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----- WHAT'S UP, DOC? -----

Vol. 3, No. 8; August, 2003 --- Copyright 2003 by A. J. Schuler, Psy. D

"Creating Leadership Solutions for Profit and Growth"

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## THIS MONTH'S THEME: HOW TO BE A BETTER BOSS

Surveys tell us that most people leave their jobs because they don't like their boss. Sure, some leave for more money, or for more opportunity, but very often the deciding factor is that relationship with the boss. When that relationship is bad, everything else is bad. When that relationship is good, even other less-than-satisfactory conditions are both more tolerable and more likely to be worked out. And for those of you who want to build really strong organizations, the best performers are even more motivated by that relationship – and they are the most likely to jump when things are not right, since they will have more options open to them. So, this month's issue is for those of you who want to be better “bosses” (managers, supervisors, executives) – or those of you who want to forward this edition to your own boss through some anonymous email process! Lots of great content this month, so dig in, and share this issue as you see fit . . .

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### THIS MONTH'S QUOTES:

“Callin’ it your job, Boss, don’t make it right . . .” – Paul Newman, in the film “Cool Hand Luke”

“A good manager is a man who isn’t worried about his own career but rather the careers of those who work for him.” -- H. S. M. Burns, former

President, Shell Oil, in a quote that is old (no women managers?) but which expresses something true.

"Don't think you are going to conceal thoughts by concealing evidence that they ever existed." -- Dwight D. Eisenhower

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## 1. TO BE A BETTER BOSS, DO:

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### GO ON AN OCCASIONAL "LISTENING TOUR"

This worked really well for a coaching client recently, who had been appointed to a new high responsibility job in a new agency, where at some point she would have to create real pressure for change. She started her job right away by scheduling one-on-one time with each of her direct reports, spanning more than one city, by phone if not in person. She took an open-ended approach to learning what each person liked about their work, what they did not like so much, what they hoped to do or achieve in the long term, what they saw as potential problems for the agency, etc. She got to know them by just listening in a non-threatening way, which gave her a lot of credibility right away, even though she was replacing a popular predecessor and coming from the outside. She learned a lot that will make her more effective as she guides the organization in some new directions, and minimized the resistance she will likely encounter as she introduces new ideas and changes. This is something any boss can do informally any time, or periodically, no matter how long he or she has been in the position. Don't make a big deal of it; just do it, or ask for time on people's schedules just to catch up or take the pulse of the organization.

### ASK WHAT PEOPLE WANT FOR THE LONG TERM

Asking does not obligate you to give everyone what they want, but it's better to know than not to know. If you know what a person's career or personal ambitions are, you can find creative ways to help them get where they want to go while also helping them serve the needs of the organization. You likely won't keep people forever, but if you make their paths through your organization also serves their needs, you win a referral source for other new people to come to your organization in the future, and maybe a chance to rehire a "boomerang" – someone who someday comes back to your organization and helps in a new way – in the future.

### FIND OUT HOW PEOPLE LEARN BEST

Some people need hands on supervision; some people like to learn by watching first and then doing. Some people like to jump right in, make mistakes and then come to you when they have a question. Some people

like to read about things and like to be referred to courses or manuals, etc. Some people won't learn by reading at all. Everyone learns differently, and as a manager, you are the one primarily responsible to see that people learn how to do their jobs with excellence: it's not the job of the training department, which is their to support you, but not do all the teaching for you. Most managers mistakenly assume, without ever realizing it, that everyone learns the same way they themselves do. Very, very few managers ask people how they learn best, and so most people, when asked, don't know quite how to respond at first – they have to think about it. Go ahead and ask anyway, and make them think! Just by asking, you'll help them take more responsibility for their own learning while also getting a sense of how best to manage them and guide their growth in the job.

#### DECIDE FOR YOURSELF WHAT PEOPLE'S BEST TALENTS ARE

Everyone has their “aces and spaces:” areas of greater talent and areas where they are not so strong. But not all of us know ourselves well enough to know where those spaces are, and sometimes we misguide ourselves. Sometimes, people have to learn through experience where they are not be suited to be, and in the process, you may lose some people who think they are most apt to do one kind of work when you see them as most fit for another. But make some assessment of where each person's leading edge talents may be, and be open to revision as you observe performance over time. People generally will be happiest (and most productive) when they are doing what they do best, so try to guide them – and keep them challenged – in areas where they can stretch their talents and levels of performance while also contributing to the overall team mission – which you are responsible to promote.

#### BE FRIENDLY WHENEVER YOU CAN

This is not the same as being everyone's “friend” – more on that later. But being “friendly” goes a long way. Smile, for heaven's sake! If people only get your focused attention when there's trouble brewing, they'll avoid you and hide a lot of information from you that you will need to manage the team effectively. I'm not saying never set limits in ways that may make someone angry, but use a light touch when you can. Most managers rely too much on their positional authority to get things done, when they could accomplish so much more by creating a looser atmosphere that nevertheless is very serious about performance and results.

#### TEACH – AND CORRECT PEOPLE – RIGHT AWAY, IN PRIVATE

Take an individualized approach, and when you see something that should be corrected in performance, don't agonize for weeks or wait until the next formal evaluation period to deal with it. Get into private conversation with the person right away, try to understand (without scolding) why your

person did what they did in the way they did it, and then guide or correct them directly without a lot of fuss, if correction is indeed needed. The first time you do this, your direct report may feel a little shaken, but be reassuring and don't hold a grudge. Teaching people is important, and lessons are much more easily learned when correction quickly follows a potential error. You may need to wait a day or two if you find yourself frustrated or angry about the error, in which case it might help to wait a little until you can come across as less threatening and more open and rational. But deal with the problem if it is something that should be addressed.

On the one hand, you don't want to do this constantly so that people tense up all the time, but on the other, you don't want to let things linger, which will reduce overall performance and lead to lots of angst and ill will when yearly employee evaluations come. Dealing with people one-on-one is better than correcting in public – you don't want to humiliate anyone in public, and it's better to deal with each of your people as individuals.

Most managers either make corrections too forcefully and sporadically – when they feel “fed up” – or they avoid conflict and the making of corrections altogether. Both approaches stem from a lack of comfort with the appropriate use of authority. Find a happy medium, stick with it, and be willing to discover occasions when you misunderstood the situation entirely and have to revise your initial take on the matter. These teaching conversations should become two-way communications. And if you teach this way, while also doing the things mentioned above to build better relationships with your direct reports, most people will appreciate that you are guiding them and not just scolding or “zapping” them. Just be sure to identify actual behaviors people can modify, and don't fall into the trap of criticizing people's personalities.

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## 2. TO BE A BETTER BOSS, DON'T:

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### DON'T TRY TO BE EVERYONE'S FRIEND

If you were promoted from within, your relationships with the group and its individual members will change and the transition may not always be comfortable for you or the others. That's part of life. Sometimes new managers, or internally promoted managers, try too hard to be everyone's “friend,” to still be “one of the gang,” and that's just not sustainable. That does not mean you can't have good relations with people, and it does not mean you can't be friendly (see above). You should have good relations and be personable and friendly – being a boss is mostly about having good people skills, and if you're surly all the time and prefer to work alone, you

probably should get out of a managerial role, for your sake and for everyone else's. But often for the most people-oriented among us, it really bothers us when we have to come across as the "bad guy," though it is at times necessary. Accept it and move on. You won't be everyone's friend, but be consoled: by being a good – or even great – "boss," you can have an even greater, positive impact on people's lives and their careers.

#### DON'T DISPLAY POWER UNNECESSARILY

On the other hand, some people are way too quick to accept that they can't be everyone's friend, and then seem to act so as to prove it every day! In my experience, these are usually people who are equally uncomfortable with being in authority, even if they seem to thrive on being the "boss" and proving it at every turn. Real power is worn lightly. If you find you feel as if you need to prove who's in charge a lot, then you'll be even less in charge than you think you are. Look at the quote at the top from Dwight Eisenhower: people will be able to get a sense of your underlying thoughts and attitudes over time, whether you speak them or not. They'll sense if you see them as "the enemy," or if you're always trying to prove you're the smartest or most powerful or whatever. Take it easy; lighten up. The truth is, if you exercise your "authority" too much or too harshly, you'll have less legitimate authority in the end. You won't be in charge; you'll just be that nut who's having another fit.

#### DON'T ASSUME EVERYONE IS MOTIVATED BY THE SAME THINGS

Some people want to learn new things. Some people don't much worry about anything as long as they are paid well enough. Some people want regular attention. Some people want room to do their own thing as long as they produce. Some people would like to become supervisors or managers themselves. Some people want to avoid ever becoming a "boss." Some people want the boss to know a little bit about and care about their families, personal lives, etc. Some people want to keep their outside lives completely separate from the office. Some people like to be thanked, recognized and praised frequently. Some people just want a kind word every now and again, without a lot of fuss. Some people would like to be given some public recognition. Some people dread being singled out for attention, no matter how well intended the attention may be. Some people want to have room to be a little creative or innovative. Some people want things to stay pretty much the same without surprises, and prefer a lot of structure. Some people don't particularly want to be close to the boss, but all people want to feel pretty well understood by the boss. Some people want the organization to pay some attention to their pet projects. Some people care about the perks that can come with achievement or status (office locations, window offices, the big desk, etc.). Some people could care less about status symbols and actually prefer to stay away from them. . . You get the idea. There is a lot of diversity of motivational styles out

there, and chances are, your team members are all different from you in some significant ways. Don't take a one-size-fits-all approach to understanding others' motivations, either purposely or inadvertently. Listen, observe and ask questions.

#### DON'T MAKE PUBLIC CORRECTIONS WHEN PRIVATE ONES WILL DO

Lots of managers prefer to avoid "singling anyone out," thinking that this is a better approach to making corrections. Wrong! All you do by going public is to start everyone speculating about your targeted person. You also build resentment among those other team members who are being corrected when they themselves are not responsible for the problem. You also miss the chance to do a more targeted, efficient job of coaching the one who made the error, so that person won't likely learn well because of your scattershot, indirect, one-sided attempt at communication. And since everyone will probably figure out who your intended target is, you will have essentially humiliated that person by letting everyone else know (indirectly) that they made an error. So bite the bullet, and assume the responsibility that comes with authority. Correct – and coach – individuals in private. Express thanks and give praise for good performance in public as well as in private - unless your targeted person really becomes uncomfortable with the attention that comes from being singled out for public praise. The exception to this comes in some military training settings where the goal is to create a strong sense of unit identity and interdependence, mitigating the need to take such a strong individualized approach.

#### DON'T MANAGE BY EMAIL

Email is good for conveying basic information, clarifying simple inquiries, scheduling things, etc. But email is a blunt communication instrument, and not very good when it comes to anything that can involve or incite emotion. Stay away from it for matters of coaching or any conflict. It will only make things worse. Talk on the phone or, better yet, in person for anything of importance. Since email has become so easy, too much management has begun to rely on the making of proclamations or the issuing of decisions via email, avoiding personal or group contact, so people will lose the opportunity to ask clarifying questions, understand management intentions, etc. This only leads to problems. What seems like a time saver – email – in the short run can be a big time drainer in the long run when people misunderstand instructions or become resentful because of misinterpreted intentions. A lot of the fractures that appear in organizations stem from lazy, poor communications from the top in the first place, breeding factions and hidden agendas among cliques in the long run. Email also makes it very easy to fire off a message when people are frustrated, allowing people to say things they probably would not say in person. How many of us have seen or been part of escalating streams of

email arguments that quickly make all parties sound a bit like angry children? As manager or boss, set an opposite example. Talk to people in person and let them ask questions, see your eyes and hear your tone of voice, whenever you can.

#### DON'T GET LAZY WITH RELATIONSHIPS

An organization is a living thing, and it requires a certain amount of maintenance, even hygienic attention. It can be easy as a boss to get so task focused and busy that you lose touch with what's going on with your people. Check in and take the temperature of the group, and of individuals, every now and then, outside of the daily task and routine. That's how you can keep a team or unit functioning at its highest level over a sustained period of time. Don't get lazy with your relationships, or take them for granted (a good rule of thumb for the work environment and for a family or for a marriage, actually).

#### DON'T SPEND THE MAJORITY OF YOUR TIME ON "PROBLEM" PEOPLE

Attention can itself be a reinforcer. Anyone who has children knows this. Sometimes just paying attention to an undesirable behavior helps to sustain and promote it. This happens in the office, too. Don't get caught in that trap. And there's another reason not to spend the majority of your time on "problem" people: you lose the opportunity to build on the performances of your stronger people. How does this work? Your stronger people will have the best new ideas. New ideas can be built into successful new processes. Successful new processes can make the organization far better in accomplishing its mission, making everyone more productive. But if you're busy focusing on the "problem" people, you'll never notice ways to build with your best people. Even more, for many of your highest performers, your attention is – guess what? – a positive reinforcer, helping to promote the desirable behaviors you'd like to bring out of them and others. If you find yourself spending the majority of your time on "problem" people, you may need to recast them so their jobs better fit their talents, or even move them out of the organization, because people seldom change very much. Don't make the mistake of thinking that good "bosses" and mentors spend most of their time trying to "help" problem people – that's backward, unless your job is social work. As a boss, you'll be most successful surrounding yourself with high performers and working to bring out their best. But if you feel you need to be the smartest person in the group, you're not being very . . . smart!

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### 3. RECOMMENDED BOOKS AND FILMS

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BOOK: "Market Wizards: Interviews with Top Traders," by Jack D. Schwager, HarperBusiness, 1993.

Whether you've been watching your 401k or retirement account take a beating in the last few years, or even if you consider yourself to be a seasoned, sharp investor, this book is a classic that can be reread every few years to help you learn how to think about markets and investing as a way to maximize your personal wealth. The book is eminently readable and not too technical or filled with jargon, making it an ideal, friendly investment companion. I highly recommend it.

FILM: "Pirates of the Caribbean," in wide release

I've been a little busy for movies this summer, but I did see this one. It was fun, which is not a bad thing. Not great, or even particularly memorable, but fun. It probably could have been edited a great deal, so that it could have been about 45 minutes shorter, but hey, it was a decent ride, and Johnny Depp's version of a quasi-Keith Richards, mascara wearing, sun-baked pirate was consistently entertaining without becoming ingratiating. I have not yet seen Sea Biscuit, the latest film darling out there, so I have to take a pass on recommending it or not (sometimes films that are advertised as being so "inspirational" turn me off . . . sometimes I don't really want to like what supposed to be "good for me" . . . know what I mean?!).

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#### 4. CHUCKLES

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(THOSE of us who are not techies give tech support people a lot of grief. It's only fair we give them a chance – occasionally! - to turn the tables on us, as in this joke.)

Last week my wife and I purchased a new computer. We ran into some difficulties while setting it up so we called the customer support phone number we found in the manual.

I picked up the phone and called the number. A man answered the phone and I explained the problem to him.

He began rattling off computer jargon. This confused us even more.

"Sir," I said politely, "Can you explain what I should do as if I were a

small child?"

"Okay," the computer support guy said, "Son, could you please put your mommy on the phone?"

(AND here's one about overblown authority.)

Having just moved into his new office, a pompous, new colonel was sitting at his desk when an airman knocked on the door. Conscious of his new position, the colonel quickly picked up the phone, told the airman to enter, then said into the phone, "Yes, General, I'll be seeing him this afternoon and I'll pass along your message. In the meantime, thank you for your good wishes, sir."

"Feeling as though he had sufficiently impressed the young enlisted man, he asked, "What do you want?"

"Nothing important, sir," the airman replied, ... "I'm just here to hook up your telephone."

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## 5. HOW TO GET MORE FROM SCHULER SOLUTIONS

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The majority of you subscribers found this e-Newsletter through the Schuler Solutions web site, and have not been clients, though clients certainly do subscribe to "What's Up, Doc?"

Aside from clients, though, you subscribers are the people out there who "know" me and my work the best, and so you are in the best position to let others know about who I am and what I do, if you feel so inclined. If you're willing, here's what you can do:

### GET MY NAME TO YOUR COMPANY'S HUMAN RESOURCE DIRECTOR

Tell him or her that you subscribe to my e-Newsletter and that I provide seminars to organizations, and that I might be a valuable resource for them to explore

### GET MY NAME TO YOUR CEO, COO OR OTHER SENIOR EXECUTIVE

My typical buyer for consulting services is often not the HR department but some senior executive who faces the need to reorganize operations or perhaps manage an acquisition. Even if your senior executive has no

immediate need for my company's services, he or she may appreciate having the contact information, just in case.

#### GET MY NAME TO YOUR ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT OR MEETING PLANNER

I don't just provide consulting services – I provide entertaining, content rich presentations for conferences, either as a keynote presenter or as a breakout session presenter. Many or most of you belong to professional associations, and meeting planners are always looking for good presenters. Getting my name to your association presidents or to meeting planners will help them find good resources that they know will connect with their members. And you might not have to snooze through your next conference!

#### GET MY NAME TO YOUR COMPANY'S MEETING OR CONFERENCE PLANNER

Ditto the above. Corporations have meetings and conferences, on national and regional levels, throughout the year, and meeting planners need good content that will be relevant to organization members' needs. Get my name to your company's meeting or conference planner and maybe our paths may cross at your next off-site event!

#### GET MY NAME TO ANY MANAGER OR EXECUTIVE WHO WOULD LIKE MORE EXECUTIVE EDUCATION, BUT WHO LACKS THE TIME TO PURSUE IT

One friend and fellow Wharton alumnus said to me recently that he knows a lot of people who could benefit from my help, but he feels that recommending me would amount to a criticism of someone else! I understand his dilemma, though my coaching services really amount to a novel way to obtain executive education that is personalized, confidential and convenient – no one needs to take time off from work, leave town or attend a special university program. I would call my “Personalized Executive Coaching (PEC)” work “Personalized Executive Education,” but the acronym is a little problematic . . . If you or someone you know is in a position to lead an organization or part of it, and would like to learn his or her options for getting better at what they do (learning in a few weeks what they might otherwise take years to learn or understand), then give them my name, and we can see together if I have a plan and program that might meet their needs.

#### THANK YOU!!

Your referrals really make a difference, both for me and my business, and for the people who take advantage of Schuler Solutions' services. Thanks also to so many of you who wrote back to tell me how much they liked last month's inclusion of the “Ten Rules for Working and Living,” which makes a terrific and popular subject for any general audience presentations

I make at conferences. By the way, I still have some of those special-offer, wallet sized reminder cards of the “Ten Rules” available to you – up to ten per person. Just click [here](#) and include your mailing address to get yours.

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## 6. PROMOTE YOUR OWN GROWTH

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You don’t have to live near the Schuler Solutions main office in Alexandria, Virginia to benefit from my coaching services. Great work can be done for your own growth and development over the phone and through document review via email. To find out more about your coaching options and available coaching plans, just click [here](#) now.

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## 7. ABOUT DR. SCHULER

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A. J. Schuler, Psy. D., an expert on leadership and organizational change, provides consulting services, keynote presentations and seminars for client companies. His trademark is highly personalized service that leads to measurable increases in productivity, profit and growth. He also provides personalized leadership education and coaching for highly motivated clients.

Dr. Schuler, President of Schuler Solutions, Inc., has served diverse organizations in the private and public sectors, including The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, Sony Development, Nomura Securities and the Executive Office for Immigration Review.

A graduate of the Wharton School of Business, Dr. Schuler has successfully led the profitable growth of a dynamic, international consulting firm while serving as Operations Director, and has successfully coached over five hundred CEO’s and corporate executives.

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## 8. HOW TO SUBSCRIBE OR UNSUBSCRIBE

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your own FREE subscription, just click [here](#) to become a subscriber. If you believe you have received this message in error, or to remove yourself from this mailing list, just click [here](#) to take your name from the “What’s Up, Doc?” distribution list.

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## 9. NEWSLETTER STATEMENT OF ETHICS

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NEWSLETTER ETHICS: This e-Newsletter will be sent to subscribers only upon REQUEST, though subscribers may forward this letter to anyone they wish. Subscriber identities or contact information will NOT BE DISCLOSED to any other persons or entities under any circumstances.

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## 10. IN MEMORIAM: BOB HOPE AND CELIA CRUZ

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I try to keep these newsletters informative and even a bit entertaining. And yet, this month, the death of Bob Hope reminds us how high the bar for entertainment has been set. Some commentators have begun, since Bob Hope’s death, to point out that very often, he was really not so very funny, especially as his act grew a bit worn with time. But it’s worth remembering the Bob Hope brought a light touch to hard times through much of his career, from his work during the Great Depression to his efforts to bring laughter to scared young men far from home. Surely that counts for a lot. He was one of a kind, with a rubbery half-handsome face and a precision for timing and delivery unmatched by his many would-be imitators and followers.

Less noticed by the mainstream, but just as significant in my mind, was the loss this past month of the “Queen of Salsa,” Celia Cruz, who brought energy and joy to all her work for fifty years. She did not sing sad songs – her sound was ever one of celebration. And not just celebration, but communal celebration: salsa is nothing if not exultant and intensely social, the sound of a lot of people gathering for a lot of fun. I’ve spent more than one evening in my life with her music washing all around me and others on a dance floor. And along the way, as the reigning and undisputed “Queen of Salsa,” Celia Cruz became, incidentally, a symbol of the hopes of so many people for political and social freedom in Cuba.

As a world entertainer, she was just as well known and beloved as Bob Hope. For those of you who knew very little about her, you can learn more by clicking [here](#). ¡Azucar!

A. J. Schuler, Psy. D.  
Speaker, Consultant & Leadership Coach  
Schuler Solutions, Inc.  
6300 Stevenson Avenue, Suite 916  
Alexandria, VA 22304  
Phone 703.370.6545  
Fax 703.783.0232  
Email: [AJ@SchulerSolutions.com](mailto:AJ@SchulerSolutions.com)  
Website: [www.SchulerSolutions.com](http://www.SchulerSolutions.com)

“Make each day your masterpiece.” -- John Wooden

