

# **EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS**



# EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS

Engaging Your Total Enterprise *to* Boost  
Quality, Speed, Savings *and* Innovation

***DR. MARTA WILSON***

Featuring Dr. Altyn Clark and Colleagues



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First Edition

*This book is dedicated to Dr. Roseanne Foti. Thank you for igniting the launch of my professional flight and the flights of so many others you've mentored. You are a role model and an inspiration to all who know and love you.*



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# EXPERTS

This book features insights from eight dear colleagues and thought leaders:

Altyn Clark, PhD, PE  
Brian Skimmons, MSTM, PMP  
Garry Coleman, PhD, PE  
Patrick Hartman, PhD, PE  
Paul Odomirok, MEd, LSSMBB  
Sharon Flinder, PhD  
Vaughan Limbrick, MS, HCS  
William Bracken, PhD



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Professional Services Council, the Small and Emerging Contractors Advisory Forum, the Society for Human Resource Management, the Marine Corps Association, the Virginia Chamber of Commerce, and the *Washington Business Journal*.

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Nicole Thompson, scholar-researcher, served as a graduate intern for two years, contributing to the body of knowledge on which this work rests. Janelle Millard, strategic communications manager, is one of the bright lights at TSI, where she has become an indispensable associate serving the community at large. Without them both, I would not have been able to produce this work while running a vibrant company.

Before closing, I'm particularly delighted to acknowledge the signature professionalism of TSI's talented employees, stellar teaming partners, committed service providers, and dedicated customers within the defense and national security communities.

On a personal note, as always, I express special thanks to my husband and sailing companion, Bob Wilson, for joining me on this remarkable journey.

## PREFACE

**A**re you ready to move forward? This book is about the next best step to be made by someone—anyone—in your organization. It can be a very small step and yet have a measurably powerful impact on productivity and profit. This book gives you a new confidence that small possibilities with big outcomes are waiting to be found in your organization—right now.

A serendipitous collection of favorite ideas that have sparked the imagination and success of our customers over the years, this book will energize your bold goals and your vision of the future. My wish is that one or two of these ideas might revitalize your own innovative confidence. You can consider this book a thought provocateur. It's not food for thought; instead,

it contains seeds for thinking—about your own enterprise. You need to take it from there.

Most leaders these days run short, at some point, on imaginative moxie. Have you? Let's do a quick test: Do you know how to build agility into your enterprise, no matter how big or how lumbering it has been to date? If not, you need imaginative revitalization, because these days, agility is synonymous with longevity.

I'm here to remind you that you can sustain longevity by imagining the smallest step with the biggest payoff and then choosing that one step in lieu of all other options. Even better, I can help you imagine ways to free everybody connected to your organization to do the same: to make it *everybody's business* to know and grow your enterprise!

This book is based on research and practice. However, like most instigators of bold possibility thinking, it doesn't talk much about either. Instead, it focuses on opportunities, actions, and results.

These pages cast a spotlight on what happens after the latest research and possibility thinking have been incorporated into time-tested methods. The object is to help you focus on the open question remaining when smarts and talent tackle a problem. Are people really working, producing and serving in ways that are leaner, faster, better, and smarter? Do you know how to know if they are?

Most importantly, how can you know, before launching a change to create improvement, whether it's the right change or improvement? How do you contend with the haunting reality of opportunity costs?

Some leaders in small businesses, large corporations, government agencies, and military organizations share a secret. They have a discipline to discover their best options by answering this recurring question: What is the smallest step with the biggest return?

This book, with its stories and questions, intends to remind you to think about doing things in new ways. This is my book's one big idea: Find the smallest step with the biggest return. Then take it.

Marta Wilson  
Arlington, VA  
June 2012



# 1

## EVA: COMMITTING TO EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER AWARENESS

*The older I get, the greater power I seem to have to help the world; I am like a snowball—the further I am rolled, the more I gain. — Susan B. Anthony*

Integrity is a cornerstone in successful lives and careers. Wherever you are and whatever you do, integrity has immediate value. It means that individuals can be trusted with critical responsibilities. You have good reason to entrust your enterprise to those working with you. Indeed, your business must become everybody's business.

This idea may seem idealistic, but it is quite serious. Current research into new business realities highlights new ways of working and a new kind of talent. I've culled that research for this book. We can speed to the end here: Scholars return again and again to the far greater potential that individuals hold in our new economy.

Transformation Systems, Inc. (TSI) is the company I launched in 2002 with a leap of faith and a credit card. Since then, the world in which I do business has evolved. TSI's vibrant teams of subject matter experts have been on the cutting edge of these new waves in modes of working. This book draws on extensive interviews with them. Their comments share a concern about the pressing need for innovation and continuous improvement. And they sound another, even more timely theme: Individuals can be innovators and leaders, no matter their job level or duties.

Let me start by explaining what I mean by "integrity." My colleagues and I work daily to renew the trust others place in us; chances are you do the same. With rare exceptions, so do most professionals. Such personal integrity becomes a building block for something larger, something that we have dubbed "enterprise integrity." As a professional team, we use personal integrity in our work restoring enterprise integrity for our clients.

Enterprise integrity involves correctly balancing all the moving pieces that make up an organization. Like the diverse instruments in a symphony orchestra, different factors in business—for example, goals, processes, talent, and outputs—can perform in concert for optimal results. Enterprise integrity characterizes a well-tuned business in which all the players are accurately performing the composer's score.

Also like an orchestral performance, enterprise integrity is not a static state. Organizations constantly shift, grow, contract, innovate, and otherwise respond to a tumultuous world.

Balance is not a set point but an art. It takes a lot of practice. The visionary leader is really a conductor.

My colleagues and I support leaders in particularly tough realignments that require radical breakthroughs. As with any good old-fashioned tune-up, in these realignments we see evidence that daily attention to needed organizational adjustments has suffered in the rush of activity. As we restore operational balance to the whole enterprise, we also design processes that empower individuals to act with unprecedented range. Thus, performance measures are about motivation, not restriction.

Most people associate large-scale organizational tune-ups with leadership, and I agree—to a point. As a leadership consultant who has for decades studied, supported, and provided professional development to executives, I have seen abundant evidence that impeccable leadership is critical for any organization to remain adaptable and viable. However, too much emphasis on a leader at the top lets far too many other people off the hook.

That's because every single person with some stake in an organization must be empowered to lead within his or her domain of responsibility. This person's leadership role may be fleeting and informal, or it may be official, complete with title and performance targets. Either way, no one is inconsequential in steering any enterprise to greatness, because greatness is achieved one decision, one action, and one person at a time.

Simply put, that's what *Everybody's Business* is about. How do you make it everybody's business to be sure that your organization achieves bold goals even in bleak times? And by everybody,

I mean not just employees but also customers, suppliers, strategic partners, and even competitors!

Let me save you from reading the last page and reveal the secret in the sauce: Everything depends on creating a culture where personal integrity can work in sync with enterprise integrity—the perfectly tuned, dynamic balance of discrete elements and participants—for all your stakeholders ... every last one.

Consider Eva, my favorite waitress at my favorite restaurant, where I sometimes meet colleagues for business dinners. I know I can trust Eva for consistent and quiet service. It was the night when everything fell apart that my regard for Eva's work ethic was tested. That night might have been a turning point after which any loyal customer would have been hesitant to return. Instead, based on Eva's leadership and resourcefulness, it made a far more loyal customer out of me.

The rare night of a million small glitches does happen, even in a stellar restaurant. I understand that problems are part of good business. But, as I sat with my two guests, I observed over their shoulders quite a scene unfolding in the hallway and at the server stations. The bustle was chaotic: Servers were bumping into each other in the race to wait on their tables; unseated customers were huddled and watchful in full view; a suspicious smoke was frothing from the kitchen; a plate was overturned on the way to a table; another plate was broken on the kitchen floor. There were a variety of signs that this was turning into a night of food-service infamy.

Yet my dining room was notably unaffected. Eva was one of only a few servers, and she had picked up some large parties.