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## Your Magna Carta



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Bill Caswell is an experienced coach of CEOs and senior executives around the globe. The author of 14 books, Bill has penned the 12-book series *The Respect Revolution* written, by a CEO for CEOs, as a guide to getting your company to *Excellence* and keeping it there.

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*In 1215, 800 years ago, King John of England signed away his ultimate authority to the people with a flick of his pen. Two meaningful changes brought about by the Magna Carta, are particularly significant today: women were no longer chattels and the king had to be responsible to the people. In the following centuries, kings who would not accept the people as the ultimate authority were tossed out by the people through war or revolution: the King of France, the Kaiser of Germany, the Emperor of Austria-Hungary, the Czar of Russia and so on. Royalty in England survives today because of the framework of this document. That is, for royalty's own self-preservation it was essential to accept the idea of listening to the people.*

It was not that King John was so magnanimous; he was faced with revolt by the barons and earls if he did not accede to their wishes.

We have this same situation in most businesses in the corporate world today. Managers want a voice regarding the decisions and actions of the Presidents; employees want a voice regarding the decisions and actions of their managers. If they don't get it they revolt! And revolt they have! People stick in the jobs on average only 2 years, a crippling cost to any company. Managers fare a little better in longevity, but they are no shining example compared with what is really possible. For most people what is really possible is a job for 10 years or more – as long as opportunity and growth continue at the company.

As for women, enlightenment progress is happening, but my goodness it is slow! Twenty years ago I took advantage of that, hiring a number of passed-over females who turned out to be better than anyone around. They made my former software company (SPS) a success in 5 cities in three countries.

Here is today's lament. No matter how clever or well-meaning the clique at the top of the company is, they are no match for the 50, 100 or 1,000 employees below them. If the leaders choose to ignore these people, not only will the lower ranks revolt (by seeking greener pastures), but such companies will be deprived of sharing the collective, innovative, wisdom of those working day after day in their specific expertise within that enterprise.

CCCC has spent the last decade helping those business kings and queens who were open enough to see the light, to carve out their own Magna Cartas. I am happy to report that in most cases they have benefitted well beyond their own expectations. The formula is pretty simple: 10 heads are much better than one; by opening up, the leader will not lose the shirt on the back or the accustomed

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livelihood. These open leaders discovered that, in fact, that they gained enormously – more progress, more money, and fewer headaches along the way.

Unfortunately, those leaders who are open enough, are but a drop in the bucket. The business revolt will continue and company leaders will continue to wonder why the success they expect eludes them.

You can do something about it yourself:

- Start listening, seriously listening, to all those who report to you.
- Set up weekly meetings to allow that to happen on a regular basis.
- Do not trivialize the ideas of people who make suggestions.
- Let the group come to a consensus; if you agree with it, act upon it – and quickly.
- Pass on more authority and more responsibilities to those below you.
- Spend time to nurture every single person who reports directly to you with the goal that they will be able to replace you some day (you will replace the person above you). And if you are already at the top, your replacement will allow you to luxuriate in having time to think about the future, instead of constantly fire-fighting.
- Be patient with the process and the employees; it takes a long time to nurture employees to maturity. (Yet, you must be firm if they cannot do the job assigned.)

Now is your time to nip the revolt in the bud by setting your own emulation of the Magna Carta.

Good luck!

Bill

(Author of *The Respect Revolution*)

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