

# Marshall Goldsmith What Got You Here

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How Successful People Become  
Even More Successful!

## What Got You Here Won't Get You There

Discover  
the 20  
Workplace Habits  
You Need to  
Break

MARSHALL GOLDSMITH

WITH MARK REITER



Marshall Goldsmith: What Got You Here is a powerful exploration of the habits and behaviors that can hold successful leaders back from reaching their full potential. In this transformative work, Goldsmith, a renowned executive coach, delves into the complexities of personal and professional development, providing insights and practical advice for individuals at various stages of their careers. This article will

explore the key themes of the book, its practical applications, and the larger implications for personal growth and leadership effectiveness.

## Understanding the Core Concepts

Marshall Goldsmith's *What Got You Here* centers on the idea that the very traits that contribute to our success can also impede our progress. Goldsmith outlines a series of behaviors that high-achieving individuals often exhibit, which, while effective in reaching previous milestones, may become detrimental as they ascend to higher roles and responsibilities.

### The Success Paradox

Goldsmith introduces the concept of the “success paradox,” where individuals achieve a level of success based on certain behaviors but may struggle to adapt those same behaviors in new contexts. He emphasizes that what got you to your current position may not be sufficient to propel you further. Recognizing this paradox is crucial for ongoing development.

### Common Habits of Successful Leaders

In the book, Goldsmith identifies 20 common habits that can hinder leadership effectiveness. Some of these include:

1. **Winning too much:** The compulsion to win at all costs can lead to damaging relationships and a toxic work environment.
2. **Adding too much value:** Constantly trying to improve others' ideas can stifle creativity and innovation.
3. **Not listening:** Failing to truly hear others can result in missed opportunities for collaboration and

growth.

4. Speaking when angry: Emotional outbursts can damage credibility and create conflict.

5. Negativity: A pessimistic attitude can demoralize teams and limit overall success.

Recognizing these behaviors is the first step toward overcoming them, and Goldsmith provides a framework for leaders to self-assess and seek feedback from their peers and subordinates.

## **Feedback and Self-Awareness**

A significant theme in *What Got You Here* is the importance of feedback and self-awareness in personal and professional development. Goldsmith argues that many high-level professionals lack an accurate understanding of how their behaviors affect others.

## **The Role of 360-Degree Feedback**

One of Goldsmith's key recommendations is the use of 360-degree feedback as a tool for gaining insight into one's own behaviors. This process involves collecting feedback from a variety of sources, including peers, superiors, and direct reports. By gathering diverse perspectives, individuals can develop a more comprehensive view of their strengths and weaknesses.

Benefits of 360-Degree Feedback:

- Holistic Perspective: Provides insights from various levels within the organization.
- Identification of Blind Spots: Helps uncover behaviors that may be negatively impacting relationships and performance.
- Accountability: Encourages commitment to change as individuals share their development goals with others.

## Developing Self-Awareness

Goldsmith emphasizes that self-awareness is a cornerstone of effective leadership. He suggests several strategies for enhancing self-awareness, including:

- **Mindfulness Practices:** Engaging in mindfulness or meditation can help individuals become more attuned to their thoughts and feelings.
- **Journaling:** Keeping a journal allows leaders to reflect on their experiences and behaviors regularly.
- **Seeking Mentorship:** Building relationships with mentors can provide guidance and external perspectives on one's development.

## Strategies for Change

Recognizing the need for change is only the beginning; implementing that change is where many individuals struggle. Goldsmith outlines a series of strategies that can help leaders modify their behaviors effectively.

## The Importance of Goal Setting

Goldsmith advocates for setting specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals. By clearly defining what they want to achieve, leaders can create a roadmap for their development.

Steps for Effective Goal Setting:

1. **Identify Desired Behaviors:** Determine which behaviors need to change or improve.
2. **Set Specific Goals:** Create detailed objectives for each behavior.
3. **Establish Metrics:** Define how you will measure progress.

4. Create Accountability Structures: Share your goals with others to increase accountability.

## **Practicing New Behaviors**

Goldsmith stresses the significance of practice in changing deeply ingrained habits. He suggests the following tactics:

- Role-Playing: Engaging in role-playing exercises can help individuals practice new responses in a safe environment.
- Visualization: Visualizing successful interactions can reinforce positive behaviors.
- Regular Check-Ins: Schedule periodic reviews to assess progress and adjust goals as necessary.

## **The Role of Support Systems**

Change is often challenging, and having a support system can significantly enhance the likelihood of success. Goldsmith discusses the importance of cultivating relationships that encourage growth and provide constructive feedback.

## **Building a Support Network**

Creating a robust support network involves identifying individuals who can provide guidance and accountability. This can include:

- Colleagues: Engage peers who understand your goals and can offer support.
- Mentors: Seek out mentors who have experience in areas you wish to improve.
- Coaches: Consider working with a professional coach who specializes in leadership development.

## Creating a Culture of Feedback

Goldsmith highlights the importance of fostering a culture of feedback within organizations. Leaders should encourage open communication and create environments where feedback is welcomed and acted upon. This not only benefits individual leaders but also enhances overall team dynamics.

Strategies for Fostering a Feedback Culture:

- Regular Check-Ins: Schedule consistent meetings to discuss performance and development.
- Anonymous Feedback Tools: Utilize tools that allow employees to provide feedback without fear of repercussion.
- Celebrate Growth: Recognize and reward individuals who demonstrate commitment to self-improvement.

## Conclusion: Embracing Change for Continued Success

In *What Got You Here*, Marshall Goldsmith provides a compelling roadmap for leaders seeking to overcome the obstacles that can arise from their own success. By recognizing the behaviors that may be holding them back, embracing feedback, and committing to ongoing development, leaders can create pathways to sustained success. The journey toward personal and professional growth is continuous, and with the right mindset and strategies, individuals can adapt and thrive in an ever-changing landscape. Goldsmith's insights serve as a powerful reminder that achieving success is not merely about leveraging past accomplishments but also about evolving and transforming for future challenges.

## Frequently Asked Questions

## **What is the main premise of Marshall Goldsmith's book 'What Got You Here Won't Get You There'?**

The main premise of the book is that the skills and behaviors that lead to success at one level may not be sufficient to achieve success at a higher level. Goldsmith emphasizes the importance of personal development and the need to change certain habits to advance in one's career.

## **What are some common behavioral habits that Goldsmith identifies as obstacles to success?**

Goldsmith identifies several behaviors that can hinder success, including the need to win too much, the tendency to add too much value, and the inability to listen. These habits can create barriers in leadership and teamwork.

## **How does Goldsmith suggest individuals can overcome their behavioral challenges?**

Goldsmith suggests a process of feedback, reflection, and accountability. He encourages individuals to seek input from others, focus on specific behaviors they want to change, and create a plan for improvement with the help of peers or coaches.

## **What role does feedback play in Goldsmith's philosophy?**

Feedback is central to Goldsmith's philosophy. He believes that receiving honest and constructive feedback is crucial for personal growth and helps individuals become aware of their behaviors that may be holding them back.

## **Can you explain the concept of 'feedforward' introduced by Goldsmith?**

'Feedforward' is a technique Goldsmith introduces as a more constructive alternative to traditional feedback. Instead of focusing on past behaviors, feedforward emphasizes suggestions for future improvement, making it more positive and actionable.

## **Why does Goldsmith emphasize the importance of listening in leadership?**

Goldsmith emphasizes listening as a vital leadership skill because it fosters understanding, builds trust, and encourages open communication. Effective leaders must be able to listen to their team to make informed decisions and enhance collaboration.

## **What is the significance of accountability in Goldsmith's approach?**

Accountability is significant in Goldsmith's approach because it creates a commitment to change. By setting specific goals and sharing them with others, individuals become more likely to follow through on their intentions and achieve their desired outcomes.

## **How can 'What Got You Here Won't Get You There' be applied in a corporate setting?**

The book can be applied in a corporate setting by encouraging leaders and employees to engage in self-reflection, seek constructive feedback, and participate in development programs that focus on improving interpersonal skills and behaviors crucial for advancement.

## **What impact has 'What Got You Here Won't Get You There' had on leadership development?**

The book has had a significant impact on leadership development by highlighting the importance of emotional intelligence and soft skills. It has influenced many leaders to focus on personal growth and behavioral change as pathways to greater effectiveness.

## **How does Goldsmith's work relate to the concept of emotional intelligence?**

Goldsmith's work closely relates to emotional intelligence as it emphasizes self-awareness, self-regulation, and interpersonal skills. He argues that understanding and modifying one's behaviors are essential aspects of emotional intelligence that contribute to successful leadership.



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