



25TH Annual HPRCT Conference

Colorado Springs, CO June 18 – 21, 2019

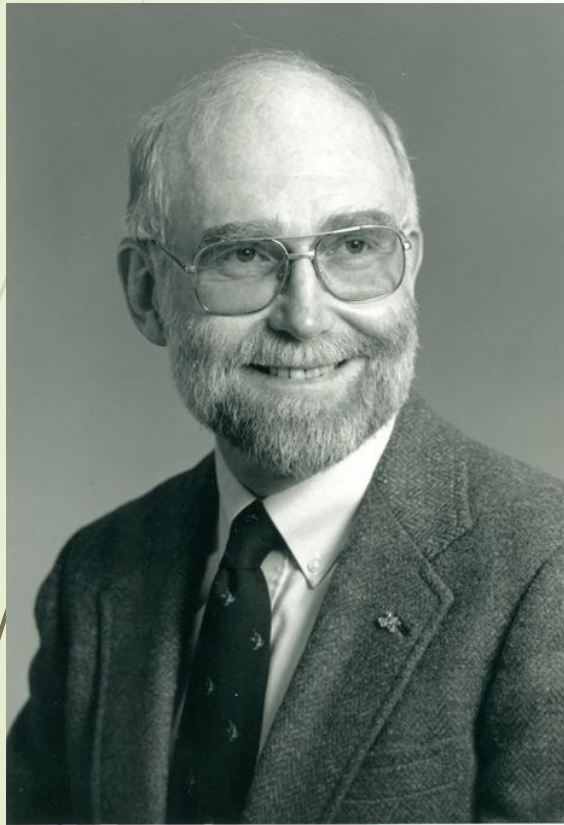
What I Learned From Bill Corcoran

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William R. Corcoran, PhD PE

03/20/1937 – 07/15/2018



- BS, US Naval Academy
- PhD (Nuclear Engineering), MIT
- MS (Business), RPI
- Nuclear Submariner
- ANS Presidential Citation for Nuclear Safety
- Creator of “The Phoenix Method” of RCA
- Contributor to “High Hazard Industries” for 58 years
- 17 Marathons, Avid Skier, Kayaker, Hiker
- Professional Colleague, Mentor
- Personal Friend

Bill Strongly Supported HPRCT

and participated in numerous conferences:

➡ 1999

➡ 2000

➡ 2001

➡ 2003



➡ 2006

➡ 2007

➡ 2010

➡ 2011



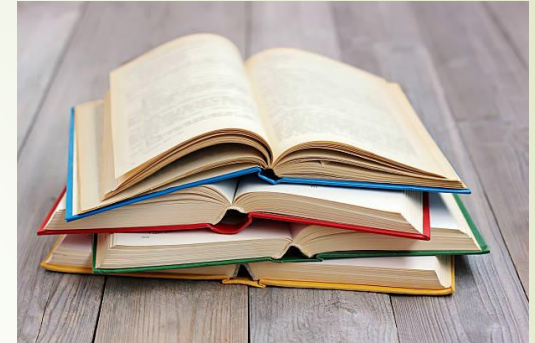
Bill's Professional Focus Areas



- Event Investigation (aka RCA, a term he disliked)
- Internal and External Oversight Functions
- Human Behavior Technology
- Abusing, Defusing, and Using English Language
- Improving Human Performance
- Behaviors and Paradigms that Support Safety in High-Hazard Industries

Examples of Bill's Written Legacy

- *The Phoenix Handbook* (438 pages)
- *The Rootician's Dictionary* (876 pages)
- *The Firebird Forum* (224 issues, 1998 through 2017)
- *Inescapables* (unfinished; 286 pages, 1,339 footnotes)
- "Yahoo Groups" (at least 42)
- Hundreds of papers, articles, and presentations



Pay Attention to Your Guard Rails!

- Make Excellent Choices
- Produce Quality Work
- Focus on the Right Stuff
- Observe What Bosses Really Do
- Pursuit of “Blame” is not a Valid Guard Rail
- Celebrate Professional Disagreement
- Think and Act with Integrity
- Embrace Transparency
- Communicate with “Just Plain English”
- Learn on Purpose, Not by Accident
- Make a Difference to People
- Invest Your Time Through Intentional Choices



What We Get From Life is the Inevitable Consequence of Our Choices

➤ Want Different Results?

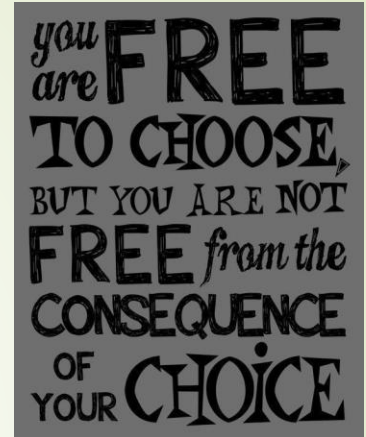
Make Different Choices.

➤ Want to Succeed?

Own Your Mistakes, Learn From Them,
& Don't Make Excuses When You Fall Short.

➤ Want to Make a Difference in the World?

Put People Ahead of Things;
Identify Something that will Help Others Succeed;
Develop a Plan to Make the Best Use of Your Time;
Have at it with Your Entire Being.



Anyone Can Deliver Quality Work (...If They Know What Quality Is)

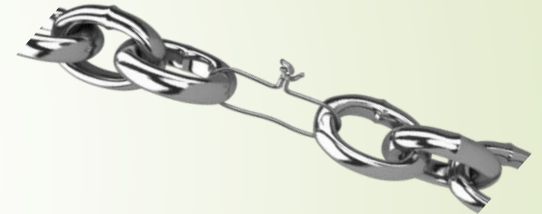
Bill's Universally Applicable Definition of Quality:

- Define the Right Job
- Do it Right the First Time
- Adhere to All Valid Requirements
- Meet All Your Customer's Needs



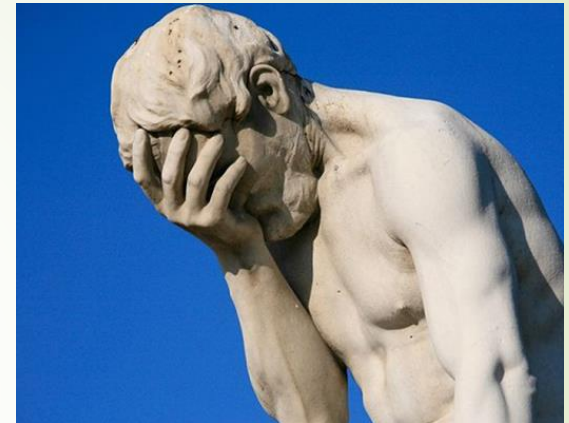
To Improve Performance, Focus on “Limiting Weaknesses”

- ▶ Limiting Weakness = A factor that currently limits performance
- ▶ Remove a Limiting Weakness and performance improves
- ▶ Correcting non-Limiting Weaknesses expends resources without significant payback
- ▶ It's easy to generate a long list of “deficiencies”
- ▶ It is much harder (and more beneficial) to identify what really matters



Quality Programs: Snatching Defeat From the Jaws of Victory

- Most “Quality Programs” are Common Sense Approaches to Business...
- Until the “QA Theologians” Get Involved
- Nothing in Quality Programs Say:
 - Ignore Problems that Fall Outside the Program
 - Waste Resources
 - Spend Time on Trivia
 - Make Stupid Choices
- We all Need Someone Overseeing Our Work, One Way or Another (Bosses, Peers, & Others)



In High Hazard Industries:

- Our people almost always behave in a manner consistent with what they know is important to the boss.
- The only ways they know what is important is where they see the boss spend time, and what they see the boss reward and punish.
- Words and directives in conflict with what our people see bosses doing are generally ignored.



The “Kitty Litter” Principle

- “If we sift through the kitty litter, we should expect to find lumps”
- If we look at organizational performance, we should expect to find deficiencies
- Some of those deficiencies will be at various levels of management



Management is Always Involved in Creation of Events

People do what they do because:

- Management wants it that way;
- Management tolerates it being that way; or
- Management does not know it's that way.



After the investigation, we usually have to tell someone senior, “Your baby is ugly.”

Sometimes we also have to point out the strong family resemblance.

It's Not About Blame—and Never Has Been

- “Blame” is appropriate for legal proceedings & law enforcement, not for performance improvement efforts (including RCA).
- “Never ascribe to malice or mal-intent what can be explained by ignorance or misunderstanding.”
- Speculation about motivation is off-limits; just look at the behaviors and conditions.
- This is as true for management involvement in events as it is for worker involvement.
- Find a better way to ask, “Why?”



Instead of Asking, “Why ‘X’?”, Ask:

What are the factors that produced ‘X’ and shaped its:

- Nature?
- Magnitude?
- Location?
- Timing?



Put another way . . . What are the factors that enabled ‘X’ to occur?

Disagreement Among Professionals: It's Inevitable and Healthy

3 Bases for Professional Disagreement:

➤ Values

- Basic Principles (e.g., work evolutions should not place people's lives at risk)



➤ Data

- Applicable Information; Evidence

➤ Model

- 'How it should work';
How to properly evaluate the evidence

***It's not typically life threatening to
"agree to disagree"***

An Approach to Resolve Internal DPOs (1)

- We discover that we disagree, and are unlikely to reach resolution;
- We agree to include our differing opinions in the applicable report, indicating that we could not reach agreement;
- I listen to your position and write it down to your satisfaction (however much dialog that takes);
- You listen to my position and write it down to my satisfaction (however much dialog that takes);
- We insert both positions into the report, **however...**



An Approach to Resolve Internal DPOs (2)

... after Bill and I started using that approach, we never had a difference of opinion within an investigating team that wasn't resolved.



Think and Act with Integrity

- Eat our own cooking
- Set and meet personal standards higher than we expect from others
- Maintain the sanctity of evidence
- Base conclusions on sound, validated evidence
- Respect intellectual property ownership & rights
- Be honest, as well as truthful
- Master the art of “no surprises”
- Establish and maintain transparency as a personal and professional practice



Transparency

Transparency = Doing things in a way that makes it easy for others to see:

- The underlying logic;
- What's right;
- What's wrong;
- What they agree with; and
- What they disagree with.



Abusing, Defusing, and Using English

- “Just Plain English” (distributed 1998)
 - Write & speak so anyone can understand (i.e., no jargon)
 - Keep it simple; keep it crisp; avoid “passive voice”
- Recognize & Mitigate Use of Misleading Terms (e.g., “Root Cause Analysis”)
- Establish and Maintain Communication Integrity



Learn On Purpose, Not by Accident

intentional (adj.)

an action performed with awareness; done deliberately, consciously, on purpose

- “I intend to learn something from everyone with whom I interact.”
- “In one year, get 1 year of experience, not 1 day of experience 365 times.”
- “Respect the evidence, especially when it tells us we’re wrong.”
- “If you think you know something, put it in writing—you’ll be amazed at what else you need to learn before you’re willing to sign it.”

It's All About People...

- “Human Performance” is not About Equipment, Systems, or Plants
- “Catch ‘em Doing it Right”
- “Equipment Doesn’t Care; People Might”
- “Let Others Know when They Make a Difference”
- “Say Thanks When You Get Help”
- “When You Care About Someone, Let Them Know Today—Tomorrow Might be Too Late.”

**WHEN YOU TAKE
THINGS FOR GRANTED,
THE THINGS YOU ARE
GRANTED, GET
TAKEN. NEVER FORGET
TO BE GRATEFUL.**

We Have But a Limited Time on Earth— Invest it with Intent

- Aggressive Daily Personal Schedule (4:00 AM to 9:00 PM)
- Aggressive Client Support Schedule (7:00 AM to 6:00 PM)
- Aggressive Vacation Schedule (Sunup to Sundown)
- Filled “Found Time” with Meaningful, Focused Activity
- Did Not Allow Circumstances to Interfere with Pursuing Goals and Relationships



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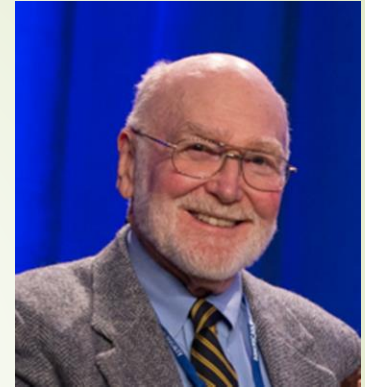
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Have at it with Your Entire Being.



As Bill would say:



“Select your guard rails with care, and as you go through life, don’t take down the guard rails that have acquired rub marks.”

“You Never Have to Apologize for Being a Class Act”



Questions?

Comments?

DPOs?



Bill Corcoran, 1937 to 2018