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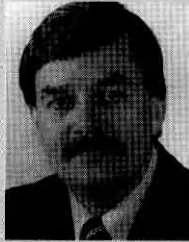
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Voice Mail

Doer's Profile



Frederick Talbott

This month's profile features Frederick Talbott. Talbott is a professor for the practice of management at Owen Graduate School of Management, Vanderbilt University. He is author of the book *Shakespeare on Leadership: Timeless Wisdom for Daily Challenges*.

What's the most exciting new development in leadership communication? "A turn to positive communication—more 'in-spiring,' dynamic, and sharing. Such communication ennobles the workplace, is magnificent for morale, and shares leadership."

What's still the biggest barrier? "The tradition of formality. That interferes with effective communication."

Favorite machine: "My Macintosh with graphics. If I could find a way to install it on an ocean kayak, I would."

What gave you the idea for your book *Shakespeare on Leadership*? "I was giving a series of talks on

leadership—and hope, really—to executives and to inner-city kids. I used some Shakespearean quotes in the overheads. After every talk, people came up to me and asked where they could get a collection of the quotes."

Pipedream: "Whatever it would be, it would be working with people."

To nominate someone to be the subject of a "Doer's Profile," call Haidee Allerton at 703/683-7251 or fax your suggestion to her at 703/683-9203. Include your own name and phone number, as well as the name and number of the nominee, and tell us why he or she is a good candidate.

how we conduct business. And doing the right thing is the *only* way our business should be conducted. It's a question of ethics!

—Howell F. Wright
Internal Revenue Service
Kansas City, Kansas

Alarming Model

I'm writing about the model, "The Feedback Process," described by author Mary Mavis in "Painless Performance Evaluations" (October 1994).

Mavis identifies four elements in effective feedback:

- ▶ Observation. "Jim has arrived at 9:15 a.m. three or four days a week."
- ▶ Assessment. "Jim lacks discipline or commitment."
- ▶ Consequences. "Other employees resent Jim's tardiness."
- ▶ Development/Improvement. "Jim

must arrive at 9 a.m., or before, each day."

Having spent many years specializing in the processes of giving and receiving feedback and in training thousands of people in feedback skills, I was alarmed by Mavis's model. It's true that the statement "Jim has arrived at 9:15 a.m. three or four days a week" is an observation. So far, so good. But it's not valid that this observation leads directly to the statement "Jim lacks discipline or commitment" (the supposed assessment).

What appears to be lacking in the model is a crucial intermediate step that involves determining the cause of the problem. A diagnosis step would ask the question "Why is Jim coming to work late?"

There may be all sorts of reasons for Jim's tardiness—such as personal problems or the fact that no one told Jim what time the company expects