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SPEAKING *Of* Success

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Their Secrets

Featuring



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BILL TODD



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SPEAKING OF SUCCESS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



BILL TODD is a recognized expert in sales, marketing, and individual motivation. He has directed the sales and marketing divisions for Fortune 500 companies and aggressive start-ups alike.

Today Todd is a sought-after motivational speaker, sales trainer, and executive coach. He focuses on helping businesses drive sales, generate record profits, and quickly shift market share.

Prior to launching his speaking career Todd served as Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Marriott's Corporate Lodging division. He also served as Vice President of Sales and Industry Marketing for Choice International, one of the world's largest multi-brand franchise organizations.

THE INTERVIEW

David Wright (Wright)

Today we're talking to Bill Todd. Bill is a recognized expert in sales, marketing, and individual motivation. He has directed the sales and marketing divisions of Fortune 500 companies and aggressive start-ups alike. Today he is a sought-after motivational speaker, sales trainer, and executive coach. He focuses on helping businesses drive sales, generate record profits, and quickly shift market share. Prior to launching his speaking career he served as Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Marriott's Corporate Lodging Division. He also served as Vice President of Sales and Industry Marketing for Choice International, one of the world's largest multi-brand franchise organizations.

Bill Todd, welcome to Speaking of Success.

Bill Todd (Todd)

Thank you.

Wright

So you've delivered hundreds of seminars, workshops, and keynote speeches on how to achieve unparalleled success. In each one you focus like a laser on five undisputable foundations for businesses and personal success. Will you tell our readers what they are?

Todd

For over a quarter of a century I have studied, interviewed, observed, and worked shoulder-to-shoulder with the most successful sales, marketing, and management professionals in the world. Each of the top

producers I've studied or worked with unquestionably out-performed their competitors and peers; they do it relentlessly in good economic times and bad. These top producers brilliantly leverage their time, creativity, and unbridled enthusiasm with their imagination to achieve success. As a result they consistently out-manage, out-sell, and out-market all their competitors.

Every top producer I have known practices five fundamental business foundations. This holds true regardless of their industry, job title, or educational background. In short, these basic practices frame the foundation of their remarkable success.

The most common trait—the one that applies to most top management and sales producers—is a focused, positive attitude about life in general and business specifically.

The second foundation of success is the ability to be professionally persistent.

The third is the single best kept secret in business today—the ability to inject fun not only into your job, but in everything you do.

The fourth is the practice of catching co-workers or direct reports doing something right.

The fifth is the unrelenting obsession with customer service.

Wright

So do we have to embrace all five to experience an immediate difference?

Todd

The good news is that you can focus on just one foundation at a time and you will experience remarkable positive change in your career. This can occur in less than thirty days.

Wright

Is there one foundation that's more important than the others?

Todd

Absolutely, and this single dominant foundation alone will propel managers and sales professionals alike into that category, often referred to as "super high achievers." It is a persistent, positive attitude about life in general and business specifically. Attitude is the high octane fuel that propels seemingly average business people to achieve remarkable results. A great attitude is a mixture of a positive outlook on life, genuine self-confidence, and strong bias for action. George Bernard Shaw said, "People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are . . . The people who succeed are the ones who get up, look for the circumstances they want, and if they can't find them, they make them."

The Cox Report on American Business did an in-depth study of Fortune 500 executives. The study concluded that over 90 percent of the executives attribute their business success to attitude versus any other basic ingredient. The research specifically asked recognized high achievers to compare the role of aptitude with that of attitude. The result was 94 percent stated that their can-do positive attitude was the single most important ingredient responsible for their success in business.

Best-selling author Brian Tracy says, "Fully 80 percent of your success as manager or as a salesperson will be determined by your attitude and only 20 percent by your aptitude." Henry Ford would often tell his managers, "If you believe you can or believe you can't you'll always be 100 percent right."

The most common trait exhibited by people with an exceptional positive attitude is the recognition of failure

as a critical element of success. Every top producer I've worked with eagerly welcomes failure. They expect and prepare for failure as part of their long-term strategic plans. In short, they've come to understand that without some degree of failure they're just not going to enjoy increasing success.

Reggie Jackson was the first player in Major League Baseball to amass 100 or more homeruns for three different clubs. His famous nickname, "Mr. October," comes from his clutch-hitting in the World Series and play-offs (he appeared in eleven). He hit 563 career homeruns and was named to fourteen baseball all-star teams. More importantly, he has the dubious distinction of being the all-time strikeout leader with 2,597.

For managers and sales professionals the message is not to avoid projects, assignments, or opportunities that might result in failure. Apprehension over failure is the single most common obstacle preventing us from both achieving and maintaining success. Ironically, recent studies have confirmed that individuals are more motivated to avoid failure than to pursue success. Put another way, most people aren't as motivated to finish in first place as they are motivated not to finish in last. Tom Peter says, "It's always better to try a swan dive and deliver a colossal belly flop than to step timidly off the diving board while holding your nose."

Wright

Your second foundation is to practice professional persistence. Specifically, what is professional persistence?

Todd

Professional persistence is the art of applying polite "stick-to-itive-ness." This is accomplished by combining your know-how and product knowledge with your drive

and determination. Professional persistence is simply the relentless pursuit of success. Committing to professional persistence is promising to yourself to out-think, out-sell, out-service, and out-communicate the competition.

Practicing professional persistence is just like jogging—the first time you step out your front door, chances are you won't be able to jog five miles. However, if you are persistent and continue to make small successful strides each day, you'll find yourself achieving previously unattainable goals in very short order.

People who are professionally persistent frequently think outside of the box when it comes to overcoming their obstacles. When the going gets rough they don't accept excuses, they dive in and they come up with ingenious solutions. They also stop and encourage their team members who have fallen behind or who have lost sight of the goal.

Top producers always seem to know that no matter how clearly thought-out their objectives are, or how comprehensive their action plan is, long-term success will ultimately depend on their commitment to be professionally persistent. It's the ability to keep going when others give up that marks us for long-term success.

In his best-selling book, *Successful Management*, Arthur Cooper writes, "What separates top producers from everyone else is the ability to carry on when things get tough or start going wrong." Richard Sentin, co-author of a book entitled *Go for No*, advocates that the only way to succeed in both sales and management is to go for as many rejections as possible. In short, you've got to be comfortable increasing your failure rate in order to increase your success rate.

Wright

Your third foundation is both intriguing and on the cutting edge. What kind of reaction do you get when you tell your clients that they must be perceived as being fun to do business with?

Todd

Imagine for one moment that tomorrow an article appears in Fortune magazine stating that it's been proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that companies providing carrot juice to their employees undergo an immediate jump in productivity plus a dramatic reduction in turnover. Better yet, these very employers start experiencing a significant reduction in the spiraling costs associated with health insurance claims. Just imagine that this same story was simultaneously quoted in USA Today, The Wall Street Journal and Business Week. Envision that each story ended with the identical conclusion—all companies executing the daily distribution of carrot juice report a 127 percent increase in bottom-line revenue. In short, each company attributes their new found success to the fact that their employees are drinking carrot juice. I can assure you that the sale of carrot juice and carrot juicers would sky rocket! Office Depot, Staples, and Sam's Club would be taking full page ads trumpeting the availability of canned carrot juice. Within days coffee machines the world over would be shoved into dusty corners to make room for the new carrot juicer.

Obviously that didn't happen but what Fortune magazine and all the other publications did report was that employees who report enjoying their jobs and having fun at the office are 127 percent more productive than their average co-worker. A subsequent study conducted by Robert Half International reported that 84 percent of the

CEOs and Human Resource Directors declared employees who display an active sense of humor while in the office do a much better job than their co-workers as a whole. Additional research conducted with 737 CEOs reported that given a choice they'd prefer to hire someone with a visible sense of humor as opposed to visible talent. Why? Fun is proven to be the most important ingredient that increases productivity and the efficiency of workers. Fun enhances team-building and encourages creativity, it helps make our minds stay clear and makes hard tasks seem easier. Fun eliminates the inevitable boredom that arises from repetition and non-challenging tasks. A fun work environment keeps employees happy, healthy, and reduces absenteeism as well as decreasing employee turnover. Norm Brinker, former CEO of Chile's Restaurants, would regularly remind his executive team that fun was the single most powerful yet least understood competitive edge they possess.

Linda Naiman, author of *Orchestrating Collaboration at Work*, reports, "Play replenishes and revitalizes our human spirit. It clears the mental cobwebs that keep us from thinking decisively." The American Psychological Association states companies that report a majority of their employees confirm having fun on the job enjoy significantly higher productivity and profits.

The best-selling book *Contented Cows Give Better Milk*, by Bill Catlette and Richard Hadden, states that the majority of those organizations with fun work environments and positive cultures consistently make more money. Their research states that each of the top fifteen companies on Fortune's "Most Admired Companies List," was also widely recognized as being a fun place to work. In fact, they systematically compared six of these companies with their top competitors. The research

looked back over a ten-year period and found that the “fun” companies consistently delivered bigger financial gains. In addition, they outgrew their direct competitors by a margin of roughly four to one. They also out-earned their competitors by a combined \$40 billion and enjoyed three times the net income per employee. These corporations generated an average of 79,000 new jobs per company compared to competitors that collectively lost 61,000 jobs.

Research categorically verifies that fun makes us think and perform better on the job. In fact, fun liberates us from worry and stress, relaxing the brain and making it easier to be more creative. Through fun and play we quickly tap into the power of our imagination, intuition, and daydreaming. Solutions at work that seem so evasive appear effortlessly in the midst of play.

Now let’s look at one resounding reason for us to seriously consider tapping into the power of fun and play at the office. According to Dr. Joanne Gavin of Marist College, American workers are spending far more time at the office than their parents did. In fact, a recent survey showed that over twenty-five million Americans work on average fifty hours a week with an additional ten million Americans putting in sixty hours every week. Today the American worker spends 153 hours or 4.075 weeks more time at the office than their counterparts did in 1969. This doesn’t count the 100 hours—two and a half business weeks—the U.S. Census Bureau reports that the average American spends driving to and from work each year.

Americans are going to return \$19.5 billion dollars in unused vacation time back to their employees this year. Prevention magazine sited a survey showing that the proportion of Americans who experience a high level of stress on a weekly basis is now up to 75 percent, which is

up from 55 percent just a few years ago. Stress wreaks havoc with our employees' productivity. According to Dr. Ed Seagal of California State University, between 75 percent and 90 percent of all visits to primary care physicians are for symptoms caused by stress.

It's important to understand that fun takes stress head-on and when you eliminate stress, you remarkably increase productivity.

Wright

Will you give an example of one successful company that embraces the foundation of being fun to do business with and encourages both play and celebration among their employees?

Todd

During each sales training seminar I always ask the same question. Which airline is known for being fun to fly with? One-hundred percent of the time the group shouts out in unison "Southwest Airlines!" It's hard to find anyone in North America who disagrees that Southwest owns the brand for fun when it comes to air travel.

I then ask the same group, "Can you name which airline is known for great inventory controls or the most comprehensive employee policy manuals?" Everyone just starts shaking their heads from side to side as the room grows silent. Who cares? The irony is that Southwest is not exactly an easy airline for businesspeople to travel on. They make their customers stand in one line after another, offer no aisle or window-seat assignments, and provide no lounges with free food or drinks. Today Southwest still does not extend upgrades or preferred boarding status for their most frequent travelers.

What makes Southwest so successful is that year after year it has a clear companywide commitment to being fun

to fly with. Southwest has been profitable for 124 consecutive quarters. As a result, it has predictably issued 124 consecutive dividend checks to its investors. Some may argue that Southwest owes its success to low prices. Yet dozens of discount airlines that have offered comparably lower prices have since come and gone. From day one Southwest's passengers have enthusiastically bragged about the airline after each trip. As a result, Southwest consistently cashes in on lucrative word-of-mouth advertising.

Does this type of viral marketing produce results? While the entire airline industry recorded dreadful financial results after 9/11, Southwest has been the only airline to report a profit for every quarter, every year, ever since. Southwest knows too well that airline travel is often perceived as something that must be endured. More importantly, they know that if you can weave fun and entertainment into the customer's experience, competitors' clients will soon hear about it. As a result, market share will start shifting almost immediately.

Southwest enjoys a customer recommendation rating double the industry average and nearly seven times higher than United Airlines. So how do they do it? Southwest has a philosophy of first employing fun, talented people. They aim their recruiting ads to the whimsical, unconventional, and even the zany to attract potential employees. For example, a group of eight perspective pilots were brought in for interviews at Southwest's corporate headquarters in Texas. Predictably all arrived dressed in dark suits. They were then offered the opportunity to change into a more comfortable Southwest standard issue pair of Bermuda shorts plus a beach shirt. Six of the applicants talked amongst themselves and agreed to change. The final two declined

and kept on the traditional interview attire. It could be a coincidence but the six who changed into the shorts and beach shirts were hired that day.

Having a corporate culture that encourages fun and play will also provide an opportunity to tap into lucrative free advertising and marketing. In the early '80s Southwest launched an advertising slogan titled "Just Pain Smart." Within days South Carolina-based Stevens Aviation, a small company, sent a cease-and-desist order claiming that it had actually owned that slogan for quite some time. Rather than pay lawyers tens of thousands of dollars in fees to hash out this argument, Southwest President and CEO, Herb Keller, challenged Steven's Aviation CEO to a one-on-one arm wrestling contest. The contest took place in Dallas at a cavernous sports auditorium. As the first round began Herb Keller called in an obvious ringer who was hiding behind the stage. In fact, it was the Texas state arm wrestling champion, John Jones, who immediately thrashed the CEO of Stevens Aviation. When Keller returned to the ring he discovered that the Steven's CEO had brought in his own ringer—a petite customer service rep who came in and clobbered Herb Keller. Round three was the decisive rubber match. Both CEOs returned and in less than ten seconds Herb Keller was soundly defeated. Keller claimed he was exhausted from a combination of athlete's foot and being over-trained. Specifically, he'd been asked to walk up two flights of steps the day before.

Keller understood the power of having fun. Within days they both received an unprecedented amount of free publicity. In fact, a hand-written note from President George Bush arrived on Keller's desk saying, "Just plain terrific, congratulations on your loss!"

Jay Conrad Levinson, author of *Guerrilla Marketing For Free* says, "Southwest's marketing doesn't work because it sells flights and destinations. It works because it helps people realize the fun of flying Southwest." Fifteen years later Southwest employees and customers are still bragging about this story.

Wright

Your fourth foundation for success is to catch someone doing something right. That seems to be in direct opposition to the most commonly accepted perceptions of management's role. Will you tell us how this radically different concept works?

Todd

According to the best-selling book, *How Full Is Your Bucket?* by Tom Rath and Donald O. Clifton, an astounding 65 percent of Americans report receiving no recognition for their good work in the past year. No wonder the U.S. Department of Labor reports that the number one reason Americans leave their job is because they do not feel appreciated.

For generations we've instilled in our young managers that they need to ensure that direct reports always follow the rules, get to work on time, meet their targets, and don't spend one penny over the assigned budget. As a result, managers often transform themselves into corporate hall monitors.

Dr. Gerald Graham, professor of management at Wichita State University, did a comprehensive study of 1,500 employees across a multitude of businesses. He reported that the single most powerful employee motivator was personalized instant recognition delivered directly by a manager.

A recent survey of American workers stated that the number one performance motivator was a simple pat on the back by anyone. Catherine Meek is president of Meek & Associates, which is one of America's leading compensation and consulting firms. She states, "The one lesson that stands out loud and clear, across all industries is that businesses do a lousy job of recognizing employees' achievements. Today the most frequent time for management feedback is when somebody screws up."

Best-selling management author Tom Wrath says, "Traditionally, when a manager sits down with an employee for a performance review, it only takes about five or ten minutes to appraise the employee's successes. Unfortunately, the majority of the time is spent discussing which areas are right for improvement." Wrath insists that focusing on someone's weaknesses can undermine the very purpose of a performance review and can sap the energy needed to perform at optimal levels in the workplace.

Super achievers understand the power of frequently catching someone doing something right. As Zig Zigler says, "If it's to be, it's up to me." Single-handedly, top producers become evangelists for celebration within their organizations; they just don't wait for senior management to "get religion." The best-selling book, *First Break All the Rules* by Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman, recommends we do everything we can to celebrate the accomplishments of our employees. Why? The Tom Peters Group reports, "The number one reason a customer stops doing business with a company is the indifference of one unmotivated employee. It's amazing how employees have such little awareness of their own strengths. All it takes is someone to hold up a mirror and show them what they're doing right. Amazingly this simple act possesses

the ability to motivate employees to achieve far more than they have ever accomplished in the past.”

Wright

Will you share one example of how a single person made an immediate impact to both a personal carrier and the success of their company?

Todd

A few years ago I was working for one the world's largest franchise organizations. Morale at our corporate headquarters was at an all-time low. We noticed people were working prolonged hours and on weekends but they weren't accomplishing what they had in the past. It became apparent that when people worked hard and put in long hours, no one seemed to notice anymore.

Without consulting senior management, we created what was called “the Celebration Committee.” Clandestinely we set aside one central voice-mailbox on our corporate system for the use of every employee allowing everyone to call in and positively nominate a coworker. In particular we wanted to know about employees who had gone the extra mile, put in long hours, or just came in on the weekends.

Once a week a stealth group of about twenty coworkers would suddenly surround each of the nominated employee's desk to applaud, blow whistles, and brandish loud noisemakers. In short, we would give the now shocked and dazed employee a homegrown standing ovation. We always presented the honoree with a beautiful framed certificate of appreciation from grateful co-workers. Within one month we had created a growing army of recognized and appreciated employees. This occurred at absolutely no additional cost to management. We didn't wait for the memo, we did not wait for senior

management to get religion, we took action—and we got immediate change.

Wright

Your final foundation for success is to develop an obsession for outstanding customer service. You state that this alone will provide us with a powerful competitive advantage that will literally catapult us to success. Will you explain to our readers why this foundation is instantaneously effective?

Todd

Delivering a high level of customer service is no longer what differentiates you from your competitors. Delivering a consistent level of solid customer service is only the ticket that allows you to compete for your predictable share of the marketplace.

In his book, *Beyond Customer Service*, Richard Gearson writes, “Your customer service must be better than your competitors’ if you are to attract and retain clients. Today, maximum profits margins result from customer retention, from loyalty and re-purchasers rather than just going after new customers. Much of customer service comes down to common sense. Give customers what they want and make sure they’re happy. Exceptional customer service always pays off and it always pays off in long-term customer retention. High quality service motivates customers to tell others about you. These referrals will transfer themselves into a customer driven sales force.”

Managers and sales professionals who foster an obsession with delivering a dependable level of great customer service will inevitably grasp a bigger slice of the market and will do so without having to play the discount game. For example, next time you’re at the airport, look at the number of business travelers who board those big

yellow and black Hertz shuttle buses. Each of those people just walked by at least a half dozen well-known national car rental desks that advertise very deep, discounted rates. They knowingly do this to go rent from Hertz. Each of these lower priced competitors has invested millions upon millions of advertising dollars to make sure that the Hertz customers walking by their desks understand that they rent the same cars for less money. Yet each day the Hertz customers just keep walking by.

How does Hertz do it? Simply put, they take such extremely good care of their corporate clients that those clients would not think for a moment about switching. In almost every airport, Hertz charges between five and twenty-five dollars more per day, per car than the lowest priced competitor. With persistently higher rates they still win the market share award year after year, city after city, and airport after airport.

People will pay and pay handsomely when you consistently deliver better service and make their life easier.

Even eBay sellers with an established reputation for delivering fast, reliable service and quickly communicating to their clients can expect to receive about 10 percent more revenue per transaction than the sellers who've just arrived on the system. According to Roger Dow, President of the Travel Industry Association of America, "When a company truly commits to delivering exceptional customer service, from senior management right down to front line employees, customers see an immediate difference. These organizations seem to operate at a higher level than others. People in these companies are inspired, they're passionate, and alive; their customers buzz about their latest buying experience,

profits soar, and clients brag about these companies using words like on fire, exciting, passionate, and electrified.” Dow calls these super charged organizations “turned-on companies.” According to the 2006 Return On Investment Report, 50 percent of the clients who are dissatisfied will not complain but will merely take their business elsewhere. In fact, they will do this on the very next purchase.

Robert C. Hazard Jr., former Chairman of the Board of Choice Hotels International, would refer to this action as, “the deadly silent complaint.” He would go out of his way to profusely thank customers who complained. He knew how incredibly valuable this information was to the long-term financial success of his over 3,500 franchises worldwide. Hazard’s commitment to delivering unsurpassed customer service was legendary. In fact, during his very first speech to franchise owners, he asked them to look at the person on their left and the person on their right and then promised the group that if customer service and brand standards did not immediately improve, one of those people would not be back for next year’s convention.

Don Landry, former President and CEO of Sunburst Hospitality, would often arrive at one of his hotels with a large strip of adhesive tape plastered across his forehead. On the tape he had printed in big, black, bold letters PMMFI. He would then visit each of the hotels’ primary working departments, from the bell stand to the front desk to housekeeping to maintenance, and all the restaurants. As you can imagine, each employee stared at his piece of inscribed masking tape, but politely said nothing. At the end of the day he would call his employees into a meeting room and explain that the initials PMMFI stood for “please make me feel important.” If each person

could accomplish this with every paying customer he or she came in contact with, everything else would fall into place.

Tom Craven, author of the best-selling book, *The World is Flat*, confirmed that the one thing you cannot outsource is the personal touch of customer service. “If you intend to survive in the new economy you must pay attention to the fact that your customer service is where your power lies. The power to influence clients’ attention and the power to increase your client base is in your hands. In the competitive years ahead, delivering good customer service will not be a noteworthy accomplishment but the one thing that may keep you from going bankrupt.”

Wright

Each of your foundations of success is based on solid common sense and can be immediately implemented. Better yet, each one can be put into practice without having to invest one additional penny. Why are the vast majority of all business professionals not practicing these foundations today?

Todd

Over the last ten years we have become obsessed with over-complicating our businesses. Sales, service, and basic product quality have been replaced by obsessing over Excel spreadsheets, P&L statements, and revenue management reports. This compulsion with over-complicating our businesses has allowed us to dismiss the basic fundamental foundations of success. We too often label these basic foundations as being too easy or too simple or too insignificant to make a difference.

An alarming number of business leaders view real customers as interruptions—interruptions that keep them from attending meetings or slogging through an endless

abyss of e-mails. Today's top producers don't walk around with a death grip on their Blackberry; they get out and talk to customers. Today's best managers do not outsource customer service but they get out to where the rubber hits the road—the customer's office. Today's top producers understand that it is more important to be fun, customer focused, and easy to do business with than it is to analyze endless revenue reports and cost analysis statements. Today's leaders are bold, decisive, and eagerly take risks; they celebrate both success and failure as the building blocks of their future success. They have an infectious attitude that spreads through their organization and motivates their co-workers to out-sell, out-market, out-promote, and out-achieve any competitor at any time.

Wright

Well, what a great conversation Bill. I can't tell you how much I appreciate your spending all this time with me this afternoon answering these questions. I know I have learned a lot and I am sure that our readers will.

Todd

Thank you very much; it was a real thrill for me.

Wright

Today we've been talking with Bill Todd who is a recognized expert in sales, marketing, and individual motivation. He is a sought-after speaker, sales trainer, and executive coach. He focuses now on helping businesses drive sales, generate record profits, and quickly shift market share. If you're reading this book or if you're listening to this on CD, you'll come to the same conclusion that I did—he knows what he's talking about.

Thank you so much Bill, for being with us today on Speaking of Success.

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