

High Five!

Books by Ken Blanchard and Sheldon Bowles

RAVING FANS

GUNG HO!

BIG BUCKS!

*And by Ken Blanchard, Don Carew,
and Eunice Parisi-Carew*

THE ONE MINUTE MANAGER BUILDS
HIGH PERFORMING TEAMS

High Five!

The Magic of Working Together

Ken Blanchard/Sheldon Bowles

Don Carew/Eunice Parisi-Carew



WILLIAM MORROW | 75 YEARS OF PUBLISHING

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Dedicated to

LARRY HUGHES

Editor, Mentor, Friend

*The best teammate
an author
could ever ask for*

FOREWORD

When Ken Blanchard asked me to write a foreword for *High Five!* I said I would be most honored to do so. After reading the manuscript, I'm especially honored. I love this book!

High Five! stimulated my mind, reminding me that any individual can achieve more if he or she is part of a good team—especially in these increasingly complex and changing times.

Even more important, the story touched my heart, as I hope it touches yours. It shows us how having a purpose beyond ourselves adds great meaning to our lives in a way that is inspiring and nourishing.

Ken not only knows about working as part of a team, he *lives* it. He is one of the best teammates I have ever had the enjoyment of working with.

When we wrote *The One Minute Manager* together, one plus one was much greater than two. We shared a common purpose: to communicate simple truths to people in an easy-to-understand way that would help them live more effective lives. We built upon each other's strengths and had fun in the process. We know the result has been greater than what either of us could have achieved alone.

We rekindled our team effort with the book *Who Moved My Cheese?* Without Ken's prodding and encouragement, I don't know if I would have ever written that book.

Now comes *High Five!* As soon as I finished reading it, I knew I was going to share it widely among my colleagues who are on the various teams I am a part of. Reading this story can motivate us all to be better team players and improve our results.

If we are to survive and thrive in the twenty-first century, learning to work successfully in teams is a must.

As Ken and his teammates, Sheldon Bowles, coauthor of *Raving Fans*, *Gung Ho!*, and *Big Bucks!*, and Don Carew and Eunice Parisi-Carew, long-term consulting partners in Ken and his wife Margie's training and consulting company and experts on team development, emphasize, "*None of us is as smart as all of us.*"

I hope you find what you are looking for in this readable and touching story and, when you do, that you raise your hand high in the air and give yourself and others on your team a great high five!

Spencer Johnson, M.D.,
author of *Who Moved My
Cheese?* and coauthor of
The One Minute Manager

High Five!

PROLOGUE

Fired!

It burned in his brain.

His vice president was saying reengineering, downsizing, redundancy, and even “Nothing personal, Alan. No reflection on your work.”

But Alan Foster knew that was garbage. He knew all the fancy words were garbage, too. Reengineering meant fired. Finished. Not wanted.

There would be a generous severance package and outplacement counseling, but Alan wasn't listening. His head was churning, trying to understand what was happening. Somewhere in the back of his mind he knew he wasn't fitting in the way he used to. He knew he'd been spoken to any number of times about it and he hadn't changed. But those were relationship issues. The way he worked with others. That wasn't something Alan could conceive of getting fired for!

He was escorted to his office and told to pack his personal belongings; twenty-one minutes later he stood beside his car with a cardboard box of family photos, books, pens, and two cans of diet soda from his bottom drawer.

“Good-bye, Mr. Foster,” said the security guard who had escorted him out and helped by carrying the framed painting he and Susan had bought two years before.

The guard stepped back, hesitated, and then said, “Sorry to see you go. You always treated me well.”

“Damn right,” thought Alan as he placed the box and picture into the backseat of his car. “I treated everyone well.”

As if to confirm his words, and mock him at the same time, Alan’s eyes fell on an engraved plaque, sitting in the box, presented to him five years earlier: The Production Excellence Award.

That's what hurt. He may not have been a superstar, but he was a good producer. When he was given a personal goal, he met it. His reports were always on time. He was never over budget. He was in compliance 100 percent with every policy and procedure. He even personally—yes, personally—took the seven ladies in the secretarial pool to lunch on Valentine's Day.

He slammed closed the back door of his Ford. Known for keeping a cool head when trouble struck, Alan was surprised to find himself getting angry. He'd given this company ten good years, and now he'd been tossed aside on the reengineering dump of the no longer needed.

He was about to get into his car when he saw the company's new president, George Burton, parking his gray Cadillac ten spaces down from what, until now, had been Alan's space. Mr. Burton had been there six months. Yet he remained while Alan, after ten years, was being tossed out.

Hardly realizing what he was doing, Alan walked over and confronted Mr. Burton as he got out of his car.

"I just got fired," Alan announced in a voice that made both his frustration and anger evident.

"Yes. I know," said Mr. Burton.

"But I'm a good producer," Alan said as his frustration overcame his anger.

"You are," agreed Mr. Burton.

"Then why?" pleaded Alan. "I don't understand."

Mr. Burton looked as if he was about to give Alan the reengineering and downsizing speech, but after a slight hesitation he reached out, put a hand on Alan's shoulder, looked him directly in the eye, and in a firm but kind voice delivered the honest truth: "Personal production isn't the issue. The issue is, you're not a team player, Alan. I need good producers, yes, but I need good producers who are team players, too."

Alan was going to protest when Mr. Burton added, "Think about it, Alan. You do great on your own, but the rest of your team isn't doing very well. You're a puck hog, Alan. You're a one-man hockey team, and that can't work today. I need people who can work together for our goals. Sure, you'd score less, but the team would score a whole lot more. As president, I have to be concerned with maximizing the contributions of everyone. Fact is, Alan, you're costing us money."

With that Mr. Burton said, "Good luck, Alan," pulled his briefcase off the front seat, and with what might have been an apologetic smile, turned and left Alan standing there, alone and unemployed.

Alan walked slowly back to his car and drove home.

Susan was a saint.

“Don’t worry, dear. You’re good. You’ll get another job easily. And a better job, too!”

Alan figured he could get another job all right. But a better job? He wasn’t so sure. He knew Mr. Burton was right. He wasn’t a team player. Alan didn’t mean to hog the puck the way Mr. Burton accused. It was just that for him puck passing and scoring goals didn’t go together. They never had.

Since leaving home at sixteen he’d been his own man. The Air Force had given him his formal education and taught him to fly. Crew loved to fly with Alan. Other pilots might walk a perfunctory check around their aircraft before takeoff. Alan inspected everything. It was ironic. The crew trusted him because he trusted no one. He even checked the sophisticated military weather forecasts with civilian ones.

Later, as a businessman, Alan continued life as a one-man band. He kept control of everything. With high energy, hard work, and a sharp mind he always exceeded his goals, even if the team didn't. His boss had told him many times that he had to become a team player. He'd try but would quickly revert to his old ways. They produced results—at least for Alan they did.

But Alan could sense the world was changing. In every industry it was the team players who were in demand. The days of a lone wolf like Alan, good producer or not, were ending. And while Alan didn't know it, even if he had been a superstar, at least what he'd have called a superstar, that wouldn't have saved him. His definition of superstar and George Burton's definition were very different. A superstar to George Burton had to meet two tests: personal production and, equally important, a superstar had to make the rest of his or her team more productive; way more productive. Alan's idea of superstar didn't go beyond the first test.

CHAPTER 1

Loud, constant cheers and the crack of wooden hockey sticks frantically trying to get the puck rang out in the frigid air and bounced back from the arena's concrete walls and the wooden stands where parents were stamping their feet to keep warm.

On the ice there was a mad scramble behind the home net as the clock hit zero, the horn sounded, and the game ended. The spectators quickly exited to the heated canteen while the players headed for the dressing rooms.

When it came to energy, drive, and enthusiasm, the grade-five boys hockey team at Riverbend Elementary School was truly remarkable. Every single player was destined for NHL stardom.

At least that's what they believed. If unflinching belief in one's own ability and a can-do attitude were the magic key to success, the Riverbend Warriors would have been at the top of their league.

Unfortunately, in reality, they had lost most of their games. When they won, it usually meant the opposing team was playing even worse hockey. And this Saturday, Riverbend had lost again.

As Alan Foster watched his son, David, and his teammates go down to yet another humiliating loss, he marveled at how little the boys seemed aware of their own shortcomings. Skating off the ice they were defiant in defeat. A bad referee, bad ice, bad breaks, and even bad skate sharpening were among the culprits being named. No one was accepting responsibility, individually or collectively, for the loss.

"Another great night of grade-five hockey," said Alan to Coach Milt Gorman while David, down in the locker room, changed to street clothes.

"I've always dreamed of a great team. Instead, once again we got our heads handed to us," replied Milt with a warm laugh.

"You and Coach Nanton really are wonderful the way you give so much time to this," said Alan.

"Gives me a chance to spend time with my son, and besides, I love the game," said Coach Gorman as he stepped out of the player's box on his way to the locker room. "Some days, though, I do wish I didn't have a team with half of the boys frightened to go after the puck and the other half hogging the puck the second they get their stick on it."

The reference to puck hogs rattled Alan, but not as much as Coach Gorman's next words: "David told my Billy that you got cut loose at work."

"That's right," replied Alan with more brusqueness than he intended.

"Sorry to hear that," said Milt as he swung several spare hockey sticks up on his shoulder. "Bad luck."

"No," Alan heard himself saying emphatically, "not bad luck. The last four or five years the company has been changing. I didn't. The result was I didn't fit anymore. It wasn't bad luck or even a bad ref or bad ice. It was my fault."

"Jeez," said Milt. "If our kids had half the guts and gumption you've got to take personal responsibility for what happens, they might really be on their way to the NHL."

"To tell the truth, this is the first time I've admitted it to myself or anyone else," said Alan. "I guess listening to those kids leaving the ice with all their misplaced grumbling was a wake-up call."

Alan's admission was also right in line with his one-man-band philosophy. He believed he had only himself to count on, so no one else could take the blame. It also provided a way to avoid facing the real problem. He had accepted responsibility. What more could he do? Case closed. No need to look deeper or further.

Of course, Milt wasn't aware of this. He was thinking about something entirely different.

"Well, here's the thing," said Milt. "I really didn't mean to embarrass you."

"No problem," said Alan.

"Nice of you to say. But what I was trying to get at is that Gus Nanton and I could really use help with these kids. I know from David that work used to keep you busy most evenings and weekends, but I was hoping you might have the time now to give us a hand."

"Me teach hockey? I haven't skated in years. I'm not even sure I remember the rules," said Alan.

"I know the rules. Coach Nanton skates beautifully. Besides, as coaches we have only one job and that's to get these kids working as a team, teaching them that everyone, working together, will accomplish more than each of them giving 100 percent individually. That's where we could use some help. If these kids learn the magic of teamwork, we'll have given them a greater gift than all the skating practice and rule drill ever could."

The arena, which minutes before had reverberated with the clash of sticks and cheers, was now deserted except for Alan and Milt.

"Okay," said Alan, taking a deep breath. "Second honest confession of the night. The change I got fired over? Teamwork. I got fired even though I was one of their best producers because I wasn't a team player. I'd hardly be the one to teach teamwork."

Milt cocked his head to the side as if to better consider what Alan had said. Then, shifting the weight of the hockey sticks on his shoulder, he replied: "That company may not want you, but I do. I think you'll be perfect. You don't have to sing like Pavarotti to teach singing."

Actually, Milt wasn't really concerned with perfection or even being average. He just needed another parent to share the load.

Sensing interest, Milt continued: "My wife and I sell bottled water from our store for a living. Gus Nanton is a graphic designer—on his own, works out of his basement office. We know nothing about teamwork. At least you know something about it. Around here," he added with a laugh, "you'll be our expert!"

Then Milt Gorman said the words Alan needed to hear more than anything. Slowly, deliberately, and sincerely he said, "I want you, Alan."

"I'd love to do it," Alan said softly to keep his voice from cracking with gratitude. He was wanted.

"Practice at seven p.m. Tuesday then?" said Milt.

"Sure thing," replied Alan.

"That's great; and thanks. I'm looking forward to working with you," Milt called back as he disappeared down the ramp to the dressing room.

Alan's explanation to his wife began simply: "You've heard that saying, people teach what they most need to learn themselves? Well, I'm going to be teaching teamwork to the Riverbend Warriors."

Teaching, not learning, however, was Alan's aim. Teamwork was fine for a sport like hockey or basketball, but in Alan's world, the world he thought of as the real world, if you wanted to get something done, you did it yourself. When Alan's butt was on the proverbial line, Alan trusted no one but himself to cover it. The fact that being a lone wolf had cost him his job, while working with his team would have saved him, was an irony lost on Alan.

At Milt's house later that evening, his wife, Anna, turned out her bedside light, snuggled up against her husband, and said, "So he gets fired because he is such an awful team player, and you take him on to teach teamwork?"

"That's it," Milt admitted.

"If I ever forget why I love you, just remind me of this, please. You're wonderful," Anna replied.