

## Little Book, Big Ideas

**We catch up with the go-getter behind *The Go-Giver*.**

**SINCE ITS RELEASE IN DECEMBER**, a small book—a parable, really—about a very ambitious young man intent on becoming a business success, has racked up impressive sales and garnered stellar reviews. *Learning Executive* spoke with Bob Burg, co-author of *The Go-Giver: A Little Story about a Powerful Business Idea* (PENGUIN/PORTFOLIO).

**LEARNING EXECUTIVE:** Do you consider yourself a writer? A speaker? A storyteller?

**BOB BURG:** I am a speaker who writes. There are writers who speak, but that's not me. I do not consider myself a storyteller, which is why I was very fortunate to team up with (co-author) John David Mann who is a wonderful storyteller. John is an exquisite writer, and I was so fortunate to work with him.

**LE:** Why do stories and parables continue to be an effective way to pass along business concepts?

**BB:** Because people learn through stories. And that has been the case for thousands of years. The greatest teachers have always been storytellers. People wrap themselves up in stories and picture themselves as the person in the story. Many of the great trainers—and leaders—have been great storytellers.

**LE:** Why have so many little books, whether we are talking about cheese or icebergs, found such big success in recent years?

**BB:** A lot of them are just well-written. A lot of the parables out there are very good and I have enjoyed many of them. The other reason is that, in our information society, there is so much to read and keep up with that you look at a little book and you think: OK, I can handle that. We can all take an hour-and-a-half to involve ourselves in a fun story.

**LE:** Of the five laws of success your main character embraces in the book, the law of authenticity (“the most valuable gift you have to offer is yourself”) seems to be the most challenging. Why is giving of ourselves so difficult at times?

**BB:** There are a number of answers to that question, but one reason is that we have allowed technology to become the master instead of the servant. Technology is just a tool to be utilized. People start to think of the tool as an end unto itself. In my other book (*Endless Referrals*) we dedicate an entire chapter to the Internet. We suggest that, all things being equal, people will do business with people they know, like, and trust. They don't do business with computers they know, like, and trust. It's all about the relationship and how much value you add to the relationship. In many ways, we have taken something that could make us a better communicator and turned it into a hindrance. But in general, authenticity can be a struggle. Most of us continue to work at it as we try to improve ourselves. ■■

Bob Berg was interviewed by Rex Davenport, editor of *Learning Executive* magazine. He can be reached at [rdavenport@astd.org](mailto:rdavenport@astd.org). To learn more about the book, visit [www.thegogiver.com](http://www.thegogiver.com).

