



Bye, Bye Boo Bird

At the Fall parent-teacher conference, my oldest son’s third grade teacher strongly suggested that we get Bryan assessed for learning disabilities. Bryan could read well but comprehended little of what he read. He also struggled with writing. Three months later at the assessment meeting, we learned that Bryan did not have any learning disabilities but he did have Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). He had trouble focusing and with controlling his impulsiveness. Although there are still many times I=d like to change Bryan, I cannot change who Bryan is. What I must focus on is how I choose to influence him.

“I know God will not give me anything I can’t handle. I just wish that He didn’t trust me so much.”
Mother Teresa

The Winner’s Grid

The Winner's Grid provides a map for taking more personal power in change situations. There are six ways to act in any situation. In a previous article, we examined the Cannot Control column. In this article, we’ll look at the “May Have Influence” area. When you encourage those around you to become Change Agents rather than Change Victims, you will be valued as a **Cheerleader**. The other option is to be a “**Boo Bird**” by just sitting back and letting your opportunity to influence others slip by.

	<i>Can Control</i>	<i>May Have Influence</i>	<i>Cannot Control</i>
<i>Just Do It!</i>	<i>Game Face</i>	<i>Cheerleader</i>	<i>Hanger On</i>
<i>Let It Go!</i>	<i>Armchair Quarterback</i>	<i>“Boo” Bird</i>	<i>Graceful Exit</i>

Be A Cheerleader

A *cheerleader* is both an encourager and excellent communicator. Very few “cheerleaders” are paid to cheer at a professional sporting event. A cheerleader is not the coach who calls the plays. She or he merely cheers on the people who are playing the game. The same is true in our organizations. Most of us are not the coaches calling the plays in the game of change. Yet if we want our organization to be successful, all of us need to become “cheerleaders” who are committed to communicating continuously. We need to encourage those around us.

A cheerleader often influences the outcome of the game and has an immediate and definite impact on those around them. Here are some specific organizational cheerleader strategies:

- Give input when none is asked for.
- Encourage your co-workers when they are discouraged.
- Volunteer to serve on transition task forces.
- Constantly look for ways to help your team/organization get better at what you do.

Avoid Becoming a “Boo Bird”

As a cheerleader, you are an encourager and communicator. You give input and provide options. Unfortunately, some people would rather mutter, “Let the leaders make their own mistakes. They’ll come crawling back to us later looking for ideas.” The **Boo Bird’s** attitude is “Why bother?” The organizational ship is sinking. What the Boo Bird doesn’t realize is that they are on the sinking ship and they will sink with it. When we sit back and just boo, not only does the organization lose, so do we. Even if we don’t lose our jobs, others may lose respect for us, and we ultimately lose a lot of respect for ourselves.

I have to admit that when I began doing extensive research on Attention Deficit Disorder -- what causes it, strategies for how to deal with it, etc. -- it didn’t take long for me to surmise that in most cases, ADD is hereditary. We certainly knew immediately whom Bryan did NOT get it from -- me! In fact, while I was sharing the descriptive characteristics of ADD with my husband, Jim said to me, “Boy, you know a lot of those characteristics fit for me, too.” I lost it! I snapped at Jim and said, “I can’t even handle having an ADD child must less an ADD husband. Don’t even go there.” Admittedly, a part of me just wanted to give up and become a “Boo Bird.”

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A **Boo Bird** is a person who comes to a professional sporting event. They put a paper bag over their head with holes cut out for the eyes. They wear the paper bag so no one will identify them as a fan of the team. They watch a game and “boo” the entire time. They are only there to bother the players and to discourage the other fans. They are helpless, hopeless people who just boo.

How does booing help encourage any organization to succeed? How is our own attitude impacted when we are consistently negative? If your organization is so bad, why do you stay? None of us deserve to be in an organization if we’re not willing to get in and put a game face on when life isn’t all that pleasant. Keep in mind the fact that we take our reactions and attitudes home with us every night -- is that good news for you?

Although there have certainly been times with Bryan that I just wanted to be a Boo Bird and let Jim deal with him, I quickly surmised that putting an ADD dad with an ADD child is a recipe for frustration. I have no control over Bryan nor his ability to learn. I can’t go into his class and take the tests for him. The best I can do is influence Bryan and be his **cheerleader**.

What is your chosen role -- to be a cheerleader or boo bird?

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