



What Got You Here Won't Get You There By Marshall Goldsmith

I knew of Marshall's coaching work from the executives I speak to. He has an excellent reputation. When I saw his book at the airport, I had to pick it up. It's well done and well worth the read. Fact is, every one of us has our weak points. We can learn about them from character assessments, skill testing, business results, and feedback from colleagues, customers, and friends. Somebody like me knows I get bored easily and have a low attention to detail.

The essence of Marshall's message is that if we don't address these weak points, they can affect our career. Marshall's emphasis is in communication. There is very little in this book about time management, systems control, delegation techniques and other tools that can help make us more efficient. This book is about the soft side and what you can do about it. Marshall's approach reminds me of a twelve-step program. First you have to admit you have a problem, then you have to apologize to those you've impacted with your problem, and then you have to declare your intention to do something about it, and ultimately, reach into a higher power source. For Marshall, this higher power source is coaching and support from friends.

Marshall tells us that successful people believe they have succeeded, can succeed, will succeed, and will choose to succeed.

Marshall states the only natural law he's witnessed in three decades of observing success is this: "People will do something—including their behavior—only if it can be demonstrated that doing so is in their own best interests as defined by their own values." As we all know it, WIFM. Marshall focuses on twenty habits that can hold us back. These are:

1. **Winning too much:** The need to win at all costs and in all situations—when it matters, when it doesn't, and when it's totally beside the point.
2. **Adding too much value:** The overwhelming desire to add our two cents to every discussion.
3. **Passing judgment:** The need to rate others and impose our standards on them.
4. **Making destructive comments:** The needless sarcasms and cutting remarks that we think make us sound sharp and witty.
5. **Starting with "No," "But," or "However":** The overuse of these negative qualifiers which secretly say to everyone, "I'm right. You're wrong."
6. **Telling the world how smart we are:** The need to show people we're smarter than they think we are.
7. **Speaking when angry:** Using emotional volatility as a management tool.
8. **Negativity, or "Let me explain why that won't work":** The need to share our negative thoughts even when we weren't asked.
9. **Withholding information:** The refusal to share information in order to maintain an advantage over others.
10. **Failing to give proper recognition:** The inability to praise and reward.
11. **Claiming credit that we don't deserve:** The most annoying way to overestimate our contribution to any success.

12. **Making excuses:** The need to reposition our annoying behavior as a permanent fixture so people excuse us for it.
13. **Clinging to the past:** The need to deflect blame away from ourselves and onto events and people from our past; a subset of blaming everyone else.
14. **Playing favorites:** Failing to see that we are treating someone unfairly.
15. **Refusing to express regret:** The inability to take responsibility for our actions, admit we're wrong, or recognize how our actions, admit we're wrong, or recognize how our actions affect others.
16. **Not listening:** The most passive-aggressive form of disrespect for colleagues.
17. **Failing to express gratitude:** The most basic form of bad manners.
18. **Punishing the messenger:** The misguided need to attack the innocent who are usually only trying to help us.
19. **Passing the buck:** The need to blame everyone but ourselves.
20. **An excessive need to be "me":** Exalting our faults as virtues simply because they're who we are.

He explains that most of us have weaknesses in some of these areas, usually not all of them. Some of these weaknesses are so great that they are, in fact, a problem. Marshall helps you to think through how each one of these may impact on your career and perhaps personal life as well.

The first step on this journey is to get feedback. As part of his coaching process, Marshall will get feedback from a dozen or more cohorts. He will ask them to make four commitments:

1. Let go of the past.
2. Tell the truth.
3. Be supportive and helpful—not cynical or negative.
4. Pick something to improve yourself—so everyone is focused more on “improving” than “judging.”

One of my favorite quotes in the book “Forgiveness means letting go of the hope for a better past!” He will then ask a series of questions. Provided in the appendix is an entire outline. Question in his global leadership inventory center on the following subjects:

- Thinking globally
- Appreciating diversity
- Developing technological savvy
- Building partnerships
- Sharing leadership
- Created a shared vision
- Developing people
- Empowering people
- Achieving personal mastery
- Encouraging constructive dialogue
- Demonstrating diversity
- Anticipating opportunities
- Ensuring customer satisfaction
- Maintaining a competitive advantage

Once you get the feedback, the process to move on is very simple:

1. Say thanks for the feedback and stop there.
2. Apologize for any damage your behavior may have caused and then let go.
3. Advertise to others that you intend to make this change and solicit their continued support and feedback.
4. “Successful people have a glaring tendency to over-commit.”

I can't under emphasize the power of the fourth insight. In my Victims, Villains and Heroes workshops, I talk about over-commitment as the number one trap of the hero. It generates expectations and lies. When people feel they've been lied to, it feels unfair and they think you don't care. And there's no weighing of the lie. So be very careful about what you commit to and understand the importance of saying “No.”

Various carrot and stick approaches include measuring results, creating financial penalties or rewards, and of course, the appreciation of your peers and loved ones. Marshall reminds us how important it is to say “thank you.” When we get feedback, say “thank you” and stop. When we are complimented, say “thank you” and stop. When somebody else provides us with an idea, say “thank you” and stop. Generally whatever we say after that takes away from the power of the moment. He reminds people how important it is to send thank you notes, something I preach at every one of my workshops.

Conclusion: As a result of reading this book I am reminded of the following:

- No whining
- No yelling
- No blaming
- No excuses
- No regrets
- I have no problems
- Be present
- Listen!
- Show I care
- Say thanks and stop
- Give them the credit
- Be here now
- Be non-judgmental
- The past is the past
- Start from here
- Spend concentrated time with my family
- Apologize
- Ask how I am doing
- Don't over-commit
- Have *fun* in the process!