

Dr. Tim Donovan interviewing Marshall Goldsmith for the Organization Development Journal

Timothy Donovan



Timothy Donovan, PhD, is President of Avery Group, a multidisciplinary consulting team specializing in Executive Leadership and Organizational Development. Dr. Donovan is the visionary for the Avery Group and has coached business executives and leaders for the past 15 years. His executive coaching

with corporations, small businesses and health care professionals has resulted in high performance teams and learning environments that transform organizational cultures. Dr. Donovan is also founder and Clinical Director of Avery Center in Pensacola, Florida. He has managed a private clinical psychology practice for the past 20 years.

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Marshall Goldsmith

Marshall Goldsmith is a world authority in helping successful leaders get even better – by achieving positive change in behavior: for themselves, their people and their teams.

Recently, the American Management Association named Dr. Goldsmith as one of 50 great thinkers and leaders who have influenced the field of management over the past 80 years and *Business Week* listed him as one of the most influential practitioners in the history of leadership development. In November 2005, he was recognized as a Fellow of the National Academy of Human Resources – the highest award for a HR professional. Dr. Goldsmith's work has been featured in a *Harvard Business Review* interview, *Forbes* article, *Business Strategy Review* cover story (from the London Business School) and *New Yorker* profile. He has appeared in: *The Wall Street Journal* - as one of the top 10 executive educators, *Forbes* - as one of 5 most-respected executive coaches, the *Economist* - as one of the most credible consultants in the new era of business and *Fast Company* - as America's preeminent executive coach. His work has received national recognition from almost every professional organization in his field, including: the Academy of Management, ASTD, HRPS and SHRM.

Marshall is one of the few consultants who have been asked to work with over 70 major CEOs and their management teams. He conducts workshops for executives, high-potential leaders and HR professionals. His Ph.D. is from UCLA. He is an Adjunct Professor teaching executive education at Dartmouth's Tuck School and is frequently asked to speak at leading business schools.

Marshall is co-founder of Marshall Goldsmith Partners, a network of top-level executive coaches. He served as a member of the Board of the Peter Drucker Foundation for 10 years. He has also donated substantial time to non-profit organizations, such as the Girl Scouts, the International and American Red Cross – where he was named a National Volunteer of the Year.

Dr. Goldsmith's 20 books include: *The Leader of the Future* (a Business Week best-seller) and *Coaching for Leadership*. Two of his recent books are: *Global Leadership: The Next Generation* and *The Art and Practice of Leadership Coaching*. Amazon.com has ranked seven of his books as "most popular" in their field. Harvard Business School has chosen six of his books to be their Working Knowledge recommended books. Almost all of his articles and videos are available (for no charge) at www.MarshallGoldsmithLibrary.com.

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Interview

Tim Donovan: *How did you become interested in the work you're doing?*

Marshall Goldsmith: I was introduced to executive education 28 years ago - when I met Paul Hersey, a very well-known leadership development professional. He is a great teacher. I basically 'followed him around' and learned about what he did. At the time, I was a college professor at Loyola Marymount University and got to practice teaching his material. One day Paul (by accident) became double booked. He asked me, "Do you think you can do what I do?" I hesitantly replied, "I'm not sure..." He said, "I'll pay you \$1,000 for one day." Since I was making \$15,000 a year, this sounded good to me! I said, "Sign me up, coach!" I flew across

country, did a program for a very prestigious organization and was the highest-rated instructor (by the participants) out of the many speakers in their two week program. The client was very upset when I showed up - because they expected Paul. But after I was rated first place, they were very happy and requested that Paul send me again. Paul called me and asked, "Would you like to keep doing this?" That is how I was introduced into the business.

... all of my work in executive coaching is done on a pay only for results basis.

TD: *What about Executive Coaching?*

MG: As it turns out, I also began my coaching career by accident. I was working with the CEO of a very large company, who said, "We have this young guy working with us who's smart, dedicated, hardworking, driven to achieve, entrepreneurial, and gets results. He is also an arrogant, stubborn, opinionated know-it-all. We don't think he is living our values. It would be worth a fortune to me if we could turn him around. I heard the word "fortune," and I said, "Maybe I can help!" He said, "I doubt it." That's when I came up with my idea. I proposed, "I will work with him for a year. If he gets better, pay me. If he doesn't get better, it's all free!" The CEO said, "Sold!" That's how I got into executive coaching. Since the beginning, all of my work in executive coaching is done on a pay only for results basis.

TD: *Very interesting. What kind of preparation did you have for doing coaching?*

MG: I had a PhD in Organizational Behavior from UCLA and years of experience in teaching leaders, designing custom leadership inventories and providing feedback to executives - before it was called coaching.

TD: *Did you do your PhD before you talked about making the transition into executive education?*

MG: Yes, I already had a PhD.

TD: *Ok, so you were prepared academically. Did you have the experience in the field at that time?*

MG: Absolutely none when I started in executive education.

TD: *That was your first shot at it.*

MG: I started out at the top! Sometimes, it's 'just one of those things'. I was very fortunate, I was very successful when I got the opportunity, but Paul Hersey opened the door. If he hadn't of opened the door for me, I wouldn't have had a chance. I owe a lot to Paul.

Most people want to skip all that hard work and fast forward ahead to the top of the coaching world.

TD: *So what were the major challenges that you had to face in developing your coaching practice?*

MG: To be honest, I haven't had lots of challenges. I have just worked hard. If you wanted to hire me as a coach today, you'd have to wait at least six months. I've been very fortunate - in the past 28 years, I've always had plenty of business. Now I have more requests than I can possibly accept. On another level, 'getting here' isn't as easy as it may sound. Let me give you an example. I probably get at least one email a day from someone saying, "I want to do what you do." They often think my life is easy. Sometimes I feel like saying, "Well it's really not that hard. You just need to work very long hours and deliver results for 28 years, fly 8.5 million frequent flyer miles (on

one airline), work with over 70 CEOs, speak in front of hundreds of thousands of leaders and publish 20 books. No big deal!" Most people want to skip all that hard work and fast forward ahead to the top of the coaching world. It doesn't really work that way. To stay at the top in any field, you have to pay your dues over the years. Many people are given the illusion that they can graduate from a two-week coaching program and have a career working with top CEOs. It doesn't work that way in the real world.

TD: *That's a good point. What were the major challenges that you faced as you developed as a practitioner?*

MG: As I look back - the biggest challenge that I've faced was getting over my own ego. It finally dawned on me that none of my clients get better because of me. They get better because of themselves and the people around them. If their drive to improve doesn't come from their heart - it won't happen. So for me, a real great learning over the years is getting over the delusion that 'this is all about me'. It really isn't. It's about them.

TD: *How did you get over that?*

MG: My partner, Howard Morgan, and I did a study involving over 86,000 respondents ("Leadership Is a Contact Sport") which was published in *Strategy+Business*. In our research, we measured the impact of leadership development programs on increased leadership effectiveness - not as judged by participants in the programs, but as judged by their co-workers, 6-12 months after the programs. We found that participants who returned from the programs, practiced what was taught, discussed what they learned with co-workers and did regular 'progress checks' to gauge improvement - were seen as becoming more effective leaders. Participants who did no follow-up might as well have been watching sit-coms! Their improvement was no better than random chance. In many cases, the participants who improved a great

deal - and the participants who didn't improve at all - had the same teacher. Me. What I learned was their long-term improvement said far more about them than me. Does this make sense?

Ironically, the people who didn't change at all gave me the same great instructor ratings as the people who improved a lot!

TD: *Oh yeah.*

MG: Ironically, the people who didn't change at all gave me the same great instructor ratings as the people who improved a lot!

TD: *So the difference was that the people who had the improvement followed-up and had a support group and or network that held them accountable, that gave them feedback and support ... is that right?*

MG: That's exactly right. Arnold Schwarzenegger's got a great quote: "Nobody ever got muscles by watching me lift weights." Arnold is also exactly right. People that 'lift the weights' get stronger - people that just listen to instructions on how to work out don't get in shape!

TD: *It looks like you're very empirical about this. You said your research involved over 86,000 respondents.*

MG: That is correct - over 86,000 respondents from 8 major companies - 12,000 were from outside the US. We are conducting new studies all of the time.

TD: *So, you gathered the data and looked at it empirically. It was the result of your own research as opposed to purely clinical experience.*

MG: That's right.

TD: *How many consultants do you think gather research on their practice?*

MG: Some, but not nearly enough. I don't know of anyone else who has done 'before and after' impact studies with tens of thousands of people from around the world.

Many 'executive coaches' are paid for activities - not results.

TD: *In general, how many consultants do you think really gather data about their practice, look at it and then change?*

MG: Again, not enough. Many 'executive coaches' are paid for activities - not results. They get paid based upon the amount of time that they spend and because their clients like them.

TD: *What do you see that is critical about your approach that is different from others?*

MG: I don't get paid because my clients like me nor do I get paid for spending time.

TD: *So you contract for results.*

MG: I get paid if my clients get significantly better on pre-selected behaviors as judged by pre-selected people.

TD: *Like a peer group?*

MG: Whoever it happens to be - this is determined by my clients and their managers - not me.

TD: *Can you give me a recent example?*

MG: I just worked with a CEO of a major corporation

last week. I was asked to coach a future CEO. My 'formula' is pretty simple. I just asked, "If this guy gets better at this stuff as judged by these people is it worth this much money? Yes or no? If the answer is no, don't hire me. If the answer is yes, you can't lose."

TD: *There is a lot of enthusiasm in your voice. You must really enjoy doing this.*

MG: Oh I love what I do. In fact, I already know what my retirement day is. Do you know what day that will be?

TD: *What day?*

MG: The day that I die. None of the top people in my field ever want to retire. We all work until we die. We are having too much fun to ever quit!

... my whole mission is helping successful leaders achieve a positive long term change in behavior.

TD: *You talked about one insight - nobody got better because of you. In what other ways have you changed during the course of this work.*

MG: Another change I've made is that now my whole mission is helping successful leaders achieve a positive long term change in behavior. I no longer work on reformation projects. If companies are thinking about firing an executive - I don't want to work with this person. It is not 'immoral' or 'wrong' to work with people who may be fired. It is just no longer what I have chosen to do.

TD: *You mean if the company says to you, "We're thinking about firing Joe Smith because of yadda yadda yadda," you'd say, "That's not what I do."*

MG: That's not what I do. I only work with successful people - and I only work with 'volunteers'. Another change I have made is that I no longer try to convince anyone to do anything. I never try to imply that they will make more money because of working with me. Most of the issues I deal with are people issues. If the company has to bribe someone to treat people with respect one year, what do they have to the next year, pay a bigger bribe? I just say, "Look. Look inside your heart. Is this the right thing to do? If it is, do it. If it's not, don't do it. And by the way, if that's not reason enough to try to change, there isn't reason enough.

TD: *So it sounds like you've gotten really clear about your principles and your values. Like you said, you've got a six months waiting list, so you can choose who to work with.*

MG: You are right. If I wanted to, I could just hang out at the beach for the rest of my life.

TD: *Not likely.*

MG: Highly unlikely.

TD: *Do you take time for yourself, Marshall? Like going to the beach or lifting weights?*

MG: I exercise. I'm in good shape. I walk, I exercise and I take vacations.

TD: *How do you refresh yourself and recharge your energy.*

MG: I very seldom get 'uncharged' because I love what I do. For me, I don't have to do this; I love it. What I love doing the most is teaching. I teach at Dartmouth and I teach inside large companies. I just taught 2000 leaders in the Kaiser-Permanente Hospital System Network. Over the years, I have taught hundreds of thousands of people. I love teaching.

TD: *What did you teach at Kaiser?*

MG: I only teach one thing: helping successful people change their behavior. I only know one thing. I have a limited knowledge base (laughter)! Outside of that, there ain't much there. So basically, that's all I can do. So, at KP that is what I taught. I also do a lot of keynote speeches for large groups. And then I do executive coaching. Coaching is where I learn the most. I enjoy teaching the most, but I learn the most from coaching. If you read my writing, most of what I write about is what I've learned through coaching. My new book (out in September) will be called *What Got You Here - Won't Get You There!* It contains lots of stories based upon what I have learned as a coach. Writing is what has had the broadest impact for me. I've either written or edited 20 books and many articles. Look at my website - Marshall Goldsmith Library- www.marshallgoldsmithlibrary.com, I give everything away. I give away all the articles, all the videos, it's all free. You can copy, download, duplicate - and share with anyone you want to. If you want to use it in your church or charity, if you want to use it in your business or anything, feel free. I've had people from 119 different countries visit this website in the past 4 months.

TD: *Why do you give it away?*

MG: Some of these are poor people from places like Ethiopia and Papa New Guinea. They can't afford to buy this type of material. I feel good about being able to just give it all away. Basically everybody builds on what others have taught. Paul Hersey, in explaining his own success, said, "I am only standing on the shoulders of giants." Since I am only standing on his shoulders, I feel the same way. Why try to hoard it? We also have a business - Marshall Goldsmith Partners (MGP). I don't own or manage the business. These are people who use my coaching process around the world. I pretty much enjoy just doing the work. MGP has great people who like to manage large projects.

TD: *Do you do any group work or do you only work one on one?*

MG: I do a lot of work with teams. I worked with a team today. My approach to team building is described in an article and video on my website (called "Team Building without Time Wasting").

TD: *Can you briefly describe your approach to coaching?*

MG: If you'd like me to describe my approach, I can describe it in about 5 minutes.

TD: *Great!*

There are two elements of what I do in coaching - one is required, the second is optional.

MG: My coaching process is very straightforward. There are two elements of what I do in coaching - one is required, the second is optional. If my clients don't want to do the required, then I just don't work with them. It's that simple. I'm not here to judge anybody. I just say, "Look, I'm not here to judge you. I just don't want to work with you. If you don't get better, then I won't get paid. Why waste my time and yours?" The required part - is that my clients have to agree that I am going to interview all of their pre-selected coworkers. If they are the CEO, the CEO picks the coworkers; if they're not the CEO; the CEO has to agree that they're the right coworkers. Almost every client that I work with is either the CEO or has the potential to be a CEO. After interviewing my clients' pre-selected coworkers, I develop a profile of their leadership behavior. These interviews usually last an hour or so. I develop a report that contains confidential feedback. I do not identify who said what. And then I spend a lot of time with the coworkers - helping them help my client.

... I learned that my 'wisdom' had very little to do with their increased effectiveness.

I've gone through three levels as an executive coach. Level 1 - I thought people would get better because of me, because I was saying clever, wise things. When I did all that research we discussed, I learned that my 'wisdom' had very little to do with their increased effectiveness. So I got over 'it's all about me' - and started spending more time with them, I became much more effective. Now more than half of my time in coaching is not spent with my clients, but with their co-workers. What I say to the co-workers is basically, "Mr. Co-worker, I'm going to be working with my client, Joe, for the next year. I don't get paid if Joe doesn't get better. 'Better' is not determined by Joe (or by me) - 'better' is determined by you and the other co-workers. I then continue with the co-workers, "I have four requests for you: 1. Let go of the past. (This is very simple - but not very easy.). 2. Swear to tell the truth. (Now, I'm not naïve; I know that just because a person swears to tell the truth doesn't mean they will. On the other hand, I know it increases the odds they will.) 3. Be a positive and supportive coach for my client - not a cynic or critic or judge. (In our coaching process, my clients reach out to their co-workers. If their co-workers act cynical, they give up. If their coworkers are positive and supportive, they keep going!) 4. I finally say, "You pick something that you want to do better. In our coaching process, my client is going to reach out to you and say, "I want to get better at X." When this happens, you can then say, "I can get better, too. Please help me get better at Y." (With my favorite client - I am guessing that about 200 people ended up getting better! The world improves a lot when we all decide to 'help more and judge less'.)

After reviewing their feedback, my clients have brief one-on-one conversations with each of their co-workers. My client says, "Mr. Co-worker, thank you for participating in this process. I know that you are busy. Here are the positive things that I have learned about myself in my confidential feedback. I have also received a lot of 'good news'. Thank you for this very positive feedback. Here is what I want to change. I can't change the past, so I am not going to ask for more feedback about the past. Please give me ideas on how I can do a great job in demonstrating this behavior in the future. (This is called feedforward not feedback.) My clients are taught to listen to their co-workers ideas - without judging their ideas.

I tell my clients never promise to do everything that their co-workers suggest. Leadership is not a popularity contest. Just listen. Be quiet, think about what you are learning and then say-thank you. Tell them, "I can't promise to do everything you suggest, but I can promise to listen and do what I can!" After my clients talk with their co-workers, they talk with me. I review what they have learned and give them my ideas. This is the optional part of our coaching process. I have no expectations that all of my ideas are brilliant. I 'reserve the right to be wrong'. I ask my clients to only use the ideas that work for them. I talk with my clients every couple of weeks and maybe give them my ideas in person - maybe once a month. They have a regular disciplined follow-up process with their co-workers. They then get measured at the half-way point - and at the end of our process - on improvement in identified behavior to change - improvement in overall leadership effectiveness and the amount of follow-up with each co-worker. As I discussed earlier, our research findings are clear. Leaders who 'stick with the process' get better - I get paid - and life is good!

TD: *How long have you been doing this and how did it evolve?*

MG: I started out by doing customized 360° feedback almost 30 years ago - even before I was teaching executives. That was way before it was in vogue. Now nearly everybody has customized 360° feedback. Almost nobody did this when I started. So we were 'pioneers' back then. After I started giving leaders feedback on how they were perceived, I started teaching them how to respond to feedback - by talking with their co-workers. We quickly learned that people's change did not come from getting feedback. What leaders did after they got the feedback was a key to long-term impact. My coaching process has been an evolution of what I have learned over the past 30 years.

TD: *What else would you like to tell us or tell the world?*

I think most leadership development programs measure the wrong things.

MG: 1. I think most leadership development programs measure the wrong things. They evaluate trivial points like 'did you like the speaker', 'how was the room' and 'was lunch nice'? No one becomes a more effective leader because they had good speakers, because lunch tasted good or because the room was nice. Companies ought to be evaluating their leaders. Many corporations are training speakers, janitors and cooks - not leaders!

2. I think - rather than force people to participate in leadership development - companies should set strict guidelines on who is allowed to participate. If participants won't commit to follow-up and apply what they have learned, why waste time and money? Companies shouldn't waste their energy on training people who don't care. There are plenty of people who do care. Put all of your development energy into those people because the others are just going to discredit what

you're doing anyway. And the ones that do care will have fantastic results. Just work with them.

TD: *So your idea is to work with successful people and help them get even better.*

MG: Work with people who care. There are plenty of them.

TD: *What's the biggest issue you work with? What is the #1 challenge faced by your clients?*

You need to learn to let others win.

MG: The number one challenge is 'winning too much'. Successful people want to win. If it's meaningful - we want to win. If it's trivial - we want to win. If it's not worth it - we want to win anyway! We like winning. It's very hard for successful people not to constantly win. I asked one of my clients, a CEO of one of the top 50 companies, "What have you learned since you've been a CEO." He sighed, "My suggestions become orders." If you're the CEO of a company that big, your suggestions become orders. In other words, you always get to win. You need to learn to let others win.

I asked, "What did you learn from me when I was your coach?" He replied, "The most important thing I learned from you was - before I speak, stop, breathe, and ask myself one question: 'Is it worth it?'" He then laughed and noted that as a CEO about half the time he has the discipline to stop and think - he decided, "Am I right? Maybe. Is it worth it? No." This may sound simple - it isn't easy. Here's a man whose entire life has been focused on one thing: winning. Now he's a CEO. He always wins. You know what he's got to learn? Quit winning.

Another great lesson that I have learned is that there's a big difference between simple and easy.

Another great lesson that I have learned is that there's a big difference between simple and easy. Everything I ask people to do is incredibly simple, none of it's easy. My typical client is a multi-millionaire, very brilliant, dedicated, hardworking person who sincerely wants to get better. Every one of my clients will admit that none of this stuff is easy.

It's hard to change! And I always find it ironic that companies say things like, "We are going to transform our leaders after they sit through a two-day program. Yeah right! There's a 55 year old guy whose been screaming at people his whole life. Do you think he's really going to be transformed because he sits in a room for two days and listens to a lecture? I don't think so. That's never been my experience.

TD: *When you talked about winning and your typical client - multi-millionaire, bright, talented, hard-working leader. Do you find that it's a compulsive need to win at everything they do?*

MG: It can easily become a habit.

TD: *Talk a little more. How do you intervene with people like that and how do you help them with that over-used habit?*

MG: Well, I begin with the way they treat me. As we discussed earlier, my coaching process has two levels of interaction - with me there's no argument in either dimension. One is the required. The required, they have to do. And if they don't want to do it, you know what I say? Bye. I don't argue with them. I just don't work with them. Everything else is optional. After

they commit to the required, I say, "I am going to give you ideas just like all your coworkers." You know what I tell my clients? "Let's say I give you the stupidest idea in the whole world - the dumbest idea in history! You know what you are going to say? Thank you. In the same way that you are not going to judge or critique your co-workers ideas - you are not going to argue with my ideas. You probably do too much of that anyway. Just learn to shut up and say - thank you. If you don't believe in my suggestions, you won't do it anyway. So if you don't want to do it, don't. Don't waste your time and mine by arguing." People listen a whole lot better when they don't have to prove how smart they are all the time. So I teach my clients how to listen without proving they're smart. One client, who was practicing feedforward, said, "I am listening better than I have in my entire life. When I asked him why, he said 'I know all I can say is 'thank you'. Normally, when people talk, I'm so busy composing my next comment to prove how smart I am that I'm not really listening - I'm just composing. It's amazing how much more I can learn when I don't have to prove that I'm smart!"

TD: *Just listening to you, I'm thinking of a couple of clients that we met with before we spoke with you. I was thinking about this CEO - and his constant need to win.*

MG: There's another variant on this theme called "adding too much value." Let's pretend you're the boss and I'm young, smart and enthusiastic. I come along with an idea. You think it's a great idea. Your natural reaction - instead of just saying 'great idea' is to say 'that's a great idea, BUT, let's add this to it.' Well, the problem is the quality of the idea may go up 5%. My commitment to execution may go down 50%. It's not *my* idea anymore. It's now become *your* idea. It's very hard for smart, successful people not to constantly add value. We all need to breathe and ask, "Is it worth it?" before we speak.

I have a case study I do with my clients that 75% of successful executives fail. Are you ready? You can try it out on yourself!

You want to go to dinner at restaurant X. Your partner, husband, wife or significant other want go to restaurant Y. You have a heated argument - then you go to restaurant Y. This was not your choice. The food tastes awful, the service is terrible. Option A: critique the food. Point out your partner was wrong. All of this could have been avoided if the partner had listed to me! Option B: Eat the stupid food, shut up and try to have a nice evening.

What would I do? What should I do? Most of my clients 'fail themselves!' They say 'what I would do' is the opposite of 'what I know that I should do'. For about 75% of my clients: What would I do? Critique the food. What should I do? Shut up. It is hard to quit critiquing the food. It is hard to quit being right. It is hard to quit winning - even if winning is clearly a stupid idea!

TD: *Anything else?*

MG: Another funny story. I was working with one of the top generals in the military. I wasn't getting paid for working with the military; I was just doing it as a volunteer. So I looked at him and said, "Maybe I'll be the coach for one of your Generals". He said, "Marshall, I know you're volunteering. If you could only coach one General, who would be the perfect General for you to coach?" I asked, "Can you find me one who is patriotic, cares about our country, has the highest degree of ethics, has great integrity, possesses the right values, is driven to achieve, gets results, is technically gifted, is highly educated, is brilliant, is hard to replace, and is an arrogant, stubborn, opinionated know it all? Do you think you might be able to find me one?" He laughed and replied, "Marshall, we've got a target rich opportunity!"

TD: *Do you have plenty of potential clients?*

MG: There are plenty. My job is fun. Another thing I do is very different from many coaches. Everyone around the people I coach knows exactly what my clients are trying to improve. None of what I do is a secret. Most of my clients publicly talk about what they're trying to achieve. In fact, my clients often have dinners together and they talk with each other about what they're trying to improve. Some coaching approaches suggest that everything should be a deep, dark secret! Not me. You know why? I think that my clients should be proud of trying to get better, not ashamed of it. It sends a big message to the corporations that the big bosses are trying to improve.

TD: *How is that structured? How does it evolve within the organization?*

The best thing you can do to help other people get better is let them watch you try to get better.

MG: I can give you some examples. CEO of Getty Images, Jonathan Klein, stands up in front of everybody and says, "Here is how I am trying to improve." Steve Sanger, CEO of General Mills, does the same thing. Every one of my clients does this. I can go down the whole list of all my clients. They all do this.

TD: *So they stand up and do this publicly?*

MG: You know why? They try to be excellent role models. I wrote an article called, "If you want others to develop, start with yourself." You know what I tell people at the top? The best thing you can do to help other people get better is let them watch you try to get better.

TD: *How do people find out about you?*

MG: I don't even know. People just call on the phone. You know I've been doing this so long. In the executive coaching field, I think I'm the best known coach in the world. *The New Yorker* did a profile of my life, *Forbes* did a profile about me, I was interviewed in the *Harvard Business Review* ... I'm being interviewed by you. I've been in most magazines. If you go to my website and look under "Marshall in the press" - you will see over 200 references to my work - in publications from around the world.

TD: *I really like the way you talk about using the social environment, follow-up and feedback. It reminds me a little bit about what Fernando Flores used to say about making promises in public and making lots of them because that builds solidarity.*

***We just need to get over that,
"If they understand, they will
do" myth.***

MG: That's right. Another interesting fact - my clients love is getting to meet each other. I just did a session at my home where I had 11 mega successful people. They were discussing an important topic - "What am I going to be doing for the rest of my life?" It was a great meeting. It is wonderful to be able to talk with your peers in an open, supportive environment.

TD: *In your experience, when you look at the corporate world, what is the area of greatest need or greatest concern for the next generation?*

MG: Well I can give a perspective from my own field, which is the executive education field. We just need to get over that, "If they understand, they will do" myth. Almost all executive education is based on a

very bad assumption: If they understand, they will do. Somehow we pretend that if you post the right word, or say the right phrase or talk about the right technique; somehow people are all going to do the right things. Well, if that were true, then why are so many people in the U.S. fat? 'Go on a diet and work out every day!' It's not hard to understand. It's hard to do! The challenge in leadership development is not making sure that leaders understand the practice of leadership; it is making sure that leaders practice their understanding of leadership. A common incorrect assumption is that leaders don't understand the practice. The reality is they've all read the same books. They don't practice their understanding. The challenge is doing - not understanding. Yet most leadership development is focused on understanding.

TD: *What do you find is most helpful in regard to changing executives' behavior?*

MG: To my clients I say that - this change has to come from inside you. You should make this change because - in your heart - you believe that this will make you a better leader - help the people around you and help your company. If you sincerely believe this - make the change! If you don't, don't waste your time. If your effort to change doesn't come from your heart, you will just be acting like a phony. I have no desire to help someone be a better phony - and play silly games. Take the high road. It's not my life, it's yours. What do you want to do?