



Culture at Work

BOB ALL
CUSTOM SECURITY SPECIALISTS OWNER

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About the Author

Bob All, president and owner of Custom Security Specialists in the Hilton Head, Beaufort, and Savannah area, has been securing the low country with custom integrated intrusion, fire, access control, cameras and gate access control systems since 1981. He began his career with Home Safety Equipment Company, and in 1998, Custom Security became Bob's dream come true. Bob is passionate about helping people, starting with his family and his Custom Security team. Hiring smart people with good hearts meant that Bob is today developing a caring, giving atmosphere within the Custom Security Team in order to help people outside of the company. In January of 2018, Bob attended a Ziglar Small Business Boot Camp in Dallas, Texas that confirmed the actions of the past twelve years in building a team culture had a real purpose and inspired him to continue to enrich culture into community with a mission.

At the age of 64, Bob is so excited about learning more about how to inspire his people to be the best that they can be. He is doing four one-hour webinars per week and two coaching sessions per month. Bob believes he has something to give back to the people he cares about. He is stepping back from working *in* production in his company and working more *on* his company's direction instead.

In 2019, Bob adjusted his role to "The Encouraging Owner" to develop relationships with their existing customers and open doors through referral marketing that otherwise would not be possible. Hopefully, you will bump into him, but be prepared. Bob listens more than he talks, so don't be surprised when he starts asking questions.

Above all else, Bob is a husband of forty-three years to his wife Nan; a devoted father to his children, Jason, Robin, Sarah and Aaron; and Pappa to Carter, Mathew, Conner, Addison, and Adalynn.

Introduction

What legacy can any man expect to leave? How will his descendants remember him? In the tradition of my grandfather and father, I hope to be remembered as a God-fearing man who is devoted to his family. My hope is to leave within these pages some encouragement to anyone who does not fully believe in themselves; a belief that they can be a person who can make a difference to their family, friends, and the people they touch every day.

I was born in Allendale, South Carolina, in 1954. A large portion of my childhood and best memories were spent at Land's End across from Parris Island. I learned to swim when I was six. Even though the only reason I did was so Mom would let me learn how to water ski like my brother and sister. Up until then, I spent all my time building sandcastles to imprison the fiddlers. The fiddlers did not cooperate. They always escaped. Our greatest joy growing up was skiing from sunup to sundown. Gas was 25 cents a gallon back then, and we burned gasoline until Mom started waving the flashlight! We even skied in the rain, until the lightning started popping. Then Mom went nuts and made us come inside. On my 13th Christmas, Dad gave me a rod and reel like his so that anyone, even a kid like me, could cast. It was the Mitchel Reel on a brown rod that I still have today, hanging in the pool hall with a ton of memories.

Not much happened in high school until my senior year when my Grandpa, "Papa," introduced me to Nan, my wife now of forty-three years. The big irony was that my mom's name is also Nan. I just figured that I knew what I was looking for. After all, if her name was Nan, I was off to a good start. And my Papa had very good taste in people. Yes, yes! I'm a momma's boy too, okay! It took me all of six months to propose, so Nan could say NO. Then it took me five years to ask again, which caused me to go into shock. All I could do was mumble, "I've screwed up now," while her family was dancing around celebrating. In reality, it has been the best commitment I have ever made.

When you start to make a life and career for yourself, it doesn't come with clear instructions. When I became 28 years old, I finally learned how smart my dad actually was. I asked him one day how he had learned so much, to which he replied, "The school of hard knocks." He often said that "you learn in the valley, not on the mountain top". Now I am 65 and still do not completely understand except that I know that I know who is in control.

This book is designed to help you understand how making a difference is possible for you. About how you can slowly develop a caring community at home *and* at work. The first five chapters are about my journey from the struggle for survival to success, while

the last chapters focus on significance, then giving back. It's never too late for you to make a difference in the lives of your family, the people you work with, and the people you work for, your customers. Hope you enjoy. See ya!

Chapter 1. Sell to Survive

It all started in 1980. I was selling security systems to the fine southerners in Hampton, Estill, and Allendale, South Carolina, during the silver theft craze in the late 70s. After finishing a security system for Nell Atwell in Hampton, she encouraged me to go to Hilton Head and sell real estate. Well, I knew nothing about real estate, but I was good at the security system sales. So I scouted out Hilton Head and ended up meeting Jim Crouch, who had a security company with sixty-three accounts, called EDGE. Jim worked full time for the local electric company and did security on the side. Jim was getting a divorce and needed to sell his security company. I convinced my boss, George Ball, to entertain the purchase as to provide a better opportunity for me and a good investment for him. George and I met in a small restaurant in Ehrhardt, South Carolina. As our meeting started, I was excited but afraid at the same time.

As a child, I never felt that I measured up. Failure was so frequent that I did not have much confidence in myself. My mom and dad were big believers in my ability. I heard it a thousand times, "Bob, you can do anything you set your mind to." But I figured that they were supposed to say stuff like that. As I attempted to explain my fear, George just shook his head and said, "*You just don't get it. I believe in you more than you believe in yourself.*" Wait a minute! The ONLY people who said stuff like that were my parents. Was George for real? But what if George and my parents were right? I could not escape that thought. All of a sudden, I was forced to see myself through a different lens. I certainly did not want to let any of them down, because, you see, I am not only a momma's boy, but also a people pleaser.

Well, the purchase was made and off I went. Literally, it was as if George put me into a rowboat, shoved me off the bank, and said, "*Sink or swim, son.*" Every three to four months, George would travel from the home office of Home Safety Equipment Company in Orangeburg to Hilton Head. I spoke to him on average about every two weeks. I did everything except mail the invoices, but in return, I never missed getting paid—commission only, that is. If you asked someone today to work for commission only, they would laugh!

I was hungry to succeed and needed to provide for my wife Nan and my son Jason. Every appointment was of paramount importance for me to close. This, and only this,

was my focus, but I soon realized that to keep getting these opportunities, we had to maintain our commitment to the customer.

The next six years were a sales paradise! Money in the bank, a new house, and a baby girl Robin. (Today, she runs 90% of my company.) Then my dream was crushed seemingly overnight.

Chapter 2. 1987 The Corporate Dream

Dream? More like a nightmare! I was negotiating with George for fair share of what was built in the Hilton Head area. In a six-year period, the Hilton Head office was nine times its original size. Within months of my attempts to receive an owner's share of the Hilton Head office, George told me he had sold the company to National Guardian. I was shocked beyond belief. Over a period of several months, George kept trying to convince me that I should become a corporate man. Very reluctantly, I signed on still thinking, "It's all about the money." They made me a sales manager of fourteen sales people from the areas in Orangeburg, Charleston, Myrtle Beach, and Hilton Head. But the reality of the beast I was working for soon became clear.

I went to Columbia to state my case, and that is where the tide began to turn. I explained, "*You want the customer to make a commitment to you, and then you think you have them locked in by contract.*" They said, "*Bob, you take it too seriously. It's just business.*" I said, "*That is where you are wrong. I made a commitment to do what is right by the customer and make exceptions to the contract where necessary, and you say it's just business. I have it right, and corporate is wrong.*"

A year later, I started seeing my kids look at me, then look at their mom, and say "Who's this strange guy walking in the door." I had a choice: worship the company but lose the family or save my family. So this was a no brainer. I resigned and told them I was only going to do sales in the Hilton Head area. Six months later, corporate told me that it was unfair that I had all of the contractors and architects that I had established a relationship with for 15 years. They asked me to split them up with the other sales people. Then corporate saw dollar signs in the new zero down, free installation giveaway systems, and I thought the security business as I knew it was forever messed up. I went into my service manager's office, Mark Rabon and said "*Let's start our own security company.*" But he was too afraid of the risk. "*Well, then I'm leaving. I've had enough.*" It was time for me to do what Nell Atwell had suggested in the beginning. Sell real estate. After all, how hard could it be?

Chapter 3. Real Estate?

How hard could it be? In reality, it was not that hard, but it was just not in me. After going through all of my savings in general brokerage real estate, I was determined to succeed for my family. Then one day, I sold a home in Rose Hill to the wife of Dennis Wilkins, the general manager of the new Sun City, breaking ground at the time. This opened the door for me to jump as I put it, *“from the frying pan straight into the fire!”* Don’t get me wrong. I learned lessons the same way my dad did: *“The school of hard knocks”*. Well, I got a real education at Sun City, *in the Valley!* Today, I keep the Sun City and the National Guardian coffee cups in sight to remind me that even on my most stressful day at Custom Security, it is far better than those days. How grateful I am! But then in the second and third year at Sun City, I was blessed with a huge string of house sales. Sales reps were constantly coming into my office and asking, *“What’s your secret?”* I knew they would not believe me so I was hesitant to answer, but I did. I said, *“No secret. God is blessing my socks off, and I don’t know why.”* One by one, they stomped out of my office angry and disgusted, thinking I was crazy. God always has a plan! My problem is, and always has been, that He doesn’t tell me until He is ready, moment by moment.

Chapter 4. 1998 My Dream Comes True

In that last year at Sun City, I replaced all of my savings! In addition, our family purchased a pleasure boat. Yes, a hole in the water where you put money, but we love being on the water. I always kept in touch with my old boss, George, telling him what was going on. While I was talking to George one day, he said *“I just hung up the phone from talking to Mark Rabon, my old service manager, and he is ready.”* *“Ready for what?”* I said. *“Mark is ready to start that security company now.”*

And we did. We each put up a small amount of money and named the company Custom Security. And again, I started selling for survival. This time it was different. The alarm business was in me, a part of who I am, and I owned 50% of nothing to start with. But now, I can make the exceptions and do what is right. I did not realize it at first, but now customers had a choice between Mark and me versus Corporate. So many previous customers called and said, *“Bob, you’re back. You can help me.”* So to say we grew fast was an understatement.

I set a 10-year goal in the beginning, which was well exceeded. The small loans we had on vehicles were soon paid off, and we stayed in a positive cash position through conservative thinking. I remain debt free personally, as does Custom Security. But even though the money was always there, something was still missing. There was always a feeling that there was more, much more, but what was it? There was a void.

Chapter 5. TAB Helps the Dream Solidify

When I first went into business, I was asked those questions that I could not answer, so I called my previous National Guardian general manager, who is now retired, and of course, George. The problem came when they both passed away. People started calling me asking for advice. A scary thought, what made them think I knew the answers? I felt alone and with no support or backup. How was I to make the right decision every time? Mistakes, in so many cases, cannot be undone and can do great damage. TAB, The Alternative Board, is a group of local business owners who meet for half a day, once a month to discuss issues, opportunities, and obstacles with a business coach as the facilitator. This level of advice and support guided me through the transition in 2010 to buy out my partner, Mark Rabon. This was done in such a way that I retained a friend and Mark continued to work with us for several years after.

Beginning in 1981, there had been a thought in the back of my mind ... I had always wanted to own my own company. Even as a kid, everyone said that I was an independent little cuss but I took it as a compliment. Now, I am sailing my own ship, setting my own course, and feeling that the responsibility was an honor and an obligation. But there had to be more to it than just making a sale. I was good at sales, but leadership, alone, this was new territory! But I knew who is in control!

Chapter 6. 2007 The Beginning of Change

While the buyout was developing, another life change was already in progress, but I did not realize it for the first year. Since 1981, I had hired talent with a skill. I naively believed that. Just give me warm bodies, and we can train them. This so-called “talent” was expected to be responsible, company minded, and take care of the customer. The norm of that day was that the personalities ranged from being hard headed to impossible. It was expected that a manager would magically know how to increase gross revenues while increasing profits in spite of the everyday drama between conflicting personalities. Back then, a DISC personality analysis did not exist. Then, along came a technician that changed everything.

This person was a family man. He was a great husband and father. He had his priorities where they should have been. He was kind, gentle, and never said a cross word about anything or anyone. He had a way of calming a room, just by walking into it. Needless to say, his heart was in the right place, and I really began to love this guy. He made everything easier than it truly was.

Then, every time one of the more challenging personalities started acting up, I'd get mad. Really mad. Why can't everyone be like him? I had heard about getting the right

people on the bus, then getting the right people in the right seats, but I thought this was a dream world that was not possible. My anger turned into determination, and I committed to looking as long and as hard as it might take to find another role model, then another and another.

I advertised in listings in twenty cities, from here to the Mississippi to Chicago and New Jersey. I knew I had to demand higher standards and interview deeper. In the process, I found that the information on Facebook was very revealing. I would collect numerous resumes, and then narrow them down to the top three. I googled interview questions and came up with sixty-five sideways questions that challenged the candidate to give up detailed answers concerning challenging events. I included questions that allowed me to see who they truly are and if I could trust them as I do the role model. I would ask a question, and then ten questions later ask the same question from a different perspective to see if their answer would change. Many interviews have been cut short because I suspected a lack of honesty or integrity.

Once the candidate was chosen, an interview was conducted in person. Then if successful, I would ask them to take a week of their vacation and work for me for one week. Each technician had the opportunity to work with the candidate. Then at four o'clock on Friday, we gathered in the conference room where I asked one question: Is he one of us? The result has been accountability between team members. If they vote you in, then each team member also knows that they can vote you out. There is a common goal in mind.

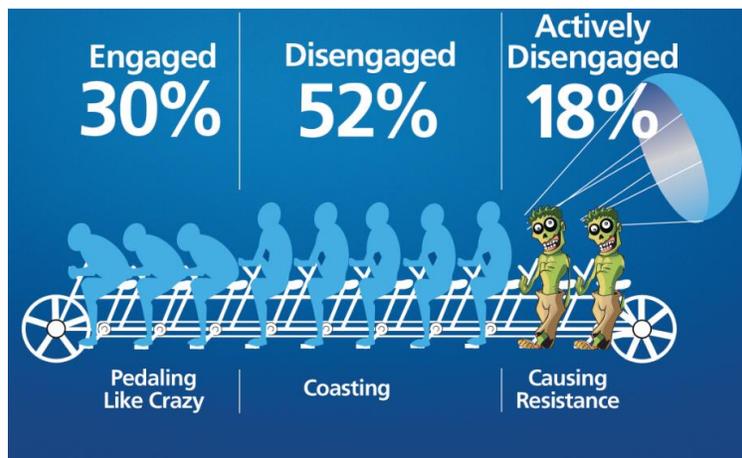
Here is the goal envisioned in numerous meetings soon after the new role model became a focus for us.

*Consider that one day your teammate neglected to do something. Quietly, without saying anything, go take care of whatever needed to be done but say nothing. They will eventually come looking for you and ask if you took care of this. You simply say, “**Don’t worry; I’ve got your back.**” What if we did this for the people in this room? What kind of difference could it make for us? And as a result, how will this affect your marriage and your family? What impact will this make on each of us and to our customers when they see the relationship that we have as a family?*

In our company meetings, my daughter and I may speak on a specific topic for five or ten minutes. Then, we go around to each team member for issues or opportunities. Every person knows that they have a voice in how things are done. There is a discussion, and if most people agree on a matter, then the decision has been made. No one is left out and everyone contributes. Everyone has a voice.

It took me thirty years to discover that working with those who were difficult was not necessary. It took thirty years to discover that community in a company is possible. If someone had shown me how this was possible, it would have changed the lives of so many more people. Ten years later, Howard Partridge, the business coach for Ziglar, taught me this concept through a book called, *The Power of Community*, which is an awesome read. A few of our teammates, members of our family, have relocated for reasons beyond their control. They take a part of us with them. Each of us is forever changed because we understand that community in the workplace can be real. I did not believe it possible, but now I am a true believer.

One weekend not many years ago, we had a company gathering to shoot skeet in Ehrhardt, South Carolina. In the first fifteen minutes, as the team was arriving, I was ready to be a good host and entertain. But then, I realized that I was the one who was being entertained. These people had been hanging out together, helping each other when needed, and even going together to ball games in Atlanta. I thought, what is this environment that is being created? I had not yet heard of community, but here it was right in front of me. And I liked it! This is absolutely, awesomely phenomenal!



Tom Ziglar, Zig Ziglar's son, gave me this picture which hangs in our conference room as a reminder. It shows the national average of workers in the US. A trainer spent three days with our office staff recently. After, I asked her where our employees stood in relation to this picture. She said, "they are all vested". Relationship is a priority. When I leave on vacation for a week, I come back to find that they didn't need me. Shocking, Custom Security could survive without me! Now I saw what was possible, but what was the next step? Let's get some perspective.

Over thirty years ago, I went to my pastor, CB Easterling with an issue that troubled me. I asked him, "CB, you have a great reputation for visiting people in the hospital. I have difficulty even going into a hospital as it makes me nauseous. What in the world do you say to people who are

terminally ill?” CB replied, ***“It’s not so much what you say. It’s just being there.”*** I have applied this lesson in almost every area of my life, so can you.

Now, if I pay attention, there are moments every day that I practice this at work! One easy example so you understand is with my family. I walk into my son, Jason’s home, wave at the adults in the house and continue walking out the backdoor where the grandkids are at play. Then I sit on the back steps and wait for them to see me. They know that I require a hug, so I wait. One by one, they come over and give me hug. Then I have a few questions about them and their world. We talk for two or three minutes then they go back to playing, and I go back inside. At work, the process is similar. I want people to know that I am there and that I care.

Chapter 7. January 2018 Ziglar Business Boot Camp

About 1980, George gave me my first set of Zig Ziglar cassette tapes. Since then, Zig has been my hero and my mentor. Even today, as I drove into work this morning, I still listen to Zig’s recordings in my truck. Zig says if you have listened to a recording fifteen times, you can start completing the sentences; then you have it. It is amazing that with age, you hear from a different perspective and you understand what Zig is saying in a deeper and more meaningful way. I challenge you even now, years after Zig has gone to meet the Lord, to purchase *Born to Win* or *See You at the Top* and see for yourself that his teachings are life changing. It is because Zig bases everything he teaches on Biblical principles, so they are true. His message is timeless, ten years ago or ten years from now. Everything said is verified first in the Bible by Zig. You, too, will become a collector. Zig and I share the same hero from above. I hope He becomes your hero, too!

I always wanted to go to one of Zig’s conferences in Dallas, and I greatly regret that I never did. Before Zig passed, he developed a relationship with Howard Partridge and invited him to be the Ziglar small business coach. For years, I have been getting email invitations to a small business boot camp every time it’s available. Finally, I told my wife, let’s go. I will finally get to go to Zig’s office and see for myself his wall of honor. Zig’s heroes. Now I have my own wall of honor in my office. She gladly said, *“Yes, I can go shopping.”* *“No, I need you by my side to see and hear what I hear,”* I replied.

Well, we went and the applicable information to my business was overwhelming. It was the closest I have ever come to attempting to drink information from a fire hose. Tom Ziglar, Zig’s son, spoke first about the Zig Ziglar legacy that took on a new meaning for me, considering that I had been listening to Zig for the past thirty-eight years. Then Howard Partridge spoke about running a business systematically and creating a culture of community for my company.

As I listened, I began checking off what he was saying that my team was already experiencing. The exciting news is that I was concerned because I did not know the next step for Custom Security. I was introduced to the next several steps! Since the three-day Small Business Boot Camp in January of 2018, I have been in four one-hour webinars on four different subjects plus one hour per month of private coaching. Through all of this, it is as if I have a thousand puzzle pieces floating around in my head that are challenging. But because of this I have been able to plan more effectively and maintain better composure under stress. God has a plan! Proverbs says, man plans his ways but God ***directs*** his steps. Notice the word directs! This is a huge key. He is my guide.

At the boot camp in January of 2018, Howard and all the other speakers had been speaking, like Zig, very frequently about God or Jesus. I raised my hand and said, *“We have been told in business to never speak of politics or religion. Yet every other breath you speak of either God or Jesus. How do we reconcile this with the liability exposure it brings?”* I will never forget, Howard paused for only a couple of seconds and said, *“Yes, Jesus had this problem too, and they crucified Him.”* Well, that settled the issue for me. This was my turning point!

Chapter 8. Turnkey

Later, Howard kept referring to being turnkey, but I was not sure what he meant. So again, I raised my hand and asked what he meant by turnkey. Turnkey is to be able to turn the key in the door, leave, and my company run without me. I raised my hand again. *“Yes Bob?”* By this time, he knew my name well. I said, *“Christmas!”* *“What do you mean Christmas?”* *“Custom Security will be turnkey by Christmas, 2018.”*

So far, it's working! We, like so many growing companies, have challenges finding people with the right skill and knowledge ***combined*** with the right heart. Since April of 2017, we have had a listing in twenty top cities east of the Mississippi but with fewer resumes to look at than ever. One day, my daughter Robin called me very excited, *“Dad you will not believe this. A guy just walked into the front door with twenty-one years' experience in industrial security!”* I replied, *“Wow, that's great.”* *“No Dad, you don't understand. When I am talking to him, well, it's spooky. It is like I am talking to you.”* I said, *“Well, this is going to be interesting!”* And now, for over two years, our experience has been outstanding! More incredible, Robin was not surprised that he just walked into the front door. Over the years, this is only one of several who just walk into our front door. We have a great collection of great stories about the building of a team, one special person at a time, which developed into a family orientated community. It keeps happening this way, again and again. It's a part of ***His*** plan!

Chapter 9. Refire not Retire

In one of Zig's recordings, he was asked many times about retirement, just as I am today. I have adopted Zig's reply. I'm not retiring; I'm refiring! I have learned so many valuable life and business lessons that to put it all on a shelf and retire and not give back to those I may be able to help would be selfish of me. Slow down, yes, and hunt and fish more is certain. But God is instilling His love into me every day that makes it far easier for me to tell even strangers that God loves you, yes you!

At my age, why would a guy go to three-day business conferences and invest four to five hours per week learning business principles and systems to help grow and improve Custom Security? It's simple, the average life expectancy of a corporate CEO upon retirement is 3-4 years. Why? Simple. You stop using it and you lose it. When you get to my age, keeping your game intact becomes more challenging than ever. Mentally feeding on the right information, constantly learning and surrounding myself with the right people makes for loads of the right kind of fun.

Now it is 2020 and this story is now current. I believe the future will be different, as I am less in production and working more on my business. Meaning, I will be taking the practice of "Being There" to a whole new level. Within the company, I will be an encourager. After all, this is my Spiritual gift. I will come alongside to mentor, assist, teach, or make sure everyone knows that I am available as a coach, a friend, or someone who has two ears and listens as well as my hearing aids will allow.

To our customers, I hope to be a friend. The method is the same, especially the listening part. My salutation for over forty years has not changed for myself or George Ball before me. So, in memory of George.

Yours for the Best Security,

Bob All

PS: I hope I have inspired you to reach beyond yourself to significance, but I would be remiss knowing the definition of the top without leaving to you Zig Ziglar's definition of success. Best wishes.

The Top
By Zig Ziglar

You are at the top when...

You clearly understand that failure is an event, not a person, that yesterday ended last night, and today is your brand-new day.

You have made friends with your past, are focused on the present, and optimistic about your future.

You know that success doesn't make you and failure doesn't break you.

You are filled with faith, hope and love; and live without anger, greed, guilt, envy or thoughts of revenge.

You are mature enough to delay gratification and shift your focus from your rights to your responsibilities.

You know that failure to stand for what is morally right is the prelude to being the victim of what is criminally wrong.

You are secure in who you are, so you are at peace with God and in fellowship with man.

You have made friends of your adversaries and have gained the love and respect of those who know you best.

You understand that others can give you pleasure, but genuine happiness comes when you do things for others.

You are pleasant to the grouchy, courteous to the rude, and generous to the needy.

You love the unlovable, give hope to the hopeless, friendship to the friendless, and encouragement to the discouraged.

You can look back in forgiveness, forward in hope, down in compassion, and up with gratitude.

You know that "he who would be the greatest among you must become the servant of all."

You recognize, confess, develop, and use your God-given physical, mental and spiritual abilities to the glory of God and for the benefit of mankind.

You stand in front of the Creator of the universe and He says to you, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."