

Book Review

Goldsmith, M with Reiter, M. (2007). *What got you here won't get you there*. New York, NY: Hyperion.

Goldsmith, M, with Reiter, M. (2010). *Mojo: How to get it, how to keep it, how to get it back if you lose it*. New York, NY: Hachette Books.

Goldsmith, M, with Reiter, M. (2015). *Triggers: Creating behavior that lasts – becoming the person you want to be*. New York, NY: Crown Business.

Elizabeth C. McCourt
New York, USA

Every night for the past several years, Marshall Goldsmith uses a coach to listen to a list of questions he's proposed as goals for each day. He calls this seemingly simple process "daily questions," and suggests that one can have as many questions as they want. In his first book, he talks about his "baker's dozen" (p. 167) and now his list has evolved and grown into about twenty questions. The criterion for answering these questions is "have I tried" or "did I do my best" and gives a daily accountability on both personal and professional goals to effect positive change. Positive behavioral change is the theme running through these three best-selling books by Goldsmith. Practical tips, along with some of his actual coaching client examples, help articulate the methods.

At nearly 10 years old, Marshall Goldsmith's *What Got You Here Won't Get You There* remains a relevant read. In working with his corporate executive clientele, he states, "As we advance our careers, behavioral changes are often the only significant changes we *can* [sic] make" (p. 44). His book outlines the twenty habits or potential pitfalls common to the corporate environment, ranging from winning too much or adding too much value, to failing to give proper recognition, and even refusing to apologize or express

regret. He then explores these habits in a way to effect systematic positive change.

One of the main ways he proposes to work on habits is with a 360° evaluative feedback and coaching methodology because, he says, high achieving executives can only get so far with a strategy that is solo in nature. Goldsmith interviews approximately 18 people that surround his high-level candidates so that he can do an evaluation of behavior. The method goes a step beyond a traditional 360° assessment by having feedback participants not only remain a part of the process, but also have some accountability themselves so that they have some ‘skin in the game’ and commitment rather than merely judgment of the participant. This method also seeks to dilute the aversion to contribution, particularly when the candidate is at a high level of leadership and is used to giving rather than receiving feedback, essential so that the focus becomes on improving rather than judging. The underlying theory is that the talent that got one to a particular place of success will not necessarily allow them to achieve more without engaging in a positive way with the people surrounding and interacting with them.

Goldsmith also discusses apologizing and ‘meaning it’ as important components of self-awareness and improvement. He says, “It’s not enough to tell everyone that you want to get better. . . Now that you’ve said you’re sorry, what are you going to do about it?” (p. 142). Challenging your clients to be humble in their approach to improvement may cause some resistance. If getting ahead and breaking bad habits to be a better leader are important, then an apology is a good start to the process, says Goldsmith.

Mojo is Goldsmith’s follow-up that continues toward the path of positive change by making an evaluation of both personal and professional mojo. The focus says Goldsmith, is “what people can *start* [original italics] doing in order to achieve more meaning and happiness in their lives. That’s the payoff of having Mojo” (p. 14). He starts off with a simple evaluation and asks the client to evaluate both the long-term and the short-term benefit from a particular activity. Not only will making the evaluation alter your experience of each activity, but it invokes an opportunity to note patterns that emerge. One of his own personal examples involves surfing the internet, but the evaluation of whether this has a positive benefit or is a waste of time changes daily. In *Mojo*, he articulates that this simple happiness evaluation could lead to abandonment of the activity or more satisfaction, making the goal of said self-evaluation more happiness and awareness of the impact of your actions.

This self-awareness can also lead to the discovery of mojo killers. Helping clients to evaluate what might take away energy is as important as what might make one gain energy. Being angry at a situation or at someone is an everyday example of a mojo killing activity. Indeed, his focus is less on changing the environment, and more on changing one's reaction to it. Real life examples of Goldsmith's clients in all these books give more credence to the words on the page. Failed engagements end quickly with Goldsmith because, he cautions, only work with people who truly want meaningful change. When someone doesn't improve, their investment in coaching is refunded.

His latest book *Triggers: Creating Behavior that Lasts – Becoming the Person You Want to Be* delves further into the question of how we can not only get ourselves but also our clients to see what is the charge or trigger of a reaction. Admittedly, I found some of the content contained here to be repetitious of the two prior books. There is more in-depth discussion and analysis of the "daily questions." In Chapter 10, he provides an account of a research study with 2,537 participants that evaluates 6 powerful questions and proves the positive impact of using the questions to effect change and improve abilities or goals. This accountability of checking in daily on the same goals, he says, not only invites improvement but will make one see clearly where they are falling short.

The goal of this book invites coaches and the reader to create a structure surrounding both triggers and goals. Without the understanding of the triggers that compel a person to take action, good and bad, a person will be challenged to improve or achieve. In creating an inventory of triggers to increase one's awareness of their environment, there is opportunity to both control, change and challenge behavior. Ultimately, the most insightful clients 'become the trigger' for positive impact in the people around them. Connectivity is a theme in all of Goldsmith's books from 360° evaluation impact to understanding your triggers and effecting positive change.

People come to coaching because they want to achieve change and each of these books provides some thoughtful tools to achieve that. As a coach, Goldsmith's books offer an opportunity to both self-evaluate and learn different techniques and possibilities for coaching high-level executives and others. The overarching theme of personal development and recruiting others to help is a theme in each. Even when some of the stories show up multiple times, there was new and evolved information stemming from the mission to effect positive change by self-evaluation and interaction.

Within the connectivity of each of these books it shows that if one can take meaningful steps to improve and self-evaluate, one's professional and personal life improves. *What Got You Here Won't Get You There* is perhaps the most expansive due to the focus and recruiting of others to help with the 360° evaluation. *Mojo* reminds the reader that we are in control of the energy that we keep or give away to others. *Triggers* is perhaps the culmination, because it invites the reader, client or coach to actually become that which he is trying to achieve and thus parlay that positivity to helping others. The books are successful in being both thought provoking for the general reader as well as a useful resource for coaches.