

The Button Approach *By Seth Godin*

Some of the best project management that I've ever seen has happened in companies that use the "red-yellow-green" system. It's based on a very simple, very visible premise: Every single person in the division of a company that's launching a major new initiative has to wear a button to work every day.

Wearing a green button implies that you're on the critical path. It tells everyone that the stuff that you're doing is essential to the product's launch—that you're a priority. If you don a yellow button, you're telling your coworkers that you're on the periphery of the project, but that you have an important job nonetheless. And wearing a red button sends the signal that you have the ability to slow the project down or to take precious resources away if you choose.

When someone with a green button shows up, all bets are off. Green but-

tons are like the flashing lights on an ambulance, or the requests of a surgeon in an operating room: "This is a life-or-death path," green buttons say, "and you'd better have a damn good reason if you're going to slow me down." When a person wearing a yellow or red button meets up with someone wearing a green



button, that person understands that it's time to make a decision: "How can I help this green button get on with the critical job?" Or, at the very minimum, "How do I get out of the way?"

Of course, people can change their button color every day, or even sever-

al times during the course of a meeting. But once you adopt the button approach to project management, several things immediately become clear:

First, any company that hesitates to make people wear buttons because it's worried about hurting employees' feelings isn't really serious about the project—or about creating *(cont'd on p. 2)*

Managing in the Millennium *By Marlene Carosselli*

In a sense, we are all managers—no matter what our job title. We manage to keep our eye on the ball, our nose to the grindstone, our ears to the ground, our fingers on the pulse of the times, our minds on the task, our thoughts to ourselves, our feet on the ground, our back to the wall, our shoulders to the wheel, and our heads on straight. We manage time and tension, emotions and energy, schedules and stress, projects and priorities, data and deadlines.

If the last ten years represented the "nanosecond nineties," the next ten could be called the "millisecond millennium." More than ever before, we will need new ways to gain the right perspective and, in so doing, gain control of events that often seem to be spiraling toward chaos.

Those of us who have spanned the nexus of two millennia need to manage the stress in our lives and our jobs with greater wisdom, serenity, and spirituality.

Think Globally. Act Locally. Put the stress factor in perspective. Just think about what is happening in the world—earthquakes, floods, war, bombings, fires, terrorism. Then realize that the stressor you are facing *(cont'd on p. 2)*

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Committee Vs. Consensus

How do you get people to work together? Most companies have "committee design." That's not what I like. I like "consensus design."

In a committee, people don't speak up. They don't say what they think. Nothing is allowed to come out.

Consensus design means that you all express yourselves and your ideas. And at the end of the day, we all agree to do something.

You might initially be against an idea, but if someone walks you through the thought process, you might then be able to say, "I see what you're talking about."

Freeman Thomas, Vice President, Advanced Product Design, Daimler Chrysler as quoted in Fast Company, December 1999

“Are you itching to work at a red-yellow-green company? Would it turn you on to wear a green button to work? Would it make you take an important—if painful—look at your own decision-making style if you were issued a button each day to signal your decision-making readiness?”

Seth Godin, Fast Company

Button *(cont'd from p.1)*

a culture in which decisions get made. In fact, if you duck the buttons, you'll just keep ducking other decisions.

Second, folks don't like wearing red buttons: They'll work very hard to find a way to contribute so that they can wear a green button. And there are plenty of people who are totally delighted to wear a yellow button.

Third, the CEOs, project leaders, and team leaders can quickly learn a lot about who's accomplishing what inside of company.

Reprinted with permission from Seth Godin, Fast Company, December 1999.

Millenium *(cont'd from p.1)*

is insignificant by comparison.

Change Your Thinking about criticism.

View it as a possible opportunity to learn more about yourself. And....don't respond to it until you've put some distance between you and the critic or the critique.

De-Stress Yourself by putting your hands together in a praying position. Then let your left thumb massage your right palm for half a minute. Do the same thing in reverse, using the right thumb to massage the left palm.

Visualization. When you feel pressure building up, visualize your stress as a balloon about to pop. Then imagine letting out a little bit of air pressure over a two-minute span of time. This simple technique can help control tension when you feel you're ready to explode.

Verbal Connections. Keep in mind what George Bernard Shaw said: "The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place." Don't hesitate to repeat your message to ensure its clarity. The average adult needs to hear a new concept four times before the idea sinks in and becomes intellectual reality. The average pre-schooler, 55 times.

When you rephrase your request, use different words and ask for feedback before moving along to a new idea.

Based on Dr. Caroselli's most recent book, Managing at Work: 250+ Ways to Enhance Your Productivity, Professionalism and Well-Being.

Activity *(cont'd from p.3)*

Neatly print the following bullets on separate index cards:

- ◆ The team agreed that Mondays are a bad time to meet. Everybody's just returning from the weekend and preparing for the work week.
- ◆ Mary usually takes the minutes.
- ◆ Many people in the office go bowling on Thursday nights.
- ◆ The coffee machine is three doors down from the conference room.
- ◆ The conference room has an oval table with ten chairs around it.
- ◆ John and Kathy always arrive at work by 6:30 am.
- ◆ There is a flipchart and markers in the conference room.
- ◆ Sally and Roger have to leave work by 4:00 pm.
- ◆ The team agreed that Fridays are a bad time to meet. Everybody's preparing to leave for the weekend (if they haven't already left).
- ◆ The company has 211 employees.
- ◆ Kristin is the team leader.
- ◆ Treena thinks that team meetings are usually a waste of time.
- ◆ Ken has been looking forward to the team meeting. He has a very important issue he'd like to raise.
- ◆ The overhead projector light bulb is burned out.
- ◆ There isn't a whiteboard in the conference room.
- ◆ The team agreed that the team leader prepares the agenda and leads the meeting.
- ◆ Kristin is going to be out of town on Tuesday and Wednesday.
- ◆ The conference room is booked on Thursday from 8am to 12 noon.
- ◆ The conference room is booked on Wednesday from 8 am to 12 noon.

If the group is large or you want to add to the confusion, add your own irrelevant information cards!

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

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Kristin J. Arnold, CPCM
Editor



Quality Process Consultants, Inc.

48 West Queens Way
Hampton, Virginia 23669
Phone (800)589-4733
(757)728-0191

Fax (757)728-0192

e-mail: karnold@qpcteam.com
<http://www.qpcteam.com>

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“Henry Ford once stated that ‘Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success.’ Well, I doubt that Henry Ford knew how prophetic that statement would be, but it clearly describes Kristin Arnold’s approach to team success.”

Ed Scannell

Author of Games Trainers Play Series

extraordinary team

What’s New at QPC Inc.

Other than a historic two feet of snow falling in Hampton, Virginia, the big news is that my new book, *Team Basics: Practical Strategies for Team Success* is a big hit! So thank you for your support and encouragement as we “birthed” this baby...and I hear it gets easier the second time! (Yes, I am already working on #2 AND #3!)

As I reflect on the past year, I have been very blessed to have worked with some great clients such as Virginia’s Center for Innovative Technology, Hampton Roads Partnership, T. Rowe Price, Canon Virginia, Inc., Newport News Shipbuilding, The Elizabeth River Project, Richmond Public Library, Henrico County School System, NASA Langley, Noland Company and US Coast Guard. Thank you!

I have also had the honor to work on such diverse initiatives such as international, state and regional planning, strategic planning, hiring and retention planning, marketing planning, facilitator training, team skills training, team building and team implementation.

I am looking forward to an equally rewarding and challenging year. And I hope we have the opportunity to work with you, helping your teams to be extraordinary!

Kristin

www.qpcteam.com

Have you checked out our website lately? If not, you should. Check out what’s on the site now:

Team Facilitation. Learn what facilitators like Kristin do.

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Speaking. Kristin speaks nationally on the latest trends in team work. Print her “One Sheet” right off our site.

About QPC. Check out Kristin’s bio, QPC’s client listing and stellar testimonials!

Publications. Search for a particular topic, article or view a complete listing of Kristin’s bi-weekly *Daily Press* columns.

Products. Visit our new shopping cart where you can quickly and conveniently order all your team and facilitation products including *Team Basics*.

The Arnold Building. Don’t forget our distinguished meeting facility in Downtown Hampton!

Practical Team Activities: When Shall We Meet Again?

When Shall We Meet Again?

To demonstrate how teams assess information to make a decision.

Time - 15 minutes

Nr. of Participants—At Least Five

- ◆ Prepared Flipchart
- ◆ Prepared Index cards (see p. 2)

Invite the group to participate in a team activity which will give them a glimpse into the group dynamic. Tell the group, “The team needs to meet for four hours next week. You have been exchanging emails to determine the best weekday and time to meet. The emails are written on these index cards.”

Mix up the cards and give at least one card to each team member. Remind them that their task is to answer the question written on the flipchart: “Given the following information you received by email (on the index cards), when will your team meet (weekday and time) next week?”

Then stand out of the way and watch

the team dynamics!

The answer is deceptively simple: The team must meet on Thursday from 12 noon until 4 pm. The team has agreed it cannot meet on Mondays and Fridays. Kristin has to be at the meeting, and she’ll be out of town on Tuesday and Wednesday. The conference room is booked on Thursday from 8am to 12 noon.

As the team attempts to solve the riddle, you may witness some common traps:

No Process. The team just starts shouting out the information they have on the cards, without planning how to handle the task.

Process Loss. The team ignores someone who has the answer (or something close to it)

Assumptions. The team begins to make assumptions about the information—what is relevant and what isn’t—without any criteria to assess it.

A Hero Emerges. One person solves the riddle and declares victory, while making his/her teammates feel left out or stupid.

Poor Communication Skills. Talking over each other, interrupting, dominating the conversation.

Agonize About the Irrelevant. Just in case they miss something, the team goes over each piece of information.

Paranoia Sets In. Could it be a trap? Could it be one of those team activities that “get you” in the end? Is there something the facilitator just isn’t telling us?

Eventually, the team figures out it needs structure/process. One person will take the “leadership role,” define a process and facilitate the team to the logical conclusion.

Debrief the team. What worked well for the team? What could the team have done better? Did they fall into some of the common traps?

"Kristin's book is easy to read, informative in style. Just flip through and discover helpful hints and tools. This is an excellent reference book to use in any team situation."

Russ Cherry
Associate Director, FDIC

From the Bookshelf

By Elizabeth Felicetti



For anyone who has ever felt a little like Scott Adams's popular cartoon character "Dilbert," *Team Basics: Practical Strategies for Team Success* is a godsend. Kristin J. Arnold explains everything about workplace teams, from "launch" to knowing when your team needs to "die."

Arnold, a management consultant, facilitator and team expert, writes a newspaper column entitled "Teamwork." This journalistic background is evident in her crisp prose as she explains everything you ever wanted to know about team meetings such as deciding where to sit, dealing with interruptions, writing on flip charts and creating agendas. If you've ever sat in a meeting wondering "What's the point?" then this book is for you!

But information about team meetings is just a one part of *Team Basics*. Do some of your team members live in another state? No problem!. She writes about "virtual" teams, and her book has a whole section on technology explaining voicemail and e-mail etiquette, special tactics for videoconferencing and collaborative technology.

Arnold never talks down to the reader. Rather than spewing unintelligible management blather, her approach is straightforward. Clearly, managers of all kinds have the most to gain from the book.

The rest of us can learn something, too. The "team" approach has been around for years, but has anyone really explained it in an easy-to-follow, practical format? Arnold designed the book to be "reader-friendly." Just pick up a copy; the topics are broken down into easily digestible sections of two to four pages, with lots of clear headings, charts, and even some highly amusing illustrations by cartoonist Dom Renaldo.

Order your copy today at www.qpcteam.com

WordSMART By Doug Smart

Odd, isn't it, that compliment and complaint can be just one page apart in the dictionary and a universe apart in impact?

"Compliment" comes from the Latin "cumplir": to complete. You can feel how the sentence, "you are especially beautiful today," completes the effort the hearer put into looking good.

"Complaint" has Mediterranean roots, too, as it comes from the Latin "plangere": to lament. Sticking "com" in front makes it "with lament," i.e., complaining. You know you are lamenting when you say something like, "Yikes! Can't you do something about your hair?"

Some people favor the habit of complimenting ("Great job! Thanks for the extra effort you put into...") while others habitually lament ("Oh well, maybe next time you'll get it right."). Since words are tools we can choose to help us get more of what we want, let me ask you: Which of the two tools — compliment or complaint — that you choose to use today is more likely to influence the results you'll see tomorrow? (HINT: beauty, initiative and business gravitate to where they are appreciated.)

Test it yourself. All day today, give more compliments than complaints. Compare tomorrow's results with yesterday's.

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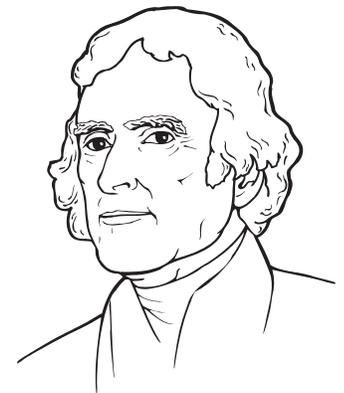
Improving the Declaration of Independence By Dakota Livesay

During the construction of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson became upset because a committee wanted to change his draft. Benjamin Franklin related the following story to Thomas Jefferson:

A friend, in the process of opening a store, composed a sign that read, "John Thompson, hatter, makes and sells hats for ready money." A friend of John Thompson suggested "hatter" wasn't necessary because "makes and sells hats" was sufficient. Another friend said to eliminate "makes" because no one would be interested in the manufacturer. A third said that "for ready money" wasn't necessary because people didn't buy on credit. "Sells" wasn't necessary because no one expected him to give hats away. Finally, "hats" wasn't necessary because the sign contained a picture of a hat. The sign eventually read "John Thompson" with a picture of a hat.

Thomas Jefferson accepted the changes in his draft of the Declaration of Independence.

As did Thomas Jefferson, we need to understand that quite possibly whatever it is that we've created can be improved with the help of others.



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