

THE  
**BOSSHOLE**  
**EFFECT**



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EFFECT**

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Three Simple Steps Anyone Can Follow To Become  
A Great Boss And Lead A Successful Team

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*The BossHole Effect®*  
*Three Simple Steps Anyone Can Follow To Become a Great Boss And Lead A Successful Team*

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As I reflect on my life so far I realize that the richness of my experience has been enhanced by the people I have been close with over the years. There have been a select few who have had much more impact than they may realize. So I feel compelled to give a loving shout out to my high school junior prom date, my first serious girlfriend, my first true love, my first wife, the mother of my children, my granddaughter's grandmother, and my current roommate. They all happen to be the same person. Love you Buggs.



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# INTRODUCTION

## The BossHole Effect<sup>®</sup>

**“The leaders who work most effectively, it seems to me, never say I. And that’s not because they have trained themselves not to say I. They don’t think I. They think we, they think team. They understand their job to be to make the team function. They accept responsibility and don’t sidestep it, but we get the credit. This is what creates trust, what enables you to get the task done.”**

**–Peter Drucker Management Expert**

Most people spend more time at their job than at any other activity throughout their adult life. These forty hours per week at work for fifty weeks per year for forty years is where they build self-esteem, make friends, and accomplish professional goals.

Unfortunately, it is also where they are forced to work with Boss-Holes and where we become discouraged by The BossHole Effect<sup>®</sup>. By definition, a BossHole is someone who acts like an ass and who happens to have the positional authority to impact your life. Other definitions of a BossHole taken from the UrbanDictionary.com include:

**An employer of a particularly evil nature, completely devoid of empathy or concern for anyone else, the deadly hybrid of boss and asshole. And my personal favorite:**

**An asshole who is better at being an asshole than most other assholes.**

The BossHole Effect<sup>®</sup> is the powerful capacity of a BossHole to suck the joy, energy, enthusiasm and greatness out of an organization. BossHoles don't just inhabit businesses. They can ruin non-profits, schools, sports teams, youth groups, homeowner's associations, church activities and just about any experience where a group of people gathers for a common purpose. BossHoles don't even have to be the official boss to exert their influence. The best of the breed require no official management or supervisory title.

A BossHole wields devastating negative energy, the metaphorical equivalent of a black hole caused by the implosion of a supernova. The gravitational forces created by a black hole are so strong that rays of light cannot escape their influence. The toxic anti-matter generated by a BossHole inflicts similar devastation on any workforce. Jeanna Bryner summarized University of Florida research in an article, "Abused Workers Fight Back by Slacking Off," in *Live Science* on October 8, 2007. This research demonstrated that workers with abusive bosses were five times more likely to slow down or make errors on purpose, six times more likely to hide from their boss, three times more likely to not give their best effort, and seven times more likely to falsely take sick leave.

The Gallup Business Journal published an article, "Many Employees would Fire Their Boss," on October 11, 2007. This research confirms the BossHole Effect<sup>®</sup>. The research indicated that 75% of workers report that dealing with their immediate supervisor is the most stressful part of their job; 24% would fire their boss if given the chance; 56% are unengaged and sleepwalking through work on any given day, and 18% actively undermine their team's efforts.

BossHoles create a multi-billion dollar negative drain on the gross domestic product of our nation and need to be eradicated to ensure our competitiveness in the global economy. But like the resilient cockroach this is easier said than done. The best we can probably hope for is to avoid

contact with them whenever possible and to practice preventive maintenance. By not leaving anything around for them to feed on and by keeping some roach hotels strategically placed where they are likely to congregate, we should be able to minimize their presence. And when all else fails, we need to simply get over our fear of bugs and grind them under our boot heels one crunchy squish at a time. In modern guerilla warfare the weapon of choice is the improvised explosive device. (I.E.D.) In order to rid the world of business destroying BossHoles it is time to break out the B.E.D., the BossHole extermination devices.

Edmund Burke's famous quote is:

**“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”**

Your challenge is two-fold. Do not tolerate BossHole behavior in others. And try not to act like a BossHole yourself. Everybody has bad days. Under stress everyone can occasionally behave inappropriately. But behaviors become habits and habits guide action. Don't let acting like a BossHole become a habit. BossHoles come in three general categories.

#### ***The Complete BossHole***

This jerk enjoys being a BossHole and thinks it is the right way to behave. He or she berates, abuses, demeans and belittles others like they are ignorant and unable to thrive in their absence. The only reason people work for this person is because they need the job and haven't found anything better yet. No one respects this arrogant punk and many secretly wish him/her harm. Everything this BossHole does is counterproductive to the development of an effective team. He/she will lie, cheat, steal your time, undermine the goals of the team, foster destructive habits and act smug about it.

#### ***The Partial BossHole***

This person doesn't want to be a BossHole, doesn't believe he/she is a BossHole, but commits just enough BossHole activities to ruin the effec-

tiveness of his/her team. They usually have no idea that people think they are a BossHole. With guidance they can learn not to be a BossHole. Basically this person is trying to do a good job but just doesn't quite get it right. It is common for this type of boss to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory by routinely blowing the little things that matter.

***The Underground BossHole.***

These people are scary dangerous because they pretend not to be Boss-Holes and only show their true colors when your back is turned. They smile to your face and shred you behind closed doors. They may not even officially be your boss but seem to feel that tearing you down will somehow catapult them past you in the organization. They will agree with you in private then sabotage your plans in public. If they do become your boss they inevitably become a Complete BossHole to you. While I hold out hope these people can change for the better, I have never personally witnessed such a conversion.

***The Great Boss***

The Great Boss is by definition not a BossHole. In his book *Good Boss, Bad Boss*, Bob Sutton describes the qualities of a good boss. Based on his research he suggests that good bosses do certain things and behave in specific ways. Good bosses:

- Consistently balance being too assertive with not being assertive enough
- Possess the ability to stay after it until they get it done
- Consistently produce small victories
- Avoid undermining the dignity or authority of their subordinates
- Protect their employees' ability to get their jobs done.

The difference between a BossHole and a Great Boss can be explained by asking three critical questions: Does your boss: Do everything possible to help you do your job well? Respect your dignity? Inspire you to excel at what you do?

I can tell you from my own experience that BossHoles can appear in your life at any time and without your permission. During one of my previous lifetimes I worked as a Regional Pharmacy Manager responsible for supervising over 100 stores for a major West Coast drug chain. I went to work there because the boss was a good friend and a great person. However when the company was sold, a new leadership team came in and I was forced to work for one of the biggest BossHoles I have ever met. When I was writing the description of the Complete BossHole the image of this knucklehead was frozen in my mind. For the purpose of this narrative I will call him Dick.

Dick began his career on the East Coast and was hired to take command of our nearly 700 stores as the Vice President of Pharmacy Operations. On the morning of his arrival in Los Angeles I was asked to pick him up at LAX on the way in to the office. He was scheduled to hold an introductory session with the executive team. To describe Dick as abrasive would be like suggesting that 5,000 pounds of burning cow manure might have a slight aroma. Within five minutes of meeting Dick he had clearly indicated to me that I was to speak only when he gave me permission and that I had no idea how to run a drugstore. Within 30 minutes of meeting with the management team, Dick had accused one of the Regional Pharmacy Managers of being anti-Semitic and the rest of us were branded as morons.

I have never struck another person in anger in my life but I came as close as I have ever come when this BossHole chewed me out for ten minutes in front of my staff and customers at a new store opening. He had only known me for a few days so I couldn't possibly have earned this wrath. Regardless of the fact that Dick had no idea what he was talking about, and he had all of his facts wrong, to berate a supervisor in front of his subordinates is organizationally self-destructive. And I am not talking about a simple snide remark or a snotty comment; I am talking about a full-throated tongue-lashing accusing me of gross incompetence.

While this buffoon was wagging his finger and proving his complete BossHoleness in front of everyone, I could see through the double doors to the back of the stockroom. Each of our stores had a large heavy steel machine that was used to compact cardboard boxes into recycling

bales, essentially a large trash compactor. I began having this out of body experience where all I could hear were the parental voices from the old Charlie Brown TV Specials bleating “Wah, Wah, Wah.” Meanwhile I was daydreaming about the effect of this trash compactor on Dick in the event of a tragic “accident.” I was imagining a scene from the 007 movie *Goldfinger*, when the villain crushed an uncooperative mobster in the automobile compactor at a wrecking yard.

This was one of the many times in my life that my wife has saved me from myself. Because just as I was beginning to rationalize that I could either do the crime and be out in seven years with good behavior, or knock this arrogant punk through a wall and insert my name badge in his forehead as I told him to take his job and shove it, I heard a voice in the back of my head. It was my wife saying, “He’s not worth it and you can’t quit.” We were in the final days of completing construction of our new home and had not received the permanent financing from our construction loan yet. Changing jobs at that moment would have been a huge mess.

So I did what most employees do when they work for a Boss-Hole. I shut down. I said, “Yassuh boss.” “Whadeva you needs, boss.” I gave a big smile and counted the days until my loan was approved. The day after the loan was approved I began a new job with an employer that appreciated what I could do for them. And during the 30-45 days it took before I could leave, I supported my store teams but I spent most of the time laying the groundwork for my transition. Within 30 days of moving to my new employer I had successfully recruited several of the best pharmacy managers from my old company to join my team. We thrived while my old employer struggled. Now I don’t typically gloat, but I will admit to a certain amount of vindication when Dick got himself thrown in jail for securities fraud a few years later.

If you work for a partial BossHole there is a good chance you can help them mend their ways. If you work for a Complete BossHoles then you either have to convince higher management to remove him or find a different job. Complete BossHoles rarely convert to Great bosses. My guess is that even when he gets out of jail Dick will still be a dick.

The last species of BossHoles I need to discuss is the Underground BossHoles. These people are devious and sneaky. They pretend to agree and be a good teammate but they save their knife wounds for when your back is turned. Sometimes it takes a while to smoke them out. You may never hear an unkind word directly from their mouths but they eventually leave their footprints in the sand somewhere. When they do you can plan your strategy to neutralize their impact. The thing that shuts them down more than anything is shining the light of truth on their behavior. They thrive like cockroaches in the dark of night. Once you turn on the kitchen lights they usually run for cover.

Hopefully none of you ever have to work for a BossHole. However, as in my case, that is not always under your control. You cannot control the twists and turns of life but you can control your own actions. In order to protect yourself from harm you must understand how to be a Great Boss so that you can help any supervisor you encounter learn to do the right things the right way to become a Great boss. More importantly, you can personally learn to be a Great Boss by reading the rest of this book.

The examples in this book are slanted towards the individual boss looking to own and operate his/her own business. However the principles and techniques that create team unity and effective action are the same whether you are applying them to your own business, a department within a larger business, or any team of people united in a common purpose. No matter what you hope to achieve someone has to set the tone and lead the charge. A Great Boss will always improve the performance of his team. So learn to be a Great Boss.





# CHAPTER 1

## Why Read this Book?

**“An organization’s ability to learn, and translate that learning into action rapidly, is the ultimate competitive advantage.” Jack Welch Former Chairman and CEO of General Electric**

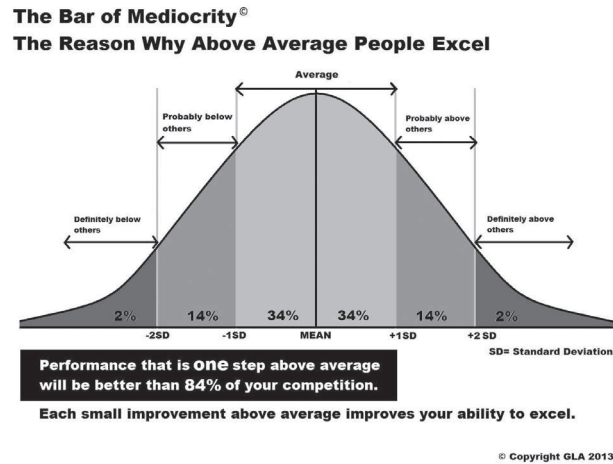
The overwhelming majority of people are mediocre. This is not a politically correct thing to say however, it is a statistical fact. Most people’s daily actions hover within a narrow performance band around average. Statisticians call this distribution of behavior the Normal distribution and describe it as a bell shaped curve. What they mean by that is that sixty-eight percent of all performance falls within one standard deviation of average. If you are content to be within that sixty-eight percent then please don’t read this book. Close it and now and file it away with all the other great books you have never read.

If you choose to continue reading then please understand that you do so at your own peril. The excuses that people typically use for failing to succeed involve reluctance to risk failure. This book shines the cold hard light of truth on how teams work and what causes them to excel. Once you understand the true drivers of championship caliber performance you will

no longer be able to consider mediocrity acceptable. You will understand that failure is the stepping stone to greatness. You will become driven to pursue excellence. You will understand that you are in charge of your fate. And you will no longer be able to use the excuses that you currently allow to prevent you from taking positive action.

And just in case you are wondering whether you have the ability to be great let me ask you a few questions. What percentage of companies do you think are great companies? What percentage of bosses are Great Bosses? What percentage of teams are great teams? Would you be happy if you were better than eighty-five percent of your competition? Well, all it takes to be better than eighty-five percent of your competition is for you to be a little bit better than average. Here is how I come up with that number.

If all competitor's performance is plotted on a graph and the graph is a Normal curve, the numerically average performance would be at the fifty percent mark. Statistically however, sixty-eight percent of the competitors would perform within one standard deviation of the average of fifty. Everyone within that performance band is statistically defined as average. Half of this sixty eight percent would be above fifty and half would be below the fifty mark. Adding fifty plus thirty four equals eighty four so if you perform at more than one standard deviation above average you will perform better than eighty four percent of your competitors. The good news is you don't have to become a superhero to become a Great Boss. All you have to do is transform yourself to be a little better than average and you will outperform eighty five percent of your competitors. This is a little bit of a geeky point but the math is correct. This book will teach you everything you need to know to rocket past average and become a Great Boss and the leader of a championship caliber team. You must learn to rise above the Bar of Mediocrity.



An increasing body of research is suggesting that our educational system and self-esteem oriented culture have conspired to beat the creativity and love of learning out of a large share of our youth. “Helicopter parents” micromanaging their children’s lives, a school system teaching to the test, and endless adult praise for participating rather than achieving, have generated a group of people who have always gotten the rewards without necessarily ever doing the work. When rewards are given without effort being required, the unmistakable message is that effort is not required.

Carol Dweck Ph.D., professor at Stanford University, is one of the world’s leading experts on motivation. In her book, *Mindset*, she contends that people sabotage their own success when they operate with what she calls a fixed-mindset. People with this mindset believe that they are as smart as they are ever going to get and that you can’t teach an old dog new tricks. They see no reason to put in effort to excel. After all, they get a trophy just for participating. If you have a fixed mindset then you have a choice to make. Get over it or abdicate your future to the efforts of others. The reality is that if you are not getting better at what you do, you are losing ground to your competition. And everyone is competing whether they choose to believe it or not. Sadly, until they acknowledge that they have something to learn, they won’t.

If you see yourself as stuck where you are forever, I am sorry. That must be a miserable place to be. Successful people, however, don't believe that. They operate using what Dweck calls a growth mindset. These growth-oriented people believe that there is always something they can learn to do better.

This book is for people who want to be Great Bosses or learn to help their bosses become one. It explains the step-by-step process by which an individual can learn to be a Great Boss. Great Bosses build successful teams. Therefore, the focus of this text will be on the knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes necessary to build a high functioning team. However, most small businesses start with a few employees and can't afford to take months to learn how to mold those employees in to an effective team. So the lessons presented here are designed to be implemented immediately by anyone who is willing to invest the few hours it will take to read this book.

Why should you care what I have to say? Because I have been where you want to go. I have worked in the corporate offices of three different large publicly traded companies, Sav-On Drugs, Thrifty Drug Stores and Smith's Food and Drug Stores. I functioned as a Pharmacist, Pharmacy Manager, Training Manager, Marketing Manager, Category Manager, Pharmacy District Manager and Regional Pharmacy Manager. I was the first pharmacist in my graduating class to be promoted to pharmacy manager at a time when that mattered. I was the first pharmacist to become corporate training manager, marketing manager and then category manager for Sav-On Drugs at a time when that mattered. I was in the Executive Development Program with Jewel Companies, and I have spent more than 15,000 hours of my life in various meetings with executives in those companies.

Since leaving the corporate world, I have owned and operated several successful small businesses including a chain of Halloween shops, two drug stores, a medical supply store, a medical billing business and an Internet marketing company. I have unloaded trucks, vacuumed floors, remodeled stores, hired hundreds of people, fired more than I care to remember, worked 80 hours per week and agonized over every major decision.

I served on the local and national boards as a director and dedicated over 20 hours a week to coaching youth sports while raising two amazing kids with my high school sweetheart. I have experienced all the joys and sorrows of financing, building and operating businesses that depend on my efforts for their survival. I have lived through what works and what doesn't work in the small business world. I have paid dearly for my business education from the school of hard knocks. It has been a wild ride made palatable by the support of the woman I love. I wouldn't trade a minute of it for anything. But I wish sometimes that I had had some better advice from someone who knew better.

In 2007, I sold the retail businesses and embarked on a new career as an Assistant Dean and Associate Professor of Management at Wingate University School of Pharmacy in Wingate, North Carolina. Now I teach the next generation of pharmacists the management skills they need to thrive in the post Affordable Care Act world. And within 18 months of becoming an academic dean I won a national award for excellence from the teacher's academy.

During my business career I have supervised thousands of employees, worked for hundreds of bosses and battled organizational stupidity at every turn. I've worked with hundreds of managers, some of whom were brilliant, and I have worked with highly paid individuals who were dumber than a rock. I have seen what works and what doesn't work in the operations, human resources, marketing, distribution and purchasing departments.

I may be the only one in the country with such a unique resume of experience in management roles in a variety of settings. And even though everywhere I have been I have been successful, I possess no special intelligence. I have succeeded because I have been able to figure out what needs to be done and found a way to get it done. I have many faults but my singular unique talent is the ability to observe things that others don't see and to integrate those observations into effective action. This manifests in my being a voracious reader and collector of seemingly unrelated information that becomes the foundation for breakthrough ideas.

As a result of my experiences, I have developed a leadership philosophy that works. It works regardless of whether you apply it to your own business, a corporate position, an academic setting, a healthcare team or a sports team. It works because it is simple to explain and easy to understand. It works because it uses simple guidelines that can be applied to any setting. It works because it cuts out the crap and gets to the point. I believe in making everything as simple as possible but not simpler. I hope to describe this simple process of leadership in a way that you will be able to apply these principles to your own life, your own teams or your own business. My goal is to inspire you to translate what I teach into effective action. I learned a long time ago, as a corporate trainer that coming up with fancy slides and long-winded speeches is not a substitute for effective training. What real people in the real world want is knowledge and skills that they can turn into effective practices today.

Much has been written about the subject of leadership. My approach to teaching you to become an effective leader of others is driven by the fact that in most small organizations, the owner/operator or team leader must perform a variety of functions. The three functions that all successful leaders must perform are Coaching, Commanding and Creating an environment that engenders success. These three simple steps to becoming a Great Boss – Coach, Command and Create - provide the backbone for effective and actionable leadership of any enterprise that seeks to be good at what it does, whether it is made up of players, pharmacists, doctors, executives, plumbers or teachers.

If you have not had the opportunity to manage others in a competitive environment, you may not understand what I mean. So let me finish this introduction by giving a couple of examples from my fast pitch softball coaching career to illustrate the impact a single leader can have on the outcome of a team. I know that some of you may not enjoy sports analogies, but they are hard to avoid when you are discussing teams because they provide such a target rich environment of examples. If you don't get sports then just bear with me as I will mix in examples from community practice pharmacy as well.

In the first case, imagine that at the very early stages of the championship season, in the first practice game prior to the start of tournament competition, you have 15 players on your team. As this first practice game gets into the late innings with a tie score, your team comes up to bat with the winning run on second base and two outs. One of your new players is the next scheduled batter. As the coach you have two options: You can let this new person take the at-bat and try to drive in the winning run or substitute a hitter that you know much better to attempt to drive in the winning run. Imagine the impact of this decision, not on the outcome of this individual game, but on the development of this player as a productive member of your team by the end of the season.

If you pull this new young lady out of the game for a pinch hitter, in the first practice game of the year and do not give her the opportunity to drive in that run, you will have created doubt in that player's mind. She will begin wondering:

“Does my coach think I am not good enough? Why does my coach not trust me to perform? If my coach is not going to allow me to try to hit in a practice game when it doesn't really matter, when is he ever going to allow me to hit when it does matter?”

The potential positive impact of a trusted familiar player coming up, getting a base hit and winning the game versus the negative impact of demoralizing, de-motivating and disengaging that new person from your team effort, is something that a good leader must consider. If you win the meaningless game and end up destroying the relationship with the new player, have you really helped your team in the long run? If you communicate to your new player, “I don't believe in you. I don't trust you,” how will that impact her desire to excel in the future?

The net effect of this decision to send in a pinch hitter for the new player is that the coach is arbitrarily determining the value of that new player to the team without ever giving the player the opportunity to prove

what she can do. In that scenario, the typical reaction of the player is to withdraw and stop trying. Her response is usually, “What difference does it make if I work hard if he’s not even going to let me have the opportunity?”

Now consider a different way to handle this scenario. Prior to the critical at-bat, you call a timeout. You go up to the young lady and say,

“You know what? I don’t care whether you get a hit or you don’t. What I need you to do is get a good pitch and hit it hard somewhere, and then we’ll just see what happens. Don’t worry about trying to knock in the run. Just relax. This girl throws 80% of her pitches on the outside corner. I want you to take that outside pitch and just hit me a nice sharp ground ball up the middle.”

That same young player will now get back into the batter’s box with an entirely different mindset than the player who gets pulled for the pinch hitter. She will think; “The coach trusts me enough to let me try. He knows that I can’t control the outcome. Even if I don’t get a hit, as long as I have a good at bat, coach will be happy.” The real upside of this leadership strategy is that the coach has let the player determine the level of success she achieves by her own performance. If after a sufficient number of at bats the player cannot get the job done, that player may rightly find herself cut from the team. But in the second scenario the player’s performance has determined whether she stays on the team, not the coach’s arbitrary guess. Her performance, rather than an artificial decision by the coach, has determined the outcome. This is one example of how the leadership style I will explain to you can have a huge impact on the psyche of your team.

I’m going to give you the other instance where I think a small effort to apply effective leadership can have a huge impact on the character, morale and engagement level of your team. Imagine that your team is participating in a team-building event at an outdoor challenge course. Your team is faced with a task. The task is a 15-foot-high wall. Your job is to get all 15 players plus coaches over that wall in 10 minutes. The rules are that



you can't use any tools other than yourselves. You can lift each other. You can throw each other. You can do whatever you want but you have to get people over this wall. The task is crystal clear - get your team over that wall.

Imagine that the team is focused. They give a full effort, but they cannot get that last person over the wall and time expires. You are left with options as the leader of this team. The first option is that you can shrug off the failure and give up. You as the leader of that group can say,

“Okay, we didn't make it. Let's go on to the next station.  
Let's go try the next event.”

Another option is to refuse to accept defeat. You can look your team in the eye and say,

“I don't care about the time limit. I don't care about the next event. We're not leaving here as a group until we get over that wall. If we have to stay here the next 10 days, we're going to figure out a way to get this done.”

Consider what these different options communicate. In the first case, “We didn't make it. It's okay. Don't worry about it. We tried.” In the second scenario, “We're not leaving until we succeed. We don't care what the rules are about an artificial time limit. We're not leaving. We're not giving up until we succeed as a team.”

It is a single leadership choice but a huge difference in the long-term impact on your team attitude and chemistry. Real leadership occurs at unexpected times, and the moment must be seized when it occurs. You must learn to find these teaching moments, develop an effective strategy to capture the good lessons and then model the values you are trying to instill in your team. Leadership is less about grand strategies and Harvard business plans and more about leading by example. You will show leadership by acting like a leader. If you will do that, you can turn any group of teammates into an effective, powerful, successful organization.

**“Executives owe it to the organization and to their fellow workers not to tolerate non-performing individuals in important jobs.” Peter Drucker, Management Expert**

So come with me on this journey towards learning to be a Great Boss by building a team that will achieve excellence. The process is the same regardless of what you want this team to accomplish. Whether you wish to build your own business, develop a product team within your existing organization or develop a competitive youth sports team, the process is the same. It doesn't matter whether you want to be the primary leader or simply help others get the job done. There is a process that will lead to success, and this book is designed to help illuminate that process.

**Don't become a BossHole and never forget that friends don't let friends become BossHoles.**