

*Burke Hedges'*  
***Success X Factor***  
*Positive Change for a Better Life*

---

**"Life is not what happens to you, but what you make of it!"**

---

*"I can't imagine I could have become the person I am now without books. Books became synonymous with freedom. They showed that you could open doors and walk through."*

**-- Oprah Winfrey**

Yes, it's that time of the year again when we celebrate the holidays and shoppers fill the malls looking for that perfect gift for Uncle George or Sister Suzy. Advertisers are bombarding us with commercials for the latest and greatest toys, electronic gadgets, and new fashions. "Give them the new Dyno-Buzz, they'll never forget it!" But, in reality, how many gifts do we end up returning to the store because it is really not for us? How many gifts are put up in the closet after a day or two? Do you even remember the gifts you received last year?

Why not do something different this year and give a life-changing book to the people on your list? Give them something that will make a difference in their lives.

I remember the book that changed my life forever, "The Greatest Salesman in the World", by Og Mandino. It was given to me by my sister-in-law and it was the turning point of my life. Mandino's book inspired me to quit my dead-end job and to seek a position selling cellular phones. Within a year of my first sale, I had opened my own cellular phone business, and, I'm proud to say, I've been a successful entrepreneur ever since.

In the words of Henry David Thoreau, "*A truly great book teaches me better than to read it. I must soon lay it down, and commence living on its hint... What I began by reading, I must finish by acting.*"

Reading influences us in ways we can't even comprehend. Research proves that reading changes the way humans solve problems, store information, tell stories, interpret the world, and think about ourselves. Reading even changes the shape of our brains! When we stop to really think about the impact that reading has on our lives, we're left standing in awe.

When I chose to read *The Greatest Salesman in the World*, I had no idea at the time how it would change my life. At the time it seemed like such a small, inconsequential choice.

But like the injured skier who chose to “zig instead of zag”, small choices can have enormous consequences. Even a seemingly small choice, like deciding to join a fitness center or putting on your seat belt before you pull out of the driveway, can dramatically change the direction of your life.

Do you remember the hit movie, *You’ve Got Mail*, starring Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan? It’s a cute story that captures the growing tension between the giant Barnes & Noble-type bookstore chains and the small, independent bookstores.

The lead female character, played by Ryan, owns a small children’s bookstore. Hanks’ family owns a nearby superstore that is driving Ryan out of business. At one point Ryan gushes that she loves what she does, and Hanks asks her what’s so special about selling books to little kids. She replies, “*I love what I do because books tell children who they are long before they ever become it*”.

This line pretty well sums up the power of reading to shape young lives. In fact, it sums up the power of reading to shape our lives at ANY age. The way I see it, Ryan’s comment applies to personal growth books just as much as it applies to children’s books. Personal growth books tell us who we can become before we become it. They give us hope. They stir our imagination. They inspire us to take action. They make us stretch ourselves. They plant the seeds that grow and blossom into our dreams. They challenge us to live up to our full potential. In short, they empower us to change...to get better...to grow rich.

*“Many times the reading of a book has made the fortune of a man.”*

**-- Ralph Waldo Emerson**

What follows is a list of the books in my **Personal Growth Books Hall of Fame**. Why not give one (or more) of these books to the people on your list. Change their lives...Plant the seed....

1. *Pilgrim’s Progress*, John Bunyan (1670)
2. *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (1793)
3. *Essays by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau* (1840s)
4. *Horatio Alger Stories* (1860-1899)
5. *Acres of Diamonds*, Russell Conwell (1890s)
6. *As a Man Thinketh*, James Allen (1910)
7. *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, Dale Carnegie (1937)
8. *Think and Grow Rich*, Napoleon Hill (1937)
9. *The Power of Positive Thinking*, Dr. Norman Vincent Peale (1952)
10. *The Strangest Secret*, Earl Nightingale (1956)
11. *The Magic of Thinking Big*, David J. Schwartz, Ph.D. (1959)
12. *Psycho-Cybernetics*, Maxwell Maltz (1960)
13. *The Greatest Salesman in the World*, Og Mandino (1968)
14. *Man’s Search for Meaning*, Dr. Viktor Frankl (1959)

15. *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Dr. Steven Covey (1989)
16. *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen (1993)
17. *See You at the Top*, Zig Ziglar (1975)
18. *The Magic of Believing*, Claude M. Bristol (1948)
19. *The Richest Man in Babylon*, George S. Clason (1926)
20. Books by Dr. Robert H. Schuller

Many of these titles can be purchased at INTI Publishing [www.intipub.com](http://www.intipub.com)

This Christmas give the gift of education. But, whatever you do, have a joyous and safe holiday season. Take time to spend with your loved ones and do something nice for yourself. You deserve it!

Seize the day,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob", with a stylized, cursive font.

*"The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who cannot read them."*

**-- Mark Twain**