

# Something Different— Straight Talk

**W***hat does it really take, to get productivity from people and, by doing so, maximum profits from and success for a business?*

In the time elapsed between the first edition of this book and now, much has become known about some revered entrepreneurs who built and led giant companies and who were or are extremely tough-minded and I would say, ruthless managers. Steve Jobs and Jeff Bezos are two great examples, known for being harsh, brutal, enraged by incompetence, mercurial, willing to embarrass executives in front of others, imposing autocratic rules and disciplines, and making it “my way or the highway.” They built two of the most successful and valuable companies in the world with this leadership style. Theorists argue they succeeded despite this. I insist, because of it. You can place Donald Trump in the same place. I have personally witnessed his unrestrained ire toward employees who disappointed on two occasions. If you go back in time and really study Walt Disney, you discover a guy who, very often, created the *un*-happiest place on earth for his executives. Walt was dictatorial, confrontational, unreasonably demanding, hated being told “no,” and was prone

to rage. The Disney parks are run with an iron hand, with strict rules and discipline for employees, and swift elimination of those who can't cut the mustard.

If you read this book, which predated most of the books on Jobs, including Walter Isaacson's incredible biography, *Steve Jobs*, and predated the first in-depth book on Amazon and on Jeff Bezos, *The Everything Store: Jeff Bezos and the Age of Amazon* by Brad Stone, then read those books, you will see the commonality. There is no *laissez-faire*.

I must begin with a confession: I have only one employee and she is at an office thousands of miles away that I never visit, and we both like it that way. But this happy fact does **not** disqualify me from writing this book. You can relax; I'm not a fuzzy-headed academic, metaphysical softie chock full of personal growth axioms, ex-coach into team-building, or any other sort of theorist. I'm a *very* battle-scarred veteran. I've had as many as 48 employees, had a dozen for a number of years, then 5, then 3, then 1. I've had 'em in manufacturing, retail, direct sales, and publishing businesses. I've employed my parents, my brothers, my wife, my ex-wife, but mostly strangers. MBAs and minimum-wage earners. You will *know*, when you read this book, that I am "real," that I have been where you are, that I am talking from bloodied-nose experience, not ivory-tower theory.

My clients employ hundreds of thousands of people. I have clients with as many as 1,500 stores, large field sales forces, and, more commonly, 10 to 100 mixed employees—clerical, sales, customer service, fulfillment. At the time that I wrote this, I personally worked, in-depth, hands-on, with owners of 34 different businesses ranging in size from \$1 million or so a year to \$30 million. However, through my networks of consultants and coaches, I am in touch with over 1 million small to medium-sized business owners each year. And one thing they all have in common: gripes, complaints, disappointments, frustrations,

pain, and agony with regard to their employees. Much of this has to do with unreasonable expectations and a misunderstanding of the actual nature of employer-employee relationships. Some of it lies squarely at the fault of the business owner for failing in one or more of the Three Requirements For Having Employees: Leadership, Management, Supervision. Some is unavoidable if you must have employees.

I do tell my clients: the fewer, the better—none if possible. I'm much happier without them, and you would be, too. And most businesses have many more than they need. But if you insist on having them, they come with responsibility; there are things you must do continuously to keep them from stealing you blind, to force them to perform to your specifications, to reward those who do, to rid yourself of those who won't. This book is about all those things. For many it will be a bucket of cold water in the face, an eye-opening shocker, a loud, clanging wake-up call. I have been called the Professor of Harsh Reality for a reason. For some, it will be an overdue permission slip to finally start managing your business as if it really is *your* business. For many, it will lead to greater profits, its primary purpose.

This is the 18th book in my *No B.S.* series. It may be the most *No B.S.* of them all. Hundreds of thousands of my books have been bought by business owners all over the world, and, fortunately, these readers eagerly await the next title and keep coming back for more. From what they write and tell me, the popularity is thanks to the blunt, unvarnished truth telling, the frank talk, the unequivocal positions. You may not agree with me, but you won't have any confusion about where I stand. These days, that's something. If this is the first *No B.S.* book you're reading, give it a chance. I think you'll appreciate just how different it is from the other business books you've read. Let me know what you think. You can communicate with me directly, by fax, (602) 269-3113.

You will also meet Keith Lee in this book. Keith is a “management systems guy.” From personal experience building and operating two different very successful companies, he developed—initially out of need and self-defense—micro-detailed, fail-safe systems spanning selection and hiring of the right people for each purpose to managing people, information, and activities by the navigational star of maximum profit. These systems work so well, envious business owners who are customers of his companies or know him through association began asking him to share his secrets. The result is now a third company, working with small and midsize business owners nationwide, installing better management systems and coaching owners, CEOs, and managers. Keith is a nicer, kinder, gentler guy than I am. Yet, he is still about imposition of strict disciplines on every function of business and on the people who perform or administer those functions. I’m confident you’ll find his chapters included here of great value.

Finally, I’d like to acknowledge that I am best known as an advertising, marketing, and direct-marketing expert, helping business owners and entrepreneurs skyrocket lead flow, sales, and growth. Some people are surprised to find me meddling in management. They shouldn’t be. Pouring money in the form of leads, prospects, and customers or clients or patients into a bucket riddled with holes, leaking at its bottom, is miserably unproductive. Much of my good work is sabotaged by a business’s people and its owner’s lousy management of them. In direct marketing, everything starts unraveling at the first point human employees get involved. I once told a new client offering me \$2 million to fix his advertising and marketing not to hire me and instead go get the way his stores’ phones were answered fixed, the way his salespeople sold fixed, the way they followed up on unconverted leads fixed, and their own internal misinformation mess fixed. This advice was neither welcomed

nor acted on. I took his money and did the best I could, but I witnessed a lot of sabotage and waste and tragedy. It was like bolting a rocket engine onto an old biplane made of rotting wood and held together with duct tape. You really can't separate marketing from management. And you have to understand that management is not an expense—it is a way of *making money*.

—Dan S. Kennedy

PS: There is an important FREE GIFT OFFER from me on page 379 of this book. This gift can really skyrocket your profits. It's also the way to continue our relationship beyond this book. Please take a minute to act on it.

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# Gobbledygook

## “R” Us

“Because of the fluctuational predispositions of your position’s productive capacity as juxtaposed to government standards, it would be momentarily injudicious to advocate an increment.”

—ALEXANDER HAIG WHEN SECRETARY OF STATE

“I don’t get it.”

“Exactly.”

—CONVERSATION BETWEEN ALEXANDER HAIG,  
THEN SECRETARY OF STATE, AND HIS AIDE

**I** hold in my hand a brochure sent to me in the mail from a highfalutin’ university’s school of management, attempting to sell me on attending its \$4,950.00 two-day seminar titled “Managing the New Workforce: Leadership and Strategy.”

This brochure, as well as the seminar it pitches, represents everything that’s wrong with at least 90% of everything being fed to business owners and executives about managing people. It is, in a word, B.S.—but let me demonstrate.

First, it’s chock full of vague, meaningless gobbledygook. Nice sounding, until you critically analyze it. Here are a few priceless examples:



**Expand your own perspective and deepen your understanding of how to learn and act on the values and needs that drive a growing portion of your workforce.**

Huh? What, exactly, is the take-away, practical value there? After all, you aren't really interested in running a group therapy program for your employees, are you?

It gets better . . .

**With demographic shifts come new demands on leaders who must be prepared to find, develop, and retain the New Workforce.**

This is a statement of fact, not a promise of a solution. The brochure is full of these and actually only lists five benefits, one of which is that "expand your perspective" thing. And, really, what is this "New Workforce" anyway? It's gobbledygook. It makes it sound like aliens from outer space have arrived and suddenly replaced all your employees. Hey, demographic shifts in available employees aren't anything new. They've been a constant since at least the Industrial Revolution. Lincoln freed the slaves. Off we went. Women came into the workforce. Asians, Hispanics, attention-deficit-disordered youth. Pfui. And you don't want to be prepared (with deeper understanding!) to find, develop, and retain any New Workforce anyway. That misses THE point. You want to be prepared to find, develop, and retain a productive workforce that produces maximum profit for your business. You see, the professors' very idea of the purpose of employing people, even of owning a company, is misguided. Certainly not in sync with yours.

And I'll bet you'll be wildly excited about this . . .

**A multigenerational panel discussion will provide an opportunity for participants to interact with undergraduate**

junior and senior students majoring in business. With an aim toward highlighting both differences and similarities among the generations, participants will come away with a deeper understanding of what makes these young employees tick.

There sure is a lot of talk here about “deeper understanding.” Meaning you, the guy handing out the paychecks, have to more deeply understand the gentle, fragile, difficult-to-motivate, complex individuals entrusted to your care. Gee, sounds like you’re running a day-care center.

**Now here’s what is NOT mentioned anywhere in this brochure:** managing people for PROFIT. I read every word very carefully. Since I was occasionally convulsed with laughter, I reread it. The word “profit” does not appear. Not even once.

I wonder why?

Because—like virtually all these university-sponsored seminars, most other management seminars, most management books, most newsletters for managers, etc.—this puppy’s being taught by people whose management experience is limited to organizing their sock drawers. No claim is made of even one day spent in the real world, dealing with real employees and real problems—let alone an imperative to create profit. This particular \$4,950.00, two-day excursion into the theoretical world of psychobabble has four speakers:

An Academic Director (whatever that is) who is a visiting lecturer at the school of management. That’s it. That’s all that’s said about her in the brochure. Presumably because there’s nothing else to say.

A Chief Marketing Officer and an Adjunct Associate Professor of Marketing at, of course, the school of management. Hmm, Professor of Marketing—maybe he put this nifty brochure together.

A Diversity Coach who wrote a book, *Managing Differently*. Honest to Mabel, a “Diversity Coach!” “Go be diverse for the Gipper!” I wonder, are the Diversity Cheerleaders going to be there too? Maybe a marching band. Okay, that’s harsh. Heck, I run business coaching programs myself. But this diversity scam has gone way, way too far. It’s replaced the sexual harassment and gender sensitivity scam that previously sucked fortunes out of scared corporate coffers. And the fad before it. Enough already. We’re diverse. Get over it. Get to work. The *job* isn’t diverse. And the *coach* word has become the most overused term since *excellence*.

Nowhere does it say any of these “experts” ever took over a troubled company with horrid employee morale and massive quality control problems and turned it around. Or managed a workforce in a way that led to any measurable accomplishment, like increasing profits by 30% over a year. Or even managed a Dairy Queen. It doesn’t say any of these things because it’s selling *professors*. (If any of them have actually accomplished anything worth bragging about, managing a *real* workforce, failing to mention it is still telling. It reveals a certain mindset about the relative importance of practical experience and street smarts vs. academic theory and philosophy. There’s a smugness to it. The folks with the leather elbow patches on tweed jackets and tenure looking down their noses at us sleeves-rolled-up, boots-in-the-muck folks.)

Of course, YOU are a real business owner in the real world, very unlikely to fall for this. I imagine a bunch of corporate executives who also can’t spell *p-r-o-f-i-t* go on their companies’ tabs and have a grand old time playing eight-people-at-a-table workshop games with their Diversity Coach, then head for happy hour. I doubt you’d catch an entrepreneur in here on a bet.

But the trouble is, this buffoonery and charlatanism seeps out of the colleges’ little side businesses and infects the thinking

of business owners in many other ways. This sort of academic gobbledygook and classroom theory finds its way into the articles you and I read in real business magazines, into the books on management we might turn to for help. These professor types actually get hired to come in and screw around in real companies we own or invest in or rely on as vendors. They get hired to speak at our associations' conventions. And if you hear this stuff enough, you might think it has a place in your business.

It's actually a cancer on corporate America. Untold millions of dollars and millions of hours are wasted on this sort of thing. Everybody's in meetings and group discussions and quality circles and deeper-understanding retreats when they should be *working*. Managers are embroiled in trying to implement this feel-good, talk-in-circles, meaningless stuff when they need to be *managing*.

I've watched otherwise intelligent CEOs and top executives sit in meetings, listening to this silliness, none willing to state the obvious—that the professor has no clothes. I guess for fear of appearing unsophisticated in front of the others. So budgets get approved by people who won't, themselves, have to suffer through the exercise, who can't clearly explain what they're buying, and who have no way of holding it accountable for increased profits.

It's sad enough this permeates big, dumb companies.

Whatever you do, keep it out of *yours*. You really need to put up barriers. Inoculate yourself. As a good start, any suggestions about managing your business or the people in it coming from somebody who can't show his success at managing businesses (profitably)—like a professor—ought to be ignored or viewed as comedy.

I'll go further. Be cautious about bringing “the gobbledygook culture” into your company with your hiring. In his book *Car Guys vs. Bean-Counters*, Bob Lutz uses the term “the MBA virus”

to describe a takeover of a business by academic, management, and marketing theory, producing a permanent cloudiness of needless complexity. I have one client, two partners who began as kitchen table entrepreneurs, who now own a billion-dollar-a-year enterprise. I frequently spot their ads in the marketing journals, advertising open positions. Most include “MBA required.” One of these men is a college dropout, the other never attended college. I have, a number of times over 30 years, been one of their highest paid advisors, and I never attended college either. None of us could get hired at their company. In recent years, in my occasional work with them and participation in meetings with various teams within their company, I find the MBA virus. When it infects a business, as it has this one, decision-making has slowed, bureaucracy has grown like vines on a brick wall, and it’s hard to find anybody managing things with entrepreneurial background or directing marketing who has sold its kind of products to its kind of consumers, nose to nose. People entrusted with millions of dollars have opinions birthed in classrooms but zero experience in actually making real money.

Of course, you want to surround yourself with people smarter than you are if you can. But “better educated” does not necessarily mean “smarter.”

Oh, and to keep picking on the management school’s brochure for its seminar because it’s such an easy target: There’s one thing other than mention of profit that you won’t find anywhere in it: a guarantee. My own company and dozens of my clients often conduct seminars for business owners, with fees ranging from less than \$4,950.00 to four times that much. These seminars are always guaranteed, often by more than your money back: If, at the end of the first day, you aren’t thrilled with the practical value you’re getting, say so, leave, and get a full fee refund plus your airfare and hotel tab reimbursed. Why do *we* do

such a thing? Because we can. Why don't the professors? I leave you to your own conclusions. **But here are the litmus tests you might consider whenever shelling out your hard-won dough for business advice:**

1. It's from somebody who's been where you are and done what you hope to do.
2. It's from somebody with real business battle scars.
3. It's from somebody who can prove profit comes from his advice—preferably in his own past or present businesses as well as others'.
4. It comes with a guarantee.

Two of the management books I now recommend as required reading (see page 363 for complete list) are by Bob Lutz, veteran of four different automakers but best known for his tenure at GM: *Car Guys vs. Bean Counters: The Battle for the Soul of American Business* and *Icons and Idiots*. He recounts tales of corporate dysfunction that will send chills up your spine and get you laughing out loud. The outright silliness that permeates corporate America, affecting management and marketing, is truly amazing. Much of it comes from academia, from MBAs, and from big-name consulting firms stocked with freshly graduated MBAs. It seems CEOs are as susceptible to fads as teenage girls, and as easily bamboozled as illiterate small-town farmers were by traveling medicine men at the turn of the last century.

This book is not for any of these people. Its first edition was absolutely shunned by the business media that serves the corporate world—from *Fast Company* to *Fortune*, despite my dutifully getting copies into the hands of a dozen such periodicals' editors, and despite buying full-page ads in several of these media. One took the time to send me a nasty note about how brutish and unenlightened it was. I researched him, and you can guess his story. Journalism degree. From the campus to

editorial positions. Nary a day actually managing a business that had to turn a profit. That grubby matter left to others.

Well, a pox on 'em all. I don't work or write for that crowd anyway. My relationship is with the business owner who is armpit deep in it, day in, day out, fighting to wring profit out of his business. There is no place in your life for leadership *theory*, for psychobabble gobbledygook, for feel-goodism. This book is for you. A reality check. A *harsh* reality check. Clarity. Permission to manage rationally and, yes, ruthlessly when needed to achieve *your* objectives. Specific strategies that may rankle many, but can save you a lot of losses and headaches, and make you a lot of money. Which is the point of it all: to make you a lot of money.

## Diversity Company Non-Fight Song

With new awareness we worship the gods of  
Diversity, Sensitivity, and Flexibility  
And cheerfully pretend Kwanza is  
a real holiday.  
Go D-I-V-E-R-S-I-T-E-E!

No Christmas trees, no Easter candy  
But time off with pay to fight global warming  
is fine 'n' dandy.  
Go D-I-V-E-R-S-I-T-E-E!

At this company men can look pretty,  
oh so pretty  
'cuz we have classes in  
sexual orientation sensitivity.  
Go D-I-V-E-R-S-I-T-E-E!

For the new youth we must take special care  
never to upset their delicate disposition  
Criticism or be-back-from-lunch-on-time . . . beware  
hostile workplace litigation.  
Go D-I-V-E-R-S-I-T-E-E!

If he wears his backward hat indoors or  
brings his goat to work  
your new managerial imperative is to overlook.  
Respect his unique cultural dignity.  
Practice flexibility!  
Go D-I-V-E-R-S-I-T-E-E!



## Diversity Company Non-Fight Song

Demanding uniformity  
stifles their creativity;  
at the assembly line  
it's the new hate crime.  
Go D-I-V-E-R-S-I-T-E-E!

Clearly the new management think works so well  
with all the cars we make recalled,  
with customer service exported to India.  
You may think you died and went to business hell  
and wonder why truth and common sense so mauled,  
but you just need to be more Mahatma Gandhia!  
Go D-I-V-E-R-S-I-T-E-E!

Performance standards show no sensitivity.  
Productivity is culturally subjective.  
Tough-minded management, not a feasibility.  
Only a Neanderthal would make profit the objective.  
Go D-I-V-E-R-S-I-T-E-E!

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✘  **No B.S. Ruthless Management of People and Profits**

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