

## FOREWORD

THIS BOOK HAS profound relevance as we transition from the control model of the Industrial Age to the release model of the Information/Knowledge Worker Age. I suggest that the biggest problem we have in most organizations and workplaces today is that we are still using the Industrial model while attempting to operate and compete in an Information/Knowledge Worker Age. Unless we adopt the mindset, skill set, and tool set associated with unleashing human potential, with helping people, and with finding our own voice and inspiring others to find theirs, we will become history. By contrast, those who successfully make the transition will make the future. This outcome is inevitable because it's pragmatic. Ironically, it is also idealistic. Thus the unique juxtaposition in Hans Christian Andersen's tales between the practical and the ideal parallels our present challenge.

Before I elaborate, let me say a word about Mette Norgaard. For years, the executive development programs at the Covey Leadership Center and later FranklinCovey were graced by her presence, her leadership, and her teachings. She is one of the more caring, insightful, and truly effective teachers I have ever known. When you are around her, and even when her reflective thoughts and questions posed in this book surround you, you will sense that she did not just learn these magnificent insights — she *earned* them.

Mette, much like the nightingale in this book, has the quiet courage to sing her own song and to encourage (put courage into) others to find their own voice and sing their own song. As she discusses each tale and shares her personal convictions, it would seem we are studying Mette's personal journey, discoveries, and development. But when I read and reflected on this book, I felt as if I were also studying my own personal journey, discoveries, and development. Such is the power of poetic metaphor and parabolic teaching. Everyone comes at it from the lens and vector of one's own life.

As you truly reflect upon the stories in this book and discuss them with others, particularly with your own work team, the book's practical insights and idealistic motivations will help lubricate the necessary transformation. Let me give you a few "for instances."

*The Emperor's New Clothes* particularly illustrates a statement someone made: "When man found the mirror he began to lose his soul." The point is, he became more concerned with his image than with himself. I believe that you will find that over 90% of all leadership and personal failures are basically failures of character, and at the most fundamental level the tales in this book are all about character. This is extremely relevant in today's organizations, particularly business organizations, which are becoming guilty by association because of the scandals of a few. I believe those few are just the tip of an iceberg, and the great mass has not yet surfaced. These cultural flaws are essentially a fruit of the Industrial Age model, which nourished bureaucracies, hierarchies, competitive silos, kissing up politics, hidden agendas, and denial, denial, denial.

*The Ugly Duckling* learned the hard way to find his own voice in harmony with nurturing swans and became freed from the metastasizing cancers of comparing and complaining and criticizing and contending — freed from the comparison-based identity that nurtures the co-dependency of the control model.

*The Dung Beetle*, obsessed with appearance and cleverness, is simply unaware of the horrible consequences of an inflated self image. Arrogance, both personally and organizationally, is the main derailer of great performance.

*The Nisse at the Grocer's* displays a practical idealist who models the balance advocated by both Jim Collins and Peter Drucker, who essentially taught that the first duty of management is to face reality — the hard, cold, stubborn facts of reality — and then to be optimistic and opportunistic and idealistic.

*The Fir Tree* illustrates the dissatisfaction and frustration and futility of never living in the present. Not living in the present is futile because it violates the Law of the Harvest, where one must prepare the ground before planting, and also water, cultivate, weed, and nourish patiently, and then wait for nature to do its thing in making what's possible actual. You may be able to cram for an exam in school, but you cannot cram real growth.

*The Nightingale* is my favorite of all these tales because it epitomizes the integration of the practical and the idealistic. This is exactly what can happen in the workplace with a release model. Rather than the loneliness at the top of the Industrial Age organizations, where all the important decisions are made while the rest wield the screwdrivers, in Information/Knowledge Worker Age organizations leadership becomes distributed throughout the entire culture. Efforts become focused on helping people find or discover their strengths, their unique, natural talents. People become more willing to be part of a complementary team, where strengths are made productive and weaknesses are made irrelevant through the strengths of others. It is a paradigm shift as when the Copernican notion of the sun being at the center of the universe replaced the Ptolemaic concept that the earth was at the center.

This book, by helping us to understand the simple wisdom of Hans Christian Andersen, provides an absolutely apt and highly relevant metaphorical description of this paradigm shift, from a control-based to a release-based way of seeing ourselves and one another, and from a fragmented person to a whole person — body,

mind, heart, and spirit. And, in my opinion, even though Mette wrote it for the workplace, the lessons are just as significant and relevant to the home place, the community place, and the privacy of one's own heart.

I hope you enjoy and gain from this material as much as I have. I commend it to you for discussion purposes in work teams and for training and development programs. Its humor will be a lubricant for humanizing and personalizing change!

Dr. Stephen R. Covey  
Author of *The 7 Habits of Highly  
Effective People* and *The 8th Habit*