

GOLD!

Introduction

*“Sow an act and you reap a habit;
sow a habit and you reap a character;
sow a character and you reap a destiny.”*

Frances E. Willard
19th Century Educator

Home ownership, two cars in the garage, sending your kids off to complete their college degree and then retire—the American Dream! Is that all the American Dream is though—the pursuit of material prosperity? Are we working longer hours to simply buy bigger houses and newer cars? In the 1931 landmark book, Epic of America, James Truslow Adams, originally defined the American Dream in these terms:

“It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position.”

Adams believed America provided a system where all people, regardless of social status were able to achieve their American Dream. All people have the opportunity to realize their full potential, therefore experiencing not only economic prosperity but also happiness, contentment and fulfillment.

The American Dream has taken a hit in recent years, though. There are some who believe we need to redefine The American Dream, to scale down our expectations, so a revised version of The American Dream can become achievable once again.

The idea is not without merit, either. In 1995, a Business Week/Harris poll found that 66% of the respondents believed the American Dream had become harder to achieve since 1985, and three-fourths believed that achieving the dream would be more difficult in the next 10 years. In addition, A CNN poll taken in 2006 found that 54% of Americans considered the American Dream unachievable.

Yes, achieving The American Dream is more difficult than what Adams envisioned—it's more challenging than a generation ago. Economic trends have illustrated this for years. According to the GINI Index, America has increased the ratio between the rich and poor while Japan, France, Germany and the United Kingdom have held steady. The Tax Foundation reported that median income actually *fell* 2.24% from 2000-2006, adjusted for inflation. There are other sobering statistics, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis:

- Personal savings rates have decrease by at least 50% since 1970 and as much as 75%
- America became the largest debtor nation in the world since 1986 after being the largest creditor
- Per capita income has doubled since 1948, but it has leveled, and then decreased steadily since 1967

A study conducted by the World Economic Forum in 2009 showed that London dethroned New York as the financial capital of the world. The WEF's 2009 Financial Development Index ranks 55 countries on the sophistication and stability of their

GOLD!

financial systems and markets. Britain replaced the U.S. as the top financial country. As reported by BusinessWeek.com, "...the U.S. fell from No. 1 in 2008 to No. 3 this year. While the country is still by far the world's wealthiest, financial instability and a noticeably weakened banking sector pulled down its scores. The No. 2-ranked country, Australia, jumped nine rungs in the rankings, thanks to its greater financial stability, low sovereign debt, and ready access to consumer credit. In addition, in 2009 the National Academy of Science found that one in six Americans—just over 15% of the population live in poverty—over 47.4 million Americans! Bottom line, we're making less money and saving less of it. What was once achievable is currently perceived to be unattainable. Or is The American Dream a moving target that's eluding people because nothing is ever enough? Is The American Dream over? Are we the generation who lets it slip away? Are we witnessing the demise of the greatest democracy the world has ever seen?

The American Dream doesn't need to be readjusted, redefined or recalibrated for the times. The one thing America doesn't need is another pep talk filled with empty platitudes and irrelevant anecdotes. What it requires, though, is a process. The Olympians featured in *GOLD!* illustrate how they achieved their American Dream. The Olympians are role models for us all, for they competed, and then succeeded in a global market long before the term became a part of our national lexicon.

Having intent of purpose, being more efficient and more creative, developing sound judgment are the keys to achieving The American Dream. Once we lower our sights and expectations, The American Dream is over. Getting the right things done is less time provides the path to The American Dream.

The American Dream should require hard work, but it shouldn't require 80-hour workweeks where parents never see their families. What's the point of achieving anything if we lose our soul while attaining it?

The validity of the American Dream isn't in question, however. What needs to change is moving from a result orientation to a process orientation. The American Dream is a journey, not a destination. We need to change our perspective to *what we want to have* as result of achieving The American Dream to *what we want to experience* through the American Dream. By putting our efforts into the process of The American Dream, we'll garner more than anything we could envision The American Dream currently promises. It's less about filling your wallet and more about filling your soul. Thomas Jefferson set the path in the Declaration of Independence when he wrote that "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness" is an inalienable right. The American Dream requires a re-commitment by each of us collectively and individually. It's not whether the American Dream does or does not exist, but do we still *believe* the American Dream is worth pursuing?

Some look at American life as a race—some say a "rat race", but that depends upon how you look at it. That's what *GOLD!* is all about—beliefs. Developing an effective belief system is the difference between success and failure, between excellence and mediocrity, between winning and losing, between achieving the American Dream or letting slip away. Smart people learn how to develop a belief system that increases their chance of success.

Running a race is an appropriate analogy to life and life events. There's a beginning and an end, with many milestones and obstacles along the way. Smart competitors prepare

GOLD!

for each race and anticipate the problems and triumphs they're going to experience. Simply put, they're proactive. *GOLD!* provides the means to lead a proactive life in pursuit of The American Dream.

So what does it mean to be smart? This question has fascinated, puzzled and annoyed philosophers since the beginning of time. But *GOLD!* is not about philosophy. It's about a process of achievement that's been proven empirically and provided results in the real world for real people. Over 25 years ago, I set out to find out what makes a winner, what separates a champion from everyone else, what enables some people to make the most out of their potential. I wanted to find out what those "smart" people knew that others didn't.

Coaching, playing and consulting to 21 championship teams has taught me one important lesson—the most productive player on the team is never the most gifted athlete on the team. I wanted to find out what were the characteristics, the intangibles, the qualities of those who made the most of their potential. Championship teams are built on the backs of these kinds of people. They were the cornerstones of every championship team. I had many questions, and I wasn't sure if these questions could be answered accurately. Plenty of people have tried, but I still needed to ask. My questions included: Is there a way to identify these intangibles? And if we can identify these intangibles, can other people acquire them? If the intangibles are somehow learnable, can a process be developed that's repeatable for a group of people? What I learned is the so-called "intangibles" are not intangibles, characteristics or qualities at all. People who make the most of their potential—the people who are *Level Six Performers*—have developed beliefs, acquired skills and built habits that enable them to win, to succeed, to make the most of their potential—in essence to achieve The American Dream.

Besides the skill development aspect of high performing people, I learned three important lessons. First, what is currently considered complex is actually simple. People who maximize their potential have one single trait that separates them from everyone else. Second, one group is not more likely to develop this trait more than any other group. It doesn't matter what race, gender, or age you are—Excellence is available to everyone. Third, a process exists that can be learned, both individually and organizationally, that enables people to become Level Six Performers regardless of the activity.

What was assumed to be ethereal and subjective has been proven concrete and objective—and it's called it *Level Six Performance*. Character is the essence of Level Six Performance where actions and beliefs merge to achieve The American Dream. Character is being good and doing right—a result of judgment *and* action. Thinking and Doing is our nature, but many of us limit ourselves to one or the other. The Olympians who are featured in *GOLD!* demonstrate how they combined both Thinking & Doing to create championship performance. The Olympic stories demonstrate how people came to the right decision followed by productive actions. They'll show you how they applied the skills to make the right decision followed by the courage to act on their decision. It's known as "Decisive Action"—making the right decision followed by productive action. Making the right decision is useless if you fail to act on it. Likewise, acting without careful consideration wastes time, money and resources. Both result in costly errors—errors of omission and commission. Hopefully, this is the beginning of a serious discussion of

GOLD!

performance, achievement and human potential. Character is the foundation of The American Dream!

If you can measure it, you can manage it. The most important feature about Level Six Performance is it's measurable. No test accurately and conclusively predicts a person's potential, but through Level Six Performance (L6P), we're now able to measure how effectively a person *maximizes their potential*—whatever their potential is. Scores range from Level 1 to Level 6 within a bell curve.



The bell curve illustrates a developmental concept, where performance in Level 1 is weak and in Level 6 is strong. The strategies presented in *GOLD!* strengthen and enhance performance. As individuals and organizations apply L6P tools, develop high performance skills and habits, character strengthens. No matter where you are within the continuum, the strategies presented in *GOLD!* will work for you and help you move from one level to the next.

The skills I've alluded to are the foundation of what it means to be smart. People who maximize their potential have learned to develop an effective, self-supportive belief system. Humans are cognitive beings, rather than intuitive—we enter this world completely defenseless. We're poorly equipped to survive and even less equipped to succeed in a competitive environment. Thankfully, we're provided with a brain that enables us to develop a belief system that works for us rather than against us—the only way we can survive is to strengthen the capabilities between our ears.

People who master Level Six Performance skills and habits develop a belief system that maximizes their potential and enables them to gain a competitive advantage. Beliefs are active—they shape how you act, and habits are developed from your beliefs. Some people are creative, others are critical, while still others are logical. Creative, critical and logic are all valid methods of thinking. Level Six Performance strategies teach people to think in any way they have to in order to perform as well they can. People are able to learn how to make effective thinking a habit—to develop a belief system that works for you. *GOLD!* will help you to learn how to effectively think.

Belief systems are usually interpreted as a foundation for a religious movement or political party, but that's a limited understanding. Belief systems, otherwise known as a

GOLD!

worldview or paradigm, affect every relationship in your life. Belief systems impacts your relationships with your family, your spirituality, your community—everything you affect in your life and everything that affects your life! The scope of this book, though, is limited to the relationship you have with your career—your professional relationship—but you may apply the tools and strategies to enhance the relationships you have in every aspect of your life.

Although this book is structured in three sections with 17 chapters, leading one to assume there is only one correct belief system, each person interprets the information through their own lens, through their own past experiences and then through their future professional practices. In effect, each person develops a unique belief system that works for them, not anybody else. Flexibility, not rigidity, is the construct guiding the process throughout *GOLD!*. There is no right way or wrong way to apply the tools—they just need to be applied. As a result, performance improves and character strengthens regardless of the activity. You'll enhance your efficiency and your effectiveness. Your professional productivity will improve increase and you'll enjoy the process to a greater degree. Your American Dream is much more attainable as a result. Additional skills such as problems solving and creativity will also be improved due to the change in your belief system.

Which takes us to the bottom line purpose of this book—change! The tools are directed toward individual use, but they may also be applied organizationally. The foundation of transformational leadership is changing a current ineffective belief system that yields unsatisfactory results to an effective belief system producing high performance results. This change may be targeted to an isolated business team or an entire organization, but change begins—and can only occur—if belief systems are changed. The primary mistake made by business leaders, though, is attempting any change initiative without changing their own individual belief system. Leaders must change themselves first before any organizational change initiative is attempted. Authentic, consistent, long-lasting change occurs first organically and intrinsically, and then is radiated outward toward others. Like any organism, lasting change takes place at the cellular level. Leaders are the nucleus of their organization and if change doesn't occur at the top, any change experienced within an organization is to be short-lived. *GOLD!* will teach you how to change.

But change to what and why? Level Six Performers don't set out to be superstars or Gold Medal winners. Maximizing one's potential is measured more than how much money a bank account holds. The primary objective Level Six Performers is to express themselves freely and fully. They seek to transform into an integrated person—a whole person—someone who understands their relationship with the world. People have many sides to their character and Level Six Performers actively seek out opportunities to express all aspects of their character. They have a higher calling—they have no need to prove themselves to others. Level Six Performers are not driven by naive or unsophisticated agendas. They are not “being driven”; rather they are “driven toward” accomplishing a self-transformation to a fully integrated person.

People who express themselves fully know who they are, they're aware of their strengths and weaknesses, they know how to leverage their strengths and compensate their weaknesses—yes, Level Six Performers have weaknesses and challenges just like everyone else! Level Six Performers know what they want, why they want it, how to communicate what they want and how to enlist the help of others in order to get what

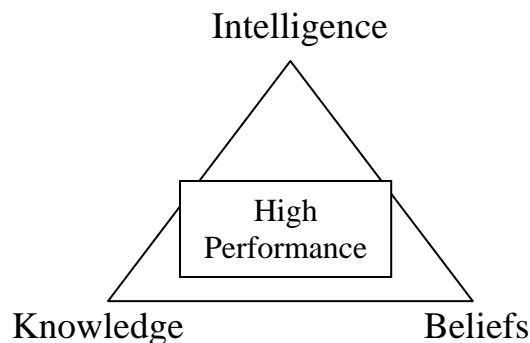
GOLD!

they want. In essence, they know how to achieve their American Dream. *GOLD!* will teach you how to express yourself freely and fully and transform you into an integrated person.

My course of investigation discovered an educational model that helps people to develop an effective belief system. An educational model includes habits, behaviors, skills and tools. Belief systems are developed over time and then become automatic. People have routine habits of doing things where they're unaware of what they're actually doing. Think about brushing your teeth. You get up in the morning and while you're still half-asleep you're able to fulfill one of the most important health functions of the day. It would be pretty difficult if you had to explain your process of teeth brushing to someone without using your hands. Most people just end up saying, "I brush my teeth just like everyone else, and if you want to learn how to brush your teeth, just watch me!" Well, belief systems and brushing your teeth are similar and different at the same time. They are the same in that beliefs are a habit—an unconscious habit—just like brushing your teeth. They are different in that people are unable to learn how to develop effective belief systems by watching others. Beliefs are actions that can't be seen—mind reading is impossible, even for people who are trained in human behavior. Psychologists, psychiatrists and educators still have to ask the question, "What do you think about this?"

A habit can be either good or bad, and developing habits is a result of learning skills—they don't appear out of thin air. When people learn how to do something, they have acquired a set of skills that leads to actions. When those actions are repeated enough and have been appropriately rewarded, habits develop. People who develop belief systems that enable them to maximize their potential have also developed Level Six Performance habits. I've found 84% (Levels 1-4) of all people have developed belief systems that actually limit their potential. The other 16% (Levels 5-6) have acquired a process and mastered skills that enables them to maximize their potential. You just can't watch how others do it or read about it—you have to do it yourself. Actions lead to a change in belief systems.

My course of investigation also discovered *The Performance Triad*, which illustrates how people maximize their potential. The three points of the triad are Intelligence, Knowledge and Beliefs, and high performance is a result of the interplay of all three.



Intelligence is an indicator of potential, just as speed, strength and endurance are indicators of athletic ability. As mentioned before, the most gifted athlete is never the most productive athlete. Intelligence represents only the possibilities a person holds, but

GOLD!

without the other two points of the triad, the most intelligent person will be outperformed by less intelligent, but more effective people.

The second point of the triad, Knowledge, is information. People who combine accurate knowledge with high intelligence outperform other intelligent people who are unable to access the same information. One thing the Information Age has taught us, however, is information doesn't provide a competitive advantage. It has only shown if you don't have access to information, then you're sure to fall behind. Information doesn't put you ahead of your competition; it can only keep you even with your competitors.

People assume Knowledge and Intelligence are the only factors that matter because it's a simple formula to understand—the more information you have, the smarter you are. High performance is more complex than that, but most people expect to find a simple solution to a complicated problem. If you're expecting an "Aha Moment" by reading this book, you won't find one. The "Aha Moment" provides short-term relief for long-term problems—but not solutions because beliefs haven't changed. People who provide the "Aha Moment" create an ethical issue—they're just playing upon the fears and emotions of people who are looking for a magic bullet. Once the moment passes, people recognize they still have problems and they're left without a process to solve them. So they continue to look towards the soothsayers and charlatans for another Aha Moment. Again, this alleviates pain momentarily, but the root of the problem still exists—the beliefs that held them back are still present. It creates a system similar to the drug addict and the drug supplier. The supplier provides short-term relief creating a greater need. When the addict needs another fix, the supplier is more than happy to supply it—at an increased price!

Effective belief systems are at the heart of Level Six Performance and it's the point of the triad most neglected by our society. Beliefs systems exist below the level of awareness for most people. The problem is most people presume they're either good thinkers or bad thinkers. This isn't true. People are able to learn skills that develop high performance habits. Learning how to develop a high performance belief system requires a system, a structure, a process. Examining beliefs is abstract enough with a system, but without it, the examination just wanders aimlessly. It only leads to confusion. This is the basis of the assumption that people either have it or they don't. The fact is Level Six Performance is a method that leads to high performance repeatedly and consistently based on effective belief systems.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "Talent is usually developed at the expense of character." If you look at sports, business, and even the educational system in America, Emerson is right. But it doesn't have to be that way. Level Six Performance proves potential can be maximized by enhancing our character—by learning how to develop effective belief systems. The purpose of *GOLD!* is to provide a process for people to follow to develop a high performance belief system. The process is presented as a formula, which contains skills people can learn that lead to Level Six Performance habits. When mastered, people can use the same formula to perform at their maximum potential regardless of the activity. The formula is:

Principles (Preparation + Execution) = Level Six Performance

Principles govern our actions throughout the preparation and execution phases of performance. Most people focus on the additive aspect of the formula—and that will get

GOLD!

you part of the way there. Level Six Performance is attained by defining your Principles of High Performance. Principles determine how you act in both the Preparation Phase and the Execution Phase. Some people are great at preparation—a.k.a. “The Practicer”—but they fold when faced with the pressure of execution. Others, who may appear to be lazy and inconsistent during the Preparation Phase, are above average during the Execution Phase—a.k.a. “The Gamer.” Everyone knows a little more preparation would significantly help The Gamer. Moreover, everyone realizes The Practicer would benefit by relaxing and trusting themselves during the Execution Phase. Identifying the problem is easy. Fixing the problem is much more difficult. The key is *how* to do it. *GOLD!* shows you how to do it.

GOLD! is a handbook of tools that develop effective belief systems, providing the foundation for high performance skills and habits. But tools are only tools if they are used. As you go through the book, apply the tools to current situations you’re facing. A hammer used to drive a nail into a piece of wood is a tool. A hammer not used may as well be an object that’s been placed in a picture frame. It ends up being admired or criticized for its intellectual and artistic aspects—which is a waste of time. **Don’t Frame the Hammer!** The more you use the tools in the book you’ll develop a belief system leading to Level Six Performance skills and habits. As you use the tools, you’ll better understand their proper applications.

This book won’t make your problems disappear, but it will help you solve the problems you face day-in and day-out. This book won’t cause opportunity to come knocking, but it will help you seek out and take advantage of opportunities you create. By applying the tools and developing Level Six Performance skills and habits, you’ll be better equipped to be a Level Six Performer in your job, in your family and in your community. Isn’t that what The American Dream is all about?