



BILL SIMS JR.

green
beans
&
ice cream

THE REMARKABLE POWER
OF POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

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Bill

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Bill

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&
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**THE REMARKABLE POWER
OF POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT**

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“It must be realized that there is nothing more difficult to plan, more uncertain of success, or more dangerous to manage than a new order of things . . . for he who introduces it makes enemies of all those who derived advantage from the old order and finds but lukewarm defenders among those who stand to gain from the new one.

Such a lukewarm attitude grows partly out of fear of the adversaries and partly from the incredulity of men in general, who actually have no faith in new things until they have been proven by experience.”

—Niccolo Machiavelli, circa 1513

Table of Contents

One: The Little Rebel	1
Two: Why Did He Do That?	3
Three: Changing Attitudes and Self-Motivation	9
Four: Does Punishment Really Work?	11
Five: The Church of Here and Now	17
Six: Why Does R+® ¹ Work	19
Seven: Blinded by the Light	21
Eight: Why Cash Isn't King	23
Nine: The \$3,000 Jacket	27
Ten: Behaviors We Haven't Learned to Observe	31
Eleven: Why Do I Have to Recognize People Anyway?	33
Twelve: "Stop Recognizing Those Employees!"	35
Thirteen: A T-Shirt for a Million Dollar Idea?	37
Fourteen: Who Killed the Work Ethic?	41
Fifteen: Daughter of the Month	47
Sixteen: Most Likely to Succeed	49

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Seventeen: “You Can’t Positively Reinforce People If They Hate Your Guts”	51
Eighteen: Teacher’s Pet Syndrome	55
Nineteen: Pink Cadillacs	59
Twenty: CAVE People: One Size Does Not Fit All	63
Twenty-One: “Business Is Behavior”	69
Twenty-Two: Stuff That Rolls Downhill	73
Twenty-Three: “Feel-Good” Recognition	77
Twenty-Four: Not Another Baseball Cap	81
Twenty-Five: Isn’t a Paycheck Enough?	85
Twenty-Six: Is Cash Really King?	89
Twenty-Seven: I Hate My Boss!	93
Twenty-Eight: Is It Positive or Punishing?	95
Twenty-Nine: Don’t Drink the Pink Kool-Aid	99
Thirty: Chocolate, Vanilla, or Strawberry? The Great Debate	105
Thirty-One: Empowering Employees is R+ ^{®1}	113
Thirty-Two: What Makes a Great Leader?	117
Thirty-Three: Why Green Beans & Ice Cream?	129

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Foreword...

Well here it is—my first book. This was a lot harder than I thought it would be... I hope you enjoy it. You are holding the culmination of my life's work (nearly 30 years) in the area of positive reinforcement and employee motivation/behavior change at large and small North American firms.

In the movie that bears his name, Forrest Gump said, "Life is like a box of chocolates." I think my life has proven him to be correct. My early years in business can best be summed up as the proverbial "start-up with a shoe-string budget," "wing and a prayer," and "the school of hard knocks." Many years later, when I started talking about Green Beans and Ice Cream, I had no idea that people around the world would want to hear the message, and that it would resonate so strongly with them. I am humbled that it has touched so many hearts and hope that in some small way it will make a difference for you too.

While there is a long, long list of people who have inspired and helped me, I respect your patience as my reader and readily acknowledge that we cannot list them all. Nevertheless, just a few of those I wish to thank from my professional world are Aubrey Daniels, Bob Nelson, Gene Owens, Gail Snyder, George Self, Mark and Neil Biteler, Doug Hamilton, Dave Stanley, Vic Anapolle, Ray Miller, Bruce Majors, Diana Linville, Ken Yockey,

Larry Beggs, Kenny Sawyer, Barbara Glanz, Leo Inghilleri, Billy Yarbrough, Max Dover, Lisa Kane, Bob Coleman, Jane Greer, Keith Johanson, Marie Jones, Bob Veazie, Jitu Patel, Faiz Al-Thi-ga, Ann Lindsey, Tom Hippe, Ron Ellis, Darryl Oscars, Tommy Sides, Rudi Fillingim, Mike Gibney, and Steve Kopecki—I thank all of you for believing in me and for the different perspectives on human behavior that you have helped me to see.

From the bottom of my heart, I thank my mother Edna, and my father Bill Sr., for being the two parents that every kid wants to have, and for patiently guiding and mentoring me. I honor my brother David and sister Bonnie for their hard work alongside me. I thank my wife Margie for believing in me when the chips were down. Finally I both commend and thank my two precious daughters, Carli and Daphne, for making our home a cherished place to return to after all those long, hard days, and for letting your daddy get on yet another airplane. I love you all...b ☺

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bim". The letter "B" is large and stylized with a thick, curved top stroke. The "i" is small with a dot, and the "m" is written with a cursive, flowing style.



ONE

The Little Rebel

It was suppertime, and there they were again:

Green.

Slimy.

Stringy.

My worst nightmare—yeah, it was green beans all right—again.

By the time I was a four-year-old kid, I had already sampled green beans and concluded they weren't for me. The strings might as well have been wood chips, the way they caught in my throat as I tried to get them down.

Mom was my boss, and I was her newest employee. We had a real labor/management crisis going on. She begged, cajoled, and pleaded. But I was determined not to eat those green beans.

So I crossed my arms, frowned, and pouted, figuring she'd give up and forget about green beans, as she always had in the past.

But this time, Mom had a secret weapon. Now, there was something else on the table besides that dreaded green scourge.

"Billy Joe, if you eat your green beans you can have some..."

You guessed it.

"Ice cream!"

This sheer stroke of maternal genius changed my behavior forever. In a flash, I saw those green beans, not as an oppressive burden, but as a first-class ticket to that lovely ice cream.

Sure, Mom got what she wanted—a balanced diet for her four-year-old.

And I got ice cream.

Pretty cool.

(Thanks, Mom. You are the best!)

I'm not sure exactly when or how Mom pared back the ice cream, but somehow I came to terms with green beans and accepted them for what they are—pretty healthy and tasty by themselves (oh, Mom learned to buy stringless beans, and that didn't hurt either).

Mom had learned how to change my behavior!

- The 9-11-2001 attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.
- The 1999 massacre at Columbine High School in Colorado.
- Going “Postal”—a phenomenon named for the series of violent and lethal outbursts by disgruntled U.S. Postal Service employees during the 1980s and 1990s.

All of these events included a common factor: human behavior that shaped the world as we know it. After all, what is a country, a family, a school, a business? While the environment, buildings, equipment, and furniture are certainly important, it is the tapestry of human behavior that creates what we call “culture”.

Culture is made up of many small behaviors and activities. Sometimes we say that the culture is “toxic” or “nurturing”. Many people assume that culture is what it is, and can never be changed. At best, they will say that culture change requires a long time.

I beg to differ. Ask Hosni Mubarak (Egypt’s strongman before the Arab Spring melted his power base) how fast culture can change.

Consider the sudden, unexpected collapse of the Soviet Union and the dismantling of the Berlin Wall.

Consider this common scenario in the business world:

A president unveils his new plan to turn around his failing company.

“It won’t work, sir,” comes the timid response from his staff.

“And why not?”

“The culture here won’t support it.”

“*Culture!* What’s that? A fuzzy word to hide a lame excuse!” retorts the frustrated leader.

Sure enough, his plan fails, torpedoed by culture.

The word *culture* is often hard to define. Here's a definition I like: "Culture is a pattern of behavior which is encouraged or punished by the management system over time."

In reality then, to change culture, all we have to do is change behavior. Attitudes follow behavior, just as my attitude about green beans changed over time, after my behavior changed.

But many have been misinformed. An old friend of mine, whom I'd not seen for 20 years, learned about my work in behavior change. In a telephone conversation, he offered up his two cents worth on the subject: "Bill, I remember my professor in psychology to this day. He told me that before you can change behavior, you have to change attitude."

I swallowed hard. He was a good friend, and it had been a long time since we'd talked to each other.

"Crad," I told him, "I hope you won't be upset, but when I see you, I'd really appreciate it if you'd let me tell you why your professor was wrong."

I guess he still likes me, because we went to lunch soon afterward, and I was able to explain to him that to change attitude, you simply have to change behavior. He even asked me to present to a group of 200 company leaders on the subject of positive reinforcement and behavior change!

No matter whether you are a parent, husband, wife, teacher, boss, supervisor, professor, cop, or anything else in life, what you often want from the people around you is the same thing: behavior change.

You want more production, quality, safety, and customer service from your employees; better test scores, homework, and study habits from your students; cleaner rooms and better grades from your kids. To get more from people, we need behavior change.

Everything we observe can be broken down into behaviors, activities, results, and culture. If culture is Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, then every note from every instrument can be likened to a behavior.

Results are achieved by a myriad of behaviors. Think of your favorite dessert. That dessert is the result. But the sugar, flour, butter and other items that make up the dessert are behaviors. When we get the behaviors right, we can cook up some amazing results!

Culture, like a dessert, can be toxic or nurturing. There's nothing like luscious banana pudding to add warmth and flavor to a meal. But a notorious husband-killer in North Carolina—known as the Black Widow—used banana pudding laced with arsenic to do away with her spouses.

So how do we achieve that nurturing culture?

Can we really navigate the murky world of the human mind? B. F. Skinner, American behaviorist, social philosopher, and poet, once wrote, "Thoughts are behaviors we haven't learned to observe yet."

Until technology allows it, you can't see inside my mind, and I can't see inside yours either. This "black hole" of human logic means that if we believe attitude must change before behavior, then we will be waiting a very, very long time to see any measurable difference in human performance. Just ask the Marlboro man how many years he read the Surgeon General's warning printed on every pack of cigarettes he smoked. Did those produce behavior change in him? It was not until he was in the hospital, terminally ill with cancer, that his attitude about smoking finally changed. Powerful consequences had forever changed his life, his behavior, and finally, his attitude toward smoking.

Since the complex world of human thought and attitude is at present not easily read, we need another tool to understand human behavior, one that we can implement easily in today's business world.

That tool has existed for more than 70 years. It's a science called "behavioral analysis".

Using some simple and easy tools, we can crack the code that reveals why people do what they do. And we can empower ourselves and others to achieve performance we never thought possible.

This book is devoted to helping you do just that . . .

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www.greenbeanbook.com

“This is a must read if you’re serious about achieving sustainable behavior change with your team.”

Joe Rea, Operations Mgr., Pacific Aluminum, Gladstone, Australia

Critical Acclaim for Green Beans & Ice Cream

Bill presents, in a fresh way, information essential in today’s workplace to encourage the behavioral change necessary to improve human performance. **William G. Oakley, President and CEO, Goodwill Industries of Central Florida, Inc.**

Bill’s behavior change process was the most effective human performance improvement process we ever used. **Larry Beggs, The NutraSweet Company, Augusta, Georgia**

You are a light shining in the darkness. Don’t stop what you’re doing, Bill. People in the workplace are dying on the inside and desperately need “hope” restored. I shall use that which I’ve gleaned from your workshop to brighten as many lives as possible each day by letting them know that their presence and effort is appreciated. **Lynda Wallen**

Chapter by chapter, the book supports the reality that positive reinforcement works wonders...it inspires me to look at all interactions differently whether I am at work, with my family or managing my 12-year-old’s little league team. **Todd D. Breindel, P.E., Safety Engineer, SGL Carbon LLC**

This book is an easy read...just like having a conversation over coffee with Bill. It was informative and interesting all at the same time! **Gary Higbee, Founder and President of Higbee Associates**

For any individual or organization who struggles to change behaviour, this book yields powerful food-for-thought and common-sense strategies on how to move forward with rapid culture change! **Dave Stanley-Tenneco**

Feedback on Bill’s Workshops and Keynote Presentations

Best training I’ve ever attended! **Larry Cancel, Controller, Eaton Corporation**

At dinner on Friday night, your talk generated quite a buzz. Everyone had an opinion, and it was awesome hearing all of our guys talking about what it takes to be an effective leader. **Jim Davis, Vice President**

Just a note of thanks for a powerful session this morning. It took several hours of sober reflection on your message before the real power of Positive Reinforcement became clear to me—keep up the good work! **Manager, Marathon Oil, Equatorial Guinea, Africa**

I am truly astounded. My entire management team has completely bought into BBS, even the most resistant to change. Bill is being quoted by all. My managers are all now finally on board. Now, we have to go the next level!! **Linda Littke, HR Manager, Eaton Corporation**

By the end, everyone clearly saw the value of positive reinforcement in every aspect of our lives, not just our careers. Kudos for a job well done, Bill! We are sure that this course will help us tremendously. **Jeffery G. Reid, Department Manager, Devro, Inc.**

I recommend Bill Sims, Jr. wholeheartedly as a keynote speaker at any conference of high repute! **Dr. Jitu C. Patel, CPEA, Fellow of the ASSE**



Bill Sims, Jr., is President of The Bill Sims Company, Inc. For nearly 30 years, Sims has created behavior-based recognition programs that have helped large and small firms to deliver positive reinforcement to inspire better performance from employees and increase bottom line profits. A sought-after speaker, he has delivered leadership workshops and keynote speeches around the globe and has built more than 1,000 positive reinforcement systems at firms including DuPont, Siemens VDO, Coca-Cola, and Disney.

