

I don't just read books, I devour them, with a pen in my hand, highlighting and making notes. After reading, I copy down all the notes and type them up, considering each idea all over again. Yet, I have often found that key learnings are too quickly gone from memory. That's why I started compiling these two-page book reviews for personal use. With the encouragement of friends and colleagues, I offer my notes now through the Creative Option C website so that others may gain the insight of these authors and perhaps be inspired to read the entire work.

TITLE:	<u>First Break All the Rules: What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently</u>
AUTHOR:	Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman, Gallup Organization
PUBLICATION:	Simon and Schuster, 1999

PRIMARY THEME: When it comes to what makes a manager successful, or to what motivates employees, conventional wisdom (the set of existing rules) is off the mark. Great managers know that for best performance, each employee must be in the right role, motivated and supported, and dealt with according to their unique needs.

SUMMARY DISCUSSION: Here's a book written by Gallup Organization researchers who interviewed more than 80,000 managers about their experiences at work. They've identified twelve questions that are responded to positively by people who work in strong and productive workplaces. Because one size does not fit all, approaches to improving performance vary from person to person, work group to work group. Buckingham reports on companies that have realized tens of millions on the bottom line for each percent increase in employee satisfaction levels.

CHAPTERS:

- *Introduction: Breaking All the Rules.*
- *Chapter 1: The Measuring Stick.* Employees in productive work teams answer the following questions positively. They are the best predictor of employee satisfaction and therefore employee performance.
 1. Do I know what is expected of me at work?
 2. Do I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right?
 3. At work, do I have the opportunity to do what I do best everyday?
 4. In the last seven days, have I received recognition or praise for doing good work?
 5. Does my supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about me as a person?
 6. Is there someone at work who encourages my development?
 7. At work, do my opinions seem to count?
 8. Does the mission/purpose of my company make me feel my job is important?
 9. Are my coworkers committed to doing quality work?
 10. Do I have a best friend at work?
 11. In the last six months, has someone at work talked to me about my progress?
 12. This last year, have I had opportunities at work to learn and grow?
- *Chapter 2: The Wisdom of Great Managers.* People don't change all that much. Time spent trying to get anyone to execute a task for which they have no talent is wasted. A person who has no talent for focused thinking, for example, cannot be successful in a role that requires it. It is more productive to select employees who have the talents you need, and then craft roles around the talents of the people you have.

- *Chapter 3: The First Key: Select for Talent.* “Talent” differs from “skills” and “knowledge.” Here, talent means a recurring pattern of thought, feeling or behavior that is integral to a person’s character and can be counted upon. Talents fall into three categories: thinking, striving, and relating. The best managers know what talents they need in the people on their teams, and they recruit for that. Skills and knowledge can be taught.
- *Chapter 4: The Second Key: Define the Right Outcomes.* Conventional wisdom suggests that the boss must be in control of his or her people, but in reality, such managing reduces motivation and diminishes each individual’s contribution. Paint a picture of what excellence looks like. Of course, many workplace situations unalterably require employees to take specific steps for safety or accuracy purposes, but great managers know to value the outcome more than the steps, and to communicate such outcomes to the team.
- *Chapter 5: The Third Key: Focus on Strengths.* Manage around weaknesses, and focus on what people are good at, desire to do, have innate talent for. If someone has no natural ability to relate with others, perhaps that person cannot be successful with customer interaction – but might be excellent at display design. The rule to break here is the Golden Rule: Treat each person the way *that person* wants to be treated.
- *Chapter 6: The Fourth Key: Find the Right Fit.* When a person is excelling in their job, the fit is right – their talents are matched to the role they are performing. Great managers know that excellence in one area does not necessarily mean someone would be excellent in another. A great waitress, for example, might become a great manager or she might not, depending on her talents.
- *Chapter 7: Turning the Keys: A Practical Guide.* Choosing the right people requires asking the right interview questions and listening for clues to talents, where rapid learning has been demonstrated, or job satisfaction achieved. Putting people in the right roles and increasing performance through strengths-based evaluations are also done with forethought and effort.

TOOLS:

In addition to providing the twelve questions for measuring the strength of a workplace, five appendices in the book provide additional resources, including a list of talents, The Gallup Path to Business Performance, What the Great Managers Said, A Selection of Talents, Finding the 12 Questions, and the Meta-Analysis.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

“[Great managers] know that they cannot force everyone in a particular role to do the job in exactly the same way. They know that there is a limit to how much each employee’s different style, needs, and motivation can be ground down.” p. 109.

“Persistence directed primarily at your non-talents is self-destructive. No amount of determination or good intentions will ever enable you to carve out a brand new set of four-lane mental highways. You will reprimand yourself and put yourself through all manner of contortions... No matter how well intentioned, relationships preoccupied with weakness never end well.” p. 145.

“Lacking a good manager, you won’t be able to last long. As this book has shown, in your struggle to turn all of your talents into performance, your immediate manager is a very important partner. If you are cursed with a truly bad one, then you will never see the best of you. No matter how much you enjoy the job itself, get out, fast. You deserve better.” p. 234.

THE TALENTS:

- *Striving:* Achiever, Kinesthetic, Stamina, Competition, Desire, Competence, Belief, Mission, Service, Ethics, and Vision.
- *Thinking:* Focus, Discipline, Arranger, Work Orientation, Gestalt, Responsibility, Concept, Performance Orientation, Strategic Thinking, Business Thinking, Problem Solving, Formulation, Numerical, and Creativity.
- *Relating:* Woo, Empathy, Relater, Multirelator, Interpersonal, Individualized Perception, Developer, Stimulator, Positivity, Persuasion, Command, Activator, Team, Courage