

Book Review

Corporate Health Group's Insights from *Watercooler Wisdom: How Smart People Prosper in the Face of Conflict, Pressure and Change*

"...disorder can be a source of order...growth is found in disequilibrium, not in balance. The things we fear most in organizations---fluctuations, disturbances, imbalances--need not be signs of an impending disorder that will destroy us. Instead, fluctuations are the primary source of creativity."
Leadership and the New Sciences, Meg Whitley, 1994

To be a victim, or to be in control of our reactions to our environments? That is the question. No matter what role we play...from CEO to assistant...we are all facing increasing pressures in the workplace and out of the workplace. It's often easy to become a victim of circumstances ...wrong boss, wrong company, disagreeable coworkers, poor economy, poor job prospects....whatever the case may be...

However, becoming a victim only leaves you feeling helpless and out of control, and there is too much at stake, personally and professionally to allow that to happen. The dilemma of how to deal with those pressures and conflicts in the workplace is the art and the magic of not only surviving, but *prospering*, even in the most trying of times.

In their book, *Watercooler Wisdom: How Smart People Prosper in the Face of Conflict, Pressure and Change* (New Harbinger Publications, 2006), Keith Bailey and Karen Leland provide guidance regarding the life skills needed to be the one to emerge successfully and more effectively. It's the practical application of these necessary skills that caused us to select this book for our review.

In interviews with more than 20,000 executives, managers and staff from around the world, the authors discovered how people of all walks of life flourish. Throughout the book, the reader is provided with a roadmap. It begins by having the reader assess the way they react to situations in the workplace.

How do you deal with change? How do you deal with pressure? How do you deal with conflict? All three of these dynamics can create a great deal of stress, and how you manage them can make all the difference. Once you have evaluated and mapped your own responses, the book then takes you on a journey of self-discovery to help you to achieve prosperity!

Insight #1—Grow from Change

Smart people look for ways to grow from change, not for ways to resist change. This attitude of growth—managing reactions, attitudes and fears—is how the smart person becomes central player in their organization.

A central player is someone who embraces change and is seen as critical to any important organizational initiative. Personal reflection plays a major role. Smart people don't spend time wishing things were different; instead, they focus on what they can do to make it better.

Insight #2—Reduce Pressure by Creating Tomorrow Today

We all have the same number of hours in a week. Smart people realize that how you use those hours is what makes people effective or ineffective with respect to the pressures of the workplace. Working happier, not harder is about understanding your core mission and values and spending your work time on those goals that are most important. Through prioritizing and organizing the approach to work, you can reduce the pressures.

Insight #3—Dance with Conflict

“Conflict is inevitable, but combat is optional.”—Max Lucado

While conflict is often perceived as bad, it is often conflict that leads to the ideas that create the most productive change. As the quote implies, it's how we choose to handle that conflict that makes the difference in the work environment. Smart people take the time to understand the source of the conflict, plan strategies for overcoming it, and are willing to work through difficult issues without creating hard feelings. They confront the conflict in a positive way, not retreat from it in fear.

Whether you read this book from start to finish or use it as a guide to help you with a specific workplace issue, you will find that it's a practical and useful reference tool.