

by Scott Milne
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Teach Your Children Well

I've gotten by so far with some great help by some great friends, mentors and teachers. They say a mind is like a parachute: it works best when it's open. Sometimes we get stuck thinking there's only one way to do a project or do an install. There have been plenty of times when I've been stuck on an install or troubleshooting and a friend in the trade has suggested something I just didn't think of. Son of a Gun, it worked! Being taught something is much better than being told something.

My old shop teacher was the best at this. Bill Burroughs was an engineer who left the business world to teach young kids. He told me he wanted to do something that made a difference in the world. I know with my friends and I he made a big dif-

ference. He created a class called Industrial Techniques. He showed us how to weld, use a metal lathe, and

lines worked. He would point out a machine, tell us how it worked and then say, "Some guy made that in his

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use a Bridgeport machine (a vertical milling machine). He took us on field trips to factory and production companies. I remember going to a forge to watch them pour cast iron and do sand castings. We went to a business that did metal spinning; they made nose cones for small airplane engines... Cool Stuff.

Most important he took us to factories to show us how production

head drew and on paper and made it work He was thinking." For 17-year-old kids it was mind blowing.

Mr. Burroughs had a great style of teaching ... You could do any project you wanted. Just tell him what you wanted to do and get his OK. Some guys built things, maybe a go-cart. Some worked on their cars. Bill would stop by and say "How's

it going? " He would look at what you were doing and say, "Well let me show you Maybe try this Give it a shot." We would try something our way and it wouldn't work, then try it his way and—Son of a Gun—he was right. No negative comments, just a push in the right direction.

When working with apprentices I find that style works well. Try this see and if it works. See if it isn't an easier solution.

And sometimes a little humor goes a long way. Mr. Burroughs started his first day of teaching doing some drawing on the chalk board. While he drew what he thought was a very interesting drawing, the kids where acting up, throwing stuff, acting like 17 year-old boys. Bill came to school the next day with a package.

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Management—How Do You Do It?

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to Time Management Seminars to just about any aspect of a manager's job description. Some companies required their managers to attend these classes as a condition of advancement while other managers opt to take them because they, personally, want to be better at their jobs.

The result of attending any of these seminars or courses is pretty easy to observe. Almost everyone who leaves a class comes out fired up and applies the lessons learned with the enthusiasm of a Zealot. Whether or not they continue to work at the lesson learned is another

matter entirely. Think of it this way; how many people do you know who have dieted to lose weight? After religiously following a prescribed regimen and losing the weight, how many have managed to keep the weight off after, say, a year or so? Management seminars are like that.

A Better Mousetrap

In my humble opinion, all of these commercial "better management" programs have something to add to the training of good managers. None, however, have invented a better mousetrap. Where they go off the rails is in trying

to make a one-size-fits-all class. People are not automatons. They are not all the same in the way that they act, work or think. Even if we all agree on a specific way of approaching a problem, not everyone can do it that way. Not to mix metaphors, but there is always more than one way to skin a cat.

If you are a meticulous craftsman (read: anal) and you approach your job with the same meticulous attitude, you will manage that way. You will keep copious, accurate records. You'll demand your employees provide you with accurate and detailed accounts of the project(s) you manage. You will,

when asked, be able to pinpoint exact times and locations of project progress if asked.

If you're more of a laid back sort of craftsman ("almost is close enough," "it's behind a wall, no one will see it!") you'll probably manage the same way, allowing a certain amount of leeway in your people, reports and results. "Did I order that cast iron last week or the week before...?" That's not a knock, it's a fact.

If you're sort of in between the two previous examples, your management style will reflect that. If you're an owner, your concern for your company will be reflected in your management of it.

Going back to the one-size-fits-all seminars, perhaps instead of absorbing the whole program and trying to incorporate the lessons in their entirety into your management style, the better alternative might be to include and practice only one, or possibly two, of the lessons that you were taught instead of the whole program. If you find that the one or two things work for you, use them until they are second nature to you and incorporated into your management style.

If, on the other hand, these new elements don't work with your style or with your company, you can discard or modify them and try other aspects of the course. After all, the object is for you to become a better manager, not to pedantically parrot phrases and euphemisms while trying to force a round peg into a square hole.

Never lose site of the goal: a better manager means a better run company. A better run company means more efficient use of resources and a fatter bottom line. **G**

The Brooklyn, N.Y.-born author is a third-generation master plumber. He founded Sunflower Plumbing & Heating in Shirley, N.Y., in 1975 and A Professional Commercial Plumbing Inc. in Phoenix in 1980. He holds residential, commercial, industrial and solar plumbing licenses and is certified in welding, clean rooms, polypropylene gas fusion and medical gas piping. He can be reached at allen@proquilldriver.com.

Modernize and Spectrum Collaborate

AUSTIN, TX — Modernize, a leader in home improvement lead generation services, has announced a strategic partnership with Spectrum Communications & Consulting Inc., the creator of leading artificial intelligence software for home improvement contractors, Predictive Sales AI (PSAI). The partnership will allow Modernize to deliver sales leads and appointments directly into home improvement contractors' Predictive Sales AI engine, allowing a contractor to gain insight and intelligence into lead performance and sales representative performance instantly and automatically.

Modernize's partnership with Spectrum will maximize their mutual customers' success by providing lead in-

telligence, so contractors can align the right lead with the right sales representative, creating the best customer experience and resulting in higher customer conversion rates. The combined

solution provider that's as committed to leveraging homeowner data to their customers' advantage as we are," noted Modernize CEO Jason Polka. "But that's exactly why we've partnered

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solution will allow contractors to scale their businesses, serving more homeowners than ever before while limiting the contractors' marketing costs.

"It's rare that we find another solu-

tion provider that's as committed to leveraging homeowner data to their customers' advantage as we are," noted Modernize CEO Jason Polka. "But that's exactly why we've partnered

with Spectrum. We're confident that the powerful data unleashed by our combined solution will help our customers realize even more value out of the leads and appointments we provide."

Aside from improving close rates for leads provided by Modernize, the two companies will be sharing aggregate performance data. This will enable both Modernize and Spectrum to improve the quality of their products by better understanding how different types of leads and appointments perform throughout their clients' sales funnels.

ated. As a boss you set the tone for the company. A clap on the back or a "Good job today," goes a long way towards making someone feel like they are appreciated.

Teach your apprentices well. **G**

Scott Milne is the owner of Milne Plumbing and Heating. He and his company have been serving the greater Boston area for nearly 30 years. He specializes in high-efficiency heating systems for custom homes.

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He reached into the bag and brought out a shoulder harness he had made with coat hangers and two old motorcycle mirrors. He now could draw on the board and watch what was going on behind him. The kids got a big laugh and they all had a different respect for him. A little humor goes an along way.

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