What’s your Impact on Business?

The Sherpa Guide to Business, Behavior and You

Written by Brenda Corbett
Impact On Business

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The characters described in our stories are real. Their names, personal information and the details of their operating environments have been changed to respect their confidentiality.

This book contains principles from executive education programs offered by the author at the University of Georgia, Howard University and elsewhere. Executive education programs can be arranged directly with the author for on-site delivery, as they have done for Toyota, the National Cancer Institute, Duke Energy and many others.

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The benefits of coaching at any level are well documented. Many of the world’s top performers benefit from coaching, whether in sports, performing arts or business. What leads the very best to actively seek further coaching support? The answer is clear. The best in their professions achieve enormous success through a combination of technical or functional expertise and an in-depth understanding of how to lead their organization.

This book highlights that special combination of skill and behavior, the two primary elements in the equation for success. Combined, skills and behavior create an “Impact on Business” or IOB. In the world of high performing business organizations, impact on business (IOB) serves as the strategic value proposition for executive coaching. The authors of this book address the concept of IOB through a combination of thought evoking vignettes and the power of Sherpa questions.

On a personal level, my introduction to the process began in 2008 as a participant in one of the Sherpa Executive Coaching certification programs. What seemingly began as an interesting framework for self-awareness quickly became a comprehensive playbook for coaches who help others realize their full potential, reaching their “personal summit.”

As a student, coaching client, and executive sponsor, I have seen first-hand the tremendous impact of the Sherpa process. It affects clients both personally and professionally and often leads to a groundswell of interest for further coaching support in an organization. The success of coaching is not limited to personal growth; it also provides the foundation for broader success of a client’s team or organization.

Great coaching can have a profound impact on Business (IOB). Leaders ascend to varying levels of an organization initially based on their ability to deliver results or functional expertise. They can reach a level where their capabilities have a finite shelf life unless focus is given to the full IOB equation. This is where the second half of the IOB equation, behavior, becomes so critical to success. Without focus on both skills and behavior, a leader will face limitations and candidly not realize their potential.

As you read this book, I challenge you to compare and contrast the leaders in our seven stories. Where are the similarities? Where are the differences? What are you learning from their experiences? If you see yourself, I encourage you to seek out feedback, formally and informally. Embrace the feedback, don’t defend it and soon you will begin to realize the true benefits of awareness and a renewed commitment to growth.

In closing and on a more personal level, I would like to thank Brenda Corbett and the entire Sherpa team, who have worked tirelessly in supporting and developing leaders around the world. They are making a difference one client at a time. They have been instrumental in my development and in changing the way in which development professionals affect the business. It is a privilege to share my perspective on IOB and, more broadly, Sherpa Coaching.

*Stephen Subasic, Vice President, Human Resources, Stanley Black & Decker, 2012*
“Just as Sherpa guides lead climbers in ascending a mountain, Brenda Corbett leads us on a smoother path to success in our professional lives. I would take these authors on my climb of Kiliimanjaro, or to the top of Everest any day.

Marshall Goldsmith, executive coach, best-selling author, recognized as the most influential leadership thinker in the world

‘Impact on Business’ is replacing ‘Return on Investment’ as a measure of the value of leadership development. Seven years of research proves the need for a new standard. Impact on Business is it. IOB.
Learn about IOB as you enjoy seven stories about people you probably work with: classic cases that show the importance of business behavior to the bottom line.

As you read through the stories in this book I am sure that your first reaction will be: “I am not like any of these people”. The truth is that everyone displays some degree of this behavior at some time in their professional career. That is why the lessons in this book are so important to each and every one of us. Take your time as you read through these stories, then examine yourself very closely, keeping an eye on your business behavior throughout each and every day.

Andy Hove
Chief Operating Officer
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Success and Happiness

At the end of the day, you want to be fulfilled. You want to be complete. You want to have it all. The ‘total package’ means being happy and successful. So, let’s talk about happiness and success.

What is success? You are successful when you set meaningful goals and reach them. Unfortunately, you don’t always achieve this. You work, but you don’t always find meaning and satisfaction.

What is happiness? Go a step further. What is complete happiness? Complete happiness. Break it down. Complete happiness means being happy and being complete. You are completely happy when your relationships with people are positive and productive. Happiness, all on its own, can be found in a number of seductive sources. Complete happiness requires a complete person. Can you say that you are complete?

How do you become completely happy? Completion of self is a relatively new concept in the Western World. In many places, it’s an ancient concept, especially in Asia. We went on a search, to discover how to be completely happy. In the process, we worked with Arun Kattel, a sociologist in Kathmandu, Nepal. We interviewed Sherpas who have summited Mount Everest. We asked them about success and happiness. We asked them about their work, their lives and what really matters to them.

What did we find out from the Sherpas? We expected something powerful and unique. That’s what we got. Throughout this book, we will share Sherpa Inspiration: wisdom that relates to what you do every day. These Sherpas have personally stood atop the highest point on earth. They have helped countless others to attain the summit. Here’s what we learned. This takes work. It’s no surprise, but ‘success and happiness’ takes work. Lots of work. No matter what you do, no matter what you say, no matter how you act, everything you do that relates to ‘success, happiness, and completion of self’ takes work.

This takes work, but you work all the time. We challenge you to ask: Are you working on yourself? Working on your ‘self’? Frankly, working on yourself is a lost art in the Western World. Our mission is to bring that work ethic back. The lost part of our being is a work ethic that says “I am going to work on myself.” This involves thinking differently. This involves reflecting differently. This involves speaking differently and acting differently. Ultimately, this involves brand new behavior.

Once you know how to do it, how to work on your ‘self,’ you will be rewarded. You will discover that all the work is worth it. We know this truth; People who change
their behavior for the better are better people. They gain success and happiness. Without effort, they also improve everything around them: their relationships, the organizations they serve. People who work on their behavior will ultimately make different choices. They will be successful. They will choose to be happy.

As you read this book, you'll discover how important you are and how much influence you really have. You have an impact on your business, your relationships, and a lot more. Read on, and learn how to make the most of that impact.

The Business of Life

Let’s face it; much of your happiness will be tied up in your work. You spend many hours there. If there is one place you should focus on improving your happiness, it’s at work. If you are good at what you do, you can be successful. Shouldn’t you be happy, too? When you work for a living with all of your heart, you have power and influence. Your power and influence can make your organization and its people happier and more successful. Most importantly, this can make you happier and more successful. We call that having a “positive impact on business”.

At the end of the day, it’s figuring out how to channel all you are into what you do. If you want to be good at your job, you have to know what you are doing. Your knowledge and skill help create your Impact on Business (IOB). But, IOB is more than knowledge and skill. Your impact on business is directly related to your behavior. When you display positive business behavior, the rest of your life will get better, too.
What is IOB?

Simply put, IOB stands for impact on business. When you deliver a positive impact on business, you are producing a significant improvement in the way things turn out for your organization. If you want to be happy and successful, then delivering a positive impact on business (IOB) should be your ultimate goal. This formula tells you how to deliver the biggest impact, right where you are:


Positive skills: Leave skills out of the equation and performance will eventually fall short. Take an expert, well versed in her field. She is the Vice President of IT in a large hospital. Here are some of the skills she must have to be competent in her job.

Skills:
- Medical records regulations
- Financials
- Cost analysis
- Forecasting
- Network tuning

Positive behavior: Let’s look at the other half of the equation. Our vice president has five people reporting directly to her, with another 33 people reporting to them. To lead, guide and motivate them. She will need certain positive behaviors:

- Communication
- Delegation
- Problem Solving
- Follow Through
- Approachability

She knows all the ‘ins and outs’ of her profession. She needs certain positive behaviors in order to lead effectively.

True success comes from a combination of positive skills and positive behavior. Together, the two create a positive impact on business (IOB).

What happens to a person with great style and charisma, who lacks essential knowledge and experience? What about someone who has great technical skills and no personality? Either one will be a disaster. Both skills and behavior must be positive in order to create a positive impact on business.
The Stories

We are going to tell you seven stories about seven people we personally worked with. These stories are all true. Let us introduce them to you.

(1) Sam: Chief Financial Officer at a manufacturing firm in Kansas. Cold as ice.

(2) Alicia: Texas call center manager. Perfect. Too perfect.

(3) Christian: Silicon Valley. Small IT company President. He doesn’t really like people.

(4) Robert: Sales manager. Detroit, Michigan. Loves to talk . . . and talk . . . and talk.

(5) Danielle: Deputy Commissioner, health care. Doesn’t look like she cares.

(6) Nora: District Manager, cosmetics manufacturing. Lost in New Jersey. Nora’s act is a vanishing act.


Our challenge for you is simple: As you read, try to relate these stories to your own work life. Become aware of the way these people behave, and their impact on business. Be honest. Do you see your boss? Do you spot someone you know? Do you see yourself?

Look at them from every angle, from different perspectives. In each story, there’s a behavior issue. Learn what it is. Then, apply the learning in whatever way makes you happy and successful.

An obligation comes to you, because you are reading this book. Here’s what we expect from you:

ξ First, be open and just take in the information. Let your guard down. Just read and seek to understand, not defend or justify.
Second, reflect. Reflect on the story. Reflect on the individual. Reflect on yourself. Be honest. Acknowledge. Do you have room to grow in this area?

Third, really take in Sherpa Inspirations that we offer after every story. They are there to help you create full awareness and understanding.

And lastly, be willing to play a different tune. Be willing to be more conscientious with people, with your words, with how you act and behave. Be willing to live out your impact on business in a more positive way.

Your positive changes will surprise you more than you know. They will surprise others. You will discover that it’s worth all the effort.
Sam is the Chief Financial Officer for an auto parts maker in Shawnee Mission, Kansas. Sam’s employer is a good sized firm, and they’ve done their best to keep people on the payroll, in good times and bad. Sam has been brilliant in his strategies and tactics. He’s kept costs down. He’s kept up with reporting regulations. Sam has kept the company afloat.

People who work with Sam will tell you that he is very talented, but he’s as cold as ice. The guy never says “Hello.” to anyone. Sam walks in from the parking lot and bolts to his office. He closes the door and opens it only if he needs to shout out his next demand: “Kerry, get in here.” “Mike, where’s that report I need?” Everyone shudders when they hear the door open. They hope their name won’t be called.

Here’s how Sam describes his style:

It’s my way or the highway. Otherwise, you can take the dead end street, the u-turn...whatever you want to do. My way or the highway means my ideas are going to be the best. Nobody here can come up with ideas as good as mine.

I hire people to do the work. I’ll do the thinking. But, with all that, I am surrounded by incompetence. I have to tell these people what to do or they will fail and it will be on my head. All these people have to do is what I tell them to do. That’s the simple recipe for success.

I believe in the truth. Sometimes people don’t like it. Sometimes feelings get hurt. I didn’t include someone. I didn’t need to, sorry. I might have even yelled at them. So? Do you think I have time to bring them into the office for a happy little conversation? I have too much to do. No time to slow down, let alone be concerned for how they feel.

I have a job to do and I do it. People fail, and I react. What’s the problem? These people just don’t ‘get’ me. I don’t care if they understand me, as long as they do the work and do it right. I do not need people asking “What about this? What about that?” Come on people, you know I have been in this business fifteen years! I know what I am doing.

Do you know someone who manages the way Sam does? Of course you do. There are people like Sam everywhere. If he is not in your office, he’s down the block.
Maybe we are talking about you here. Is that possible, to some degree? Have you ever thought or felt or acted the way Sam does? Maybe you don’t do it all the time, but… Have you ever ‘run over’ somebody to get what you wanted? Maybe what you wanted was clearly the right thing. Maybe you got there the wrong way.

Start embracing this truth: If this is you, you are creating a world of intimidation with yourself at the center. An environment like this makes people shut down. Eventually, all communication shuts down.

Management by intimidation is one of the most prevalent behaviors that executive coaches deal with. What’s the impact on business created by intimidation? Think about working for Sam.

How do you feel? It’s called lack of empowerment.

When you dominate instead of cooperate, you do not empower your people. If you don’t empower people, they never learn to do anything on their own. If you leave, who will replace you? Ultimately, you will be a leader with no followers.

Intimidation can change by simply being available and open to your people.

Here’s where a new attitude can make a difference. If you are intimidating, acknowledge it. Understand it. Own it: This might be you. You will not be able to move forward unless you own the fact that you behave this way. Here’s the great part: If you can identify that you behave this way, you can change it.

Just as you want your family to succeed, you want your company to succeed. You want it to work like a fine, well-oiled machine. If you can step back and see the damage you are doing, things will start to change on their own. Your task is simple. Be aware and see what’s going on. Understand the implications and you will start traveling down a different path, a more positive one.
Sherpa Inspiration: Be Available

We live inside people’s business lives. We observe. We coach. As we share our stories, we will highlight certain behaviors and call them what they are. We’ll help you understand the cost of your current behaviors, how they affect your life at work and everything else you do.

As coaches, we simply act as a conduit, a pipeline for some new way of understanding yourself.

Think of your current habits as a tennis game. The ball comes over the net and you hit it back, the same way every time. You’re not winning points. What do you do? You have to do something differently if you’re going to be successful. Maybe you’ll hit the ball diagonally cross court, creating a fresh new angle that gets you beyond the routine, and past your opponent. Perhaps you’ll go over the top, throw up a lob, put the ball in a high arc into the back of the court for a winner. Whatever you do, you have to play the game differently.

Be available to look at your situation with a twist. You can change the circumstances in front of you. You just have to be open and accessible to the idea of not handling a scenario like you always have. Until you behave differently, you won’t be as happy as you should be, and you won’t be as successful.

So what does your cross court shot look like? How about your lob?

Let’s look at our next story.