

# Gung Ho!

By Ken Blanchard & Sheldon Bowles

(Fertig Notes)

- Too many toil alone. They are unhappy. Their spirits die at the office door. How true. All across America, spirits died at the office door.
- I believe anyone can grow and change, but I didn't have enough time to work with this person. Sometimes the only way to change a manager is to change a manager.
- Spirit of the Squirrel. Why do those squirrels work so hard? They work hard because they are motivated. Why are they motivated? They have a goal. Why does that goal motivate them? They're motivated because if they don't store up food they won't survive the winter. They'll die. They are motivated because the work is important. Their work goes beyond important. It's worthwhile.

## The Spirit of the Squirrel: WORTHWHILE WORK

- Worthwhile goes beyond important but it starts with important. First, the work has to be a understood as important. Second, it has to lead to a well-understood and shared goal. Third, values have to guide all plans, decisions, and actions. Put all three together and you've got worthwhile work. In short, Spirit of the Squirrel.
- People have to understand how what they do contributes to the well-being of humankind—makes a difference.
- It's the understanding. It's not the work itself. Most any job you can name is important and makes the world a better place to live. People really are needed. It's just that they don't understand how they fit in.
- You have to learn to see how what you've done has helped others.
- What we're really talking about is one of the most powerful human emotions. It ranks right up there with love and hate. It's called self-esteem. One of the fastest and surest ways to feel good about yourself is to understand how your work fits into the big picture. When you feel good about yourself, well, that's the beginning of Gung Ho.
- You can't have worthwhile work unless everyone is working toward a well-understood and shared goal. But that's not enough. It matters how you reach the goal. You must be guided by values. You have to be proud of both the goal and how you get there.
- Goal setting is a big problem in most organizations. The managers think because they print a goal in the annual report or announce it at some meeting, the goal is shared. They may have shared it, but if the team doesn't commit, it isn't a shared goal.
- It's the buy-in that makes the difference. It's the commitment to making a goal a reality that has to be shared.
- Sometimes the best way to lead is to find out where people are going anyway and then get out front.
- Two types of goals: First, *result goals*. Statements that set out where we wanted to be—whether it was units worked on, finished, or shipped, or accounts collected, or whatever. Second, *value goals*. Statements that set out the impact we wanted to have on the lives of our team members, our customers, our suppliers, and our community.
- Importance and goals get people going. It's values that sustain the effort. There is nothing worthwhile about work that leads to a goal arrived at by cheating.
- Values are more management's unique responsibility than goal setting is. With goals, you will have a couple of critical ones. With values, every one is critical.
- In a Gung Ho organization values are the real boss. Values are to guide your behavior, not for you to guide others. You're a leader, not the police. At the same time, though, you have to ensure the organization is internally aligned—everyone singing from the same hymn book. You can't impose agreement to values any more than you can to goals, but you can, and must, impose conformity. If people don't respect your values, then they work elsewhere. You wouldn't keep

someone who didn't work for your result goals. Don't keep people who won't honor your values either.

- Once you proclaim a value, you can't toss it aside just because it might be inconvenient.
- That's the thing about a value. It has to hold up in tough times. Otherwise it's not a value. It's a feel-good slogan of the day. It's ethics of convenience.
- Values aren't set the way goals are. The minute, the second, you proclaim a goal it's real. It's set. Values don't work that way. You can proclaim a value all you want, and you need to do that, but values become real only when you demonstrate them in the way *you* act and the way *you* insist others behave. Goals are for the future. Values are now. Goals are set. Values are lived. Goals change. Values are rocks you can count on.
- The essence of Spirit of the Squirrel. Worthwhile work, which meant three things:  
**Important    Leading to shared goals    Value-driven**
- The closer you get to Gung Ho, the higher the trust level will be. That's what you need. Trust. As mutual trust rises, support for goals will increase.
- You have to be willing to explain why goals are important and honestly show how people benefit. Burn this into your mind in capital letters: **TELL THE TRUTH.**
- It goes beyond walk your talk. You've got to have honest talk to start with.
- Managers keep control by pretending information is sensitive and withholding it. It's great for power trips but it doesn't lead to trust. If you want your team to be Gung Ho, you have to tell the whole truth, and that means information belongs to everyone.
- Along with total honesty, you have to put the well-being of your team members first.
- Running a business from numbers is like playing basketball while watching the scoreboard instead of the ball. Look after the basics if you want success, and the first basic is the team.
- The *work* of an organization is to look after customers, but the *reason* the organization exists in the first place is to serve the people who work there, as well as the community they live in.
- "Gung Ho was Chinese for 'working together' and the slogan of Carlson's Raiders during World War II."\*    \* Led by Lieutenant Colonel Evans F. Carlson, the men of the Second Marine Raider Division were known for their enthusiasm, teamwork, and outstanding results.
- My job was to point out why Walton Works #2 made the world a better place. They didn't buy it all the first time. But they listened, and opened every meeting by repeating the same message.
- Values were personal, as well as corporate, and people didn't talk easily about personal things. Be patient, he said; it will come.
- The Spirit of the Squirrel leads to Gung Ho only when it is matched with Way of the Beaver.

#### **The Way of the Beaver:**

#### **IN CONTROL OF ACHIEVING THE GOAL**

- Each beaver has a large measure of control over its own destiny. They decide how the work is going to be done. They operate like independent contractors.
- If everybody has the Spirit of the Squirrel, but management makes the workers do everything by management's book, that organization won't be Gung Ho. Chances are, management's way won't be the workers' way, and so the workers won't be able to produce as well. Besides, the workers' way will likely be better. Much better. Nothing kills Gung Ho faster than narrow-minded and likely mean-spirited management, chipping away at workers' self-esteem by insisting things be done the bosses' way.
- These beavers don't achieve engineering marvels because some other beaver is ordering them around. It's up to each of them how the dam gets repaired. They exercise their own best judgment.
- It is important to understand that these beavers do what they do because they decide to. Not because they've been ordered to. The Way of the Beaver means team members must control achieving their goal.

- Once you begin to let employees have a real say in the way things are done, and they accept the challenge, you soon won't recognize the place.
- Your job as General Manager is the same as any true leader's. Let people know why the work is worthwhile. Decide where you're going. Make sure the team shares the goal. Help set values. Get the resources in place. Hold the rule makers in check. Ensure you've got the support you need both inside and outside the organization. Keep your eye on the future to ward off trouble and be ready to change direction. As for the team? You have to let the people who really do the work do the work. It's your job as leader to know where the plant is going. It's the team members' job to get you there.
- By setting the key goals and values, you define the playing field and the rules of the game. You decide who plays what position. Then you have to get off the field and let the players move the ball.
- The goals and values are like sidelines. The players have to know that as long as they follow the rules they can go anywhere within the lines. And they have to know that when the ball is in play you'll keep off the field.
- If you want your people to take charge, they have to be free to do it, and freedom comes from knowing exactly what territory is yours. Knowing how far you can go before you're out of bounds has to be matched with knowing the boss isn't about to step in and take over.
- There may be some mavericks, and they're not all bad if you don't have too many, but you'll find people will naturally work together.
- The real secret of successful management is discovering what people do naturally and then figuring out how to adapt the organization to take advantage of natural behavior. Too many managers go at it the other way around.
- It's tough to be boss without being bossy. You need high self-esteem.
- Change is hard. They may not like the way things are run now but they know how to cope. Old familiar problems are more comfortable than new strange ones.
- The Spirit of the Squirrel fulfilled God's plan for the forest, and now the Way of the Beaver fulfills His plan for the beaver. The first addresses the needs of society. The second, the needs of the individual.
- People who are truly in control work for organizations that value them as persons. Their thoughts, feelings, needs and dreams are respected, listened to, and acted upon.
- You don't have to go any further than valuing individuals as persons. Do that and you've got it all.
- Beavers have work they can do. They build dams with trees and mud. They couldn't be in control of achieving the goal if they were expected to build a concrete dam. The Way of the Beaver requires work that's possible. You had to give people work they can do. You can't expect to achieve production beyond their reasonable capacity or skills beyond their training.
- When you undershoot, you won't make people happy. You insult them.
- Nothing drains self-esteem faster than knowing you're ripping off the system. Not earning your pay.
- Nothing demeans faster than getting something for nothing. It's the same when you don't let people contribute, perform to their capacity. It's the same story for skill levels.
- Every time you expect work from people who aren't trained for it, you sabotage Gung Ho.
- Just asking people to do what they are able to do easily won't give people the feeling of accomplishment they need to be Gung Ho. You have to stretch them. Give them work that demands their best and allows them to learn and move into uncharted territory.

#### **Way of the Beaver**

#### **IN CONTROL OF ACHIEVING THE GOAL**

1. A playing field with clearly marked territory.

2. Thoughts, feelings, needs, and dreams are respected, listened to, and acted upon.
3. Able but challenged.
  - Attitude you can control and your attitude will be reflected by everyone else.
  - I decided the reason I was so miserable was that our product was bad and the workers were so awful to deal with.
  - It dawned on me they were miserable because I was a real pain to work for and the plant a horrible place to work. Nothing was going to change unless I changed.
  - Change doesn't mean just getting rid of old habits. It means developing new habits to replace the old.
  - Everyone in this department looks like they're working hard. Why's that?  
It's not hard work when you're enjoying it. I used to work hard at my last job. I've been here five years and it doesn't seem like hard work at all. The last place, I **HAD** to go to work. Here I **GET** to go to work.
  - Tradition around the plant says everybody had well-defined rights and territory. Not much about responsibility, mind you, but we're big on rights and territory. You've started people looking at things differently and their natural instinct is to put what they can within their own boundary.
  - You put an old dog in a new yard and first thing they do is piss on the fence posts to mark out their territory. All we're seeing is fence post pissing. Bound to happen.
  - Some people are small-pie people. They spend their whole lives convinced there is only so much pie to go around. They sit down at the table and start to fight over who gets what, worried someone else is getting more than their share. They love boundaries and fence posts to protect their territory. Big-pie people assume there's lots for everybody. More than enough. They've got an expanding pie. They trust anyone in the family to divide up the pie. No need for fences when the field is bigger than everyone could possibly need. Gung Ho people are big-pie people.
  - With territory comes responsibility and there's more than enough of both for everyone.
  - It was one thing to subscribe to the principles. Quite another to make them part of life. While everyone showed interest, there were two major stumbling blocks. First, team members had to be willing, even eager, to take on considerable extra responsibility. People don't do that without time to think. Lots of time. Second, managers had to give up the levers of control they'd worked a lifetime to get hold of.
  - The Gift of the Goose brings enthusiasm to Spirit of the Squirrel and Way of the Beaver. Squirrels chattered away to scold the world. Beavers whacked tails to send warning messages. They were honking encouragement and cheering each other.

**The Gift of the Goose:  
CHEERING OTHERS ON**

- Spirit of the Squirrel and Way of the Beaver provide the spark. The Gift of the Goose is like throwing gasoline on the spark.
- When people discover the power of Gift of the Goose there is no stopping them.
- Those geese fly thousands of miles every year. They can move hundreds of miles in a day. They are truly one of the wonders of our world. And they do it cheering each other on every step of the way. It's how you make a mission come alive.
- People who set out to accomplish something that they believe is important and worthwhile—that's right work—need to make a contribution to the way that work is done—that's right way. Put those two together and you've got a mission. But the driving force behind people as they pursue a true mission is a reason for doing the work. A need to be fulfilled. You reward people by fulfilling those needs. Gung Ho people do right work, the right way, for the right reward. No score, no game? Sports teams must be about the most Gung Ho organizations you can name, but try to think about a basketball game where no one kept score and fans didn't cheer.
- People are rewarded in two ways and both are important. Cash and congratulations.

- Einstein put it best:  $E = mc$ . Enthusiasm equals mission times cash and congratulations. Both cash and congratulations are important. But cash comes first. You have to feed a person's material needs, food, and clothing, etc., before you can feed their spirit with congratulations.
- Congratulations are simply an affirmation that who people are and what they do matter and that they are making a valuable contribution toward achieving the shared mission—right work done the right way.
  - You have to practice finding positive things though, and that's tough to do when you've spent your management career looking for things people do wrong.
  - When you can't outright congratulate someone, you can always encourage them. And words of encouragement mean you have faith in their ability, and by acknowledge that ability you've also paid them a compliment.
  - There are both active and passive affirmations. Active affirmations are the kind you usually think of. Telling people what a great job they've done or presenting an award. Passive affirmations can be even more powerful. A classic example would be sitting on your hands, biting your tongue, and looking unconcerned and confident as one of your team members carries forward a tricky, complicated, and important project. Just the kind of project you excel at, and every fiber of your body is crying out to take control—or at least issue a couple of warnings about potential trouble spots. But you don't. And your silence sends a very clear message to the worker: You're good. You can handle this. I trust you.
  - The Gift of the Goose doesn't have the impact unless the Spirit of the Squirrel and Way of the Beaver are also present. Otherwise it would be like spreading fertilizer on rock. A few fast sprouts where a little seed and soil meet in a crevice perhaps, but nothing worthwhile or permanent.
  - Cheer the progress, not just the result. At a football game the crowd doesn't sit mute in the stands while the home team moves the ball to first down and goal to go and then cheer only when the touchdown comes. But that's what most organizations do.
  - Success is all about attitude, energy, balance and connecting with others. Best of all, once you get a taste of it, you start to spread it around. Like love, the more you give, the more you get.
  - How did people change? Trust, Telling the truth. Building self-esteem. Rewarding people who shared information. Setting stretching goals. Living our values. Training, training, training, and then more training. A learning, growing mind is an open mind, and we needed open minds.
  - Then cheering. Lots and lots of cheering. We challenged everyone in the plant to catch other people doing something right.
  - One of the ingredients of success was energy. Enthusiasm is positive energy. Human minds, when linked to a common purpose, are like a series of linked computers. Together they achieve infinitely more than they would acting alone.
  - If you want to be Gung Ho, don't decide to be Gung Ho. Constantly, deliberately, and systematically live a Gung Ho life. And if you're going to Gung Ho an organization, you better be sure your agent of change lives a Gung Ho life too.
  - The knowledge of what to do to be Gung Ho is important, of course. But what really counts is doing it. Taking action. Now. Today.