

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



BOB LIVES IN AND WORKS OUT OF CALGARY, ALBERTA. After forty-five years of public service, Bob retired in 2014 and is now engaged in his own “leadership through engagement” practice. He is well known across the country as a thought leader, author, and a down-to-earth practitioner of new models for employee and citizen engagement, systems thinking and building leadership at all levels. His emerging and new style of leadership is based on the concept of an entrepreneurial “practice” off the corner of the desk. This exciting approach is predicated on the belief that the real job of leaders is to create more leaders and that leadership can be found in the file rooms as well as the boardrooms.

ABOUT THE BOOK

STUDIES INDICATE THAT HUMAN BEINGS MAY BE BECOMING INCREASINGLY more disengaged than ever. The trends are most pronounced in the workplace where workplace engagement scores are flagging, as well as in our communities where citizen engagement benchmarks—such as voting patterns—show a serious lack of engagement. This little book is both a story of trying to change systems from within while growing front line leadership. It provokes us to go way beyond theory and motivation, to find real “Monday morning” practices and tools to move our engagement scores in a more positive direction.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Handcrafted Leadership

*The Art & Craft of Building
Engaged Workplaces and Communities*

will be released by Doghouse Publishing, of Calgary, Alberta, in November 2014.

For further information, you may contact the author by e-mail at:

chartierbob1@gmail.com

For further announcements and details of forthcoming events, please visit his website at:

www.bobchartier.ca

Handcrafted Leadership



*The Art & Craft of Building
Engaged Workplaces and Communities*

BOB CHARTIER

author of Canadian best-seller
Bureaucratically Incorrect: Letters to a Young Public Servant

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Foreword – *by Karen Bonner, Public Servant/Integral Coach™*
- Preface
- 1 The Big Idea
- 2 Leadership Practice – The Big Challenge
- 3 Engagement – The Big Work
- 4 Engaging the Individual
- 5 Engaging the Team
- 6 Engaging the System
- 7 The Relationship Question
- 8 Engaging Issues
- 9 Engaging Audiences
- 10 Engaging Accountability
- 11 The Future of Workplace Engagement
- 12 The Future of Citizen Engagement
- 13 Conclusion – Some Good Questions
 - Acknowledgements
 - A Few Good Books
 - Author Biography

PREFACE

I am still learning

MICHELANGELO (87 years of age)

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO READ THIS BOOK. This little book is simply my reflection upon two decades of ongoing curiosity around new approaches to leadership, as well as a fresh look at engagement and how the two have a highly synergetic relationship.

These days, there are many books to choose from that offer great insight into the subjects of leadership, workplace, and citizen engagement. I would encourage you to read them all. These are all critical issues for our times and we need to learn as much as we can.

This contribution to the conversation may be unique for a number of reasons.

First of all, it is a true story. All the ideas, tools, and practices described in the book have been test-driven by myself, as well as hundreds of fellow practitioners, and we have all experienced the highs of success and the lows of failed attempts.

Secondly, much of the writing, experience, and thinking in these areas of interest is often harvested from the private sector, the business, and industrial and commercial world. This book is a view from another lens—the public sector. The experiences, stories, and learning came from our attempt to bring

the world of practice-based leadership and engagement into the unique world of public service. By contrast, there are very few books available to choose from on public service renewal and I believe any contribution to that conversation should be helpful.

Finally, this small effort is about boots on the ground. You will find some theory, some provocative ideas, and some blue-sky stuff. Most important of all, I believe you will find something that you could actually do on Monday morning. This was not written as a “how-to” book, but rather as more of a “how do you do” book.

These days, public service is becoming more and more about putting out fires and I hope this little bundle of paper might actually start a few, especially in the hearts and minds of most public servants who have sensed that there is more to public service than just doing the job; we have to fix the place as well!

That being said, I believe much or most of the book may speak to our colleagues in the other sectors; private and not for profit included.

The title means a lot to me.

I started working fifty years ago as a plumber’s apprentice with the goal of becoming a craftsman—a journeyman. I got waylaid from that goal for a number of reasons including a bit of disillusionment about the level of craft remaining in the trades and a world where prefabrication, speed, and corner-cutting were starting to be more important than true craftsmanship. I also learned at the time, that I wasn’t a particularly adept or naturally gifted handyman, to tell the truth.

I later found my commitment to craft through the arts, and the little pottery tea bowl icon in this book is a sincere reflection of the authenticity of the ancient world of handcraft. I would like to believe that I tried to infuse the spirit of the handcrafted approach in my life in public service

I traveled the gravel roads in the early days and went the extra mile with people as I tried to practice public service in the old school way, as a servant of the citizen, as well as of the government in power.

I resisted the cults of efficiency over effectiveness and saw my work as serving citizens not customers.

I questioned the flavour of the month expediency of the emerging technologies and the notion of a new “virtual fix” for everything.

I would still rather talk to a colleague or a client directly rather than “connect” to them in some second-hand way.

We may never really get leadership right, but knowing there are thousands of practitioners out there taking on leadership from the corner of their desk, I would say it is a fine start.

We may never get engagement right, but recently, I had the privilege of being in a room where more than one hundred politicians, public servants, educators, business leaders, and some amazing young high school kids were sitting knee to knee in a World Café conversation about sexual abuse. It was a powerful engagement moment and it makes me want to believe that we are going down a good road.

Leadership and engagement is messy work, not done well from an office or from behind a computer. It means getting into a room with people you may not know, rolling up your sleeves and having some difficult, but amazing, conversations.

My dad was a plumber and his hands were dirty every day. He knew how to do good work and he was always engaged with his crew and his customers. He did good work and he led from where he stood.

Handcrafted practice—makes for good work.

*Bob Chartier
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