

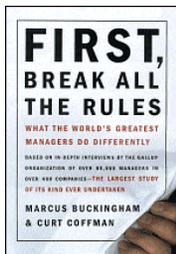
# First, Break All The Rules

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## Overview



Front cover of Book

In the book “First Break All the Rules”, the Gallup Organization’s Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman have identified common characteristics of great managers from around the world. They identified the traits found most often in the best teams. The research is based on in-depth Gallup interviews conducted over the past 25 years with over a million employees and 80,000 managers in 400 companies.

## The Measuring Stick

Many companies know their ability to find and retain talented employees is vital to their sustained success but they have no way of measuring their effectiveness in this area. During the past 25 years, most managers have come to the realization that the only way to be competi-

tive and successful is to build a workplace that attracts, focuses on, and keeps talented employees. Companies and managers know they need help. The few measurements available, such as, employee retention figures or number of days to fill openings lack precision.

The goal was to find out what the world’s greatest managers do differently. Great managers are revolutionaries, who go against conventional wisdom and reveal the new truths they have forged in its place. Buckingham and Coffman state that the greatest managers in the world seem to have little in common. They differ in sex, age and race. They employ vastly different styles and focus on different goals. Yet despite their differences, great managers share one common trait: They do not hesitate to break virtually all the rules of conventional wisdom. Great managers do not believe a person can achieve anything he/she sets their mind to. They do not try to help people overcome their

weaknesses. They consistently disregard the golden rule and even play favorites. Buckingham and Coffman studied great managers from across a wide spectrum. Some were in leadership positions, others were front-line supervisors, some were mid-level managers, while others were in Fortune 500 companies. They focused their analysis on those managers who excelled at turning the talent of their employees into performance. One of the key findings in this study was that the front-line manager was the key to attracting and retaining talented employees. “People leave managers, not companies.”

Who demands this more simple and accurate measuring stick? Institutional Investors. These investors are moving trillions of dollars in and out of companies, and they want to know if management can do its job, mainly, keeping the employees and customers happy.

## Special points of interest:

- THIS RESEARCH PROJECT GREW FROM TWO BASIC QUESTIONS:
- WHAT DO THE MOST TALENTED, PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYEES NEED FROM THE WORKPLACE?
- HOW DO YOU ATTRACT, FIND, FOCUS, AND KEEP TALENTED EMPLOYEES?

## Inside this issue:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| THE MEASURING STICK                      | 1 |
| THE WISDOM OF GREAT MANAGERS             | 4 |
| THE FIRST KEY: SELECT FOR TALENT         | 5 |
| THE SECOND KEY: DEFINE THE RIGHT OUTCOME | 6 |
| THE THIRD KEY: FOCUS ON STRENGTHS        | 7 |
| THE FOURTH KEY: FIND THE RIGHT FIT       | 8 |
| TURNING THE KEYS: A PRACTICAL GUIDE      | 9 |

# First, Break All The Rules

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## Measuring Stick Continued



Author Marcus Buckingham

Investors now realize that the “culture” of the company is as important as the hard results of profitability and efficiency. They have started to pay closer attention to how companies treat their people. A great deal of a company’s value now lies “between the ears of its employees.” When someone leaves a company, they take their value with them and often it is to the competition. Businesses and business leaders are demanding a simple and

accurate measuring stick for comparing the strength of one workplace to another. This is the goal of the Gallup Organization.

WHAT LIES AT  
THE HEART OF A  
GREAT  
WORKPLACE?

HOW CAN YOU  
MEASURE  
HUMAN CAPITAL?

## Gallup’s Challenge

Gallup took on the task of looking for common threads in their mountain of data. Measuring the strength of a workplace can be simplified to twelve questions. They measure the core elements needed to attract, focus, and keep the most talented employees.

## The Twelve Questions to Measure the Strength of a Workplace

1. Do I know what is expected of me at work?
2. Do I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right?
3. At work, do I have the opportunity to do what I do best everyday?
4. In the last seven days, have I received recognition or praise for doing good work?
5. Does my supervisor or someone at work seem to care about me as a person?
6. Is there someone at work who encourages my development?
7. At work, do my opinions seem to count?
8. Does the mission/purpose of my company make me feel my job is important?
9. Are my co-workers committed to doing quality work?
10. Do I have a best friend at work?
11. In the last six months, has someone at work talked to me about my progress?
12. This last year, have I had the opportunity at work to learn and grow?



Author Curt Coffman

## **IF YOU AS A MANAGER CAN CREATE THE KIND OF WORK WHERE EMPLOYEES ANSWER POSITIVELY TO ALL 12 QUESTIONS, THEN YOU WILL HAVE BUILT A GREAT PLACE TO WORK.**



### **Putting the Twelve to the Test**

The Gallup Organization sets out to prove the connection between employee satisfaction and business performance across many different types of companies. A detailed description of Gallup's methodology and discoveries can be found in the appendix of the book. Gallup ran a meta-analysis on performance data from over 2,500 business units and opinion surveys (The 12 questions). of over 105,000 employees. The results were the following:

- Every one of the twelve questions was linked to a least one of the four business outcomes: productivity, profitability, retention, and customer satisfaction. This meant that the twelve questions were capturing those few, vital employee opinions that related to top performance. The measuring stick had withstood its most rigorous test.
- Employees who responded positively to the twelve questions worked in business units with higher levels of productivity, profit, employee retention, and customer satisfaction.
- An employees' immediate manager is critical in building a strong workplace.
- People leave managers not companies. If you do not get along with your manager, no amount of company benefits, perks or pay will persuade you to stay and perform.
- Of the twelve questions, the first six are ones linked most strongly to business outcomes:
  1. Do I know what is expected of me at work?
  2. Do I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right?
  3. At work, do I have the opportunity to do what I do best everyday?
  4. In the last seven days, have I received recognition or praise for doing good work?
  5. Does my supervisor or someone at work seem to care about me as a person?
  6. Is there someone at work who encourages my development?

**GREAT  
MANAGERS SAY  
"YOUR TALENTS  
ARE THE  
BEHAVIORS YOU  
FIND YOURSELF  
DOING OFTEN."**

### **Managers trump companies**

1. A poor manager can scare away talented employees, unseen by top executives, draining the company of power and value.
2. A talented employee may not necessarily be a good manager, companies need to be careful who they promote.
3. An employee may join a company because of their generous benefits package and their reputation for valuing employees, but it is the relationship with their immediate manager that will determine how long they stay and how productive they are.



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# First, Break All The Rules

## The Wisdom of Great Managers –Chapter 2

Great managers are as different in management styles as they differ in gender, race, age, religion. But the one insight that was echoed by tens of thousands of great managers was:

*People don't change that much.*

*Don't waste time trying to put in what was left out.*

*Try to draw out what was left in.*

*That is hard enough.*

This insight is the source of a great managers knowledge and it drives everything they do with, and for, their employees. It is the foundation of their success as managers. Great managers do not believe everyone has unlimited potential. They focus on an employees strengths and not their weaknesses. It is why they play favorites and why they break all the rules of conventional wisdom.



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GREAT MANAGERS LOOK INWARD... GREAT LEADERS, BY CONTRAST, LOOK OUTWARDS. GREAT LEADERS ARE NOT SIMPLY MANAGERS WHO HAVE DEVELOPED SOPHISTICATION.

## What Great Managers Do

Managers play a vital and distinct role. The role is to reach inside each employee and release his/her unique talents into performance. This role is most effective in one on one situations. Therefore the managers role is of a 'catalyst' to help speed up the reaction time between the employee's talents and the company's

goals and between the employee's talents and the customers' needs.

To achieve positive reaction from their employees, a manager must:

1. Select a person— know the differences between talent, skill and knowledge
2. Set Expectations

3. Motivate the person
4. Develop the person - emphasize one-on-one interaction.

## The Four Keys

How do great managers play the role of a catalyst?

### Conventional Wisdom

1. Select a person according to experience, intelligence and determination.
2. Set expectations by defining the right steps.
3. Motivate the person by helping them identify and overcome their weakness.
4. Develop the person by helping him learn and get promoted.

### Great Managers' Wisdom

1. Select for talent
2. Set expectations by defining the right outcomes.
3. Motivate by focusing on strengths
4. When developing someone, help them find the right fit, not simply the next rung on the ladder.



A quarterback must manage a game and also be a leader on a team

## The First Key: Select For Talent—Chapter 3

Great managers define talent as “a recurring pattern of thought, feeling, or behavior that can be productively applied.” The key to the definition is the word “recurring”, your talents therefore are the behaviors you find yourself doing **often**. The key to excellent performance is matching the right talent with the role to be played.

Great managers understand that the ‘right talents’, more than experi-

ence, more than brainpower, and more than willpower alone, are the prerequisites for excellence in all roles. You cannot teach talent. Talent is the driving force behind an individual's job performance.

People react to the same stimuli in different ways. Everyone filters the world differently. An individual's filter is unique. Because every person is guided by their unique filter, the

same situation produces very different reactions. Great managers understand and respect those differences.



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## Skills, Knowledge and Talents

Great managers accept the fact that every individual is unique and people do not change that much. They embrace employees individuality. It is more efficient to nurture and have someone understand their filter then guide it toward productive behavior. Great managers help employees discover their hidden talents.. They also

can teach their employees new skills and new knowledge.

Great managers understand that skills, knowledge and talent are distinct entities. The distinction among the three is that skills and knowledge can easily be taught, whereas talent cannot.

The Gallup organiza-

tion has taken the concept of talent and identified three basic categories:

1. Striving talents- explain why someone does what they do everyday
2. Thinking talents– explain how they think, make decisions.
3. Relating talents– explain whom they build relationships with, trust, ignore.

EXCELLENCE IS

IMPOSSIBLE TO  
ACHIEVE  
WITHOUT  
NATURAL TALENT.

## Talent: How Great Managers Find It.

- Many people do not know their true talents.
- During job interviews, people are out to impress, which makes it hard to scout talent.
- Going into the interview know exactly what talents you want.
- Identify one critical talent in each of the three talent categories: striving, thinking, and relating. Focus on them during the interview process.
- To know that you have started with the right three talents, study

your best employee in that role.

- Look at the successes not the failures.
- As a manager you should excel in the art of the interview.



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# First, Break All The Rules

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## The Second Key: Define the Right Outcomes

Great managers know that they do not have control. You actually have less control than the people who report to you. All a manager can do is motivate, influence, berate, or cajole which is remote control management—not being in control. Great managers understand that you can not get everyone to perform in the same way. The solution is to define the right outcomes and then let each person find their own route toward those outcomes. This resolves the great managers dilemma, it brings their two guiding principles— that people are unique individuals and that managers must focus people on the same performance— out of conflict. Standardizing the ends prevents the manager from standardizing the means. The most efficient way to turn someone’s talent into performance is to help them find their own path of least resistance toward the desired outcome.



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“THE ROAD TO HELL IS PAVED WITH GOOD INTENTIONS”  
GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

## Temptations

Why do so many managers try to control people? Managers see mistakes around them and want to create a better place to work.

*Temptation: Perfect people* - Many managers get caught up in this “one best way” of performing their roles and in the idea there are distinct steps that can be taught. This attempt to ‘perfect’ people is strong but a great manager must resist it. It is demeaning to your employees, diminishes their role and weakens the organization.

*Temptation: My People Don’t Have Enough Talent* - Respect the role enough to select for talent in the first place. Don’t just hire anyone who applies. Know what talents are required and hire accordingly.

*Temptation: Trust Must Be Earned* - Not trusting your employees limits you and your organization. If you expect the best in people, more often than not the best it what you get.

*Temptation: Some Outcomes Defy Definition* - Some outcomes are difficult to define. Manager should be held accountable to the employee response to the first 6 questions.

**The best managers avoid all these temptations.**



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## The Third Key: Focus on Strengths - Chapter 5

- Great manager focus on each person's strengths and manage around their weaknesses.
- They do not try to fix the weaknesses, instead do everything you can to help each person foster their talents. Help each person become more of who they already are.
- Don't generalize, help find what is special about each person.
- Don't focus on fixing the weaknesses, that leads to frustration not success.
- Casting is everything. Find out who has the talent for what, this takes a subtle eye.
- Through careful recasting a manager can refocus an employee's strengths and turn talent into performance.
- Everyone has talent to be exceptional at something, the trick is to find that something.
- Great managers play favorites. They spend more energy and time with their most talented employees.
- The more time and attention you invest in talent, the greater the yields.
- Do not learn anything about excellence by studying failure. Observe your best performers.

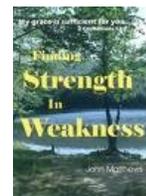


Focus on people's strengths not their weaknesses.

CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY YOU ARE TO BLAME FOR THE EMPLOYEE'S POOR PERFORMANCE.

## How To Manage Around A Weakness

- Poor performance must be confronted head-on, so that it does not lead to more unproductive performance.
- Find the cause of the poor performance. Is it mechanical, skill deficient, is it personal and is it trainable?
- The great manager begins by asking two questions. First, is the poor performance trainable? Secondly, is the nonperformance caused by the manager themselves "pushing the wrong buttons".
- Great managers know that no one is perfect. They know there are only 3 possible routes to helping a person succeed:
  1. Devise a support system
  2. Find a complementary partner
  3. Find an alternative role for the person



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# First, Break All The Rules

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## The Fourth Key: Find The Right Fit



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GREAT TALENTS  
NEED GREAT  
MANAGERS IF  
THEY ARE TO BE  
TURNED INTO  
PERFORMANCE.

- All managers get asked the question “Where do I go from here?”
- A great managers job is to help them find the *right* fit. To guide them to areas where they will be successful. This may mean promotion for one employee but demotion or even termination for another employee.
- Great managers seek a new career for an employee not merely going up a rung on the career ladder.
- Great managers understand the system is flawed. The 3 false assumptions are:
  1. One rung does not necessarily lead to another—success at one rung assumes that with a little training success at the next rung.
  2. The conventional career path leads to conflict. Prestige is limited to only those who climb the ladder, leading to competition and ultimately winners and losers. Great managers make prestige more available. They try to create heroes in every role.
  3. Varied experience make the employee more attractive. In great managers view the hunt for marketable skills and experience should not be the driving force of the employees’ career. They envision a different driving force, not a career change.

## Traits of a Great Manager

- They excel at giving performance feedback.
- Gallup found 3 common characteristics to great managers feedback:
  1. Their feedback was constant. It focused on strengths not weaknesses.
  2. Each session began with a brief review of past performance and then shifted to the future and how the employee could use their talents to be more productive.
  3. Great managers made a point of giving their feedback in private, one on one.
- They build relationships with people
- They listen without judging
- They build safety nets for their employees, called trial periods. A trial period allows an employee time to see if the new role is right for them. If the new role is a bad fit then they may go back to their former role.
- Great managers do not compromise on excellence. They confront poor performance early. They understand that people are sometimes miscast in their roles.



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## Turning the Keys: A Practical Guide

Every great manager has their own style. But every great manager shares the same goal of turning employee talent into performance. The 4 keys to achieving this goal are:

1. **Select for talent**
2. **Define the right outcomes**
3. **Focus on strengths**
4. **Find the right fit**



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## The Art of Interviewing for Talent

Which are the right questions to ask?

1. **Make sure the talent interview stands alone** - purpose is to discover if candidate's recurring patterns of thought, feeling or behavior match the job.
2. **Ask a few open-ended questions and then try to keep quiet.**
3. **Listen for specifics.** - look for answers that reveal recurring patterns of behavior.
4. **Clues to talent - Rapid learning** - important clue to a person's talent. What comes easily? What kind of roles have they learned quickly?
  - **Satisfaction** - a person's sources of satisfaction are clues to their talent.
5. **Know what to listen for.** - this takes time and focus but are integral to the art of interviewing for talent.

"THE MANAGER—  
NOT PAY,  
BENEFITS, PERKS,  
OR A  
CHARISMATIC  
CORPORATE  
LEADER—WAS THE  
CRITICAL PLAYER  
IN BUILDING A  
STRONG  
WORKPLACE."

## Performance Management

After securing the talent, the day-to-day challenge for a great manager is turning talent into performance by turning the last 3 Keys, all at once, all the time. They achieve this through a performance management routine. This routine is characterized by

1. Its simplicity - simple format, no forms.
2. The frequent interaction between the manager and employee.
3. The routine is focused on the future. What do they want to accomplish? How can the manager help?
4. The routine asks the employee to keep track of their own performance and learning.



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# First, Break All The Rules

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## Master Keys

### What can the company do to create a friendly climate for great manager?

1. Keep the focus on the outcomes - the role of the company is to identify the desired ends.
2. Value world-class performance in every role - all roles performed at excellence are celebrated and respected.
3. Study your best managers - strong companies learn from their best. Internal best practice discovery is one of their most important rituals.
4. Teach the language of great managers - language affects thinking. Thinking affects behavior. Strong companies turn the language of great managers into the common language.

These master keys, although not a substitute for great managers, are a valuable companion. However, when implemented they change the whole company climate. In this climate, great managers will thrive, employees will excel, the company grows and conventional wisdom will be uprooted once and for all.

**“Don’t try to put in what was left out. Try to draw out what was left in.”**

## About the Authors

### Marcus Buckingham

He holds a master’s degree in social and political science from Cambridge University and is a member of the Secretary of State’s Advisory Committee on Leadership and Management. Buckingham is a wonderful resource for leaders, managers, and educators, he challenges conventional wisdom and shows the link between engaged employees and productivity, profit, customer satisfaction, and the rate of turnover. He is a former senior consultant with the Gallup Organization and author of the best-selling business books - ‘The One Thing You Need To Know’, and ‘Now Go Discover Your Strengths’. He lives with his wife and two children in Los Angeles.

### Curt Coffman

He has consulted with many Fortune 100 and 500 companies all over the world. He has served as the Global Practice Leader and Senior Executive with the Gallup Organization for 22 years. His consulting insights help organizations measure and manage workplace and customer conditions that show linkage to business outcomes. His mission is to help organizations understand the key characteristics of a positive, productive, customer-oriented environment. Coffman lives in Denver, Colorado, with his wife and three children.



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“COMPANIES  
MUST CHANGE  
HOW PEOPLE  
SPEAK IF THEY  
ARE TO CHANGE  
HOW PEOPLE  
BEHAVE.

Compiled by  
Chris Mirwald

# First, Break All The Rules

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## Tying it all together



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I really enjoyed this book. We in education need to be challenged out of our comfort zone. Business leaders are always wanting accountability in education and in the classroom. Learning is a very difficult thing to measure. In the U.S. that is why they have standardized tests, but is this measuring

learning or maybe just effective memorizing.

Often in education we work independently, not always aware of what is going on in individuals classrooms when the door is closed.

We in the teaching profession also do not have many rungs to climb. How do we en-

courage improvement and giving one's best performance day in and day out? Can all the ideas expressed by Buckingham and Coffman be implemented in an educational setting? I think not, but the 12 questions would be an effective place for many administrators to begin.