



Book Review Editor: Theodore J. Weidner, Ph.D., P.E., AIA

My thanks once again

to Suzanne Drew, the University of Nebraska's Facility Management and Planning director of training and staff development. She has reviewed a book made available *FREE* to APPA 2008 Conference attendees by the speaker and author, Marcus Buckingham; and a book for those dealing with large group meetings. I heard Mr. Buckingham speak and bought additional copies of his book for my staff; the review indicates the value of my decision.

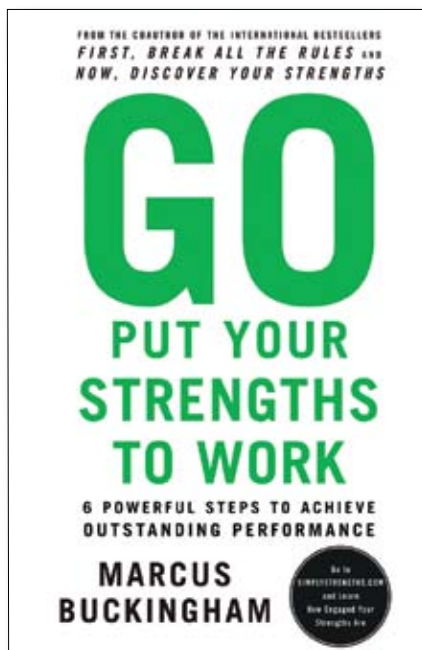
As we come to the close of the calendar year I'll wish you good health and success in your job and personal life in the coming year. Peace! — TW.

Reviewed by Suzanne Drew

GO PUT YOUR STRENGTHS TO WORK: 6 POWERFUL STEPS TO ACHIEVE OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE

By Marcus Buckingham, Free Press, a Division of Simon & Schuster, Inc., New York, 266 pages hardcover, \$30

Millions of people have completed Gallup's online personality profile to help them describe their



innate abilities and interests. Millions of others have completed other assessments to explain why they are drawn to and naturally skilled at various tasks, behaviors, and situations both at work and in life. Unfortunately, while they may be accurate and descriptive, few of these insights also come with explicit direction or prescription as to what to do with this information. With *Go Put Your Strengths to Work*, Marcus Buckingham offers a simple and effective process to use this knowledge to increase individual and group performance, productivity, and job engagement.

First, he recommends you identify a few specific activities at which you are truly strong: to which you are drawn, at which you are consistently successful, that you feel good doing, and satisfied when done. After considering exactly how, when, and why you find these activities so fulfilling, the next step is to evaluate how this strength or talent helps you contribute in your current role and how you might be able to build upon it to you and your organization's shared benefit.

Next, Buckingham suggests that you identify a few specific activities which require you to play to some of your innate weaknesses; activities that leave you drained and searching for a way to avoid it. After considering exactly how, why, and when these activities sap your energy and momentum, evaluate what options exist to either do less of this activity, do it differently or at least think about it differently.

Finally, the author provides guidance on how to both manage your time and talk to others about these strengths and weaknesses to enlist their support in making the best use of your talents and accommodating your weak spots.

Go Put Your Strengths To Work is writ-

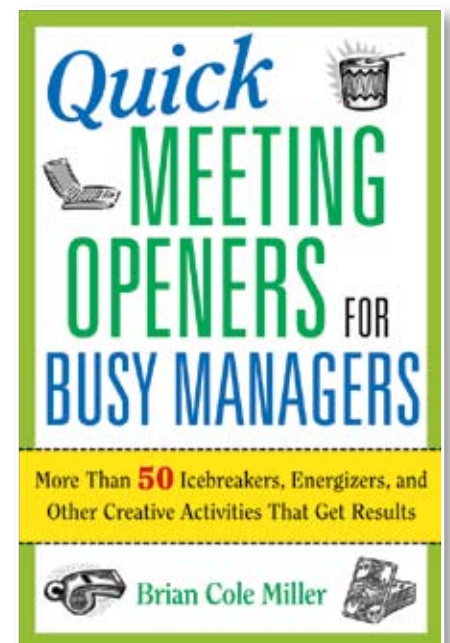
ten as a six-week, six-step, quick-read workbook to help you and your team members increase performance, productivity, and engagement. The recommended steps are simple and practical. The advice on how to discuss personal strengths and weaknesses with others is sensible and pragmatic. The support materials are engaging and useful. The examples are interesting and instructive. And, best of all, the possible benefits of implementation are enormous.

Reviewed by Suzanne Drew

QUICK MEETING OPENERS FOR BUSY MANAGERS

By Brian Cole Miller, AMACOM, New York, 168 pages, softcover, \$17.96 (also available for Kindle, \$9.99)

I hate hand-written name tags. For that matter, I also try to avoid meetings that involve preprinted name tags. It isn't really the nametags that I dislike; it's the probability that I may be involved in some sort of "get-to-know-you" exercise with other people wearing name tags.



That said, I acknowledge that these exercises can be fairly useful and surprisingly productive in providing people with a shared experience, for starting conversations, and for jump-starting networking connections and relationships. The creation of a new work group or a newly convened project task force may well benefit from a group exercise that forces people to introduce themselves and allow them to start to get a read on each other. Grudgingly, I have to also admit that I have even seen preexisting groups and coworkers establish new dynamics and forge new relationships as a result of this type of group exercise.

Quick Meeting Openers for Busy Managers, by Brian Cole Miller, is a collection of quick and easy ideas to get groups talking, moving, and interacting with each other. The book is organized by purpose of activity and size of group: activities to foster introductions, playful exercises to divide large groups into smaller ones, conversation starters and games to get people moving, talking, and interacting.

Some suggestions focus on the purpose and process of the meeting at hand. For example, everyone write down and post one thing they hope to contribute or learn from the session. Other suggestions are designed to get people thinking positively or creatively. Others just get people moving, talking, and maybe laughing.

If you find yourself in a situation where you need to arrange some sort of group interaction, either to get the meeting started, to break up a long day or break up into smaller groups, to wrap things up on a high note or get people interacting in new ways, *Quick Meeting Openers* can be a great resource. It has lots of ideas, it is very easy to read, and includes useful descriptions and practical tips and applications for each of its simple and

usually no-cost exercises. Name tags not included. ☹

Suzanne Drew is the director of staff development and management at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. E-mail her at sdrew2@unlnotes.unl.edu. Ted Weidner is assistant vice chancellor of

facilities management & planning at the university of Nebraska–Lincoln; he can be reached at tweidner2@unlnotes.unl.edu.

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