

Interview with Tom Connellan **Author of *Bringing Out the Best in Others!***

Introducing Tom Connellan, author of the New York Times Bestseller, “Bringing Out the Best in Others! 3 Keys for Business Leaders, Educators, Coaches and Parents.” Tom is talking with Juanita Watson, Assistant Editor of Reader Views.

Juanita: Thanks for talking with us today Tom. First of all, congratulations on making the New York Times Bestseller list! How does that feel?

Tom: It feels great for two reasons. First, because The New York Times list is the most prestigious and most widely known list, that’s every author’s dream. But second, and more importantly, it’s validation that the tools in “Bringing Out the Best in Others!” work and work well. And it’s only because friends tell friends and colleagues “buy this book today” that it’s a New York Times Bestseller. It’s also the only reason it’s been number one on five different Amazon Bestseller lists – Business, Relationships, Parenting, Coaching and Leadership.

Juanita: Would you please tell our readers what they can expect from “Bringing Out the Best in Others!”

Tom: Be glad to. Everyone knows someone who’s underperforming in some way. On the organizational side, someone who reports to them, someone in another functional area, a subcontractor, or a vendor are a few example that come to mind. On the personal side it might be a child, someone on the soccer or T ball team they coach, a niece or nephew, or maybe someone they’re mentoring. The truth of the matter is that most people have several underperformers in the life.

And what they can expect from “Best” is a set of tools that will turn those underperforming individuals around within 30-60 days.

Juanita: You’re a business consultant with an impressive list of clients including FedEx, GE, Marriott, Home Depot, and Neiman Marcus. Yet it doesn’t sound like this is a book geared only towards business professionals. Who’s the reading audience?

Tom: (laughing) Great question, Juanita. My corporate clients kept coming up to me and saying “This is great. Just great. I only wish that I could have known about these tools as I was raising the kids. Well, about the fourteenth billionth time that happened, it dawned on me that what I had wasn’t a just set of tools to help leaders turn around underperformers and maintain the performance

of already good performers. What I had was a set of tools to help anyone help anyone who's underperforming. The feedback has been very rewarding and motivating for me. As you could see from the endorsements at the front of the book, the tools are being used by teachers, parents, corporate leaders, and youth sport coaches. The tools are also being used by a significant number of military leaders, but of course, they are not permitted to endorse the book.

Juanita: How does one confront the problem of a worker, student, etc. with performance shortcomings?

Tom: I like to use the term "supportive confrontation of non-performance" as an approach. Too many of us – including me – hate to confront non-performance. So we put it off and put it off and put it off. Finally, it becomes so maddening that we have to say something. But by this time all the parties are on edge so it ends up as a knock-down shouting match that doesn't change anything – except to perhaps make things worse.

You can't avoid confronting non-performance, but what happens is that what's needed instead is a supportive confrontation of that non-performance.

Juanita: What are the three keys that you describe in your book that will unlock people's peak performance?

Tom: Believe in them, hold them accountable, and provide a supportive environment.

Juanita: But don't most people do those three things – at least to some degree?

Tom: They do. But most leaders, most teachers, and most parents are out of balance in some way. They might overdo accountability and underdo support. Or they might overdo support and underdo accountability. Maybe they *think* they believe in that child or team member, but when you talk to the child or team member, you find out that they believe is not being felt. So what's needed is not so much the knowing that those things are important but rather bumping up the tools they have available in those areas and then making sure that all three are in balance and in alignment.

Juanita: Does "Bringing Out the Best in Others!" provide/explain these tools and how to correctly apply them to a particular situation?

Tom: Actually it shows how to apply all three tools – believe in them, hold them accountable, and provide a supportive environment in a number of different situations. The specific situations covered are sales productivity, teamwork in a hospital, parenting and grades, parenting and getting kids to pick up a room, manufacturing productivity, manufacturing quality, teamwork and communications in a corporate environment, grades in a classroom setting, appropriate social behavior in a classroom setting, and in youth sports. The one that seems to be most freeing to parents is the solution to picking up a bedroom.

Some of those are obviously joint applications such teamwork and communications in a corporate environment.

But because it's a mix of applications, readers report that it gives them a deeper understanding of how to apply the tools in a wide variety of settings.

People who read the book will find that they use the tools not only at work and at home, but in a wide variety of situations where they want to boost the performance of someone.

Juanita: What results can people expect by following the principles in your book?

Tom: Tough to tell – it depends on what they'd like from the book. I do know that other readers have reported improved grades, enhanced productivity, better performance, more commitment, better communications, and stronger teamwork. So anyone who's looking for improvements in those or similar areas should find the book helpful right from the beginning.

Juanita: Will your book also help the reader bring out the best in themselves?

Tom: Absolutely. If you don't believe in yourself, hold yourself accountable, and create a supportive environment, you'll have trouble succeeding at anything. As Henry Ford once put it, "whether you think you can or think you can't you're probably right."

Juanita: How do our expectations affect the performance in others?

Tom: Properly expressed, expectations you hold for others will start producing results within 24 hours. The operative word, of course, is properly. Sometimes expectations can mistakenly get expressed in a way that actually harms performance.

Juanita: Is there any difference in applying your principles to a teamwork setting?

Tom: There are some differences, but they're fairly minimal. The primary difference is that you're working more on improving performance in a lateral direction – across the team – rather than a vertical manner.

Juanita: Tom, what sets your book apart from the other motivational books available today?

Tom: Two things. One, it's based upon solid research that I began when I was a Research Associate at The University of Michigan. And two, it produces results in actual performance. Some motivational books make you feel better but don't do much to change performance. "Best" not only makes you feel better, but also boosts your performance and the performance of those around you.

Juanita: Tom, tell us about your significant writing career, and your motivational speaking lectures.

Tom: I'm not sure I'd use the term "significant." I'm honored to have a New York Times Bestseller. I'm flattered to be invited by companies like FedEx and Marriott to keynote conferences. I'm fortunate to receive notes from people about what my books have meant to them. The way I look at it, everyone wants to make a difference in the world and I'm just plain flat-out privileged to have had that opportunity.

Juanita: How can readers find out more about you and your endeavors?

Tom: More than they would ever want to know is available at www.tomconnellan.com

Juanita: Thanks for talking with us today Tom. Congratulations once again for your recent success on the New York Times Bestsellers List. Do you have any last thoughts for your readers today?

Tom: Absolutely. Not everyone can be great, but everyone can be better than they are. And while there's a lot of meat in the book, you have to go beyond doing things by the book. Now, what that means is that you'll have a sound foundation for using the tools for a wide variety of situation and it's up to do to apply the tools.