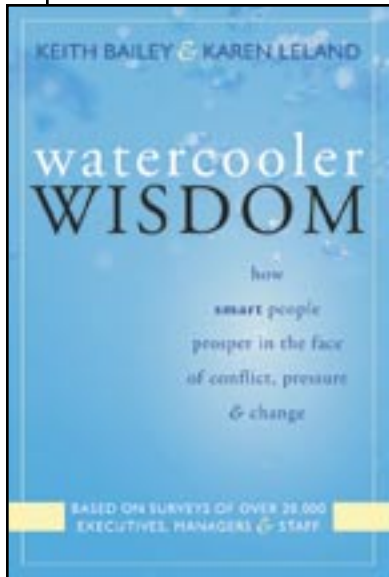


new book reveals the secrets of smart workers



Watercooler Wisdom, a new book based on a survey of leaders across the world, reveals the secrets to workplace prosperity.

We work in challenging times. In 1992, a United Nations report called job stress “the 20th century epidemic.” Six years later, in 1998, the World Health Organization declared job stress “a world-wide epidemic.” And a 2005 survey by the Families and Work Institute found that one in three Americans is chronically overworked. Of course, you don’t need any voice of authority to point out the stressful realities of the 21st century work world. You live it every day! No, what you need is some guidance on how to cope with it all.

You’re in luck. Karen Leland and Keith Bailey, the founders of Sterling Consulting Group, have spent the past 20 years surveying some 20,000 executives, managers, and staff from companies all over the world on a variety of core business issues. In the process, they discovered some significant trends that reveal the nature of stress and the specific skills that help people succeed in spite of it.

Bailey and Leland present these findings in their new book, *Watercooler Wisdom: How Smart People Prosper in the Face of Conflict, Pressure and Change* (New Harbinger Publications, March 2006). “When people talk about workplace stress, they’re usually referring to three things: change, pressure, and conflict, occurring either individually or all at once,” says Leland. “We discovered that the people who thrive in the face of stress—whether they’re from Europe, the Middle East, Latin America, Asia, or the United States—possess three essential abilities. We believe these three abilities are at the heart of satisfaction and success at work.” What are those three abilities? Leland lists them below:

Ability #1: Smart people are central players. The changes you experience at work, both big and small, can dramatically affect your point of view, mood, and energy level. New circumstances bring new challenges, yet no matter how joyous or upsetting they may be, you have the option to choose how you think about and respond to the changes you face. Smart people know that dealing with external change is an internal game that requires clarity of feelings, the ability to reflect, and self-determination. They also know that internal change requires a purpose greater than itself and an ability to keep going when the going gets rough.

Ability #2: Smart people create tomorrow today. Creating goals—both personal and professional—setting priorities, and developing habits of action empower you to manage the pressures of your workload and help make today’s aspirations tomorrow’s reality. Have you noticed, however, that it’s hard to create something new, different, and exciting for the future when your focus and energy today are so diluted? By tying up loose ends and removing the distracting tangles they create, you free up your energy.

Ability #3: Smart people dance with fire. Knowing how to communicate and develop relationships with others is an essential skill that helps you make things happen. It’s tempting to think that your work life would be a lot easier if it weren’t for all those people—colleagues, bosses, customers—who are so demanding, unreasonable, and frustrating. Smart people know that to prosper at work they must be skilled at reaching out and connecting even with those they have conflicts with. Dealing with conflict isn’t a mystery; it’s a dance with specific steps that help create harmony and understanding—if you know how to read and respond to your partner’s tempo!

about karen leland & keith bailey

Karen Leland and **Keith Bailey** are co-founders of Sterling Consulting Group, Inc., an international management consulting firm whose clients include American Express, Avis Rent A Car, Bristol Myers-Squibb and Microsoft. They have been interviewed by dozens of media outlets including API, BBC, CBS, CNN, *Fortune*, *Newsweek*, *The New York Times*, *Time* magazine, and *The Oprah Winfrey Show*.

suggested interview questions

1. Your book, *Watercooler Wisdom*, is based on over 20,000 surveys you conducted with workers at all status and pay levels—and in a variety of countries. You say that you found some common threads among the employees who were successful and happy at work. What were they and were you surprised to find so much commonality among so many different types of workers?
2. Many of us have a tendency to procrastinate, which we don't leave behind when we go to work. What are few tips for overcoming procrastination?
3. Conventional wisdom holds that to succeed you have to be a team player, but you say it's more about being a central player. What does it mean to be a central player and why do you suggest this paradigm shift?
4. We hear a lot about workplace stress these days. Are today's workers really more stressed than those of past eras and if so, why?
5. Chapter 2 of *Watercooler Wisdom* is dedicated to work psychology. How does a worker's thoughts and feelings about his or her work and perceived performance affect actual performance and productivity?
6. You also talk a lot about dealing with difficult people in the workplace. Now I think most of us realize that dealing with a difficult boss can be one of the toughest workplace situations. Let's take a hypothetical example of someone whose boss routinely takes credit for his or her accomplishments. How does this person address this without alienating the boss and sabotaging his or her chances of moving forward?
7. You offer six rules for succeeding and being happy at work. One of them is "invent meaningful contexts." Can you explain this?
8. Often the trickiest problems in the workplace involve personality, rather than productivity, issues. Let's imagine an office manager whose got someone on his or her staff who is a highly productive and efficient worker, yet is a chronic gossip. What advice do you give him or her?
9. In *Watercooler Wisdom* you offer a series of "mini-makeovers" that workers can use when they're feeling stressed out or burnt out. Can you give us an example of one?
10. You offer something called "the 4-D plan" to enhance organization in the workplace. What is this?

raves for *watercooler wisdom*

"This book provides a roadmap for unleashing your energy and focusing on what really matters most to you at work and home."

~**Tony Schwartz**, author of the *Power of Full Engagement* and president of The Energy Project

"An excellent book for anyone who wants to bring more consciousness into the way they work and improve their effectiveness and the way others respond to them."

~**Giles Bateman**, former chairman of CompUSA and cofounder of Price Club

"*Watercooler Wisdom* is an inspiring book that is both well researched and thoughtful. It provides excellent principles and practices that will engage you and show you how to transform the experience of stress in the workplace into personal satisfaction and prosperity. It's an essential companion for true success."

~**Lynne Twist**, author of *The Soul Of Money*

"This book provides a clever mirror to examine our internal thoughts and habits at work. It gives an opportunity for self-examination and advice that will be long valued by anyone who reads it."

~**Melba Pattillo Beals**, author of *Warriors Don't Cry*, and winner of the Congressional Gold Medal

"*Watercooler Wisdom* shows us in a clear and simple way that we all have the ability to have a work life that runs like a fine Swiss watch."

~**Terry Jones**, founder of Travelocity

"*Watercooler Wisdom* is an important read for anyone trying to get ahead in business or life. An insightful look at the best of human emotion at work."

~**Tom Latour**, president of the Kimpton Hotel Group

"This book gives important insight on how to thrive in today's rapidly changing business world and is a must read for aspiring young professionals or anyone wanting to have a successful career."

~**Stephen Seligman**, chief executive officer of The Learning Annex

"Smart people will love this book. Like a series of brilliant coaching sessions, each tailored exactly to your personal needs, *Watercooler Wisdom* will put you on the positive side of change."

~**Raz Ingrasci**, president and CEO of The Hoffman Foundation

"Bailey and Leland are talented communicators who blend insightful stories gathered from real-life experience with practical, immensely helpful advice. This book is a how-to for solving the everyday workplace issues that plague most of us. It is an enjoyable read cover to cover or picked up and used as a resource guide."

~**Michelle Blieberg**, global learning officer with UBS Investment Bank

"*Watercooler Wisdom* is one of the most practical, useful applications of spiritual principles for business and the workplace."

~**Brenda Wade**, author of *Power Choices*