



Sightings



The
Longview
Group

INSIGHTS...IN SIGHT

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The three movie cards were donated by The Longview Group.

The Longview Group
3 Longview Knoll
Iowa City, IA 52240

Tel: 319.351.6510
Wats: 866.351.6510
Fax: 319.351.6520

www.longview-group.com



INSIGHTS...IN SIGHT



Celebrating “Bs”

My grandfather Augustino was an Italian immigrant who settled in Oelwein, Iowa. He left a tiny village in central Italy that had poor soil, poor people, and poorer hopes.

It was the early part of the century. He came to the heartland with its rich soil, rich new railroad and richer dreams. He raised and educated five children. He worked hard enough to purchase a Sears and Roebuck house that included five bedrooms, one bath with a floor radiator and trellises for over 28 grape vines. He tended his garden after each day's work.

He smoked crooked black cigars, enjoyed sipping bourbon, and sitting on his back porch until it got too cold each winter.

He retired from the railroad shops to plant and harvest a larger, richer, vegetable garden. He loved being a retired farmer for over 20 seasons. In the winter he made strong, good wine in the basement. He shared with everyone: his retirement garden “gratias de Dios” and his wine.

He smoked crooked black cigars, enjoyed sipping bourbon, and sitting on his backporch until it got too cold each winter. My grandfather and grandmother would tell you they were the richest folks on earth.

His job with the Chicago North Western railroad was tough, sometimes dangerous work. He worked in the railroad shops as a boilermaker. He went to work every day, worked damn hard, and didn't ask for much from the rail line, except his paycheck. Friends back in Italy would not be so lucky.

He did not aspire to own the Chicago North Western. He did not want to be a shop foreman. He just went to work, got along with everyone and spent time with his kids. Some people said that he knew everything you could know about being a steam-locomotive boilermaker.

He had been in the shops long enough to learn it all. For many years, he balanced 60-hour workweeks with his home, father, and husband responsibilities.



Today we call that work-life balance.

My grandfather was a classic “B” player. You know the “Bs.” They are the folks that do the work in your shop. They are reliable, knowledgeable, and hard working. They know how to cut through the bureaucracy when a critical report is due, or a critical part is needed.

They fear neither promotion nor termination.

They ask for little except for fair treatment. In bad times, they understand when there may not be a raise. They keep working hard. They don’t abuse sick leave benefits. They know the nuances of their department. They are more interested in their work than their careers. They are truth tellers. They do not demand much from management. They have much stronger interest in work-life balance than Augustino. They have a life outside of work.

Bs save the organization from itself. But they refuse to be married to it emotionally.

“Let’s Hear It for the B Players” written by Thomas DeLong and Vineeta Vijayaraghavan was published in the **Harvard Business Review** in June 2003. The article explains that about 10 percent of the workforce are “A” players. These are the superstars who breeze

into an organization, create new ideas, plans and concepts. They are typically more interested in their own careers and advancement. They may be glitzy. They move in, move up and move on.

Then there is the 10 percent of the workers who are the “C” players. These people stay on the job because they do just enough to avoid being terminated. Sometimes “Cs” are executives in corner offices who have retired in action, if not in fact.

But the vast majority of the workers are solid “Bs.”

Recognize how important they are to your organization. Here is what they typically want: recognition for a job well done, challenging projects, the gift of time, nurturing, appreciation and some of their supervisor’s attention. Not too much, considering their critical role in making you and your organization look good.

So make some time next week for all your “Bs.” Celebrate they are in your shop, and like Augustino, work hard and work smart for you and not your competition.

To the “Bs”: Hip. Hip. Hooray!



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