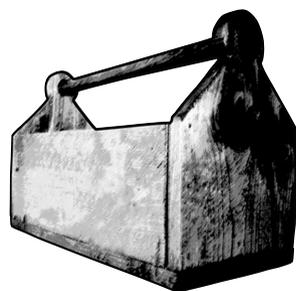


# The Carpenter



*A Story About the Greatest  
Success Strategies of All*

JON GORDON

WILEY

## Foreword

In my sessions with managers around the world, I often begin by asking, “How many of you think you are leaders? Please raise your hands if you do.” I’m always amazed that less than 20 percent raise their hands. Why is it that these managers—whose jobs are defined by leading others—do not think they are leaders?

The answer is that most people, managers included, believe leadership is defined by the title and position they hold. The managers who don’t raise their hands believe they don’t have titles that are fancy enough or positions that are high enough to call themselves leaders.

These managers probably didn’t have a father like mine. A highly decorated admiral of the Navy, my dad taught me priceless lessons about leadership. I’ll never forget when I was elected president of my seventh-grade class. When I came home from school all pumped up and proud, Dad said, “Congratulations, Ken. But now that you are president, don’t ever use your position. Great leaders are great because people trust and respect them, not because they have power.”

That’s the message of Jon Gordon’s wonderful new book, *The Carpenter*. I encourage you to think of the main character

as a mentor. He will teach you that any human being who loves, serves, and cares is a leader.

If you're a businessperson, shift your focus from "winning"—whatever that means to you—to using your business to love, serve, and build up others. If you do this, you will succeed and your business will grow in ways you never imagined.

You'll also learn that to achieve genuine success, you must help others. Your first job in life is not to judge and evaluate people, but to help them succeed in whatever they're doing. In other words, success is meant to be shared.

I am excited that you have decided to read this book. *The Carpenter* can change your life for the better. And you, in turn, can change the lives of the people around you—who in turn can change the lives of those they touch. And just maybe, one person at a time, we can change the world.

—KEN BLANCHARD,  
coauthor of *The One Minute Manager*<sup>®</sup>  
and *Leading at a Higher Level*

**x**

***Foreword***

## Chapter 1

# Collapse



The last thing Michael remembered before waking up in the hospital was running through the city streets and thinking about ways to build his company. Now he was lying on his back with wires and machines connected to his body as his wife, Sarah, sat by his side and a nurse stood over him.

“What am I doing here?” he asked groggily. “Did I get hit by a car or something?”

“You passed out on your run,” answered Sarah, who was crying and shaking. In all the years she had known him, she couldn’t recall him having more than a cold, never mind being in the hospital.

“How? Why?” he asked.

“That’s what the doctor is trying to figure out right now. He’s reviewing your tests and should be in shortly,” the nurse said.

“I hope I’m okay,” Michael said as he looked around the room and then at Sarah. She tried to smile and act reassuring but she couldn’t. She was scared and expecting bad news.

Michael lifted his arm and felt a bandage and lump on his head. “How did I get here?”

“The ambulance brought you. Your head hit the ground pretty hard. The EMTs told us that a man saw you collapse and helped you. He used his shirt to stop the bleeding and called 911. He just might have saved your life.”

“Who was it?”

“They didn’t get his name. He just gave them that card sitting on your table.”

Sarah picked up the card and showed it to Michael. It was a simple plain white card with only the word *Carpenter* and a phone number in black, bold ink.

“Not much of a marketer,” Michael said, coming to his senses and regaining his sense of humor.

Sarah’s nervousness turned to laughter as she shook her head. Even while in the hospital he was thinking about business. She was thankful, at least, that he was feeling more normal.

In that moment the doctor walked in and stood over Michael’s bed. “Well, the good news is that you didn’t have a heart attack like I had feared,” he said as he shook Michael’s hand.

“Heart attack!” Michael exclaimed. “I’m too young to have a heart attack!”

“Not necessarily,” the doctor countered. “In fact, your body is warning you that you better slow down and manage your stress or you’ll experience the real thing before too long. Have you been under a lot of stress lately?”

Michael and Sarah looked at each other. “We own a business,” Sarah said. “We’ve been building it together, and with two kids, it’s been a whirlwind.”

“Well I advise you to slow down,” the doctor said as he made eye contact with Michael. “No business or success is worth your health and life. I want you to rest for a few weeks before heading back to work. It will do your heart and your head some good. You have a minor concussion as well. Nothing major or serious but we want your head to heal, too.”

Michael looked at Sarah. Rest was the last thing he needed with everything they had going on.

The doctor walked toward the door but before leaving the room he turned around and said, “You’re lucky this was just a warning. I see people all the time who don’t get a warning like this. Remember, life gives us warnings for a reason. Learn from this. Do things differently. Your health, kids, and future grandkids will be thankful you did.”

## Chapter 2

# Rest



The next day Michael read and watched television at home as he tried to heed the doctor's advice. He wouldn't tell Sarah, but he would rather die than rest. Besides, the thought of her running their business by herself was killing him. From the beginning they had done everything together, and no matter how much they had going on with their children's school, sports, and activities, neither of them had missed a day of work until now. He knew Sarah was more than capable of running the business. She was the brains behind the software and services they sold, and also ran operations when Michael left early to coach their daughter's youth basketball team, but *he* was the driving force behind their revenue and business growth, and the reason their company, Social Connect, had grown exponentially in the past year. He and Sarah had spent a number of years at different tech start-ups before venturing out on their own together. It was a scary feeling knowing that their future and family depended on Social Connect, and Michael was driven to make it a success.

But now his strongest character traits—drive, work ethic, and passion—were affecting his health, and he had no idea what to do. He felt like a baseball pitcher being told he could

no longer use his fastball. He wanted to go back to work immediately, but Sarah wouldn't allow it. "You'll be divorced before that happens," she told him. "A few weeks won't make or break our business, but it will make or break your health."

Unable to change Sarah's mind, Michael spent his time pacing around the house trying to relax, and failing miserably at it. He stopped in front of his flat-screen TV in the family room, sat on the couch, and thought of the entertainment center Sarah wanted to build. For the first time he could picture it. At first he thought of building it himself, but then laughed at the idea. His father had always told him that he better make a lot of money because he would need to hire people to fix things around the house. And Michael did something even better: He married a handy woman who could fix things. Her dad was a mechanic, her brothers were plumbers, and when something broke in the house, the kids went to her instead of him. Yet, building entertainment centers was beyond even her skill set.

Michael then thought of the carpenter who had saved him and remembered he had his card. *I really should call to thank him*, he thought. But what do you say to a stranger who saved your life? "Hi. You saved my life. Can you build entertainment centers?" Michael found the card on the counter and decided he was just going to say thank you and ask him where he could send a gift. He called the number and after a few rings Michael heard the voice of the man who saved his life: "Hi, I'm not answering my phone right now because I'm building kitchen cabinets at 111 Main Street. I'm putting my heart and soul into these cabinets so I won't be returning calls until I'm finished with the job. Please know

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### *The Carpenter*

I will give the same attention and care to your work, as well. If you need to talk to me feel free to come by 111 Main Street during my lunch break at noon.”

Michael shook his head. A carpenter who doesn't say his name on his voicemail and won't return calls to potential clients. *How does he have any clients?* Michael wondered. Not only does this guy need a new business card, he also needs a lot of help to build his business.

## Chapter 3

# The Carpenter



A few days later, after helping Sarah and the kids get ready for school in the morning, Michael took a slow walk in the park. It wasn't something he wanted to do. It was something Sarah made him do. The doctor advised him to do some light exercise to keep his blood flowing and also said he could do any of his normal activities, besides work, that didn't cause him stress. After walking, Michael grabbed a water bottle in the kitchen and saw the carpenter's card still sitting on the counter. He looked at it for a few moments and decided it was time to say thank you in person.

*It's not every day you get to meet the person who saved your life, Michael thought, as he sat in bumper-to-bumper city traffic. What if I don't like him? We know he's a horrible marketer. What if he turns out to be a horrible person?* Michael considered a number of possibilities as he passed the road construction that was causing the traffic, and decided the man deserved a thank you regardless of the kind of person he was. After all, it's not every day you need someone to save your life.

At noon Michael pulled up to 111 Main Street, a large, beautiful, newly constructed home with a circular driveway

packed with pick-up trucks. When he walked in the front door he saw a bunch of men painting the walls and ceiling as the sounds of hammering and sawing filled the air. He walked to the kitchen and noticed a dark-skinned man with shoulder-length brown hair. He was dressed in blue jeans, brown sandals, and a white t-shirt, and sat at the kitchen table eating lunch. When the man looked up and saw Michael, his eyes lit up. He ran toward him with a big smile and wrapped his arms around him. “Michael, it’s great to see you. You sure look a lot better than the last time I saw you,” he said before letting out a hearty laugh. “I’ve been wondering how you were doing. What a nice surprise!”

“I’m doing well,” Michael said awkwardly. He was not a big hugger and didn’t expect such a warm welcome from a stranger.

The carpenter stepped back and stared at Michael’s forehead before placing his finger near the cut. “It’s healing well,” he said with a big, radiant smile. “I’m thankful to see that.”

“Yeah, me too,” Michael said nervously. “I want to thank you for helping me that day.”

“Oh it was nothing. You would have done the same for me,” said the carpenter as he walked back to the kitchen table and motioned for Michael to sit down with him.

“What exactly happened?” asked Michael.

“Well, it was really early and the sun was just coming up. I was walking to this job, which is how I get to all my jobs, and the next thing I know, I see you running, and then—*bam!*—you go down like someone shot you. Your head hit the ground hard and started bleeding pretty heavily. I took my shirt off and compressed it against your forehead to stop the

bleeding and called for help. You were out of it, but when I asked you your name you mumbled it clear enough for me to hear and tell the police when they showed up. I figured you had people who would be concerned about you when you didn't come back from your run."

"Wow. I can't believe you did all that to help me. Thank you so much. They told me at the hospital that you were a true hero. And you left your card for me," Michael said as he reached into his pocket and held it up.

"I did," said the carpenter.

"But it doesn't have your name on it. I don't even know your name."

"Oh, forgive me. I usually write my name on the card. It makes it more personal. But with them rushing you off to the hospital, I forgot. I apologize for not properly introducing myself. My name is J. Emmanuel," he said as he smiled and reached out to shake Michael's hand. "J. is actually my first name and Emmanuel is my middle name. But everyone just calls me J."

"Is J short for Jason or is it J-A-Y?" asked Michael.

"No, it's just a J and a period. My parents believed I was unique."

"Okay, J.," Michael said with a smile as he shook his hand. "It's nice to officially put a name—or an initial—to the man who saved my life."

The carpenter laughed as he got up from the table and walked over to the cabinets he was building. "I'm just glad I was there to help. You know, when I'm not walking around the city saving people's lives, I build things like this," he said with a smile, as he proudly showed off his woodwork.

Michael may not have been handy, but he knew quality work when he saw it and these were the most exquisite cabinets he had ever seen. The guy needed help with his marketing, but he certainly didn't need help with his carpentry. "They look incredible," Michael said. "Do you build entertainment centers, too?"

"I can build anything, and I have built just about everything," said the carpenter.

"That's great because it just so happens that my doctor and wife are making me take a few weeks off from work to relax and get better, and I need someone to help me build an entertainment center. I would love to repay you for saving my life," said Michael, figuring he could use the work.

"I'm honored that you would want me to build something special in your home, but please know you don't have to repay me for anything," said the carpenter as he put his hands on his heart. "I give and expect nothing in return. It's a beautiful way to live and work. If you want me to build your entertainment center, I would love to but please choose me because of my work, not because you feel obligated. Never do anything out of obligation. Do everything with gratitude and love. It's much more powerful that way."

Michael nodded as he thought about what the carpenter said. There was clearly more than meets the eye with this guy. He had never met anyone quite like him. Most people would just take the job, but not him. He wanted to be hired for doing quality work. J. was definitely a different breed and he seemed like a man of principle; besides, a little philosophy never hurt. Plus, he was very skilled. Michael would

have hired him regardless of whether J. had saved his life. Being the great listener and salesman that Michael was, he stood up and said, “Okay, how does this sound, ‘I am grateful that you saved my life, and because of your skill, I would *love* to have you build an entertainment center in my home?’”

“That sounds wonderful,” the carpenter said, laughing as he walked over and patted Michael on the back. J. knew they weren’t completely on the same page yet, but they would be soon. He could tell that Michael was a lifelong learner, and that meant they could build more than an entertainment center.

“When can you start?” asked Michael.

“I am almost finished with these cabinets and am booked for months, but I will make time for you and will rearrange some things. How about we start the day after tomorrow?”

“Sounds great. Here’s my address,” Michael said as he wrote the information on the back of one of his cards and handed it to J. “I appreciate you fitting me in. I didn’t realize you are so busy.”

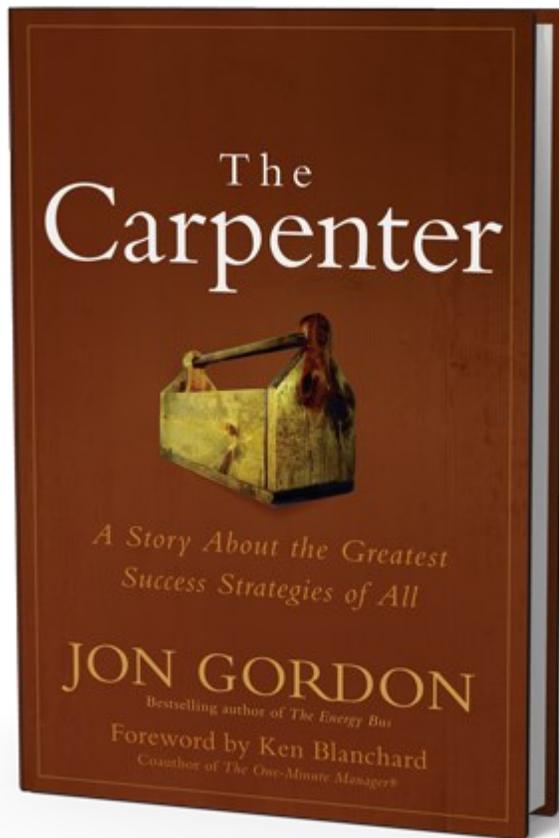
“Oh, I am very busy. In fact they tell me I’m the busiest carpenter in the city.”

“Really?” Michael said, sounding very surprised. “Why is that?”

“It’s because of the principles that guide my business. I know the greatest success strategies of all,” said the carpenter.

Michael was now very curious. Surely, he wasn’t talking about his business card or marketing prowess. “What are they?” he asked.

“I will tell you when I see you in two days. I have a few other people who came to see me,” the carpenter said, before giving Michael a hug good-bye and waving to the line of people waiting to talk to him. And as Michael walked out of the kitchen and passed the group of people waiting to hire J., he started to believe that the carpenter might be a lot smarter than he thought.



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