



My Mother's Legacy

How Champions in the Workplace™ was born

John Smithman

When I was an impressionable eleven-year-old, my mother taught me a lesson that would underscore my business life for 40 years. Now, this lesson is at the core of Champions in the Workplace Training & Development.

My mother hosted bridge parties on Saturday evenings. She'd organize four tables of bridge in our small living room where sixteen players would bid and play contract bridge for 2 hours, switching partners after each game and keeping score to determine the most successful player. Around 10:30, Dad would tally individual scores to determine the rankings while Mom would serve refreshments.

Then, Mom would conduct her miracle.

The player with the top score would get a prize. The player with the second highest score would get a prize. So would the person in third place. The person with the lowest score would get the "booby" prize. Everyone would laugh and applaud the winners. The person with the best smile would get the 'best-smile' prize. The person who told the funniest story would get a prize. And so on. Mom had a prize for everyone. And she would have a good reason for awarding each one.

The prizes were not expensive: a keychain, a pair of nail clippers, a pack of cards, a small hanky, a knick knack... You see, on the Friday before the Bridge Party, Mom would take the bus 20 miles into Montreal and buy some inexpensive gifts at the five-and-dime store on St. Catherine's Street. Then, she'd take them home, wrap, ribbon and tag each one for her guests.

Nobody left Mom's bridge party without being positively recognized for their championship. Do you think anyone refused an invitation to Mom's parties? Did anyone go home disappointed? I learned a valuable lesson from my mother. *Everyone is a champion. And we must look for and recognize their championship with our actions.*

I've had three careers so far, with several profitable "hobbies" along the way. It was Mom's legacy that helped me succeed in each. I write about my experiences as a military and airline pilot, about my career as a service department head at a major Canadian university, and about my current role as management teacher and business coach for Canada's most successful supervisors, managers and company owners in my book, *Leading Champions in the Workplace*.

John served his country as an air force pilot for six years, before starting a scheduled regional airline in Ontario. Later, he moved to Vancouver and headed up The University of British Columbia Parking and Security Services department. Along the way, he played guitar and sang professionally, worked as a magician, owned a Laundromat, a professional business centre and a school furniture manufacturing company. John is a certified coach, Toastmaster (president of his club in 2001), and Rotarian (president of his club in 2008). He loves taking pictures of champions and is the official photographer for both his Rotary Club and The Vancouver Magic Circle (Canada's largest magic club). After honing his skills as a successful business champion builder, he began *Champions in the Workplace Training & Development Inc.* in 1996, expanding from British Columbia to Alberta in 2006. John publishes *Workplace Champion* a development program for supervisors and managers.

Articles by John Smithman

- Building Champions
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Champions in the Workplace(tm) has been helping workplace champions since 1996. The company began operations in Vancouver, British Columbia, and was founded by John Smithman. Bruce Renton opened the Calgary office in 2006 to provide these unique personal training services for Albertans.



***Champions* in the Workplace**
Training & Development Inc.
"bringing out the best in people"