

## **Episode 54 - Dave Rothacker - Top 3 Books of 2019 [00:18:48]**

**Intro:** Welcome to Profiles In Prosperity, the leading podcast for residential service contractors, sponsored by Service Roundtable and hosted by David Heimer.

**David Heimer:** Hi, this is David Heimer, welcome to Profiles In Prosperity. I am a person who likes to read books. I read a fair amount. I even belong to a book club. I like talking about books and I like to ask other people for recommendations. Over my career, I've found that a great person to ask for book recommendations is Dave Rothacker. So periodically, I check in with Dave, I find out what books he's reading, what he likes, what he doesn't like, and I have found some great books by doing that. So today, I thought we should check in with Dave and ask him about his favorite books for 2019. And just a few things you should know about Dave, in addition to being a really well-read human, Dave is an author, coach, and consultant, he's an advisory board mentor for Service Nation Alliance. He writes for Comanche Marketing. He writes a weekly Saturday rabbit hole for Service Roundtable members. He blogs some fascinating stuff at Rothacker Reviews. He's part of the Go Time Success Group, and Dave is one of the very few people that has been honored with the Servant Leader Award. That's an award that is rarely given, and it's only given to those with a lifetime of outstanding service to others. So it's a very prestigious award, and he's a great person to have won it. So Dave Rothacker, welcome to Profiles In Prosperity.

**Dave Rothacker:** Yeah. Thanks, David. Thank you so much. Thanks for the introduction.

**David Heimer:** All well deserved. So I wanted to ask you about your three favorite books for 2019. But I wanted to ask you another question. You can tell me it's none of my business if you want, but how many books do you think you read in 2019?

**Dave Rothacker:** Well, I don't really keep track, so it would be hard to tell you specifically. But I think on average, I read about 70 books a year. Now, 2019 was a little different for me because instead of reading new books, half of those 70 books were

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books that I have re-read. And I find rereading books, it's like stepping in the river. You never stepped in the same river twice. And I always find nuggets of gold in the books that I reread. But on average, probably around 70 books a year.

**David Heimer:** About five to six books a month, something like that?

**Dave Rothacker:** Yeah.

**David Heimer:** Top three books for 2019?

**Dave Rothacker:** Okay. The top three books for 2019 are *The Right Story: A brief guide to changing the world* by Bernadette Jiwa, *Good Habits, Bad Habits* by Wendy Wood, and *It's the Manager* by Jim Clifton and Jim Harder.

**David Heimer:** So tell us a little bit about these.

**Dave Rothacker:** So I'm gonna start off with *The Right Story* by Bernadette Jiwa. Bernadette is a - I think of her as kind of a marketing savant. She's a marketing coach, very in tune with the marketing requirements of the 21st century. And she was kind of groomed by Seth Godin. She thinks and writes very similar to how Seth thinks and writes, but she has her own spin on it. So *The Right Story: A brief guide to changing the world*. It's not quite as dramatic as that. The way I look at it, it's a book to help change. It could be changing something about yourself or changing the culture. And her primary point in change is through storytelling. She has two major points about storytelling, be clear about the change you want to make and why, and bring people along on your journey. And to get better at articulating the change that we want, we need to understand the people that we're trying to change.

So a big part of her message also comes through one of empathy and understanding of the people that you are trying to help and change. So consequently, one of her maxims

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is, seek to understand before being understood. Another one of the points she makes is that change does not come by capturing attention or creating awareness. Even though like a rational argument, we all have an example of that in history. We all can see the example in, basically what had happened in cigarette smoking. You would see all the advertisements for all the rational reasons that we should change. And that really never did much to inhibit cigarette smoking.

So consequently, our message needs to resonate with people's feelings, and she devotes a good portion of the book to that. But basically, the way she goes through the book is she defines what is the right story and talks about the whole story, background of it. Then she gets involved with storytelling and showing examples of purposeful stories. And she uses quite a bit of case studies and very clear, not kind of Harvard business review case studies, much clearer, much more simple to understand. Overall, it's a small and short book, but it does pack a powerful message.

**David Heimer:** Sounds like it's a fun read, is it?

**Dave Rothacker:** It is. And Bernadette - comes from that, it's not comical per se. But she is light and she keeps it fun.

**David Heimer:** Yes. When you think about the people, most likely listening to this podcast; contractors, residential service contractors, what would you say the value of this book is for them?

**Dave Rothacker:** Two things come to mind. One is, understanding your audience and your market, in reading their behaviors and understanding their behaviors. But there's another one, I'm actually more steered towards this, the other part of that, even though the whole marketing aspect of it comes to mind the first part of it. But I think you could take the book and use it as a roadmap to change the culture within your company.

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**David Heimer:** That's interesting.

**Dave Rothacker:** She provides quite a few different tools through the course of the book to help you do it. So, to me, I would take this book and embrace it, and use it as a roadmap to change my company culture. And then of course, you know, the prize inside of all that is the fact that it's really written for the marketing aspect. But I was really taken in by the possibility of changing your culture with it. Book number two is, Good Habits, Bad Habits by Wendy Wood. She's a professor of psychology and business at USC, California. And what's interesting about this book is that Wendy is a scientist and she comes from a scientific perspective in the book.

She actually blends neuroscience and psychology to present her argument. She isn't the type that writes in over-the-top academic language. You can understand it. As a matter of fact, I have about three or four books on habits that I recommend and the other ones are written by more say journalists type people. But I still recommend hers the most, because I just enjoy the rigor that went into researching her case. That's kind of what I like about this. It's pretty interesting, because of the advances in neuroscience, we're learning things today about habits that we really didn't know 20 years ago, and that's based on MRI images of the brain.

And they're able to actually see what's going on inside the brain in the middle of, like say, an action or a thought. And so this adds fascination to it, and then also major credibility to the effects of habits. So she approaches it through three or four different main areas. One is context, and that would be the environment that you would engage in a habit in, another one would be, reducing friction and friction would be anything that would prevent you from establishing the habit and make the action rewarding and repeat it until it's automatic. And that's probably a good half of the book that goes into understanding the steps of what you're going through.

For the rest of the book, she talks about how discontinuity in habits can be beneficial.

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And this is a fascinating thing as well, because, let's just say you've developed bad habits in the location where you're at. When you move to another city you get a chance to kind of start over with a fresh slate. So sometimes interrupting your habits can be of benefit. She talks about the resilience of habits, both the pros and cons of that. There's also a chapter developed in the context of habits in relation to addiction. And then she talks about the happiness of habits.

There's been some commentary out there on her book about, you know, you don't really show us what to do. There are no recaps at the end of the chapters and you really don't present clear takeaways for us to go out and make these changes. In my opinion, that's the benefit of the book, because I think this book has been designed to engage with. And I think that when you really - all of that, everything that I just mentioned is in the book, it's just not in a cliff note version at the end of a chapter. And so when you engage with the book, I think you have a tendency to soak it in, take it in more.

So it's just not one of those books that you could go to one of those services that summarize books and, you know, you pay a certain amount of money and get it. You'll never get the value out of the book, in my opinion, unless you actually read it. So tons of research, tons of sources, if you're interested in delving more into habit formation, as far as that goes. Like I said, my favorite is probably today's book on habits, and I've got a couple of other ones that are really interesting as well. But I'm going to go out here and say that this is my favorite.

I'm going to give you a takeaway in a minute, but this is kind of a pre takeaway to the book. And in our industry, we see day in and day out how hard-working contractors go to a seminar, go to a conference, learn a system, learn a process, learn a procedure, come back to work, all charged up, ready to go. The phone starts ringing off the hook and they never look back, and it just doesn't get implemented. And I personally believe that contractors should study good habit formation to help in their business. Habits aren't just diet, and exercise, and cleaning the house and things like that. And I think

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this is something that is lacking within the industry as far as implementing things through the science of building habits. So that's kind of my overall takeaway, especially for contractors.

**David Heimer:** I heard her on a podcast, it's called Hidden Brain. I love this podcast. And she was fascinating, there were a couple of things that I was really surprised about. One is, how much of what we do in our life is just autopilot. She gave some really great examples of those. And then she gave me some interesting, actionable ways to develop good habits. And my guess is that she has expounded on those in the book, It sounds like she has.

**Dave Rothacker:** Right.

**David Heimer:** It was a fascinating podcast. So when I saw this pop up on your list, I was really delighted.

**Dave Rothacker:** Just a real quick other takeaway for contractors, and this is a fascinating concept. A concept that I think I first came across in my first year in this business as a truck driver was when I delivered systems to customers and to our installers. And I would always watch, I'd be there for about the first couple hours of installers starting their work. And I quickly noticed that some guys were, let's just say, we're using an example of a residential split system in a house, and I would see some installers making 28 trips, up and down the steps. And you know, it just seemed like total disorganization.

And then I would see others, and a lot of times it happened to have been the old salty dogs who were probably, back then in their late 50s, early 60s. And they were able to minimize their actions, and that was all through good planning. And Wendy, in the book, uses professional chefs in a kitchen, and how they have everything they need to cook, whatever they're going to cook. And they assemble it, everything there in front of them.

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Then they proceed with their work or with whatever they're going to cook. And to me, that's a major takeaway for any position in the heating and air conditioning industry or all of the contracting industries. And that is to think out, be prepared in advance as to how you're going to tackle something, and then move on from there. When I read that part about the chefs in the kitchen, all I could see was, you know, way back in the day, the inefficiencies of the installers that did not pre-plan their jobs. That was a big takeaway.

This is an excellent book to discuss in a group. It would have to be over like say the course of a book, probably the course of about maybe four or five weeks. I recommend it being discussed between owners of a business. But you can really get a lot out of this book by doing that. So anyhow, the last book today is, It's The Manager by Jim Clifton and Jim Harder. And these gentlemen are executives from the Gallup Corporation. And I first started following the Gallup Corporation probably around 25 years ago. This corporation is where the book, First Break All The Rules, started from. Marcus Buckingham wrote it based on the organization. In my opinion, I started calling it the best book on management that I've ever read. That was like 25 years ago. And the reason for that was, it was based on 20 or 30 years prior to that of comprehensive research.

So that was the book, First Break All The Rules. Now today, It's The Manager picks up where First Break All The Rules left off, back in the late 90s, early 2000s, and has done comprehensive research since then, and has developed this book into what I do today, call my favorite book on management ever. And like I said, it's really based on the fact that there's just so much comprehensive research into what they did to put it together. One of the conclusions from that first book, First Break All The Rules, was, people leave managers, people do not leave companies, and that has not wavered in any form at all. And they build research upon that as they put together this book, as a matter of fact, they even say that one of the most profound and distinct clarifying things that they've ever really discovered since the company had been founded, I don't know, 70 or 80 years ago, is that 70% of the variance in team engagement is determined solely by the manager. So to be more productive, managers need to maximize human potential. And

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basically, that's what the book centers around.

There are six major themes that they discovered here, and I'll just go through them quickly. The new workforce will not just work for a paycheck, they want a purpose. The new workforce is no longer pursuing job satisfaction, they want development. They do not want bosses, they want coaches. They don't want annual reviews, they want ongoing conversations. They don't want a manager who fixates on their weaknesses, and they don't view it as a job, it's their life. And so the book is concentrated around these six areas to address those concerns. It's based around strategy, culture, employment, brand, from a manager to a coach, and then the future of work.

There's 52 chapters that are devoted to those specific categories. And these chapters are about two to three pages long, that's it. It's very concise and very easy to take away the key points to whatever is in that chapter. It is designed not to be read, cover to cover, so that when you look under those six competencies, you can, and there's a lot of different things broken down under each of those. You can quickly find an area that you want to check out and then you can do a deeper dive into it, from that perspective.

The second half of the book is devoted to learning your strengths. And one of the major takeaways from all of Gallup's work over the last 50 years, is that they coach building upon your strengths, not your weaknesses. And they've developed comprehensive tools to help discover strengths, and then how to utilize those strengths, both from an employee perspective and then from the coaches perspective. And in the book, they provide a key to take a strengths assessment test. And so that's pretty neat, I took this test in 2001, and then I just took it again this past year. And it's pretty close to being the same, once it breaks it down into your particular areas of strength, it lists 34 different personas of strengths. And then it gives you as a coach, how you use those with your employees, and then it's a little bit to the employees, is how to use it to better your career. Very easily read book, and again, it's my favorite book on management ever.

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**David Heimer:** I was thinking to myself before we started talking today, that I would certainly pick up one of these books and read it. I got to say, it's pretty compelling, I'm getting them all, this is great.

**Dave Rothacker:** Yeah. Now. It's *The Manager*, I strongly recommend that the owner of the company have one and then all of their managers have them. And it's a fantastic book to build manager's meetings around because it gives you all the content that you would need.

**David Heimer:** Oh Dave Rothacker, thank you so much for doing this. This has been fascinating, and I know that our listeners are going to appreciate getting these recommendations. It's always great to talk to you about these, look forward to doing this again.

**Dave Rothacker:** Sounds good. I will be waiting along to get prepared to do this again. Thank you so much, David.

**Outro:** We're always looking for good ideas and interviews for our podcast. If you have an idea or maybe you think you should be interviewed, just shoot an email to [profiles Prosperity@serviceroundtable.com](mailto:profiles Prosperity@serviceroundtable.com). That's [profiles Prosperity@serviceroundtable.com](mailto:profiles Prosperity@serviceroundtable.com). If you think what we're doing has any value, it would be very helpful if you would give us a great rating on iTunes. Thanks for your support. Hope to see you again soon. Bye.