

## Chapter Nine

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*An interview with...*

# Wally Hauck

### **David Wright (Wright)**

Today we're talking with Wally Hauck. Wally's own *blueprint* for success involves helping leaders harness the power of influence, to dissolve their organizational problems. The interesting thing is that Wally says organizational problems often appear, on the surface, to be "people problems"; when in fact, the real problems actually stem from an organization's underlying broken internal systems.

From his research and experience, Wally has developed *The Values and Systems Problem Solving Model*, which he uses to teach leaders how to uncover the real underlying causes of their organizations problems. According to Wally, part of this problem solving process includes teaching leaders how to use his "seven secrets" to increase their powers of influence.

Wally came to understand what he teaches today as the result of the twelve years of frustration he experienced working for a Fortune 500 company. During that time, he feels he was taught to actually *de-motivate* the people he managed. Wally knew his instincts were right; the conventional management methods are flawed. Subsequently, his research proved to him that broken systems wreak havoc on people's behavior, and that management by control breeds negativity. So today, as the creator of leadership training that focuses on the positive power of using influence rather than control to address problems, Wally helps managers, leaders and their employees solve their *real* problems. When companies work with Wally, they experience a reduction in workplace "drama" and an increase in trust, loyalty and learning, which results in a healthier and more prosperous organization.

Wally, welcome to *Blueprints for Success*. I am intrigued by your *Values and Systems Problem Solving Model*. Please, tell me more about that.

**Hauck**

Thanks, David.

The *Values and Systems Problem Solving Model* I developed is based on research by Rob LeBow and Dr. W. Edwards Deming. Simply stated, their research suggests that when faced with an organizational problem, leaders need to begin by asking one question: Is this problem a values issue, or systems issue?

The difference is that when a problem is due to an issue with values, it involves a purposeful break in integrity like: lying, sabotage, being disrespectful or failing to perform as agreed. Problems that are values based are behavioral, which means individuals have choices as to how they can react or behave. For example, telling or not telling the truth is a choice. Being respectful in the face of disrespect is a choice. Values issues are very serious because they create an emotionally charged environment, which puts the relationships involved at risk.

In my problem-solving model, every problem that is not a values issue is a systems issue. Problems that result from systems issues include: mistakes, oversight, forgetting, poor training, poor quality, poor performance or lack of motivation.

More often than not, the root of a problem is due to a problem with a system, but it manifests itself on the surface as a “people” problem. Let me give you an example.

My client, the administrator of a water-testing laboratory, asked me to work with the manager of the laboratory who was having problems with the eight chemists that he managed. The administrator wanted me to work with the manager on his communication skills. The administrator hoped that doing so would help to improve the manager’s relationships with his staff.

In my first meeting with the manager, the manager told me that the lab performed testing on samples for a state environmental agency. As the manager of the laboratory, one of his responsibilities was to make sure there were no errors in the lab reports before they went back to the state. He said that he repeatedly found errors in the test reports and that he was trying to get the chemists to be more careful.

I asked the manager what he did when he found that a mistake had been made. He told me that he immediately identified which chemist made the error. When he did, he approached the responsible person, pointed out the mistake, and then asked, very nicely, that the chemist be more careful in the future. This process had been going on for some time. The manager was frustrated and the chemists were irritated with manager. The chemists felt that they were under stress, consistently having to work long hours, and they resented being “attacked” by the manager.

In an attempt to get to the root of the problem, I sat down with the manager and together we reviewed the errors. The manager said that he had scrutinized the data time and time again, looking for patterns and finding none. He had to assume that the problem was caused by human error; so with the best of intentions, he kept reminding the chemists to be more careful.

Together, we still found nothing, not even a clue, which was very frustrating. At that point, I asked the manager, "What is the first thing the chemists do when they prepare to test something?" I encouraged him to engage the chemists to get the answer. They told us the first thing they did was to go and get clean glassware from the glass-cleaning department.

We then went to the glass-cleaning department, there we found two, old dishwashing machines in poor condition. We also discovered that the person in charge of the glass cleaning process was new to the position and had not been properly trained. Next, we analyzed the condition and cleanliness of the glassware that was waiting to be sent to the lab. After a thorough investigation, we were astonished to find an invisible film on the inside of some of the glassware. Once we discovered the film, we were able to make a direct connection between the appearance of the film and the errors in the data.

To correct the problem, we created a training process for the glass cleaning person. We created a maintenance schedule for the dishwashing equipment, and the film disappeared. So did the errors! After that, the relationships between the chemists and the manager began to improve.

So you see, a problem that appeared to be in the relationships between the manger and the chemists was really a problem with a systematic process. The solution came first from asking a different kind of question- a system's question, and second, from having the manager change from attempting to control the chemists to engaging the chemists' help in uncovering the answers. When the blame disappeared, so did the relationship issues. When a systems issue is identified, a leader can take action to change the process and prevent the problem from re-occurring. This type of thinking and approach creates a cooperative environment that also improves the influence of the leader.

**Wright**

So you are saying that thinking in terms of systems can actually improve a leader's influence?

**Hauck**

Yes, it is one of the most important concepts that I help leaders to realize and learn to practice.

Before I explain, let me just say that in the case of an organization, a system is defined as a series of interdependent processes that are organized and implemented to achieve a common aim or purpose.

When problems seem on the surface to be “people problems”, the related systems must be investigated carefully; and most often the real root causes will be found. A common travel experience is another good example of how problems with systems manifest themselves as people problems.

Not long ago, while I was traveling out of state, I received the gift of a golf club. When it came time for me to fly back home, I had forgotten to consider that post-9/11 restrictions for airplane carry-ons would not allow me to take the golf club with me on to the plane. Instead, my choices for getting it safely home were either to check it as baggage or to ship it. I chose to check it.

At the airline counter the attendant tagged the club and placed it on the baggage belt. My first thought was, “I’ll never see *that* club again!” And just as I had anticipated, when I arrived in New York there was no golf club. I went immediately to the lost baggage department, where I waited and waited while the agent searched for the claim forms. When he finally found the forms, he asked me to fill them out describing the club in detail.

Again, I was asked to wait. At one point, the agent actually said to me, “Why didn’t you ship it?” To which, my very first reaction was anger, fueled by suspicion that the club had been stolen by the baggage handlers. Also angry at his unhelpful attitude, I snapped back at the clerk. Then with claim form in hand and nothing more that I could do, I went on my way without the club or satisfaction.

Two days passed without any word from the airline, so I called the phone number on the claim form. Not surprisingly, no one answered the phone, so I left a message. No callback came, not even the next day. At that point, I was totally convinced that the club would never be returned. To my surprise, the very next day the club arrived via FedEx delivery.

My golf club story shows you just how the airline’s baggage handling system did not function reliably, so ultimately, the people inside and outside of the organization suffer the consequences. So in this case, thinking in terms of the system means uncovering the reasons that the golf club did not arrive on time. Was it a common or unusual occurrence? Checking baggage today is a complex process. Checking a single, lone golf club stresses the system even more.

Learning how to think in terms of systems requires practice and patience. The value in it is that once mastered, it allows leaders to stop blaming the

people involved. Instead it paves the way to uncover and then address the real problems.

Another real benefit is when leaders think in terms of systems, they actually create a safe environment that encourages people to cooperate, because blame and negativity are eliminated. Leaders who ask system-focused questions will create an environment where it is safe for people to tell the truth. In that kind of healthy environment, people are much more willing to participate and contribute toward the good of the whole. They avoid self-serving behavior and are willing to cooperate. They feel trusted and respected. Ultimately when a leader begins to concentrate on a systems-focused approach, he automatically begins to increase his influence with the people of the organization.

Thinking in terms of systems will result in a change in focus, and will change the environment so that individual behaviors change as well.

A good example of that is General Motors, who closed its Fremont, California plant in 1982 because out of all of its plants, it had the worst record for: employee absenteeism, productivity, quality and morale. Then in 1983, Toyota and GM agreed to re-open the plant under two major conditions; one, that the plant would be managed by Japanese-trained leaders, and two, 85% of all previously employed United Auto Workers would be re-hired.

By 1991, that same plant had catapulted from having the worst track record to having the best in all the areas in which it had previously failed. What made the difference? The change simply cannot be explained using conventional management wisdom, which typically blames the people. Because as the example illustrates, the people, who were once part of the failure became part of the success. The explanation lies in new a leadership style that used influence to change the methods. The methods changed the environment, which helped to produce positive people, productivity and results.

**Wright**

You mentioned using control and influence, is there really a difference?

**Hauck**

There is a difference, but in our culture the perception of the distinction is so very subtle that many of us use the terms interchangeably.

“Control” means to have authority, and to restrain. Control limits freedom of choice, because the person in the position of authority has all the power. Being controlled means having to do what you are told.

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“Influence” can also come from authority, but it is less of a directive and more of an empowerment for the people in the positions of less authority. Influence is principle-based. It is more about helping people make their own good decisions than it is about imposing rules or steps. Influence requires high levels of trust. Control suggests a lack of trust.

When a leader has influence, he or she has the ability to create an environment that allows people the freedom to make the right decisions on their own instead of telling them exactly what to do.

For employees, management by control means doing what you are told, but management by influence means being allowed to make good decisions, in the moment, because it’s the right thing to do not because you must.

Leaders today have a tremendous challenge. The Gallup organization estimates that only 26% of employees are fully engaged in their jobs. That means that 74% are just coasting. With that kind of lack of commitment, how can leaders in a fast paced and ever-changing environment deliver quality products and services?

Can leaders address this challenge with employees who are just coasting? I doubt it. Leaders who have influence enable their people to make decisions quickly based on principle. They empower employees to adapt quickly to the fast-changing global business environment. Fully engaged employees are committed to high quality work. These employees are; sincerely passionate, fully focused, challenged, innovative, voluntary problem solvers, productive, proud, high quality workers, and volunteers willing to do more without being asked. Leaders need to inspire commitment and engagement to achieve organizational success. More than ever, they need the skill of influence to address this challenge. I help leaders develop the skill of influence.

In my experience, continuously improving the skill of influence is a strategic necessity for today’s leaders to achieve success.

### **Wright**

I see some of the differences between control and influence, but why do you say that the skill of using influence is a “strategic” necessity.

### **Hauck**

There are two major reasons why the use of influence is becoming a strategic skill. The first reason is the speed at which our entire world is changing. Change is occurring faster than ever before and it is continuing to increase velocity.

As the world changes, so do our organizations and their goals. When organizational leaders rely on methods of control to manage, it impairs the organization's ability to respond or adapt to change. To be successful in this fast-paced business climate, leaders must learn to cultivate an environment that empowers and encourages informed and rapid decision-making.

A good metaphor for this type of responsive decision-making is a flying flock of birds- a most mystifying phenomenon. As a group, they have no leader to tell them when to turn left or right, or when to slow down or to speed up; yet as a group, they change direction as effortlessly as a single organism. How is this possible? It is possible because, flocking birds naturally follow three basic principles: first, they fly in the same general direction as their closest neighbors; second, they fly at the same average speed as their closest neighbors; third, they fly at the same average distance from their closest neighbor and avoid colliding with them at all costs. Following these three basic principles, they are able, as a group, to respond to their fast-changing environment with rapid, near-precision adjustments.

Flocking birds are what's called a "self-organizing system". Organizations can achieve the same agile capabilities if the leader clarifies the vision and the organizational objectives, and teaches clear effective principles. In doing so, the leader establishes trust and increases his/her influence, while empowering each individual to make the right decisions at the right time. In the presence of a clear vision, clear objectives and sound principles, individuals participating in a self-organizing system learn how to adjust to a fast-paced environment. Like the birds, people will respond quickly, appropriately and in the best interests of the "flock", without needing a controlling authority to tell them what to do.

The second reason influence is becoming a strategic skill is that, as a society, we are in the midst of a transformation from an industrial economy to a knowledge-based economy. Simply put, this just means that jobs that require the ability to problem solve are becoming increasingly more valuable and higher paying, while the jobs involving performing repetitive tasks are rapidly losing value and becoming lower paying. The proof of this is evident in our current economy, where now we see grocery stores, department stores and "big box" stores replacing cashiers with automated check out registers. With today's computerization, cashiers need very little knowledge to do their jobs. Computers can accomplish the information required for the checkout process.

Just to be clear, there is a key distinction between information and knowledge. Information is data, but knowledge offers one the ability to make predictions. For example, a dictionary is data, whereas a table showing high tides and low tides contains knowledge. The tide table provides a prediction. The dictionary does not. Information is valuable, but knowledge is even

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more so, because it enables employees to make a prediction and therefore make better decisions.

Knowledge is now a critical asset in our economy. Fifty or more years ago an organization's most valuable assets were buildings and machines. Today, knowledge is more important than those hard assets! It is actually knowledge that made the creators of eBay wealthy; the hard assets in that business are in the hands of the buyers and sellers.

Leaders, who create environments where opportunities exist for employees to frequently and effectively use their intellect, are using the skill of influence. They are helping everyone become more valued and more valuable in terms of earning potential.

A great example of this kind of transition is my friend, Ron. Ron has been a successful auto mechanic for many years. We used to work on cars together when we were teenagers. Back then I tinkered with my own car, changing the oil or doing tune-ups, which is largely a labor-intensive process. I can't do that today; the new automotive technology has surpassed my abilities, but Ron can. Sure he works with his hands, but he also knows about the electronics and computerized systems in automobiles today. He's kept up with the advancements, so now he has the knowledge to advance his own value.

By having the knowledge necessary to work on the new high-tech cars, he has positioned himself well in the "new" economy. He knows how to interpret and predict what a car needs, making him extremely valuable to his customers.

So in a nutshell, when leaders learn how to use the skill of influence to create an environment where everyone can increase their knowledge, and learn to use it to make better decisions more quickly, it creates value and wealth for everyone.

### **Wright**

I think that most people would agree that using influence would be a lot more effective than control. Is it always?

### **Hauck**

I don't mean to say that one is more or less effective in every case, because, it really depends on the situation. For example, if something catches on fire it is usually an emergency situation, in which case a leader would want to quickly control the situation by delivering very clear instructions to avoid horrible consequences. But, what if the same leader wanted to prevent a fire? Preventing fire is a different kind of situation, so the solution requires

different skills. Preventing a fire should put us in a problem-solving mode, where the influence methodology would be more appropriate and more effective than using control.

Which skill is more valuable, knowing how to put out the fire or knowing how to prevent it? Certainly both are of great value, depending on the situation.

Using control when it is not appropriate can easily have negative consequences, which go beyond the outcome of the problem itself. For instance, when my daughter Emily was in eighth grade I chaperoned her class trip to Washington D.C. During the trip, one student sent an inappropriate text message from his cell phone to the cell phone of another student. The teacher in charge of the trip was very upset by the incident. He gathered us all together and demanded that everyone, students and parents, discontinue all cell phone usage. He thought he could control everyone's behavior with his demand, which he could not. One reason was that there was really no way for him to enforce the rule.

The teacher would have been more effective if he had chosen to use his influence instead. One option might have been to first explain why the offensive behavior was inappropriate, and then, perhaps, he could have asked the group to identify the offender. Then he could have dealt exclusively with that person.

So in this instance, not only was the use of control not very effective, it sent a clear message that he felt he could not trust any of us to use phones appropriately. Ultimately, we all acted with passive aggressive resistance by ignoring the order.

In addition to breaking down relationships by suggesting mistrust, control imposes a demand that forces people to act or refrain without choice, which reduces their sense of personal empowerment. Loss of choice can reduce job satisfaction and motivation, and when coupled with strong resistance, it can create a confrontational environment. The teacher on the class trip did very little explaining and posed no other choices, which immediately served to alienate the students as well as the chaperones.

On the other hand, the skill of using influence is an effective tactic because it explains the reasons why something should or should not be done. As an example, I'm reminded of a sign I once saw in a client's rest room. I was standing at the sink about to wash my hands and I noticed a sign over the sink. The subject was hand washing, but it wasn't the typical-"Employees must wash their hands..." sign. Instead, this sign said, "Did you know that 40% of people do not wash their hands? Did you know hand washing is the single most important thing you can do to protect your health. Infectious disease is the third leading killer in our culture. Did you know 33% of these deaths are preventable by hand washing?"

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Immediately, I wanted to wash my hands and tell everybody else to do the same!

As the contrasting hand-washing signs illustrate, when the approach is controlling, the reasons for the directive often go unexplained. With the influential approach the reasons and their importance are clear. “Wash your hands and choose health not disease. It is up to you.” The choice communicates, “I trust you to make the right choice.” It sends a message that, “You are in control of your behavior, not me.” In this way, influence builds relationships based on trust.

An environment that relies on control can also breed unethical behavior. For example, recent research shows 80% of all high school students admit to some form of cheating in the last year. Why? Are we raising our kids without moral judgment, or is this an unintended consequence of the academic environment? Students feel pressured to get good grades and their choices about what subjects they learn or what material they study is limited. The pressure to make the grade, coupled with the demands of studying subjects of little interest can increase the probability of cheating.

While academic leadership has the very best intentions, there are often unintended consequences. In its place, control has merit, but ultimately, leaders need to have both skills and know how and when to use them.

### **Wright**

So tell us Wally, what are the seven secrets of successful leaders?

### **Hauck**

Well David, actually I've already talked about two of them. The first one is the ability to motivate by explaining the reasons why, versus just telling people what to do. That was my story about the hand-washing sign. So again, the idea is that leaders, who can clearly explain why something is important, are more easily able to motivate and inspire.

The second secret is the ability to think in terms of systems. As in the example of the lost golf club, you can imagine that if the airline management used influence to include employees the way I taught the lab manager to do, how much more engaged the employees would be in finding solutions.

The third secret is the ability to build trust and credibility by behaving according to certain principles and values. Values, such as integrity and respect are concepts that hold intrinsic worth. A leader uses values and principles to help explain why certain behavior is acceptable or not acceptable. Building trust requires clarifying values and using data to guide behavior. You may recall we touched on portions of that when we talked about the flocking birds.

Wally Hauck

Secret number four is the ability to manage emotions, and manage the emotions of others. In Daniel Goleman's book, *Emotional Intelligence*, he makes the point that the ability to manage emotion is important to a person's "Intelligence Quotient" for success.

The fifth secret is the ability to listen attentively while suspending judgment. It's not enough just to ask powerful questions, you have to actually listen to the answers. Good listeners demonstrate concern and openness to new ideas. Good listeners naturally attract cooperation from others.

The sixth secret is the ability to ask powerful questions. Asking powerful questions is one technique that can change the way people think about a situation. If you can influence how someone thinks you can influence his or her behavior as well.

And last, but certainly not least, secret number seven is the ability to continuously focus on others, and how you can serve them. In other words, helping people remove the barriers which prevent them from being successful.

**Wright**

You mentioned the importance of principles and values; what do they have to do with influence?

**Hauck**

Values are the foundation of influence and trust. And my first answer to your question comes from author Rob Lebow's his book, *Lasting Change*, which sites research on job satisfaction conducted by the University of Chicago. Lebow talks about a one-question survey that garnered 17 million responses from people in 40 different countries. The one question was: "*What do people want in their work environment to have job satisfaction?*" The number one answer was, "*Values, meaning; trust me, treat me with respect, tell me the truth, be honest with me, and help me get what I need in order to do my job better.*" Quite simply, creating an environment where values are in the forefront is one major area in which leaders can use their influence to create job satisfaction.

This kind of influence incorporates three basic values, that when present and applied increase the leaders influence. The values are; integrity, respect, and customer focus.

Integrity, we all know, means doing what you say you'll do. Integrity also means keeping your word and being congruent in your actions, which of course means simply that what you say and what you do are aligned. As always, actions speak louder than words; so it follows that leaders who exhibit

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integrity and respectfulness greatly improve their influence by being an inspiration to others by example.

A good example of incongruent leadership is a leader who demands that everyone be respectful of his or her time, and then makes a habit of being late for meetings. Expecting or demanding behavior or courtesy from others, that we don't ourselves deliver, is one good way to damage our influence.

Respect means treating others with consideration equal to what we expect for ourselves. The act of attentive listening is a great example, because we all like to feel that our opinions are important. Listening acknowledges that the other person's point of view has value. Steven Covey calls this, "Seeking to understand before being understood". Listening, before you offer your opinion, shows respect for the person and gains high marks on the leadership scale of influence.

The third principle is customer focus. Identifying the customer and serving him or her well is critical. When I say customer, of course I don't only mean patrons, because a store manager for example has patrons and has employees as "customers" as well. So when I work with leaders, their customers are internal. Leaders, who clearly identify their customers treat them with integrity and respect and help them become more successful, are increasing their influence with everyone.

The value in focusing on the customer comes from the work of Dr. W. Edwards Deming. Dr. Deming is often known as, "The Father of Total Quality Management". He went to Japan in 1950 and taught the Japanese a management method that is still followed today by organizations such as Toyota. Deming said that the customer is the most important part of an organization's systems, and therefore, the customer defines quality. Knowing your customer and serving them is a principle that improves influence.

A good example of the impact customer focus can have is an experience I had recently when dealing with the telephone company.

My home office telephone was not working properly, which was causing me to run up a full flight of stairs every time I needed to answer my office line. It was maddening.

I called the telephone company to schedule a service call. The woman quoted the price for the service and then she launched right into a sales pitch, attempting to sell me additional services. I explained to her that I was not interested; I simply wanted my service fixed, but she persisted. She just wasn't listening to me and I began to get annoyed. The reason that she wasn't listening was because she wasn't interested in what I, the customer, needed. Instead, she was interested doing what was ultimately best for her...to make a commission.

*Wally Hauck*

On the day of the service appointment, the telephone serviceman came to the house, and after a quick inspection of the problem, he fixed it. He then updated his work order, told me it was the phone company's fault and said there should be no charge. He added that if I was mistakenly charged, I should dispute it. I was delighted.

He treated me like a customer, with respect. He focused on my needs and then told me the truth. In just those few seconds he influenced me to do additional business with the company. His influence was significantly more powerful than the influence of the customer service person. His treatment of me encouraged me to purchase additional services. Hers did not.

**Wright**

It seems that listening, integrity, respect, and trust are “touchy feely skills” — don't leaders and managers need to focus on results?

**Hauck**

Focusing on results is common for those in management roles, but what they don't realize is that predictable results are actually accomplished by performing work according to a predictable, functional process. So you see, focusing on results is misleading. Leaders who are able to think in terms of systems understand and appreciate that.

Some leaders put emphasis and pressure on employees to reach some type of quantitative goal by offering them incentives without concern for the methods employees will use to accomplish it. On any given day, in our daily lives we don't have to look too far to find examples of people who push the limits of the law because of the pressure they feel to achieve results or attain goals.

In the business arena for instance, in January 2005, the executives of Internet giant America Online were indicted. The reason was they inflated results in order to meet revenue or profit projections. They did it through underhanded deals, backdating contracts and lying to investors and the securities regulators.

In the arena of sports, Barry Bonds just exceeded Hank Aaron's all-time record for homeruns. Surely, Barry's record and his reputation will always be accompanied by a caveat of doubt, because of his suspected use of steroids. Why would a highly trained and talented athlete take steroids and risk serious health and legal consequences? All too often the pressure to attain results is too high.

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The academic arena is not exempt either. A study cited in a 2003 issue of the *Journal of Education* revealed that the pressure of high-stakes school testing might encourage teachers and administrators to falsify test results.

Focusing on results alone, without consideration for integrity, respect and trust can result in tremendous losses. Instead, the key is to focus on the process. Leaders, who adopt predictable processes and train people to follow those processes, are able to reduce “people problems” and create even more impressive results than those who focus solely on results.

Did you ever hear a professional golfer interviewed after winning a tournament? Typically the questions are something like, “What were you thinking about, or what was your mindset during the game?” Generally he or she responds, “I was only thinking about one stroke at a time”; or, “I just stuck with my game plan”; or, “I just kept up my pre-shot routine.” I have never heard any golfer say he or she was focused on the \$500,000 prize money.

Personally, I am currently studying for my PhD in Business Administration and Organizational Leadership. Using the exact same methods I teach to others, I’ve created a study process that I follow. I study independently, so I need to be disciplined and follow a process that will create positive results. For each course or book, my process is always the same. Every morning, I read one chapter. When I’m done with the entire book, I go back and re-read each chapter, taking detailed notes in the form of a mind-map. Then I take a practice exam and schedule my final exam for two weeks later. Every morning, during the two weeks prior to the exam, I study my notes.

The results? Well, so far I’ve earned an “A” in every course. I know that the great grades are a result of the process I am following. I don’t focus on the grade; I focus on the process. The process is defined and the results are predictable. If at some point I did get a grade less than an “A”, I would re-examine my process. I would look to see if I had followed my own process properly and if there were factors that could have caused a variation in my results. I might ask myself what I could do to improve the process. The important thing is that I wouldn’t have to question my intelligence or blame the school. Instead I would take a responsible approach by researching how my process might need to be improved.

Paying attention to processes increases a leader’s influence. Once the leader understands the process details, he or she can influence others to use that same process and therefore achieve the same results.

### **Wright**

Can you tell us a little bit more about skill of asking the right questions?

**Hauck**

Asking the right questions really provides the best opportunity to find the right answers. One might go so far as to say that the quality of the questions that a leader asks will determine the quality of the leader. Questions help people to focus their attention. The ability to focus the attention of others is the foundation for influence. Focused attention is a major factor in success. Leaders today are under tremendous pressure to perform. They are short on time and therefore cannot afford to waste a moment. The ability to ask the right questions helps save time. Asking quality questions influences focus. Leaders who have the willingness and ability to take the time to ask the right questions will find that their time, and the time of the people they influence will be utilized much more effectively.

In the article, *Beware the Busy Manager* (February 2002 Harvard Business Review) Heike Bruch and Sumantra Ghosal reveal findings that show that 90% of all managers squander their time on ineffective activities. The other 10% are purposeful managers who are both focused and energized. The authors explain, “A major drain on most managers’ energy is the perception that they have limited influence.” “The biggest difference between purposeful managers and other types is the way they approach work. Other managers feel constrained by outside forces: their bosses, their peers, their salaries, their job descriptions.”

Purposeful (or influential managers) decide what they must achieve and then influence the environment in helping to achieve that end. By focusing attention on the right things and by asking the right questions, managers can be more productive and increase their influence. They can build credibility with others by using their own time wisely and respecting others’ time as well. Previously, we discussed the power of asking systems questions. Asking systems questions helps people focus on improving the processes.

Asking, what I call, “blame questions” focuses people on who’s at fault. This tends to create fear, shut people down, and waste time. It prevents employees from being their most creative. If a leader is asking the right questions, they are actually creating a focus on how to quickly identify the root cause of the problem. A leader who asks the right questions is creating a learning environment, rather than pretending to have all the answers. A leader who uses control creates the impression of omnipotence. Often, the pressure to achieve results is so high that some leaders feel they need to know all the answers instantly. Unfortunately, there is rarely an easy or quick answer to a problem (especially in complex systems). Like the disappearing golf club, there’s most likely no quick answer. It’s a complex problem that needs to be resolved with careful thought and quality questions.

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Asking the right questions influences peoples' focus — the better the questions we ask, the faster a solution is found. The better the questions a leader asks, the more easily he or she is able to focus people's attention where it needs to be focused (the most useful direction).

Asking the right questions will increase trust and influence, while shifting the focus and mood of the people involved.

### **Wright**

You've been talking about focusing on others. Again, I've always felt that leaders need to focus on results?

### **Hauck**

I believe that leaders need to serve their customers, and their customers are always their employees. If a leader hires people who have the right skills for the job and who share the values of the organization, then the leader has positioned him or her to get results. If a leader has the right people, that leader might as well trust them!

When results are not forthcoming, it's probable that the environment or the systems need to change, not the people. Often, people don't have the tools or there are other barriers that prevent them from doing the job. The leader's responsibility is to focus on creating an environment that removes those barriers, so everyone can be successful. An influential leader does not focus on what is wrong with the people; rather he or she focuses on what can be done to help them. People work within the systems, so a leader's job is to make the systems work. This requires a focus on the removal of barriers and meeting employee needs. Leaders who consistently focus on removing barriers are serving their employees.

Influential leaders believe that people want to do a good job. If the people aren't doing a good job, it's almost always because the systems are flawed. Most often, something is missing, like a tool, training, additional time, more information, additional knowledge. Something is constraining the performance of the people. As a leader, it is your job to help them remove the barriers. Having the ability to focus on others and helping others to develop pride in their work is a powerful way to build influence. It is the basis from which the power of influence emanates, and therefore one of the most important abilities that a leader can have.

*Wally Hauck*

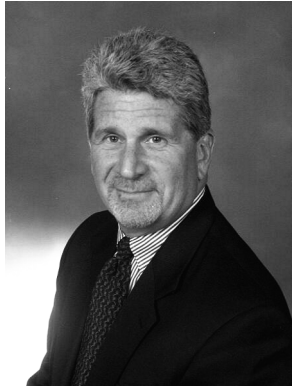
**Wright**

This has been a great conversation, Wally. I've learned a lot and I thank you for taking this time to answer these questions so effectively!

**Hauck**

Thank you, David, for your time and your great listening skills!

## About the Author...



WALLY HAUCK has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy from the University of Pennsylvania, an MBA in Finance from Iona College; he is currently working on his PhD in Organizational Leadership from Kennedy Western University. He is writing a book, *"In Trust We Profit: Achieving Sustainable Results with Trust not Control."* Wally has worked with dozens of firms and government agencies in the last decade.

Past President of American Society for Training and Development, Fairfield County CT Chapter, Board of Directors for ASTD, Fairfield County CT Chapter, member of the Board of Directors of the Bridgeport Chamber of Commerce, member of the Board of Directors for Bridgeport Rotary, past Board member for Literacy Volunteers of America, member of the National Speakers Association, speaker for The American Society of Quality at national conventions, speaker for The International W. Edwards Deming Institute, The Ninth Annual Research Seminar, and author for the Research Paper: "The White Flag"<sup>™</sup>: a Predictable Method to Build a Culture of Trust and Accountability." He is also speaker for the W. Edwards Deming Institute Annual Conference

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