

# Pull Thinking®

*Harness the Power of Pull to Fuel Growth, and Ignite Performance*  
*by*  
*Aligning People, Culture and Purpose*

Volume I

Kenneth E. Meyer

*with*  
*Jeffrey A. Lebow*

Copyright © 2002 - 2005 by Kenneth E. Meyer

All rights reserved. Published by Alignment at Work, LLC Publishing Division, Atlanta, Georgia, USA. Reproduction or translation of any part of this work beyond that permitted by Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act without the permission of the copyright owner is unlawful. Requests for permission or further information should be addressed to the Permissions Department, Pull Thinking LLC.

"Pull Thinking" is registered as a trademark and service mark in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

"Pull Principle" is registered as a service mark in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

While the Publisher has taken all reasonable care in the preparation of this book the Publisher makes no representation, express or implied, with regard to the accuracy of the information contained herein and cannot accept any legal responsibility or liability for any errors or omissions from the book or the consequences thereof.

ISBN 0-9726403-0-4 (Volume I)

Printed in the United States of America

14 13 12 11 10 9 8

## PREFACE

---

You seem to be doing all the right things. You are current with what all the latest business book authors are saying and apply (as best you can) what those thought leaders and business gurus are saying. You are even among the very small percent that become a model of success being written about by one of those major authors. Yet, you find that you still have internal conflicts and communication issues between people and teams causing tense relationships and other difficulties. You can't understand why this is happening. Why isn't everyone cooperating and happy? What's missing?

You have tried to apply what you read in the latest business book, but nothing seems to stick. It seems so easy when you read those case study examples of very successful companies like GE or Bank of America or EDS. You keep buying those books as they appear in hopes of finding the right solution that will ignite your employees and turn your business around.

The question that needs to be asked is: How do your internal and external customers want your business to be organized, to operate, to handle financial flow, etc. Like the snow flake, there is only one particular way that will produce the utmost best, most efficient process that creates the product and service experiences that your end customer wants. There is no one common formula for all of us to follow. The reality of it is that it is an individual thing. You need to figure out what is best for you.

Many successful businesses are led by CEO's, mentored by other successful leaders and or students of various business authors, achieve ultimate successful application of what they learned to their own businesses. Their successes are then chronicled in the latest business success book. Thus providing a platform on which the next business leaders build their success. And so we go.

Business authors today certainly provide great insight and advice from the stand point of synthesizing what works for one business leader or another. Authors attempt to discover how successful business leaders think and often suggest copying their habits as a way to become as successful. One author tells us to do what we are best at and pick people to do what they are best at. Another shows us what measurements successful companies have in common.

Another says that it's about having a leader that knows how to execute.

They are all heading in the right direction, and incremental improvements are certainly accomplished by some. The problem is, they leave out how to connect people to work together for the customer's benefit. All of them are high level and do not really talk to all levels of an organization.

### **What's different? Three examples:**

Curt Coffman and Gabriel Gonzalez-Molina, Ph.D. in *Follow This Path*, recommend emotional engagement as one of the keys to understanding successful business leaders today. "The accepted conclusions about emotions indicate that they are objective, measurable, and universal to all human feelings. The implications of the effects of emotions as they relate to the workplace and to customer behavior are simple but powerful." ... "But emotions are the mechanisms of our mind least understood by management – hence the great opportunity for organizations." ... "As opposed to a more transactional approach to leadership, an approach in which leaders prescribe for employees what to do, transformational leadership involves leaders broadening and elevating the interests of their employees. This can be accomplished by creating awareness and acceptance of the purposes and mission of the organization and looking beyond self-interest to the interest of the group as a whole."<sup>1</sup> They go on and provide the measures the leaders use to create this awareness in an organization. The difference that Pull Thinking brings is to tie the measurements to purposes in a structured way within the flow of customer service. Pull Thinking provides an excellent context for the very important measurements that the Gallup organization presents.

Jim Collins in *Good to Great* has the Three Circles of the Hedgehog Concept<sup>2</sup> as the cornerstone of the book: 1) What you are

---

<sup>1</sup> Coffman, Curt and Gonzalez-Molina, Gabriel, *Follow This Path*, Warner Books, Inc, 2002 pages 235, 236

<sup>2</sup> Collins, Jim, *Good to Great*, HarperCollins Publishers, 2001, page 96

deeply passionate about; 2) What you can be the best in the world at; and 3) What drives your economic engine. Using this at a high level certainly brought results to the companies chronicled in the book, but this does not work to bring buy in and alignment to all levels of an organization. It does not show individuals up and down the line how to connect to the organizational structure, how to become customer focused, or how to be empowered to solve their own problems. It does not build teams or change mindsets. With Pull Thinking, the three Hedgehog Concept circles are addressed automatically. Pull Thinking ensures an internal/external customer focus and knowledge of how to structure the environment in support of the internal and external customers of the whole organization. You will see how those three circles represent purposes – each having a connection in the service flow structure discussed in Step 3. The three circles are really Measures of Success when seen from a Pull Thinking context (Step 1). You will learn why this is only one of the Four Dimensions of Alignment. Purpose, Measurement and Frequency of Measurement also need to be addressed. The three circles also represent choices every company needs to make at all levels. The most important aspect to note is what is missing: the customer, both internal (employees) and external.

Larry Bossidy and Ram Charan in *Execution – The Discipline of Getting Things Done*, say: “In its most fundamental sense, execution is a systematic way of exposing reality and acting on it. Most companies don’t face reality very well...that’s the basic reason they can’t execute.” ... “Execution is the job of the business leader.” ... “There’s a saying we recently heard: We don’t think ourselves into a new way of acting, we act ourselves into a new way of thinking. Acting your way into a new way of thinking begins with demystifying the word *culture*...Stripped to its essentials; an organization’s culture is the sum of its shared values, beliefs, and norms of behavior.” ... “If a company rewards and promotes people for execution, its culture will change.”<sup>5</sup> Conversely this approach will not produce maximum results because the mindset has not been

---

<sup>3</sup> Bossidy, Larry and Charan, Ram, *Execution – The Discipline of Getting Things Done*, Crown Business publisher, 2002, pages 22, 89 and 92

addressed. For that to happen, the theoretical basis for understanding how best to change needs to change. The difference is that Pull Thinking provides a practical organizational alignment strategy based on profound simple ancient truth. In present day language it allows you to make sense out of difficult problems. The most efficient way to execute is to think your way into acting. Thinking comes first – actions follow. To execute first and think second is simply more difficult and more costly and the results are less than what is possible.

### **The culture difference:**

We are talking about culture and the fundamental building blocks of business – PEOPLE and how people think – their mindsets. These authors do address behavior and motivation issues. But they fail to recognize that when thinking is addressed first these issues become less difficult. The questions answered in this book are: How do you provide a culture that supports the best service possible for any business? How do you ensure profitable growth year after year? And: How do you get Four Dimensional Alignment<sup>SM</sup> throughout the organization?

Many of the best-run businesses have goals and structures in place at all levels and appear to be doing all the right things as read in the latest business books. Yet communications problems, tense relationships and low morale still exist. What's different about Pull Thinking is that it shows first why this is happening; and, second, shows everyone at all levels what to do about it.

Pull Thinking is about a practical way for people to connect with each other and to ultimately connect with the internal/external customers and suppliers with a focus on purpose and service. As a result, it creates customer-focused listening and strategic alignment at all levels beginning at the individual level. Because of this connectedness, there is buy-in that will make your business processes and your customers' business processes more successful and sustainable. How? By addressing how we think as individuals,

as teams, as organizations, as integral parts of the communities in which we serve, and how to organize to always be efficiently responsive to their changing needs.

### **The value difference:**

With Pull Thinking three levels of value result: 1.) the individual people that make up companies; 2.) the company's processes and strategies that support the individuals providing services to external customers; and, as a result: 3.) the company's customers. Pull Thinking provides a Service Flow Pull Structure that connects the whole service supply chain. Jeff Thull in his article entitled *Winning Profitable Customers* said "It's no longer enough to offer a value-added product. You must leverage your value all the way through to your customers' customers...we are living and working in a time called the 'third era' of professional selling – but too many sales organizations are still operating in an outdated mindset." In his synopsis, he refers to this as when your services go beyond the first level: a good price; beyond the second level: helping your customers' processes; and into the third level: your customers' customers benefit from your products and services. He said that this third level of sales professional is when: "You have become an integral part of their business, a source of competitive advantage, you're making their life easier, and you're contributing to their measurable success."<sup>4</sup>

### **The bottom line:**

When you make Pull Thinking an integral part of your business, it becomes a source of competitive advantage. It makes life easier for your company and your customers thus contributing measurable success to both. You have fun!

---

<sup>4</sup> From an article by Jeff Thull called *Winning Profitable Customers*, Catalyst Magazine, June 2004, page 24

## Why write this book?

Simple—when one discovers something new and important, it's natural to want to share the discovery. This is one of those discoveries.

Pull Thinking was a light bulb of discovery born out of my frustration with implementing change in organizations. The discovery was that the entire universe is one magnificent, elegant *Pull System!* Everything nature creates is created by *Pulling!* Every action is the result of a *Pull*. Can you think of any more perfect creative process than Mother Nature?

What if this is how nature thinks? What if Pull Thinking is mental ergonomics—the easiest way to think?

I needed to capture the light bulb discovery in a way that's easy to communicate and understand, so I framed it in what I call “The Pull Principle” and “Pull Thinking.” Pull Thinking brings the Pull Principle to life and makes Pull real—something we can all measure, something we can all learn to create.

The next step was to put it to work in my life and career. As a result of Pull Thinking, my personal effectiveness increased enormously. Once I applied Pull Thinking, I could solve difficult problems very quickly. Even more important, it's been very effective for others—I found myself able to talk to CEOs, executives, supervisors, and shop floor workers in a way that had them listening differently. The language of Pull Thinking made it easy for them to open their minds to new ideas and discover solutions for themselves.

I found that we are all pulled and are pulling everyday. The word pull is already a big part of our common language as both a noun and a verb—“he has pull,” or “pull a team together,” or “pull your own weight.” Sometimes we're aware of what is pulling, sometimes we're not.

What if we could learn to Pull all the time—could we be more on-target and purposeful?

We all know people who have “magnetic” personalities. What if being “magnetic” wasn't just something one is born with, and thus



seemingly out of our control? What if it was something we could learn to use to create our own personal and business magnetism?

What if we could learn to *Harness the Power of Pull*?

Some of what you will read here may sound familiar. As time goes on, I see more and more evidence that people are beginning to understand the importance of understanding “Pull.” For example, the new *Science of Chaos* has scientists rethinking their understanding of the universe and talk about the elegant order underlying the apparent chaos that is literally Pulling the creation of the universe.

In the 2005 Number 3 issue of the McKinsey quarterly, authors John Seely Brown and John Hagel in their paper called “*From push to pull: The next frontier of innovation*”<sup>5</sup> have chronicled how a few fringe companies in the world have found the value of pull systems over push systems. One of the key messages they write talks about how the discovery of the power and efficiency of pull systems will have corporate executives reassessing how they do business.

Another example: We’ve all been caught up in the push to create vision and mission statements to pull our organizations together. Many of us are left wondering why. These statements hang on walls across corporate America, but more often than not, nothing has changed in our day-to-day routine. Organizations across the country attempt to implement and sustain various improvement initiatives, such as balanced scorecard, six sigma, total quality, team development, cellular manufacturing and pull systems, to name just a few. The result? Most of us become frustrated and disillusioned because implementation has proven to be difficult or impossible.

*Pull Thinking provides the context that gives luster, passion and power to those important statements and initiatives—and provides the tools to assure their sustained realization and harness unseen forces to align with our efforts drawing us towards our vision of success.*

For me, the early application of Pull Thinking happened to be in manufacturing, but I could have been in any business. It began with a personal shift in thinking. The application is universal, because it’s simply a different way of thinking first. Action comes second. But this is for you to discover. Then you can apply it in your own

---

<sup>5</sup> The McKinsey Quarterly, 2005 Number 3

situation. After many years of testing, I have yet to find any contradictions or incompatibilities. It simply always works.

Pull Thinking isn't the result of years of studying other thinkers and business case studies or collecting the best ideas and synthesizing them into one principle. The discovery of the Pull Principal and Pull Thinking came upon me in a flash. I spent the next several years discovering new validations and learning new applications. For me, it was like discovering fire and then figuring out how to harness its power to keep warm, cook food, forge steel, and launch rockets.

I've only begun to scratch the surface of the potential of *Pull Thinking*. I was "Pulled" to write this book so everyone could learn to "*Pull together*."

*Kenneth E. Meyer*  
*ken@pullthinking.com*  
*www.pullthinking.com*  
*Atlanta, GA*  
*Summer 2004*



“Sailing out of Chaos...”