

HOW TO STOP MAKING NOISE
AND START GETTING RESULTS

Squawk!



*A Little Fable About How One Seagull Manager Learned
the Three Virtues of Great Leadership*

Travis Bradberry Ph.D.

SQUAWK!

Travis Bradberry Ph.D.

ADVANCE PRAISE FOR

Squawk!

"I've been talking about seagull management for years. If you want to understand how to turn it around, read Travis Bradberry's *Squawk!*"

—**KEN BLANCHARD**, coauthor of *The One Minute Manager*® and *The One Minute Entrepreneur*™

"I started reading *Squawk!* thinking it would help me work with a seagull manager of my own, but soon came to recognize my own flight paths in Charlie's. There are several powerful leadership messages woven into this entertaining and memorable parable—teaching me when I was least prepared (and most ready) for it. I have a list of ten colleagues who will be getting a most-unexpected gift."

—**KENNETH FOSTER**, director, Global Customer Strategy,
the Coca-Cola Company

"*Squawk!* does a tremendous job of confronting you with a critical understanding—everything that you say and do each day as a leader has a tremendous impact on those around you. Dr. Bradberry provides a wonderful solution with an easy-to-understand and utilize three-step model that allows you to engage your team and generate improved results. Read it, and you'll see a positive change in your future!"

—**ROBERT SAVAGE**, COO, Taco Bell, Yum Brands

"*Squawk!* is simple, yet powerful, and very entertaining. It provides a valuable illustration of how to get more from your team, and I was able to get through it in just one flight."

—**DENNIS SADLOWSKI**, president and CEO, Siemens Energy
and Automation

"*Squawk!* has a central theme I find near and dear—the tendency of managers to move so fast from problem to problem that they forget people are involved. People need time and attention, and this book is an important reminder that great management doesn't happen on the fly—you have to be there for it."

—**STEPHEN LUNDIN**, coauthor of *Fish!*® and author of *Cats*



COLLINS BUSINESS

An Imprint of HarperCollins Publishers
www.harpercollins.com

ISBN 978-0-06-156234-1



9 780061 562341



5 1 9 5

— Advance Praise for *Squawk!* —

“Companies are losing their top talent every day, and many of those departing do so on entrepreneurial wings. If you want to prevent this and learn to keep your flock together in friendlier skies, read this little fable and take its big lessons to heart!”

—Michael E. Gerber, bestselling author of the *E-Myth* and *Awakening the Entrepreneur Within*

“Seagull management practices kill organizational effectiveness. You might get favorable short-term results with swooping, squawking, and dumping behaviors, but in the long run they will demoralize a strong workforce and destroy the productivity of teams. The key learnings in *Squawk!* help teams enhance their effectiveness and create a real long-term competitive advantage for any company.”

—Robert T. Cancalosi, chief learning officer, GE Healthcare

“*Squawk!* offers leaders and subordinates an indispensable rock for their leadership rucksack. It teaches how to self examine your leadership style and know how to give clear mission-type orders, while allowing subordinates the freedom to figure out how to get the mission done. As a military advisor in Iraq, I have seen firsthand how useful this book’s Three Virtues are to leaders, even in grave situations where life and limb are at stake. I recommend *Squawk!* wholeheartedly—you’ll never look at seagulls (birds or human) the same way again!”

—Colonel Francis (Frank) B. Burns, U.S. Army

“In thirty-five years in the people management business *Squawk!* is the most dead on-center and entertaining thing I have read on what I now will forever refer to as seagull management. It took me back to my college days, when I read another seagull book that communicated so well. My employer has a culture of using books to build on our culture and this will be added to the list.”

—Terry Guthrie, SPHR, vice president of human resources, Festiva Resorts

“*Squawk!* is as profound as it is fun! A must-read for every manager.”

—Ron McMillan, bestselling coauthor of *Crucial Conversations*, *Crucial Confrontations*, and *Influencer*

Chapter

2

A Chance Encounter

AFTER CHARLIE LEFT THAT NIGHT, the flock continued meeting to explore options for finding food. Finding a new manager seemed like an obvious solution, but no one in the flock was the right fit. Maya had great ideas, but she shuddered to think of herself at the center of the flock's attention. The flock considered Scott a leader of sorts, but he knew that his brazen and blunt style of interacting with others would cause too many problems. Yufan seemed like the best candidate. He was a hard worker and a social butterfly, but he was perfectly happy with his position and had no interest in managing seagulls. The flock decided that Charlie was just going to have to change.

Charlie returned to the roost early the following morning with his tail feathers between his legs. He was relieved to discover that the other gulls still wanted him

Travis Bradberry Ph.D.

there. Scott was eager to discuss the previous evening's events. While the rest of the flock took off to the food court to begin the workday, Scott and Charlie stepped aside for a chat.

"I just want you to know that we hadn't figured on having our feedback land so harshly on your shoulders, Charlie," Scott explained.

Charlie nodded as if a truce had been struck.

"But I also want you to accept that our concerns are real. I mean, just look at us." Scott paused to observe the cadre of seagulls that were waddling, fluttering, and flying their way toward the food court. "We've grown and changed a lot since we first came here. The old ways just don't seem to be cutting it anymore. We're stuck Charlie. We need your guidance, your collaboration, your support, even, to help us get through this. Every gull deserves a full belly. After all, isn't that why we followed you here in the first place?"

Having had an evening to calm down and think through the gravity of the situation, Charlie was more open to the flock's feedback than he had been the night before. "You guys are right," he admitted. "I just want you to know that I *have* been trying. I just didn't realize that I wasn't doing a very good job. I'll do everything in my power to fix this. I'm willing to change."

News of Charlie's desire to turn over a new leaf was well received by the rest of the flock. The gulls had new-found energy to put back into their work—until the

Squawk!

weeks flew by and nothing happened. Sure, Charlie was a little more patient with the flock when they squabbled over food or asked for help, but it remained apparent that he didn't think there were enough hours in the day for *him* to solve *their* problems. So, the flock decided to present their own ideas for how to handle the increasingly desperate situation.

The flock had always talked about how much food must be in the park, if they could just figure out how to get their beaks on it. Surely their tried-and-true strategy of snagging food from inattentive diners couldn't be the only way to keep their bellies firm and round.

Scott was more brazen and prone to taking risks than the average gull, and he had been with the flock since they first came to the food court. It was natural for him to suggest that they quit lamenting the food they were missing out on and go straight to the source. He'd noticed that all of the food served by the food court was delivered early each morning before the sun came up. If some members of the flock just got up earlier, they could probably snag enough food from the delivery men to feed the entire flock all day.

Much to everyone's surprise, Charlie heard Scott's idea out and even acknowledged its potential, but he wasn't about to let the flock implement the strategy. "There's no way we're adding a night shift," Charlie told them. "It will be a major disruption to our schedule. We can't have a bunch of tired zombies roaming the food court."

Travis Bradberry P.H.D.

This flock feeds at the food court—*during the day*—in one shift. Period.”

Maya’s idea was next. Her clever strategy was focused on another untapped source of food in the park—the gift shops. She noticed that most of the park’s gift shops had shelves filled with snacks and candy to prop open their doors and catch the eye of hungry customers. Maya wondered why a stealthy gull couldn’t just wait until the clerk was preoccupied, swoop on in, and fly off with a tasty bag of chips.

Charlie could sense the flock’s growing furor over his rejection of Scott’s idea, so he decided to let Maya give hers a try. Charlie understood that Maya’s strategy was something of a stealth mission, so he let her be the guinea pig. Just as she often was with her peers, Maya was quiet as a feather on her way into the store. The initial missions went beautifully, and she returned with a bag of chips every time.

News of Maya’s successful runs convinced Scott that he should give it a go himself. The flock knew Scott had trouble keeping his beak shut, so they reminded him to approach the store quietly, but Scott was too enamored with visions of heroic commando missions that would save the flock to heed their request. He waited outside the store until he found his moment, went in squawking, and came skidding out on his rear with the assistance of the clerk’s broom. Charlie promptly announced that stealth missions did not work and that no further raids on the park’s gift shops would be conducted.





Travis Bradberry Ph.D.

Yufan's idea was the last one for Charlie to ruin. Everyone feared it was the last thing standing between an easy life in the food court and a return to the miserable seashore.

Yufan was something of a bulldozer when it came to getting work done. No matter how daunting the challenge, he was the first gull to spread his wings and get to work, not stopping until he was done. Sleeping, eating, and free time meant little to Yufan when there was an unfinished project at hand. It was only natural that Yufan's idea was something of a sink-or-swim proposition. His system was simple: find enough to eat and you get to stay; have trouble feeding yourself and you're back to the seashore.



Naturally, Charlie loved the idea. It made sense to him. But from the moment Yufan's plan was implemented, teamwork turned to strife as each gull shifted focus to the self-centered goal of maintaining his or her place in the food court. The entire flock became increasingly aggressive in the pursuit of their next meal, which created a chaos that engulfed the food court. Patrons were dive-bombed on all sides by pecking gulls the moment their orders came sliding through the service windows. Food went flying, children left crying, and park employees scratched their heads over this abrupt change in the seagulls' behavior.



The park staff couldn't stand there scratching for long. They weren't about to have their customers scared



Squawk!

away by a bunch of birds, and they decided that they must treat the gulls just the way a forest ranger treats a bear that has developed a taste for human food and won't stay away from campers. They would capture and relocate the aggressive seagulls.

As intelligent and swift as Scott was, his brazenness made him a primary target for capture. In fact, he was the only gull the humans came away with in their net, because their "hunt" sent the rest of the flock back to the roost in a panic. Kamikaze assaults on the food court ceased.

Charlie was off on the other side of the park when Scott was captured. When he returned to roost that evening, Maya and Yufan were waiting to speak to him.

"Bad news. Charlie." Yufan spoke first. "My plan didn't work so well, and the people captured Scott."

"Oh my!" Charlie was shocked and genuinely upset. "Where did they take him?"

"One of the dolphins overheard the humans saying something about taking Scott to the Salton Sea, way out there in the desert," Maya replied. "Poor thing; it's going to be a long flight home."

"What did he do to slip up and get captured?" Charlie asked.

"He was just doing what we all were doing, Charlie. We were fighting over the food because none of us wanted to be sent back to the seashore." Yufan said.

"I see," Charlie continued. "Looks like you guys are going to have to stop doing that."



Squawk!

“Oh, we’re stopping, Charlie. We’re going to go right back to what we were doing before all this. We’re not going to change a thing,” Maya said.

“Great! It’s settled then,” Charlie said happily.

“Not quite, Charlie. I’m sure you remember a few weeks ago when we all spoke to you. You said you’d change your approach. And you didn’t,” Yufan said.

Charlie gulped.

It was Charlie’s job to manage the flock. He had promised to work alongside them and make things better. He had promised to change. Now the gulls were stuck—they were trapped in the food court and starved by the seagull manager that had led them there.

“We’re through waiting around for you to change,” Yufan continued. “There are a few new eggs that are ready to hatch into chicks, so we’re going to have to stick around here for a month or so until they’re out of the nest and can fly on their own. After that, we’re returning to the seashore.”

“You’re *what?*” Charlie bellowed.

“We’re leaving, Charlie. We’ve had enough of this,” Yufan said.

“Maya, are you in on this?” Charlie asked.

“We all are, Charlie. It’s been a long time coming,” she said sadly.

Charlie looked up at the stoic faces surrounding him, and the room started to spin. For a gull who prided himself on his work, this was an intolerable position to be in.

Travis Bradberry Ph.D.

“Don’t be too hard on yourself, Charlie,” Yufan said, placing a compassionate wing on his manager’s shoulder. “It just didn’t work out.”

“It was fun while it lasted,” Maya added.

Charlie reeled away from the other gulls, spun around, and flew off sulking. As the night wore on, competing thoughts tore through his brain. Since taking over the flock, all he’d ever done was try to help. He’d given years of blood, sweat, and tears to ensure their dominance over the food court. But now the old ways of doing things weren’t working. Nothing seemed to be clicking, and Charlie didn’t know why.

Midnight came and went, leaving Charlie deep in thought. He wanted to return to the roost with a plan. He wanted to prove to the flock that they could stay in the food court and be well taken care of. Most of all, he wanted to lead. He paced along the rim of the sea turtle tank until he was startled by a baritone voice that echoed from the darkness. Rattled by the sound, Charlie turned so abruptly that he slipped and fell backward into the water.

Charlie recovered quickly, using his webbed orange feet to right himself, and skimmed about the tank, peering into the darkness for the source of the interruption.

“Who’s there?” he asked.

“I’m right here,” a voice replied. This time the voice was so close that it sent Charlie flopping about again.

Charlie looked down and saw the scarred shell of an

Squawk!

old sea turtle floating beside him. The turtle's head poked high above the water's surface with a wry smile.

"Why did you scare me like that?" Charlie asked defensively.

"Oh, I'm sorry," the turtle replied. "I didn't mean to scare you."

"Then what are you bothering me for?" Charlie spat. "Can't you see I'm busy? I'm trying to think over here."

"Well," the turtle explained, "you looked like you could use some help."

"That's for sure," Charlie muttered under his breath.

"Indeed it is," the turtle answered back.

Charlie was instantly peeved. *Who does this guy think he is, a psychic? Imagine this sleepy old water dweller helping me. Boy, I'd looove to see that.*

"So, what is it exactly that I need help with?" he asked.

"My name is Oscar, for your information. And you, Charlie, need to come up with something quick if you're going to stay in charge of that flock of yours."

"Tell me something I don't already know!"

Oscar had captured Charlie's interest, hidden beneath the sarcasm. Charlie studied the turtle for a moment. He'd never paid much attention to the sea turtles in spite of their exhibit's proximity to the food court. Charlie was so busy each day that he'd hardly glanced in the direction of the turtle pool, let alone stopped by to say hello to his neighbors.

Travis Bradberry Ph.D.

“So you’ve been watching me,” Charlie said wryly.

“Indeed I have. And I must admit, Charlie, you’re kind of hard to miss. You’re always moving about, flapping your wings in the air, and squawking up a storm every time the other gulls get into a bind. It’s really quite a scene,” Oscar said.

“Thanks a million for those encouraging words, Oscar,” Charlie said sarcastically, “but I’ll be going now. I have to come up with a plan before morning, or you won’t have a chance to see me *squawking up a storm* anymore.” Charlie used his wings to contemptuously punctuate Oscar’s words with imaginary quotation marks.

“Really? Why is that?” Oscar asked.

“You really want to know?” Charlie hesitated, realizing that he was about to spill his guts to a slow, flightless sea turtle.

“Absolutely. Fire away,” Oscar said.

“Well, OK, here’s the deal. You see, the flock is starving because the food court has become extremely competitive now that there are so many of us. Everybody says that I just make things worse when I try to solve their problems. But dang it, if I see some gulls in trouble, I’ll be damned if I’m not going to go in there and lend a hand,” Charlie said.

“That’s admirable, Charlie, to care so much about your work and the gulls that work for you,” Oscar observed. “So what do you suppose the flock wants you to do?”

Squawk!

“They want me to stop being me, I guess,” Charlie moaned. “Either that or they want me to make food rain down from heaven.”

“But why do you say they want you to stop being you?”

“I’m not really sure. I know there are things I do that frustrate everyone, but now it seems, with times as tight as they are, that it’s taking everyone over the edge.”

“*You’re* taking them over the edge,” Oscar stated.

“Well, I don’t know about that,” Charlie said defensively.

“Seems to me you’re outnumbered in terms of who wants who to change.”

“Well, I’ll give you that one,” Charlie replied as he stared off into space. He was beginning to fret again about what he was going to do with the flock.

“So, what’s the plan?” Oscar asked.

“Mine? I don’t have one. The gulls said they’re gonna stick around for another month or so until the new chicks grow up a bit and then they’re outta here. They’re all heading back to live along the seashore.”

“That’s a shame.”

Charlie nodded quietly, a wilted look of defeat on his face.

“Well, at least you have a month to do something about it,” Oscar observed.

“Hardly. They’ve already made up their mind. Nothing I do is going to change their mind.”

Travis Bradberry Ph.D.

“Really?”

“Yes, really,” Charlie snapped back. He was feeling a bit fired up again and he figured it must be because Oscar was being such a moron.

“What would you say if I told you that I have something you can take back to your flock that will regain their trust and get them to stay when the month is over?” Oscar asked.

“I’d say you’re crazy,” Charlie said, “unless maybe it’s a warehouse filled with food.”

“Nope, don’t have that. I have something that will feed your flock much longer than a warehouse filled with food. In fact, it’ll feed your flock forever—or as long as you’re willing to *water the garden*, so to speak.”

As annoying as he found Oscar’s beating around the bush, Charlie couldn’t deny that his suggestion was intriguing. “And what, exactly, do you have for me there, *turtle*?”

“I’m glad you asked. What I have is the only way you can expect to win back the support of your flock. You’ll need to adopt the three virtues of superior managers.”

Charlie threw his wings across his belly and acted as if he was going to throw up. “Oh, Gawd! Which anointed one decided that there are three virtues that will make *me* a better manager? Was it you, swimming around in this think tank of yours?”

Oscar couldn’t help but laugh, “No, Charlie, I had to learn them myself before I could appreciate how im-

Squawk!

portant they are. I learned them from some friends of mine—friends who live outside of this pool.” Oscar continued: “You see, I used to be something of a ‘seagull manager’ myself. I suppose I still am on rare occasions, but back then I was having many of the same troubles here in the pool that I’ve seen you having with your flock. Then I learned the three virtues, and they flip-flopped my approach to running this tank.”

Charlie remained skeptical but, to his own surprise, felt compelled to ask, “And what are these three virtues of yours, turtle?”

“They’re things that you—well anyone, really—needs to do as a manager,” Oscar said. “And the only reason you aren’t doing them now is that you aren’t aware of them.”

Oscar finally had Charlie’s undivided attention.

“The first virtue is creating full-fledged expectations for every member of your flock. The second is altering your communication style, so that it clicks. And the final virtue is my personal favorite, though I have to admit it was the hardest for me to learn: paws on performance. All you need to do is learn ’em and use ’em, Charlie. They’ll take care of the rest.” Lost in his own excitement, Oscar had said a mouthful. He looked up and saw a blank look on Charlie’s face.

Charlie cleared his throat, and the fire returned to his eyes. “Well, that’s a nice little intellectual exercise you’ve got going here in your turtle pool, but let me tell you something—it ain’t gonna fly in the real world.

Travis Bradberry Ph.D.

In the real world we have to compete for our food. We don't just get to swim around all day conjuring up cockamamie theories while we wait for the attendants to come and feed us." Charlie was furious. He exited the water and paced along the edge of the tank as he spoke. "I'm out of here! I can't believe I've wasted this much time already."

Oscar reached a flipper up over the pool's edge in front of Charlie, as if to stop him. "All right, Charlie, but before you go, let me ask you one question," he said calmly.

Charlie threw his wings on his hips and tapped a webbed foot impatiently while he waited for Oscar to speak.

"Would you be willing to learn the three virtues of great managers if I can prove to you that they do work in the real world?" Oscar asked.

Charlie remained there thinking for a moment. He knew he was out of options, though he doubted this old turtle had half a clue what he was talking about.

"What do you have to lose?" Oscar asked.

Charlie's wings fell to his side, and his foot stopped tapping. "All right, if you prove it, then I'll try and learn one of your virtues. But don't waste my time, turtle! I've got a lot of gulls relying on me."

"Great! You won't be disappointed. Tomorrow morning I want you to go meet a friend of mine. She's going to show you how the first of the three virtues works in the

Squawk!

real world. Once she convinces you of that, she'll show you how to use it," Oscar said.

"Who's your friend, and where am I supposed to meet her?" Charlie asked.

"Her name is Imata. She's a sea otter. Just meet her over at the Otter Encounter exhibit."

"A sea otter? You can't be serious." Charlie's worried look quickly faded; for once, he had realized that his fretting was not about the otter. "Tell me, turtle, what's the point of this plan of yours to show me the three virtues of great managers? Why do you care whether I change?"

Oscar was slow to respond. "I suppose there are a couple of reasons. First off, your flock provides daily entertainment for us here in the pool. As you can imagine, it gets pretty boring for us swimming around and around in a circle all day when we used to be free to roam the ocean. Anyway, it's pure comedy watching your flock dive-bomb the humans to steal their food. We'd hate to see you all go."

"And the second reason?" Charlie asked with a wry smile.

"I wouldn't mind helping you, Charlie. You seem like a good guy, now that I've had the chance to get to know you a bit. And you're really in a tight spot here with the flock. I honestly believe that using the three virtues will get you back on their good side. *Permanently.*"

Charlie was silent.

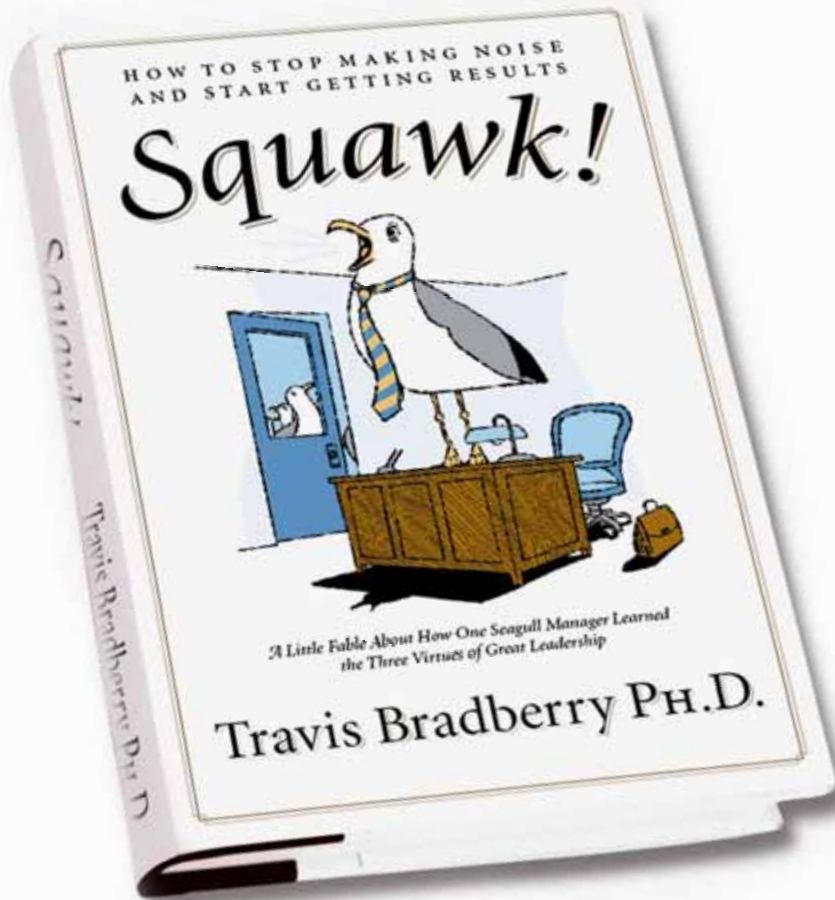


Travis Bradberry Ph.D.

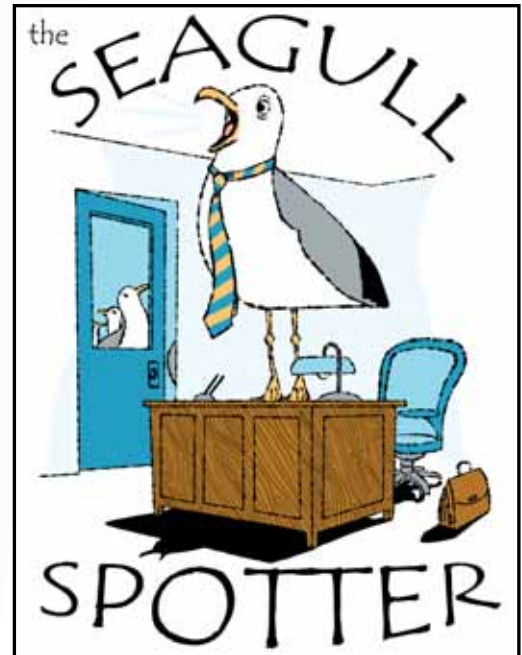
“Look, you’re just going to have to trust me, buddy—it’s the only way I can help you,” said Oscar. “Just head over to Otter Encounter first thing in the morning, and you’ll see what I mean. Imata will be expecting you.” And with that, Oscar drifted down deep into the murky water, leaving Charlie alone to choose his fate.



Want to see what happens next?



[CLICK HERE](#) to order *Squawk!* for just \$19.95, and we'll send you a complimentary link to take the new *Seagull Spotter* assessment!



A \$39.95 value that measures your skill in the three leadership virtues from *Squawk!* and tells you when you succumb to seagull management behaviors.

