



Bringing Out the Best in People

How to Apply the Astonishing Power of Positive Reinforcement

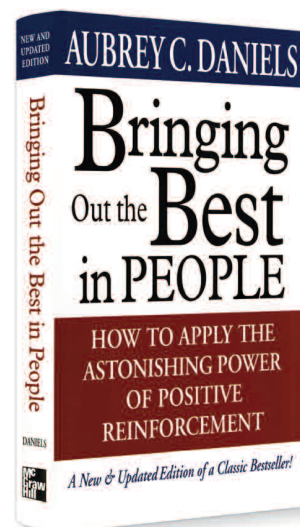
THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

What motivates people? What encourages employees to work to their fullest potential, not just for a short while but for the long haul? Many managerial fads promising quick fixes have come and gone, but none have approached the success experienced by organizations that have employed Dr. Aubrey Daniel's groundbreaking motivational methods. *Bringing Out the Best in People* provides the latest and best motivational methods currently in use at such major companies as Xerox, 3M and Kodak.

Applying scientifically-based behavioral stimuli to the workplace while also making it fun, celebrated behavior analyst and nationally known expert and author on performance, Aubrey Daniels, describes practical, precise, data-oriented methods to help you implement a management system that will maximize the long-term performance of every aspect of your company. He also helps you attain a clear understanding of human behavior so you, too, can bring out the best in your employees and achieve results that are measurably superior. By identifying what reinforces the people in your company and skillfully managing those reinforcers, you can attain the kind of *individual* performance that adds up to great *organizational* performance.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to create effective recognition and reward systems in line with what today's employees want.
- How to stimulate innovation and creativity in new and exciting ways.
- When to apply reinforcers — and how to tailor them to meet individual employees' needs.
- A powerfully positive system for gaining maximum performance from every employee.



by Aubrey C. Daniels

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THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: BRINGING OUT THE BEST IN PEOPLE

by Aubrey C. Daniels

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Preface to the Second Edition

All of us must stay in tune with behavior analysis as its applications change the world and are, in turn, changed by the world. The use of behavior analysis must not be allowed to become a business fad and, as such, suffer the vagaries that have affected other worthy business initiatives that have come and gone. Behavior analysis is not a good idea to be tried for a while and then cast aside for some other good idea. It is a science that explains how people behave and the influences that affect that behavior. It cannot go away anymore than gravity can go away and it cannot be ignored as long as people continue to be the most important element of every organization. In a changing world, the science of behavior must remain the bedrock, the starting place for every decision we make, every new technology we apply and every initiative we employ in our efforts to bring out the best in people. ●

PART 1: THE PERILS OF TRADITIONAL MANAGEMENT

Very few managers use systematic, scientifically-based management methods to bring out the best in people at work. Most try a variety of management approaches until they find one they like. But even when that approach seems to work, they don't know exactly why it did or why it works sometimes and not other times.

Conversely, the approach used here is based on more than 80 years of research in human behavior. The body of knowledge is called *behavior analysis*. The application

of these scientific findings to the workplace is called *Performance Management*. Once managers understand the principles of Performance Management, they can create the right environment and conditions to bring out the best in performers today, tomorrow, next month and next year.

Most senior managers are not particularly impressed with one-time performance improvement in a job, office or factory. They know that things occasionally get better. They get interested when things improve and continue to improve.

Organizations such as Eastman Chemical Co., Allied Systems, 3M Dental, Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Alabama, BP Amoco and Preston Trucking Co. (featured in Robert Levering's book, *A Great Place to Work*) have used Performance Management and thrived on its methods for more than a decade. Other organizations have had the same experience.

Delta Faucet Co., for example, began applying Performance Management techniques almost 20 years ago. "Delta has had nothing but better years, every year," Don Ginder, retired vice president of human resources, stated. Today, Delta leads the faucet industry in America and has begun exporting its products to Japan.

Performance Management is not a one-time management solution to a single problem at work. It provides a precise way of analyzing work and implementing a management system that will not only address the problems associated with inadequate performance, but will lead to practical ways to maximize performance in every aspect



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of the company's business. Because Performance Management is a precise, data-oriented approach, the solutions can be replicated in the same or similar settings and even extended to new settings with similar results.

A Most Practical Approach

Because Performance Management focuses on understanding behavior, we are able to tell what works and what doesn't simply by looking at the effect any intervention has on the behavior of people. Did the behavior increase or decrease, change or stay the same?

Performance Management uses scientific methods to change behavior. At first, a scientific method for managing behavior may not sound practical for line supervisors and managers, but in reality it is the most practical way to manage people.

Using scientific methods to manage behavior includes: precise specification of what we want to improve; the development of a baseline of current performance against which we can measure progress; and then a precise intervention and the evaluation of its impact on performance. This is no more than we would ask from any change in any other business process.

Management by Common Sense Is Not Management at All

Contrary to popular belief there isn't too little common sense in business, there's too much.

The alternative to commonsense knowledge is scientific knowledge.

1. *Commonsense knowledge is acquired in ordinary business and living, while scientific knowledge must be pursued deliberately and systematically.*

No special effort is required to obtain common sense. As a matter of fact, you can't stop it. It occurs just from the fact that we are alive. No wonder it's so plentiful.

On the other hand, scientific knowledge requires a special effort to acquire.

2. *Commonsense knowledge is individual; scientific knowledge is universal.*

The biggest problem with so-called common sense is that it is not really common at all. It's drawn from personal experience and, as such, is as different as our lives. When someone asks, "Why didn't you use your common sense?" he or she is really asking, "Why didn't you do what I would have done?" The fact is that when you use common sense, you always do what makes sense to you.

Scientific knowledge goes beyond the individual to look for that which is applicable across all situations.

The Challenge of 'Stretch' Goals

I hope by this time your company has discontinued the practice of setting stretch goals.

Stretch goals reduce the probability of success because they are too difficult, maybe even impossible, to attain. Depending on how far your performers are stretching, the probability of success may be less than 50 percent. No business can survive these days by reaching its goals only 50 percent of the time.

3. *Commonsense knowledge accepts the obvious; scientific knowledge questions the obvious.*

This is probably the most distinguishing characteristic of the scientific mind versus the ordinary mind. Common sense always says, "Of course," while science asks, "Why?" In other words, the commonsense person always has an answer. Before science entered the picture, common sense told people that the sun came up, the stars came out at night and the earth was flat.

Science eventually taught us that none of these things were true even though for centuries people conducted their affairs according to these common beliefs.

4. *Commonsense knowledge is vague; scientific knowledge is precise.*
5. *Common sense cannot be counted on to produce consistent results; application of scientific knowledge yields the same results every time.*

This is the most compelling reason for people in business to abandon common sense and to seek scientific explanations to problems involving human performance in the workplace.

6. *Common sense is gained through uncontrolled experience; scientific knowledge is gained through controlled experiment.* ●

PART 2: THE ASTONISHING POWER OF POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

A retired maintenance superintendent was called back to a Chrysler plant to train new employees involved in the manufacturing startup of a new car. He was one of several people who made a presentation to plant management about the new product and the production training process.

He introduced himself by saying, "I'm Don F. and many of you don't know me, but I retired from this plant several years ago. Since I retired I've had a lot of time to think about my career here. I started as a mechanic in the maintenance department and after sev-

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eral years became maintenance superintendent for the entire plant. As I thought about those days, something bothered me. Of the hundreds of employees that I supervised and managed, I can remember the names of about 30 that I would classify as ‘no good.’

“I can remember the names of about the same number who were ‘outstanding.’ That’s 15 to 20 percent of everyone I managed. What really bothers me is the remaining 80 to 85 percent who came in and did their jobs every day. They were the most responsible for my success in the plant and I can’t even remember their names. I hope when you retire you don’t bear that burden.”

Bringing out the best in people requires that *all* performers get the right consequences every day. We shouldn’t ignore poor performers, but if we are to have a high-performance organization, we can’t ignore the good performers either.

The More Immediate, the Better

Consequences that are immediate and certain are very powerful in governing behavior. For example, if, when handling caustic chemicals, performers know a small drop on the skin will produce an immediate and painful blister, it will not be a problem to get them to wear gloves.

However, performers who handle lacquer products that may cause cancer and/or possible nerve damage with prolonged exposure may not consistently wear protective gloves. In fact, many don’t wear them at all.

Reinforcers Are More Effective than Rewards

The immediacy factor explains the difference between a reinforcer and a reward. You should remember that a reinforcer provided immediately for a behavior has much more effect on that behavior than a delayed reward.

Because a reward is usually in the future, there is always a degree of uncertainty associated with it. Those offering the reward may withdraw it or change the conditions necessary to get it. The performer might not be able to meet the conditions, could die or otherwise not qualify for the reward. People typically respond more predictably to small, immediate, certain consequences than they do to large, future, uncertain ones.

The consequences that cause people to do their best every day occur every day. Yet experience has shown that most organizations spend more time, energy and money providing consequences that occur when employees get sick, retire or die than on the ones that occur every day.

This has enormous implications for every firm. It means that bonuses, profit sharing, retirement benefits and similar forms of compensation are future, uncertain consequences and, as such, do not bring out the best in people every day. These incentives are necessary, but not sufficient, to maximize performance. Certain forms of compensation facilitate performance better than others. However, compensation alone will not do the job of maximizing performance. Only effective and frequent positive reinforcement can do that.

No-Fault Performance: Change — Not Blame

When you understand how consequences influence performance, you realize that finding fault with people for inappropriate performance is unproductive and unfair. They are simply behaving in a manner consistent with the consequences they are receiving now and have received in the past.

The role of leaders in every organization is not to find fault or place blame, but to analyze why people are behaving as they are and modify the consequences to promote the behavior they need.

This approach to management does not overlook poor performance. Nor does it seek to use only positive reinforcement to attempt to create some type of unrealistic, utopian organization. Quite the contrary.

The management system we should create employs all of the consequences appropriately and skillfully to stop problem performance and promote the kind of behavior that supports the organization’s goals.

The ABCs of Performance Management

The first step when attempting to change the way people perform is to *understand why they are currently behaving the way they are*. We now know that people do what they do because of the consequences they experience following their actions. Therefore, it is helpful to discover what antecedents are setting the stage for the behavior to begin and it is necessary to know what consequences are causing the behavior to continue.

The ABC (Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence) Analysis is a simple method for systematically analyzing the antecedents and consequences influencing a behavior. This analytic technique will allow you to understand behavior from the other person’s perspective, even when it appears to be unproductive, irrational or self-defeating.

Antecedent: Something that comes before a behavior that sets the stage for the behavior to occur.

Behavior: What a person does.

Consequence: What happens to the performer as a result of the behavior.

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Once you view performance in terms of ABC, you will be able to develop solutions to performance problems that you may never have attempted in the past.

In the ABC Analysis, consequences are classified on three dimensions:

1. *Positive* or *negative*. This dimension answers the question, “Is the consequence positive or negative from the *perspective of the performer?*”
2. *Immediate* or *future*. Here we want to know, “Does the consequence occur as the behavior is happening (immediate) or some time later (future)?”
3. *Certain* or *uncertain*. This dimension expresses the probability that the performer will actually experience the consequence.

Understanding and managing consequences is the most effective way to improve performance. ●

PART 3: THE SCIENTIFIC APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP

The importance of pinpointing *active behaviors* was made clear by Dr. Ogden Lindsley. In 1965 Lindsley developed the “dead-man’s test” which is: “If a dead man can do it, it isn’t behavior; and you shouldn’t waste your time trying to produce it.”

Yet much of what we typically track in quality and safety violates the dead-man’s test. “Zero defects” and “days without a lost-time accident” are prime examples of popular goals that violate the dead-man’s test. Dead men never have accidents and they never produce defective parts.

Like behaviors, results can also be more precisely pinpointed. In 1978, T. Gilbert developed a test for determining if you have an accomplishment. He called his test the “leave-it test.” The leave-it test works this way: If you can leave it behind when you walk out of the office or plant, it is a result. If it’s something you take with you, it is not. For example, safety awareness cannot be left behind at the end of the day and therefore would not meet Gilbert’s definition of a result.

Safety awareness, better communication and increased teamwork are not pinpointed results, and effort spent trying to produce them may consume considerable financial and personnel resources, generating little value to the organization. These phrases are descriptions of a problem and, as such, represent only a beginning. You must pinpoint the desired result more precisely if you are to solve problems reliably and efficiently.

Behaviors and results define performance, and you need both to run an efficient and effective organization. So how do you pinpoint?

Precision Pinpointing

Pinpointing means being specific about results and behaviors. It requires *precise descriptions* of results and behaviors that are *observable*, *measurable* and *reliable*.

- **Observability.** *Seeing is believing.* In the final analysis, business has to be interested in results and behaviors that can be seen. Pinpointing observable results is relatively easy. The problem of observability comes up when we try to pinpoint behavior. Factors that affect behavior but are not observable, such as thoughts and emotions, are not the province of management. We can’t expect line managers, or anyone for that matter, to delve into the inner feelings of others. The good news is we don’t have to. You can manage yourself and others very successfully by limiting yourself to pinpointing behaviors you can see and hear.

- **Measurability.** Many people, when faced with these characteristics of good pinpoints, immediately complain that these criteria (especially measurement) will limit the pinpoints they can identify. This is not the case.

The fact is, if something is happening it can be measured. Every behavior can be measured in terms of frequency or duration, or both. Even when something is not happening, it is being measured. The measure is zero. Some things may not be worth measuring, but if it is important, it can be measured.

- **Reliability.** When two or more people can observe a behavior or result and come up with the same count or measure, you have a true pinpoint. Have you ever heard someone described as “friendly” by one co-worker and then described as “aloof” by someone else? They are either observing or measuring different things or their measures are not reliable.

Refining observations to the point of reliability is an important skill in pinpointing. We may start with a pinpoint that is not totally reliable but, as we use it, measure it and discuss our observations, we can refine it until it becomes more and more reliable.

The Effective Use of Measurement

In business, measurement is used to solve problems and to help the company perform better, but one of the most frequent uses of measurement is to identify performers who aren’t measuring up. Based on the measurement, negative action is usually taken to correct the performance problem. No wonder employees avoid measurement whenever they can. It’s no fun being identified as the problem.

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The purpose of measurement in a Performance Management system is different. Rather than using measurement to find problem employees, *measurement is used to enable employees to do better*, which, of course, should help the company perform better. ●

PART 4: TURNING GOOD INTENTIONS INTO HIGH PERFORMANCE

Noted quality expert W. Edwards Deming advised us to eliminate goals altogether. Deming had observed how, in actual practice, goals and standards limit performance. He said that people who are capable of more reach their goal level and stop. In other words, performers typically give only what is asked for, even when they are capable of more.

What Deming saw in many organizations was that the majority of people attain goals in order to escape or avoid the consequences of not meeting the goals, rather than attaining or exceeding their goals as a means of receiving positive reinforcement.

Understanding the True Nature of Goals

Goals are antecedents for either reinforcement or punishment. If people are punished when they fail to reach a goal, they will reach the goal only to avoid the punishment. On the other hand, if people reach their goals and receive positive reinforcement, they will not stop when they get to the goal but will continue to perform at their best knowing that more positive reinforcement will be forthcoming.

The belief that goals improve performance interferes with the effective use of goals. If goals are set but there are no consequences for either success or failure, the goals will produce no improvement and will ultimately be a waste of time.

A textile sales organization in New York used a goal-setting process called *targeting* with their salespeople. This process consumed several months of management time each year. It involved the sales manager sitting with each salesperson, reviewing every account and setting sales targets for each season.

When asked how many targets were met each season, the most common response by far was, “about 75 percent.” The actual data was available but was not routinely reviewed. When results were examined for the previous season, it was discovered that only 8 percent of the targets had actually been met! Management was shocked. They were sure the data was wrong. The next step was to look at the data from the season before and that showed that goal attainment was only 11 percent.

Management had mistakenly assumed that good participative goal setting would surely produce improvement.

Goals Get Results (a Management Myth)

When Deming encouraged management to eliminate goal setting, he was really calling for the *elimination of goals as they are currently used*. However, goal setting does have the potential to contribute to improved performance if used correctly.

Very clearly, the purpose of setting goals should be to increase opportunities for positive reinforcement.

If this is the purpose, *we should want many, not few, goals*. And, contrary to common sense, the best mistake to make in goal setting is to set the goals too low. The reasons for these techniques may be obvious by now:

1. If the goal is low, it increases the probability of success. If the goal is reached *and success is celebrated*, the motivation to do even more the next time is increased.
2. If goals become the antecedent for positive reinforcement, then the more goals you have, the more occasions for positive reinforcement.

The mistake that is most commonly made when setting goals is associated with the word *challenging*. The concept of “challenging goals” usually causes managers to set fewer goals and to set them too high. Fewer goals, harder to attain, equals very few opportunities for positive reinforcement and reward.

The fastest way to change individual behavior is to set small goals, reinforce effort and celebrate attainment. Remember, positive reinforcement accelerates the rate of improvement. The only way we can achieve dramatic improvement in anything is with lots of reinforcement.

Compensation and Performance Appraisal

The first thing to do to improve the effectiveness of compensation and appraisal systems is to pinpoint the results and behaviors needed from every job. While this seems like a formidable task, it pays dividends. This is also the first step in Performance Management.

The best job you will ever have is one where you know how you did at the end of every day. The ideal performance appraisal is one that is done every day. It is certainly not practical for management to measure performance every day, even if measures are available. However, if performance can be monitored by the performer, it is possible to get the benefits of daily measurement without the high cost of management time. ●

PART 5: REVITALIZING THE WORKPLACE

It's the responsibility of a company's executives to determine the desired organizational results. Once this is determined, the executive should define, within limits, which behaviors will be reinforced as a means of obtaining those results.

This task is value-driven. It answers the question: *"What are acceptable and unacceptable ways to get results here? Is it results at any cost? If not, what are the limits? How are they determined? What are our guiding principles and values?"*

Although values are not usually stated in pinpointed terms, doing so is the only way you can ensure that your organization lives by them. Concepts such as honesty, teamwork, innovativeness, concern for people, customer service, commitment to quality and so on can be defined in behavioral terms. In fact, if you can't define your organization's values in terms of specific behaviors, they will be practically useless in helping you accomplish your mission.

The ultimate purpose of developing a mission statement is to determine which results to reward and which behaviors to reinforce. (Listing the behaviors and results that will not be reinforced and rewarded is an equally useful exercise when a significant shift in behaviors and results is being attempted.)

After determining organizational results, the task of determining organizational values and their associated behaviors is the highest priority of executive management. This task should come before all other executive responsibilities, including those that directly affect profit. The executive cannot exercise true financial responsibility if profit is attained by behaviors that are self-serving, wasteful or repressive — not to mention illegal, unethical or immoral.

Increasing Creativity and Managing Change

Years ago, a plant manager at a manufacturing plant in Florida was asked, "What do you make here?" "I don't know," he replied, "I've only worked here a year and a half, and it takes us two years to make one." He was only being halfway facetious. The plant made the first guidance systems for satellites, and unreliability and failure to meet production schedules were serious problems.

Walking through the plant, you could see rows and rows of desks where engineers worked. To illustrate some of the problems of managing such an operation, the plant manager stopped and pointed down one of the rows. "See that man?" he asked. He was pointing to an

engineer who was racked back in his chair blowing smoke rings at the ceiling. "How much do you want to bet that if I go up and ask him what he's doing, he will say, 'I'm thinking.' And how much do you want to bet that just as soon as we go into production, he will be the one running down the hall waving a change order. And if he does, I'm going to fire him."

Managing the Creative Process

He was venting his frustration at managing the creative process. Like many people, he thought creativity was a "mind thing," not a "behavior thing." Of course, he was stymied because you cannot manage someone else's thinking. That the engineer was not thinking about work-related issues concerned the manager, but he had no idea how to confirm or refute this concern. One thing he could have done was to ask the engineer to make a list of what he was thinking about that day, how the items on the list related to the problem or project at hand and a list of next steps to take to complete the task. If he had done that, the manager would have had some behavior to work with.

Too many managers hesitate to interrupt the solitude of "thought workers," like engineers, because they are afraid they might interrupt the creative process. To them creativity is a fragile and mysterious process. Many managers, even those in charge of research laboratories, have said that you can't manage creativity. Indeed, you can't manage creativity until you define it behaviorally, but once you do that, you can apply positive reinforcement to accelerate the behaviors that enhance creativity daily.

The fact that behavior is variable means that some things are selected by reinforcement to be repeated and some are not. Variability in behavior that is strengthened will lead to new behaviors that, in turn, produce new results, innovative products or unique services. In delivering a service or manufacturing a product, we usually don't want variability. We want consistent quality. Therefore, it is important for managers to identify when variability is valued and when it is not. ●

Epilogue

The Performance Management approach is value-laden. Values come from behavior. They are statements about desirable behavior patterns that a group seeks to promote. To the extent that values can be pinpointed, they are much more achievable in any group, whether at home, at work or in society in general. Let's examine some basic values.

Honesty. Honesty means that everything is above-

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board. There are no hidden agendas. The stated purpose of asking for a certain behavior or performance is clear to everyone.

Integrity. Performance Management teaches that a manager should carefully follow up to make sure that the consequences match the antecedents. This is the basis for trust. The follow-up is to make sure that what the company *says* will happen after a certain behavior or performance *does* happen. This might be a positive consequence following good performance or it might be a negative consequence following a poor performance. Either way, the credibility and integrity of the company are on the line. This is how the value of *integrity* is promoted by Performance Management.

Equality and Respect. The Performance Management approach implies a certain equality and respect in the way we approach another human being. The basic assumption in the approach is that most behavior is learned from consequences in the environment. Therefore, we conclude that there are logical reasons for the behavior of others: They act the way they do because they have *learned* to act that way. Looking at behavior from this perspective, we are less likely to be judgmental in our estimation of others.

Justice. In a larger sense, the value of *justice* is also implied and promoted by Performance Management. Justice means that each person gets what he or she deserves. This is certainly what justice means in the courtroom sense. In Performance Management, this is what we say about managing people: *Those who perform well should get more reinforcement and rewards than those who perform poorly.*

Self-Esteem and Personal Growth. Reinforcement and rewards that are earned lead to higher self-esteem and personal growth. Earned recognition and rewards increase performers' feelings of confidence and competence. These performers have visible evidence that they add value to the organization. Confidence leads to an increase in initiative and a willingness to try new ideas. What organization can't profit from that?

Peace of Mind (Personal Security). By pinpointing for people exactly which behaviors are wanted and the nature of the consequences for those behaviors, you encourage calm, well-thought-out decisions and stress is reduced. When the relationship between behaviors and consequences is not clear, when people do not know how to earn positive consequences or how to avoid negative consequences, confusion and stress is the result.

The Golden Rule. When positive reinforcement becomes a way of life in the organization, with rein-

Managing the Nintendo Generation and Beyond

Workplace reinforcement has changed little in the last 50 years. However, reinforcement in everyday life has increased dramatically and will continue to do so. To work effectively with the younger generations, a must for management will be an in-depth understanding of reinforcement and its effects. Indeed, even now, reinforcement skills are at least as important as technical job knowledge in capturing the discretionary effort of the Nintendo Generation and beyond. The ability to design high rates of reinforcement into the workplace will be the key to high and sustained performance for the work force of tomorrow.

forcement going from boss to subordinate, peer to peer and peer to boss, adversarial relationships begin to disappear. People begin to treat each other as they would like to be treated.

Performance Management in a Nutshell

Performance Management focuses on the here and now. It is not an abstract, convoluted management principle with limited applications. *It is a precise scientific approach that works.*

There are no tricks or gimmicks. Unlike motivational theories, you don't need to delve into your workers' deep-seated feelings, anxieties or motives. Performance Management requires no psychoanalysis or role-playing. You don't need to find out what kind of childhood your performers had, what their birth order was or how they were raised.

Since everyone operates under the same laws of behavior, applying these universal laws in a positive, effective way will bring about the behavior changes you are seeking in employees — whether you manage two people or 20,000. ●

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked *Bringing Out the Best in People*, you'll also like:

1. ***Change the Culture, Change the Game* by Roger Connors and Tom Smith.** Learn how to build a culture of accountability in your organization through the Results Pyramid: Experiences, Beliefs, Actions and Results.
2. ***Multipliers* by Liz Wiseman and Greg McKeown.** Learn how to become a multiplier of talent and people and how multiplying can have a resoundingly positive and profitable effect on your organization.
3. ***Full Engagement!* by Brian Tracy.** In *Full Engagement!*, business success expert Brian Tracy shows managers how they can supercharge their employees' efforts.