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Bob Baty OBE is the Chief Executive of South West Water Ltd. A civil engineer by profession, he was educated at Calday Grange Grammar School and Liverpool College of Building. He is a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering, a Fellow of the Institution of Civil Engineers, a Fellow of the Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management, and a Fellow of the Institution of Water Officers. He joined South West Water as Engineering Director at the time of privatisation of the Industry in 1988, and has been responsible for the delivery of the company's £2 billion capital investment programme, in particular 'Clean Sweep', the company's £1 billion clean-up of the bathing waters around the South West peninsular. He was awarded the OBE for services to the water industry in the Queen's Jubilee birthday Honours List in 2002.

"I rather think it was the example of one of my former leaders, when I was quite junior, rather than a specific spoken piece of advice, which has had the greatest influence on my management approach throughout my career. The Chief Engineer for whom I worked was a rather reserved, and apparently aloof man when it came to day to day pleasantries. He was, nonetheless, a very committed and professional engineer and manager.

The behaviour that had the most profound influence on me, stemmed from his practise on Christmas Day each year when he took it upon himself to visit the construction sites, which were potentially a public hazard, and which in those days were safeguarded by a watch-man located in a small hut warmed by a coke brazier.

To each of the 'cocky watchmen' he took a parcel of chicken sandwiches and spent some time with them when they could not be with their families.

Nowadays times have changed, and Christmas Day working is not that unusual, but the strong message I received, and which has always been a part of my management approach, is recognition of the importance of every person's contribution to the success of any business.

From this example, I have always thought that if the leader of the organisation considered it appropriate to spend his Christmas Day visiting those in the organisation, who were generally considered by most of us to be of quite lowly statue, then he regarded their contribution to be anything but lowly, and gave me the guiding principle that **the contribution of every member of the team is critical to business success.**

Ever since, I have held the view that if it is necessary for any business to engage someone to do any job, no matter how apparently insignificant, then clearly that job must be critical to the success of the organisation, and as such, the individual is entitled to as much consideration and support as anyone else in more prominent/senior positions.

That leadership example has stayed with me throughout my career.”

Stephen Makin *is the Managing Director of Permavent Ltd. He left school with few qualifications and travelled the world in the Merchant Navy for a few years. Then he took a job as a building labourer, and within a few years was running the site as the gang boss. From there he started his own general building business and built his own house. This was the start of other business ventures – developing small houses, then a block of flats, starting a small builders merchants and importing and exporting.*

Permavent Ltd now has a wide range of dealings from providing Russian high spec geo textile breather membranes to the UK and Ireland, to distribution with large distributors and builders merchants nationally from their warehouse in Portland Port. The company is rapidly expanding from their Russian business base, and they plan to re-locate to larger warehousing in the near future.

“Advice will come in many forms – sometimes many times a day. But most will not even register as advice, especially if you are not looking, are not aware or, worst still, are blind to it. Sometimes though, someone will say something that applies directly to you and you know you can do it (they may only have confirmed what you already thought and are only giving you a shove). When this happens, your eyes will go wide for a while as the light comes on!

My advice came from my father, at age 16, during a conversation about mistakes people make. I questioned his judgement and reason for such action, and then he said something I had heard him say many times in jest but I had not understood. He said “...”**long time dead**”... He believed, as I do, that it is better to have tried and failed than to live without experience, because soon enough you will only have memories as life is so short.

I take every opportunity to do things (sometimes completely wrong, but age helps to stop you sooner), and this has made me into the entrepreneur that I am, and I hold multiple directorships.

But most of all, I enjoy my short life”

Dr Richard Waite *is Managing Director of ESRI (UK) Ltd, the UK’s leading supplier of Geographic Information Systems (if you’ve ever used a route-finding website or a satnav device or any kind of computer generated map, you’ll have come across GIS without realising it).*

Richard started his career as a mechanical engineer and it was whilst working as a young engineering designer that he received some memorable advice.

“I was working for a small engineering company, designing a prototype industrial robot. I was getting increasingly frustrated with the machinists in the workshop who kept making mistakes on my jobs, and this was delaying the

building of the robot. One day I expressed my frustration to the workshop foreman.

Later that day the Engineering Director came to see me and said he'd heard I was unhappy with the workshop staff. I explained my frustration and said "why can't they just do their jobs right?". He then very quietly asked me whether I'd ever made a mistake. This brought me up short. With a few gentle words **he made me realise that we're all human and we all make mistakes.**

Tom's words have stayed with me. From that day I have been much slower to judge others and to criticise people's mistakes.

Experience has taught me two related lessons: making a mistake is often the most powerful way to learn something and, never judge someone until you know all the facts.

Tom showed me that 'to err is human'. His experience helped me to be a better person."

Philip J Milton *is the Managing Director and Founder of Philip J Milton and Co. Plc ,one of the largest Independent Investment Consultancy and Financial Advisory Firms in the South West. The company was set up from scratch from Philip's parent's home some twenty and a half years ago, and since then has expanded dramatically, concentrating upon high levels of personal service to its clients. The Firm now employs twenty staff and is one of the few Independent Discretionary Investment Managers in the whole country, looking after approaching £90 million for its clients from the very smallest to the somewhat larger, at all times acknowledging that the amount that a client has it important to them and that it needs to be treated with the appropriate respect.*

"My first two pieces of advice were given to me by others. The first I learnt after I finished work in Lloyds TSB Bank Plc – it would have been very helpful to have been aware of this at the beginning of my seven years there! It is...'**rule books are for the obedience of fools and the guidance of wise men**'.

The second one is also simple, and applies both in personal and in business life. It is '**never over-promise and under-deliver, but instead under-promise and over-deliver**'. That is the way to customer satisfaction.

Two of my own maxims for my business are...'**Whatever we do, and however well we do it, we can always aim to do it better**'. My last one is in relation to marketing which so often is easily compartmentalised into some form of advertising and promotional spend, but instead we state..''**We respond to the opportunities we create in the first place**' This is designed to give the feel that so many activities of any individual or business are marketing themselves, wares and services"

Simon Rous *heads the Company Commercial Team at Ashfords. He is active in corporate finance, public company flotation, MBO and merger & acquisition work. Simon's 25 years specialist experience in corporate transactions has earned him a reputation in structuring and negotiating deals for his clients. Much of his work is derived from London and carried out through the Firm's office at Trafalgar Square, enabling him to compete for London based and international transactions at regional charge-out rates. Simon read Law at Trinity College Cambridge and then spent 11 years with Clifford Chance in London, Paris and New York before joining Ashfords in 1985.*

“The best advice I have received was gleaned from an early reading about Harry Truman, 33rd President of the United States. He said **‘You can accomplish almost anything you want in life, provided you don’t mind who gets the credit’**”

I use this advice daily and am amazed how much energy is spent, and opportunities are lost in all walks of life, by people postponing or manipulating great initiatives just to try and ensure that they get the credit”

Charles Whitehead *spent 20 years as an army officer and 18 years as a projects and business manager in IT for Logica, Digital and Oracle. He is now treasurer of 2 charities and a church, and also works for a regeneration trust in Cornwall.*

“I was told, in my training at Sandhurst, and have never had cause to doubt it – that the golden rule of leadership, regardless of whether you believe true leaders to be born or made, is **‘communicate, communicate, communicate’**. In my experience, you will find very few staff who are clairvoyants or have infallible intuition – so if *you* don’t tell them, who will? Remember too, your staff often have very good ideas, but need to be encouraged to share them. Create the environment where they have the courage to believe in themselves.

Finally, on a self-development course some years ago, one maxim stuck in my mind – **‘you have to die – everything else is a matter of choice’**. No-one else can make you do something you don’t want to but you, and no-one else can put you down other than yourself.

Emma Warren *is the Managing Director of Warren & Bradley Ltd, a company specializing in assisting SME’s to identify their strategic path, raise growth funding and manage the culture change that is needed to make this process*

successful. Emma is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants and an MBA graduate who has a wealth of experience at board level.

“Every step that you take on the ladder of career development, takes you further away from the coalface and the day-to-day interactions that shape the company that you work for. When I was just starting out as a junior manager, faced with that daunting task of managing employees for the first time, I was given a piece of advice by my then Managing Director, which I have never forgotten.

He told me to **never forget what it is like being on the other side of the door**. When I asked him what he meant he explained that as you develop as a manager, you gain knowledge and therefore an element of power, and sometimes you forget how this can affect other people. A lot of managers forget how curious they were before they knew what happened in the meetings that go on behind closed doors. His example taught me to be aware that an unscheduled management meeting can worry employees, that a harmless comment can set the rumour mill running and that a seemingly small problem to you can be very big to one of your employees.

The multi-faceted requirements of being a modern manager mean that it's very easy to become absorbed by the things that you are dealing with. Building on his advice, I have always tried to make sure that I take time out and “walk the floor”. Talking to your employees will give you a very good indication of the health of your company – you may not like what they say, but listen and encourage all your managers to do the same. Try and remove sources of worry for people, be open about the purpose of meetings and if you have to have a crisis meeting – try and do it off-site. There's nothing worse for employees than seeing a stream of worried looking managers coming out of a meeting room – think how you would have felt if you were the onlooker to this scene – when you were on the other side of the door. As business leaders we all have to deal with confidential and worrying issues at times, as well as difficult situations. There are also times when we have to take actions that affect our employees, but the way that we handle them can make a huge difference to all concerned.

Most businesses are hugely reliant on inputs from the people that work there. All too often we recognize the input that we ourselves put in, but don't recognize that actually we're part of a team. High performing teams know what their aims are and recognize the effects that individual actions have on the overall team output. Learn to recognize how you work as Manager and then more importantly, put yourself on the other side of the door and think about how the way that you work affects your employees. You may think that you're approachable, but are you really? If you dare to challenge yourself to find out, I think that you, like me, will be surprised by what you find..... “

Mark Hatcliffe *is Head of Sales at Lloyds TSB General Insurance.*

“My advice came from a close friend during a difficult time period in my career. The advice was **‘Tough times never last, but tough people do’**, and guess what? He was right.

The need, on occasions, not to compromise value and beliefs, but remain resilient, helps mould a person's character, capability and in due course, leads to respect. I came out a much better person. The same friend also gave the advice **‘learn to like what you have when you cannot have what you like’**. This certainly leads to a more contented life!

Steve Mills is the Managing Director of major telecoms reseller, *Believe It Communications Group*. Based in Salisbury, they have recently received *The National Business Award for Customer Focus in Wales and the South West*. His Curriculum Vitae boasts a varied career managing businesses in property, financial services and now telecommunications. He is currently undertaking the *IoD Company Direction Programme* delivered by *Leadership South West*.

“I am a self taught manager and have over the years been something of an informationholic; reading books, journals and now websites to learn as much as I can. Consequently I always think of ‘The Best Advice I Ever Got’ as being something I’ve read, written by someone I admire and respect.

There are many nuggets that I have picked up over the years, but the one that I repeat almost daily in my current role is something that the great Jack Welch talks about.

“Have a positive attitude and spread it around, never let yourself be a victim and for goodness’ sake have fun.”

What I have found by preaching this message to young people joining our organisation is that it is infectious. Positive people can infect those around them, try being depressed in a room full of others who are smiling and laughing. Their positivity becomes energising and can genuinely make a difference to colleagues, managers and customers.

Individuals who become victims are clearly part of the problem rather than part of the solution and their negative influence can also be infectious. Clive Woodward refers to these people as ‘energy sappers’ in his book *Winning!* and there is no place for them in a winning team.

Having fun is not just about playing hard outside of work but about making the job and working environment enjoyable. It is also about celebrating. As Jack Welch says, **‘Work is too much part of life not to recognise moments of achievement. Grab as many as you can. Make a big deal out of them.’**

We have now turned this into an art form. We enter awards, and win them, we celebrate customer testimonial letters, we celebrate exceptional performance, we give out staff awards, we want everyone to be part of the story of the business and for that story to be colourful and engaging.

The power of a positive attitude remains as strong as ever.

Richard Thomas *qualified as a Chartered Accountant in 1975, and started his own practice in East Devon in 1982. During the intervening period, he has been responsible for leading the practice of Thomas Westcott from being a small one-office firm, to becoming the largest Devon accountancy practice. Today, the firm has 13 partners and over 150 staff. As well as managing the practice, Richard specialises in acting for owner managed businesses and professional practices, as well as acting as an expert witness – particularly in the areas of business and company valuations.*

“Some years ago I attended the IoD Annual Convention where Stephen Covey was speaking on the subject of his book “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People” – which applies to people in business. It was Habit No 2 which I found to be particularly relevant and useful - **“Begin with the end in mind”**”.

It has always been a hallmark of mine to have a clear business plan and a strategy for achieving the plan’s objectives. This is applied both to my own firm, and also when advising clients.

At a subsequent IoD conference, one of the speakers was Sir Steve Redgrave, the winner of gold medals at 5 successive Olympic Games. Sir Steve explained how immediately after winning each gold medal, the team discussed what time they thought the winning team would take at the next Olympic Games. Their objective was to beat that time.

In order to do so, they broke the objective down into smaller steps, a time for 3 years time, 2 years, 1 year, 6 months etc. They showed considerable commitment and dedication in achieving their goals.

At Thomas Westcott, we have clear annual and 5 year written business plans with stretching, but achievable goals. We have a strategy for achieving each goal and this is broken down into separate individual steps.

The success of Thomas Westcott can, in part, be attributed to the fact that we **“begin with the end in mind”**

Miranda Boncey *- married, with three delightful children, I have my own executive Coaching and HR consultancy business, Inner Performance Limited. I have almost 30 years experience of finding solutions to issues about people in organisations. In people development, human resources, organisation development and managing change. I believe that life is a journey of self-discovery and growth.*

“The best piece of personal advice I have received is attributed to the great psychologist, Carl Rogers, as he approached a therapeutic encounter. “There is something I do before I start a session,” he said. “I let myself know that I am

enough. Not perfect. *Perfect wouldn't be enough.* But that I am human, and that is enough. There is nothing this [person] can ... feel that I can't feel in myself. I can be with [them]. I am enough."

It was my own Coach/mentor Will Jackson who shared Carl Roger's wisdom with me. The simple statement "I am enough" had a profound impact on me. I had always felt driven and hearing these words was as if someone had turned off a switch. It stopped me in my tracks.

I had previously told myself that I am 'good enough' but it has a judgemental flavour to it...good enough for what? And by whose standards? It implies some failure or flaw and a striving for improvement, as if we are not good enough just as we are.

'I am enough...'

In my work as a coach, and in my life, I am inspired to support people to reach their full potential. Often our own minds limit our performance, so by challenging the way that we think, coaching can unlock a person's potential to maximise their own performance. I help a client to raise self-awareness and dismantle the internal barriers and beliefs that no longer serve them well. Through self-awareness and self-belief they become confident to demonstrate their unique contribution to the world.

I encourage each of you to reflect on 'I am enough'.

Pam Billinge is an organisation and leadership development consultant and coach and is affiliated to the CLS. With a background also in body-oriented psychotherapy she is passionate about supporting the creation and maintenance of organisation and individual health. She can be contacted via her website at www.bestillmore.co.uk.

"An enduring piece of advice which has served me well over the years of my career was offered, not directly as "advice", but as part of a letter of recognition which I received in my first professional role. I was in my early twenties and worked for one of the big accountancy firms managing the national graduate recruitment campaign. On the completion of my first major project - the design, development and publication of the firm's graduate recruitment brochure - the young partner I reported to wrote a personal, handwritten note to praise my achievement and thank me for my efforts, contribution and hard work. What was most significant however was that he recognised some very personal qualities which I had brought to bear and urged me to hold onto them and stay true to them in whatever I did.

These words have had a huge impact on me. Very simply they made me aware of the importance of **staying true to myself**. Of course as my career progressed I realised that, sadly, this wasn't always made possible by the organisational context in which we work. However the important thing was that with this advice acting as my guide I have always been able to identify

when my personal qualities and values were being stifled, and could then make the decision to change my circumstances.

At another level I was lucky enough to experience the incredible motivational impact of recognition given personally and directly by a leader. A long time before buzz words and concepts like “emotional intelligence” became the norm in leadership development I was able to learn from a master at motivating and developing his team through **personal connection, challenge, support and recognition**. A hugely valuable lesson for my future career in management and leadership development, and as a leader myself.