to participate and encourage them to learn meaningful lessons about themselves and the way their teams work together.”

Michael Chaleff

Trial Attorney, Department of Justice

## What’s New at QPC Inc.

Over the past dozen years, the core of our business has revolved around facilitation and process consulting services, most recently with clients such as Horizon Lines, Baltimore Gas & Electric, and Comcast Cable. We also train team leaders and project managers such as Caterpillar and the PACE Healthcare Initiative on how to facilitate cross-functional teams.

Since we relocated the company from Hampton to Fairfax, Virginia a tad bit over a year ago, we have been immersed in a “reinvention” process—asking tough questions about our business, our clients, the value we provide and the benefits derived from working with Quality Process Consultants, Inc. We have engaged many of you in this process, identifying your needs and discerning new ways to leverage my talents in the Washington DC Metro location.

One thing we heard loud and clear is that the success of our “executive” clients (director level or above) is directly related to the success of their “executive team”—their direct reports. And yet, for many reasons, they have not been able to galvanize their team to the next level of performance. That’s where we can help, using a distinctive blend of our core talents.

Starting in September in McLean, Virginia, we will offer a unique workshop designed to enable these executives to take their teams to the next level, producing substantially greater results with less hassles and greater collaboration. Executive Team Advantage™ is an annual series of one-day, quarterly workshops comprised of team leaders from a variety of industries and locations. Facilitative in style, Kristin shares proven team tools, techniques and best practices so that each participant obtains the focus they need, develops a realistic quarterly plan to accelerate team success and instills accountability to stay on track. As best we can tell, we’re unique in this approach to helping executives build high performance teams. We’re excited about the possibilities and hope you are too! For more information, check out [www.qpcteam.com](http://www.qpcteam.com).

The other big news is that we were quoted in the last two issues *Harvard Management Update*, a newsletter published by the Harvard Business School, as well as other national newsletters. Looks like we are gaining recognition for our expertise!

## Practical Team Activities: Gordian Knot

### The Gordian Knot

To creatively demonstrate team problem-solving skills

Time: 10-15 minutes

Nr. of Participants: Groups of 5 to 15 people

According to Greek legend, the Oracle prophesized the next king of Phrygia would arrive by oxcart. Gordius and his wife came strolling into town, and Gordius was made king. In gratitude, Gordius dedicated his oxcart to Zeus, tying it with an intricate knot to a pole in the public square. The oracle declared that anyone who succeeded in untying the knot would be the conqueror of all Asia.

Many years passed. The knot stayed tied until Alexander the Great traveled to Phrygia. Alexander attempted to untie the knot like everyone else. When it became apparent that conventional means wouldn’t work, he

drew his sword and sliced the knot in half. Hence, “cutting the Gordian knot” came to mean solving a difficult problem.

Let the team know that they will be solving a difficult “knotty” problem of their own! Ask the team members to gather around in a circle, so that people are standing shoulder to shoulder. (You may also warn them you won’t be asking them to sing *Kum-by-ya* anytime soon!)

If any women are wearing high heels, ask them to remove their shoes.

Ask each person to stick out one hand and “shake” or “grab” just one other person’s hand – not standing beside him or her. Walk around the group(s) and make sure it is just one hand connecting to one other hand – not a five-hand pile-up!

Ask the group to take their other hand and “shake” or “grab” another person’s hand. Again, emphasize one hand connecting to just one other hand.

Ask the team to “untangle” itself – in other words, to

“bigger” without breaking the connections between the hands (or pulling out a sword to slice the knot in half).

Then stand back and watch the fun! Most teams are able to figure it out; either they untangle themselves into one large circle or two or three interconnected circles. A true “Gordian Knot” cannot be untied.

You can find more Practical Team Activities in our latest book, **Team Energizers** at [www.qpcteam.com](http://www.qpcteam.com)



"You can easily spot the doers by observing their working habits. They're the ones who energize people, are decisive on tough issues, get things done through others, and follow through as second nature."

Larry Bossidy

*Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done*

## From the Bookshelf



Have you ever wondered how many strategic and operational plans were put in place, only to be left unopened and not implemented? Larry Bossidy, former Chairman & CEO of Honeywell, and Ram Charan, in their book, *Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done* (ISBN 0-609-61057-0) provide a hands on, systematic approach to ensuring accountability and follow through on these plans.

Bossidy & Charan provide concrete ideas to close the gap between what is and what could be. While none of their advice is revolutionary, they detail specific techniques to ensure the organization knows what needs to be done...and then does it!

The discipline of execution is a "systematic process of rigorously discussing hows and whats, questioning, tenaciously following through and ensuring accountability. It also includes making assumptions about the business environment, assessing the organization's capabilities, linking strategy to operations and the people who are going to implement the strategy, synchronizing those people and their various disciplines, and linking rewards to outcomes. It also includes mechanisms for changing assumptions as the environment changes and upgrading the organization's capabilities to meet the challenges of an ambitious strategy."

A quick read, you'll find lots of ideas to ensure the organization is engaged, effective and executes admirably.

## More Team Energizers!

Michelle Matt at InspiringSolutions.com reminded me of several proven techniques adapted from *1001 Ways to Energize Your Employees* by Bob Nelson: In this case, she culled them down to x strategies to energize your team:

- ◆ Bring "Welcome To The Team" flowers on the first team meeting or for a new team member.
- ◆ Whenever something positive happens, put it in the "smile box." Read them once a week and draw one for a winner (e.g. a \$25 gift certificate).
- ◆ Put gold stars on their computers or name badges along with a note of thanks.
- ◆ Brown bag welcoming lunch to meet new team mates.
- ◆ Post a sign at entry with all the team members' names.
- ◆ Write thank-you notes or send online greeting cards for small success.
- ◆ Throw a team pizza party (or ice cream social)!
- ◆ Read letters from satisfied customers.
- ◆ Share customer survey results with your teammates and post on the "Way To Go" bulletin board.
- ◆ Give a "star" to team members who go beyond their normal duties or give great customer service.
- ◆ Buy team shirts, jackets, coffee mugs etc..
- ◆ Reward success with time-off or dinner certificates.

Thanks for sharing, Michelle!

## Being Prepared to Win *By Jim Ball*

Most leaders have goals; however only a few leaders really prepare their teams to achieve those goals.

Suppose you own a football team and are in the stands watching your team come onto the field. Much to your surprise, most players are not fully suited up. Some are pulling on their jerseys and pants. Others are tying their shoes. A couple of players turn and head back to the lockers for equipment they forgot.

Let us move the scene forward to the first play and listen in to the huddle. You hear the quarterback provide these instructions: "At the snap for the ball, I want each of you to run whatever play you want to run. Okay? Let's go!"

Obviously, this is a ludicrous example. But how would you feel if this scene actually occurred? What do you think your team's chances are for winning? Not good, right?

What you may find interesting is that many teams in business approach their work like this team. They are not fully suited up and ready to win. They will not know what their goals and strategies are and the individuals on the teams will not know their roles and responsibilities.

In sports, we all know that winning teams prepare to win. The coaches think through their strategies and plays in advance. The players practice their plays until they know them. They arrive for their games in good shape mentally and physically. Everyone runs the same play at the same time.

Winning sports teams win because they enter their games prepared to win.

It is the same in business. Winning business teams win

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because they are well-prepared to win.

*The Goals Institute www.goalsinstitute.com*