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“As a business leader, I have hungered for wisdom in many circumstances. Proverbs provides it. Dan and Drew bring to life this ageless guide and how you can lead conscientiously and courageously so that your company can flourish and perform. Take it with you to work!”

-Cheryl Bachelder

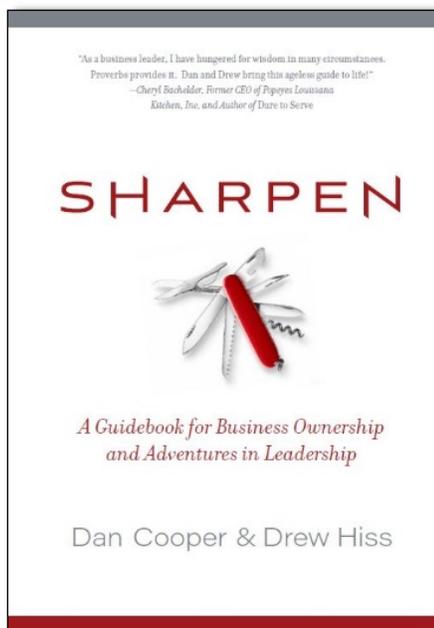
Former CEO of Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen, Board Member at Pier One, Chick-fil-A, and Procter & Gamble, and author of Dare to Serve

Sharpen

A Guidebook for Business Ownership and Adventures in Leadership

By Dan Cooper & Drew Hiss

Why can business leaders easily point to the cost of mistakes, while struggling to put a price on wise counsel?



Dan Cooper and Drew Hiss, authors of *Sharpen: A Guidebook for Business Owners and Adventures in Leadership* (September 2019) have spent a lifetime building thriving businesses and leading people. By all the standard definitions of the word, they have been successful. But they will be the first to tell you that achieving and maintaining *long-term* success is a minute by minute effort that requires good decisions based on wisdom.

Continued growth also requires a leader to connect with others, and avoid the trap of isolation. Big mistakes are often made in isolation.

But where did these two businessmen learn how to do this? What is the source of this wisdom that has helped them construct and grow a great business and personal life through the years?

It actually comes from one of the most underutilized business minds in history: King Solomon. He is widely recognized as one the richest men who have ever walked the planet. He took over the franchise from his dad, King David, and built a powerful empire unlike anything seen before or since.

Like most of us, Solomon had many strengths and a few weaknesses. Unlike most of us, he was self-aware and recognized that he needed to work through those issues, both good and bad, and devise a framework to help manage them. The result of his endeavor is a treasure trove of practical wisdom and tools that work. It's called The Book of Proverbs.

Want to have the latitude to be entrepreneurial and take risks? Better find a good spouse that believes in you and supports you.

Interested in making money but not letting it corrupt you? Better find context for what really matters before your bank account swells.

Even though Proverbs is arguably the most practical book in the Bible, translating it to the world of business can benefit from those who've been on that journey for a while. Hiss and Cooper have organized Solomon's wisdom into short but powerful chapters, a guidebook for adventures in life and business and a road map for real and lasting success.

To learn more, go to: <https://acumenimpact.com/sharpen>

About Drew and Dan



DREW HISS

CEO + Founder

Drew Hiss launched his outsourced payroll and HR technology solutions company, Checkdate Solutions, in 1994. The entrepreneurial venture was a classic bootstrap start-up whose launch plan underestimated capital needs and ramp up time by significant multiples. The adventure predictably included scrapping for cash, overhauling the business model, rebranding, refocusing, redirecting resources, shifting tech platforms, praying, seeking counsel and wisdom, etc. Not surprisingly, deep entrepreneurial scar tissue was forged. Ultimately Checkdate Solutions became one of Kansas City's fastest growing companies and was named one of the Greater KC Chamber of Commerce Best Businesses not once, but twice.

Additionally, Checkdate Solutions ranked as one of KC's top 100 fastest growing companies for nine consecutive years and was in the top 25 nationally in its industry.

Today's workplace culture tends to compartmentalize personal virtues from commerce, creating silos and compartmentalization between business, family, community, values and faith. But as a CEO, Drew and his company grew when he "decompartmentalized:" on his journey, he learned to integrate his life of commerce and his life of family, faith and values.

Drew merged Checkdate Solutions with payroll industry leader Paycor, stepping away from the company in 2008 and serving on its board for eight years. Drew remains an owner in the firm. Today, Drew's heart to help business owners leverage the influence of their business platform for eternal impact is at the core of Acumen which he founded late in 2015. Acumen is a catalytic iron-sharpening-iron environment forged from the fiery furnace of entrepreneurial battle, marketplace survival and integration of the timeless wisdom of the ages.

Drew and his wife, Sarah have been married for 30 years and have four children (plus two beautiful daughters in law) ranging in age from 25 to 20. He is a raving distance congregant of Flatirons Community Church in Lafayette, CO. Drew enjoys snowboarding, hunting, cycling, hiking and a variety of outdoor activities and adventures including running with his three dogs.

DAN COOPER

President + Growth Catalyst



Dan Cooper co-founded ej4, a video-based online training company, in 2003, and was its CEO until selling in 2012. During his time with ej4, he grew the company from a startup to a nationally-recognized firm, serving Fortune 500 clients. As of the 2012, ej4 was serving 1,000+ customers, delivering millions of program views, was highly profitable and debt-free.

Dan took his leadership and technology experience to work on and in the Sparklab startup business accelerator as well as lead change management and profit building initiatives for mid-market companies.

Today, he is the President and partner of Acumen, an accelerator community experience built for CEOs and Owners of strong and growing companies. Dan is also a certified Executive Coach credentialed through the International Coaching Federation.

He and his wife, Ali, have been married for 19 years, have three children and attend Cure of Ars church in Leawood, KS. Dan enjoys all things soccer, snowboarding, and burning meat on the backyard barbecue grill.

An Excerpt from *Sharpen*

“Timing, perseverance, and ten years of trying will eventually make you look like an overnight success”. —**Biz Stone**

Looking at a billboard of a billion-dollar Powerball number made me think, Man what good I could do for the world with that wealth. Then I wondered, Could I handle it?

It would throw your life into a crazy direction. One day you are a working man, and the next day you don't have to work ever again. Every relationship you have in the world changes. There are expectations to share the winnings, opportunities to invest, the good life to live, and it all comes at you at 1,000 miles an hour. What chaos that creates.

Then there's this statistic: According to the National Endowment for Financial Education, about 70 percent of lottery winners end up in bankruptcy. Too much, too fast, too gone.

Too much too fast isn't natural. Too much rain too fast can turn into a flood. Too much fire burning too quickly can light up a forest. Too much snow too fast can create an avalanche.

Thus, it's the same with our companies, our leadership, our power, and our lives. Most overnight sensations are 10–20 years in the making. The owners and employees slogged through many ups and downs to get there. They are confident in how to move forward.

A flood soon recedes, fires burn out, and avalanches stop at the bottom of the mountain. The quicker something is gained, the more likely it is to quickly disappear.

Proverb 13:11 Dishonest money dwindles away, but whoever gathers money little by little makes it grow.

Proverbs 20:21 An inheritance quickly gained at the beginning will not be blessed at the end.

Proverbs 21:20 The wise store up choice food and olive oil, but fools gulp theirs down.

What does just right mean to you? One industry's growth is another's down year. What are you pushing too hard too fast? Where do you see danger signs of a possible catastrophe? Exponential growth isn't bad, but most of the time, steady growth creates returns for the long term.

MENTAL MODEL: The Goldilocks Principle

This simple model is recognizable by the name. You remember Goldilocks? She didn't like her porridge too hot or too cold, but just right. Amazingly simple, this model can be used as a guideline for all sorts of topics—including your money. If you are being honest with yourself, what's “just right” when it comes to wealth? What's just right when it comes to revenue? What's

just right when it comes to salaries?

When it comes to your company, this principle can be used all over the place.

- Revenue: Just because you can grow doesn't mean you should. Have you ever experienced lower profit with higher revenues or seen a company grow themselves broke?
- Titles: Three "C-level execs" in a four-person company . . . really?
- Hiring
- Salaries
- Vacation time
- Insurance
- What else can you add to this list?

This isn't to say explosive growth and aiming for a huge goal isn't the right strategy or the one that you should take. But it does make you sit back and think before you go. The market wants you to grow, scale, acquire, ramp up, scale up, and IPO. That's great, and I want the same for you— but only in the context of what is right for you, your industry, your company, and the vision God has given you.

Let's take hiring as an example. I've worked with several ad agencies, and I've noticed they have quite the conundrum when it comes to hiring. Their work can spike or dip at any time. Giant projects are followed by lulls, and it's a huge challenge to create recurring revenue streams across a diverse client portfolio. If you staff up to support a huge project or client, you have to either find more work to use those people on the next gig or let the team go when the project ends or the client leaves. This is stressful for all involved.

How might you "Goldilocks" this?

Here's a high-level example. Agencies sell time and expertise for money. Once a resource (person) is at capacity, there is a need to work more or add capacity. One agency set a threshold of 115 percent of work capacity for 30 days consecutively before hiring on a new person. Not new project work, but a new normal in work product with clients under contract. The thought is that everyone can sprint for 30 days. Beyond that, people will start to burn out.

Obviously, this is a simple version, as they took into account retainers/projects/clients/relationship, etc. But the point is that everyone on the team knew the threshold at which hiring someone made sense. This helped keep staffing levels "just right" and allowed for dips and bumps as well. If production dipped below 100 percent, they also weren't overstaffed so much as to burden the company or let a large number of people go.

What's too hot or too cold in your business right now? How can you use the Goldilocks principle to make it just right?

Q & A with Authors Dan Cooper and Drew Hiss

Q. Why did you decide to write this book?

A. The book of Proverbs is a favorite book in the Bible for both of us. It is filled with lessons on everything in life- How to live, how to raise kids, what the role of money should be, etc. There is also a great deal of powerful and practical advice for businesspeople. Written by Solomon, one of the richest men in history and certainly one of the wisest, Proverbs should be required reading in every business school. The problem is that Solomon was apparently ADD because every chapter skips around between subjects and ping-pongs back and forth. It can be hard to follow. So, we re-organized the book of Proverbs into subjects and wrote our book around those subjects that every business leader will surely face at one time or another.

Q. You guys have had great success in business and sold your respective companies. Why this book and why now?

A. First of all, we both believe very strongly that we each have a mission in life and how old we are or how much money we have in the bank has very little to do with accomplishing that mission. Like most entrepreneurs, we made our share of mistakes. We started Acumen to have a community for people like us who need to sit down with others who are in the same boat and be transparent about what's going on for them. This book is really just an extension of that work and the many conversations and interactions we have had through the years.

Also, we realized that a book like this would have been really helpful to us as we launched and grew our businesses. As we organized the proverbs and wrote the book, we realized that Solomon's admonitions were timeless. In fact, they could have been written today. Great ideas are like that.

Q. What do you hope to accomplish with this book and your work?

A. We'd like to think that this book can be both a handbook for life, but also a North Star to follow when your business gets complicated. As businesspeople we make tough decisions every day, oftentimes on the fly and most often without a lot of feedback from our 'multitude of counselors'.

Our hope is that business leaders will keep a copy of this book on their desk and refer to it often as they face each day with all that it brings.

What Others Are Saying About *Sharpen*

The book of Proverbs teaches us to cry out for wisdom. That truth should be no different for our businesses than our daily life. Drew and Dan help drive that point home in Sharpen.

David Green
CEO & Founder, Hobby Lobby, Inc.

“As a business leader, I have hungered for wisdom in many circumstances. Proverbs provides it. Dan and Drew bring to life this ageless guide and how you can lead conscientiously and courageously so that your company can flourish and perform. Take it with you to work!”

Cheryl Bachelder
Former CEO of Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen, Board Member at Pier One, Chick-fil-A, and Procter & Gamble, and author of *Dare to Serve*

Timely. Powerful. Relevant! Dan & Drew offer powerful truth that impacts business because it impacts leaders. Trust matters more than ever and Sharpen offers deep and timeless insight to help you and your organization gain the greatest advantage of all time—Trust!

David Horsager
Bestselling Author of *The Trust Edge*
CEO Trust Edge Leadership Institute

Sharpen is filled with refreshing, uncommon candor. Each chapter provides pragmatic applications to help Christian leaders tackle today's most common leadership challenges. I found as many applications for how I manage our home and family as I do in managing my company. Reading this book humbly reminds me of how to be a Kingdom Leader.

John Ramstead
Founder and Host of the *Eternal Leadership Podcast*
CEO, *Beyond Influence*

Any smart business person pursues wisdom. Whether one is a follower of scripture or not, the book of Proverbs offers direction. Add to it, tangible mental models that can be readily employed in day to day practice – Sharpen is a beneficial resource in your tool kit to help you heighten your impact.

Stacey M. Browning
President, Paycor

I love this book. Two authors that have a deep understanding of both business and scripture write about my favorite topics: wisdom and successful living. If you want to learn timeless truths that relate to the challenges and opportunities in your life, read this book.

Mark Sanborn

Author of *The Fred Factor* and *The Potential Principle*

I was reluctant to read another book on leadership. As a former leadership consultant, I feel like I've already read them all! But Dan and Drew are proven business leaders and they've helped almost 100 other owners and CEOs be successful so I gave it a shot. I'm so glad I did! I found pearls of wisdom to immediately apply to running my organization. I'm confident you will, too.

Jeff Spadafora,

Founder/President of The Way

Author of *The Joy Model: A Step-by-Step Guide to Peace, Purpose, and Balance.*

Sharpen is one of those rare books that provides humor, insight and clarity around the application of scripture to the art of being a leader and running a business. I highly commend the work of Dan Cooper and Drew Hiss as they walk alongside of you in your journey to live with wisdom and grace.

Bill High

CEO, The Signatry

Sharpen is packed with practical, actionable and timeless insight to help leaders keep on course professionally and personally. Dan and Drew have done a great service for leaders who are looking for a go-to resource to maximize their impact business without losing their soul. What makes a book worth reading is when you know the authors actually live what they write, and Dan and Drew walk the talk. It will be a book that I will read and reference again and again.

Merle Mees

Lead Pastor, Pleasant Valley Baptist Church

So, you want to dramatically improve your business and life... It's really quite simple – change your thinking. The wisdom of Solomon as framed by Dan and Drew, two extraordinary leaders, is a perfect place to start your transformation. Enjoy the journey...

Joe Calhoon

CSP, Author & Professional EOS Implementer™

The ancient book of Proverbs is arguable the best business book for today's business leader. Dan and Drew have done a masterful job of teeing up these timeless principles for you so you

can hit a homerun in your business. I predict adherents of these principles will wake up a year from now further down the road, then those who don't. Two Thumbs up!

Randy Frazee
Pastor & Author of *The Heart of the Story*

*While Dan and Drew have lots of both expertise and experience in leading and training business leaders, in *Sharpen* they call upon a greater source of wisdom- the Proverbs of the Bible. The author of Proverbs is Solomon, one of the most successful business and life coaches of all time. *Sharpen* brings together these 31 chapters with practical applications and amazing case studies. Every business leader will be blessed by reading and applying this wisdom to their personal and business decision making.*

Jerry Kirk
Founder, The Prayer Covenant

Dan and Drew provide a reflection on wisdom that will meet any reader where they are today and help them to impact their leadership tomorrow. By combining biblical truths, personal experience, and contemporary reflection, this book demonstrates how wisdom can help today's business leaders breakthrough to greater success and significance. Each chapter includes practical examples and a call to action to actualize the concepts in the book. Dan and Drew clearly demonstrate how importance pursuing wisdom is to any business leader become a better Servant Leader or People-Centric Leader.

Brian Wellinghoff
Director Strategy Improvement & Culture, Barry Wehmiller

There's no better way to lead yourself well, and lead others, than with the wisdom found in Proverbs. This is a leader's field manual for true success!

Dr. Nathan Baxter
Founder of LeadSelfLeadOthers.com and RealCoachingSuccess.com

Business people need wisdom, and entrepreneurial couples need wisdom to keep them on the same path. Dan and Drew have created a wonderful treasure that entrepreneurs and couples can use to grow in every area of life.

Kathy Rushing
Mentor to Entrepreneurial Couples at www.KathyRushing.com and host of *Committed: A Podcast for Couples on the (Sometimes) Crazy Entrepreneurial Journey*

If you're going to chase your dreams, you'll need wisdom. And plenty of it. This book not only breaks down Proverbs, Dan and Drew make it applicable to life and business.

Zech Newman

Speaker, coach, and author of *Chasing Dreams in a Minivan*. ZechariahNewman.com

We all want clear direction in life. This book, and its mix of practical tools and deep introspection, will be a tremendous help for those seeking wisdom.

Dave Jewitt

Founder of www.YourOneDegree.com

The path to the life you want—the life God has planned for you—is paved with wisdom. This book will help you trade confusion for wisdom, and move you forward.

Heather Turner

Coach, speaker, and author of *Dream Traders - Discover and Pursue the Life You Want*



Acumen is an engaging community of CEOs and business owners who want more—personally and professionally.

With a proven framework to grow your business, we challenge and guide you as a leader. (Is this what you've been missing?)

Sharpen *Your* Edge.

Acumen's purpose is to Ignite a Higher Standard of CEO influence and Business Impact. We do this by building accelerator communities that sharpen, challenge, and inspire CEOs and Owners.

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