



# READ MATTHEWS INTERNATIONAL

THE BUSINESS SKILLS YOU NEED TO SUCCEED

## In Form

Our newsletter, **In Form**, keeps you up-to-date with our training services and new initiatives.

### In Form no. 40

### Gotcha!

The other day I was sitting on a park bench listening to a group of parents with their children. Here's what I heard:

Don't run!

Don't hit your sister!

Don't shout!

Don't put that in your mouth!

Almost everything the parents said to their children was negative. Perhaps it's not surprising, but parents spend a lot of their time and energy telling their kids what *not* to do. Yes, me too... it happens to all of us! My worst moment as a parent came when I caught myself sounding like my mother: same words, same intonation, same everything! My god... I've turned into my mother... How did this happen?

Parenting is a humbling experience. Our best intentions often get lost, and the slide from new and positive parent to tired and negative can be quick. And parenting only gets more complicated as your kids grow older. A particularly tough moment to negotiate is what to say to them when they fail exams...again! My conversations with my son often go like this:

"Bryan, how could you have failed Ethics and Physics? We spent hours preparing those two exams."

"I don't know."

"Oh, come on... that's not good enough! How did you manage to screw this up?"

"I don't know."

"Oh, Jesus... Now we'll have to go back and do it all again. What a waste of time!"

(Silence.)

Not a great conversation. He failed Ethics and Physics, and I failed Parenting... again! So while he sloped off to his room, I went to my study to reflect on how to manage my son better. I picked up an old book I had read many years before. *The One Minute Manager* was first published in 1982, yet like all the truly useful books on management and leadership, the advice it contains is timeless - it's as relevant today as when it was first written. One of its most useful bits of advice is to stop trying to catch people doing something wrong - and start trying to catch them doing something right. A positive Gotcha! if you like. We all know that positive feedback is much more effective than negative feedback - we just need a reminder every now and then. Like remembering to praise my son for the eight subjects he passed, instead of only seeing the two he failed. It's so obvious and so simple that we often never get round to it. Here's how you should do it:

1. *Gotcha! When you catch your people doing something right, give them positive feedback immediately.*
2. *Tell them what they did right - be specific.*
3. *Tell your people how good you feel about what they did right.*
4. *Pause for a moment of silence to let them 'feel' how good you feel.*
5. *Encourage them to do more of the same.*
6. *Shake hands or touch people in a way that makes it clear that you support their success.*

This is best advice I've ever read on leadership or parenting. More than once over the years this column has commented on the similarity between managing your kids and managing your work team. After all, there's only one thing that's more challenging than managing a group of people at the office - and that's managing your kids at home! If you can get your kids to do what you want, you should have no difficulty motivating your team.

So if you're like me and are steeling yourself for that end-of-year report card in June, there's still plenty of time to focus on the positive and catch your kids doing something right. And the more times you compliment your kids on what they've done well, the better that final report card is likely to be.

My son has now passed his Ethics and Physics exams... I'm still working on my Parenting.

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