

► **Saving Grace by Heath Row** **Fast Company Magazine Article July, 2004**

Fast Company members from five states gathered for a grassroots leadership-development workshop. The gathering featured several guest speakers, notably Maureen McCarthy, developer of the Blueprint of WE (formerly known as the State of Grace Document.)

Used with organizations such as British Petroleum and Astra Zeneca Pharmaceutical, the document is an alternative employment contract in which colleagues and team members spell out their working relationship. It sets expectations for teamwork and collaboration, as well as steps to take if a relationship sours. McCarthy walked Fast Company through its core elements.

Telling the Story of Us: Even in business, we go through that "in love" phase. Capture that. Come back to it. If I take the time to tell you the specific reasons why you're the supplier, business partner, or employee I've chosen, there's a greater chance you will act that way.

Interaction Styles and Warning Signs: Our work styles are so varied that we get tripped up when we don't understand another way of doing something. We assume everyone basically works the same way we do. If I tell you how I tend to act when things are difficult, you might help me get out of a stressful situation rather than make things worse.

Ask Good Questions: If a work relationship goes awry, teammates need to explore what's going on. Go through a list of questions established at the beginning of the relationship addressing why people feel tense or disconnected, whether the collaboration is meeting expectations, what partners need from each other, and what's really behind the disagreement.

Plan a Happy Breakup: If things don't work out, you need to be able to exit gracefully. You don't actually determine the exit strategy, but you do own up to its possibility. Promise that you'll never outright harm your former partners, talk negatively about them, or block their progress.

Fast Company Magazine sets the agenda, charting the evolution of business through a unique focus on the most creative individuals sparking change in the marketplace. By uncovering best and "next" practices, the magazine and website help a new breed of leader work smarter and more effectively. Fast Company empowers innovators to challenge convention and create the future of business.