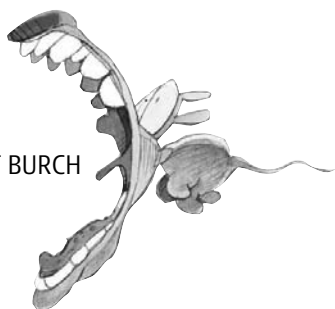


The Way of the Dog

GEOFF BURCH



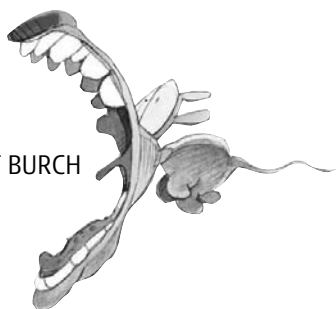
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of the
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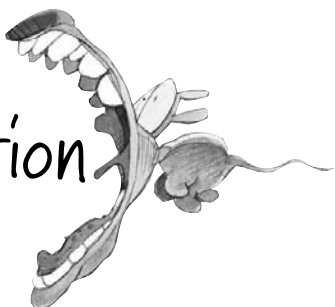
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Dedication



To my wonderful wife, friend, boss, and owner, Sallie, who as everybody knows is the real brains behind the whole thing.

To my sons, James and Simon, whose successes have exceeded anything that I could have ever achieved and who have soared like eagles from our cuckoo's nest.

Contents



Acknowledgements ix

The Way of the Dog –
The Story about the Story xi

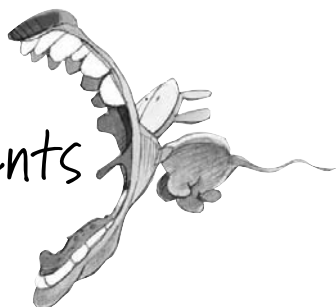
The Way of the Dog –
Instructions for Use xliii

The Way of the Dog 1

The Way of the Dog
in a Nutshell 123

About the Author 127

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- My friend, Paul Hurst, whose intensive scrutiny has corrected the errors of my ways (well, my pen, anyway).
- All my clients, whose adventures have been the inspiration to the story.



The Story about the Story

Success, who needs it?

I am often accused – falsely, I hope – of being a motivational speaker, so inevitably on my travels to various conferences I bump into the genuine article. They get their audiences breaking bits of wood, pushing arrows to their throats, and even walking through fire. I watch aghast and can never see the point. What is it that people are getting? What do they gain from the dubious ability to walk through fire? Even more

frightening is that, after one of my own tirades, people will come up to me and say they feel motivated and even inspired. Inspired to what? I wrote this book to try and help people get what they want, but what do they want? One conclusion I draw from this is that whatever it is that they *do* want, they don't want what they've got now, and the classic motivator can take them somewhere else at least. When I discuss this the professionals ramble on about visualization and goal setting, but these are very difficult if all you know is 'anything is better than this'.

Apparently, what you should do is choose your ideal situation and visualize it. In a more businesslike or career situation, you should set goals, targets, or objectives. However, this has never motivated me; it is more likely to confuse me and leave me feeling that I have failed at something. Exactly what I have failed at, I don't have the foggiest idea.

It surprised me then when people said that I was successful. Successful at what? Successful, I suppose, at the things I set out to do. Therefore, bearing in mind my hearty and deep-felt cynicism, how could this be? Can ordinary, well-adjusted, fed-up people achieve whatever they want without some loopy Pollyanna view of the world? Could it be a simple process that, if deconstructed, could be bottled and



sold with a guarantee? Perhaps, instead of goals and so on, we see what we want as a destination to journey towards.

An atlas of optimism

To make the journey logical, we need a starting point so that we can measure from where we are to where we need to be. Sometimes, we might find the distance too great to make the thing worth bothering with. If a journey is made from one place to another, the usual starting place is where you are at the moment. The first problem, therefore, is to have a very clear idea of where you are in the scheme of things. I love the joke of the person asking the way and being told, 'If I wanted to get there, I wouldn't start from here!' Well, you do start from here, so be certain where *here* is and don't fool yourself into thinking you are somewhere else.

Actually, here's a profound (stupid, but still profound and faintly encouraging nonetheless) thought about journeys. You start off from where you are and travel toward your destination. After some time travelling, you stop for a rest and to take stock. Where you have stopped is a place too – in fact it is where you

are now. When you measure that against your destination, it stands to reason that your original journey should be shorter – in other words, you are getting closer to where you want to be. If your destination is further or the same as it always was, you have cocked something up. If you drive on the highway and you see your destination is 50 miles away on a signpost, and at the next post it says 40 miles, things are going well. If it says 60 miles, you are going in the opposite direction. If, after a few hours of travelling, it still says 50 miles, you are going sideways. It makes sense, then, to see a signpost as quickly into your journey as possible. It would also be good to have a trustworthy road atlas or map.

Imagine having a positive-thinking or self-help atlas that when you look at the distance from London to Glasgow says, 'It's not as far as you think!'

And how to get there? The positive-thinking atlas says, 'Imagine that you are there, picture yourself standing in Glasgow. Believe you can do it and one day you will wake up and find yourself there'. Complete rubbish, of course. A real road atlas shows the routes, the distances, and the places along the way. Actually, if I was being difficult, I might think about charts (as in sailing boats and ships, etc.): in a boat – particularly a sailing boat – you can make



progress towards your destination without necessarily going straight there. You use your chart to find hidden dangers and surging tides. If the wind is against you, then you must tack. If your destination is 50 miles away, you might sail for 25 miles and find your destination is now 40 miles away. This won't discourage a sailor because they know that they are making progress, and they happily tack away.

An important point here is that one of the keys of safety at sea is knowing exactly where you are at all times.

Fear is the key

The first time I saw all this stuff work in my life was when I was young and first married, and we had clocked up a bank overdraft that threatened to sink us without trace. The day this monster hit the limit was a huge shock. We had been drifting along day to day and, of course, at the back of my mind I sort of understood that we were spending more than we were earning – but what the heck, something would turn up. Something turned up alright, in the shape of a very nasty letter from the bank manager which, in effect, said enough was enough and could they

have their money back or else. I scampered round the house like a headless chicken. This was it, I had hit the wall and there was nowhere to go.

What I didn't realize was that this was the perfect place to start a journey, because the bank had told me exactly where I was – up to my neck in it. The essence of a good journey is to understand clearly your current position, and I had certainly done that. Next, a destination is required. I had that too, I had to be in the black. I announced that we would have a slap-up feast when the overdraft was cleared, but until then nothing was more important.

I would hate people to think I was obsessive but, like everyone, under the right circumstances I can be a bit of a picture-straightener. Who hasn't lain in bed thinking, 'Did I leave the hot plate on?' You know you didn't. You checked didn't you? So turn over, and go to sleep. Forget it. Forget it warming up that hanging tea towel – which is just starting to smoulder – a flicker of flame, the safety film that told you a blazing kitchen could reach a temperature of a blast furnace in only 25 seconds after the first glowing ember. Darn it! Off you pad, downstairs, to find that of course you turned it off. If you can develop a destination that creates the sort of itch that can't be scratched, then it all starts to happen. I started to chase down money