

Book Review by Keith Hartsough, FSA, EA

What Got You Here Won't Get You There, by Marshall Goldsmith

As a reader of Marshall Goldsmith's newsletter (co-published with Patricia Wheeler, www.LeadingNews.org), I am familiar with the quality of his advice. When I saw an ad in an airport for *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*, I knew it was going to be a valuable read, and I was not disappointed.

From the title, one could assume that this book is about the need to learn additional skills as we get further in our career, such as when an actuary moves from technical work into client relationship management or management. However, the book is actually focused on the behavioral changes we each need to make to get from where we are (which may be very successful) to *there*, a place where we can be even more successful. The further we climb in our career, the more our limitations are based on behaviors rather than skills.

In his executive coaching, Marshall Goldsmith has worked with many people who are extremely successful but held back from further success by one or more behaviors. He includes a list of the 20 Habits that can hold us back, such as using sarcasm or making excuses. Successful people are often blinded by their prior successes into thinking they have no need to change.

Consistent across many of the habits is that we behave in this way when we're focused on ourselves. Part of the solution is to focus instead on how others perceive their relationship with us. The book's practical solutions point to concrete ways to change our behavior, such as the need to consider not, "Am I right?" but rather, "Is it worth it?" before deciding how to respond to a colleague. To improve, we need to learn from the past but focus on the future. Obviously, the past cannot be changed. Looking back can be worthy and productive *if* we use what we learn to identify changes we will make in the future.

For those of us well into our careers, the book is a reminder to take the time to do a realistic self-assessment and see what behaviors we have that might be holding us (or our colleagues) back from contributing even more. For those earlier in their careers, the advice this book contains can help avoid developing the habits that could limit your future growth. And, as pointed out throughout the book, many of the habits are easier to see in others than ourselves, so it helps if people around us are aware of our efforts to change and help us watch for recurrence of the behaviors. In the book's example of a Johari window of self-awareness, the key is our blind spots – our behaviors that are visible to others but not to us.

This book is recommended for anyone who recognizes they have a need to improve – and especially for anyone who thinks they don't need to.

More information about Marshall Goldsmith and his work can be found on his website, www.MarshallGoldsmithLibrary.com.