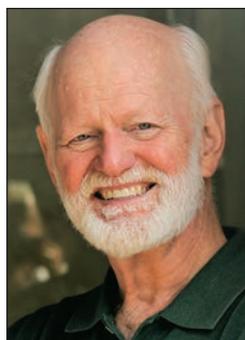


Living an Earned Life

An Interview with Dr. Marshall Goldsmith

EDITORS' NOTE Dr. Marshall Goldsmith is the author or editor of 35 books which have sold over two million copies, been translated into 30 languages, and become bestsellers in 12 countries. His two New York Times bestsellers are *MOJO* and *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*, which was the *Harold Longman Award* winner for *Business Book of the Year*. In February 2016, *Amazon.com* recognized the "100 Best Leadership & Success Books" in its "To Read in Your Lifetime" series, and two of Goldsmith's books, *Triggers* and



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What Got You Here Won't Get You There, were recognized as being in the top 100 books ever written in their field. His other books include: *Succession: Are You Ready?* – a *Wall Street Journal* bestseller; and *The Leader of the Future* – a *BusinessWeek* best-seller. Goldsmith's professional acknowledgments include: *Harvard Business Review* and *Best Practices Institute* – *World's #1 Leadership Thinker*; *Global Gurus*; *INC* and *Fast Company* magazines – *World's #1 Executive Coach*; *Institute for Management Studies* – *Lifetime Achievement Award for Excellence in Teaching*; *American Management Association* – *50 great thinkers and leaders who have influenced the field of management over the past 80 years*; *BusinessWeek* – *50 great leaders in America*; *Wall Street Journal* – *top ten executive educators*; *Economist (UK)* – *most credible executive advisors in the new era of business*; *National Academy of Human Resources* – *Fellow of the Academy (America's top HR award)*; and *World HRD Congress (India)* – *global leader in HR thinking*. At a recent *Thinkers50* ceremony in London, he was recognized again as the *World's #1 Leadership Thinker* and *#1 Executive Coach*. Goldsmith served on the Board of the *Peter Drucker Foundation* for 10 years. He has been a volunteer teacher for *U.S. Army Generals*, *Navy Admirals*, *Girl Scout executives*, *International and American Red Cross leaders* – where he was a *National Volunteer of the Year*. He holds a PhD from *UCLA's Anderson School of Management* where he was the *Distinguished Alumnus of the Year*. Goldsmith teaches executive education at *Dartmouth's Tuck School of Business*.

How do you define the role of an executive coach and how do you approach the work?

My role is very straightforward. I help highly successful leaders get even better. Our Stakeholder Centered Coaching process measures

results in terms of positive change in leadership behavior – not as judged by the leader, but as determined by the leader's key stakeholders.

There are many people who say that they are executive coaches. Is the term overused and is it challenging to differentiate in the industry?

I agree that the term "executive coach" is highly overused. A way to differentiate executive coaches is to ask the question, "Who are your clients?" My clients are all very comfortable with having a coach and with stating that I am their coach.

I was very proud of the fact that 27 major CEOs publicly endorsed my previous book, *Triggers*, and talked about having me as their coach. I always wonder why any coach cannot identify his or her clients. How many of the top 10 tennis players have a coach? Ten. They are all more than happy to identify their coaches and thank the coaches for their role in improving performance.

What are the keys to identifying the roadblocks that prevent people from achieving their best performance?

My biggest selling book, *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*, addresses this very issue. Any human, or any animal, will repeat behavior that is followed by positive reinforcement. The more successful we become, the more positive reinforcement we get.

We can easily fall into what is called "The Superstition Trap" – I behave this way, I am successful, therefore I must be successful because I behave this way. This can create two problems:

1. We are all successful because of doing many things right and in spite of making mistakes. I have never met anyone who was so wonderful that they had nothing in the "in spite of" column.

2. The behavior that led to our success in the past may not lead to our success in the new, and rapidly changing, world of the future.

What interested you in writing your new book, *THE EARNED LIFE*, and what are the key messages you wanted to convey in the book?

A key message is that we need to be constantly re-earning our lives. We never "get there" and live in a land where everything is

perpetually wonderful. One type of book always has the same ending, "...and they lived happily ever after." This is called a fairy tale.

As Bob Dylan wrote, "He who is not busy being born, is busy dying."

Will you discuss the steps to living an earned life?

To live an earned life, we need to align our:

- Aspirations – our higher purpose that has no "finish line."
- Ambitions – our goals that we are focused on achieving.
- Actions – our enjoyment and engagement in day-to-day life.

What do you see as the biggest stumbling blocks for leaders?

One of the biggest stumbling blocks can be our need to "win" or "prove that we are right" when it is not worth it. Peter Drucker said, "Our mission in life is to make a positive difference, not to prove how 'smart' or 'right' we are."

One of my amazing clients noted, "For the great individual achiever, it may be 'all about me'. For the great leader, it is 'all about them.'"

How do you define the keys to effective leadership?

I am not an expert on all elements of leadership. The leaders that I work with become more effective because they have:

- Courage – They have to "look in the mirror" and face difficult feedback.
- Humility – They have to admit they need to improve and ask key stakeholders for help.
- Discipline – They need to do the hard work – over time – that is required to achieve lasting change.

Did you always know that were interested in this type of work and what has made the work so special for you?

I had no idea that I would be interested in this type of work. When I was young, this type of work did not even exist. I have been inspired by great teachers and mentors like Frances Hesselbein, Alan Mulally, Peter Drucker and Warren Bennis.

You have achieved great success in your life and have impacted many lives. Do you take moments to reflect and celebrate your accomplishments or are you always looking to the future?

Both. I strive to do my best to enjoy today and be grateful for my many blessings. I also strive to "be more" and try to keep making a contribution in the future. ●

