

The following is an unedited chapter of my next book entitled *An Elephant's Guide to Majestic Living*. I plan to share a few "early releases" of unedited chapters which I believe will be especially helpful during these very challenging economic times. This chapter is entitled, "Hairy, Chewy Pig Ears". It is one of several chapters that address the complicated interrelated issues of: 1) choosing the best business management and personal advisory team members; 2) how to attract and/or find the best business management and personal advisory team members; 3) how to evaluate people, business models and vendors, etc. with a scientifically sound, rather than an emotionally oriented selection process; 4) who to trust, when to trust and how to trust effectively; and 5) how to achieve "earned peace of mind". The other sections of the book will tackle additional timely relevant topics. I welcome your comments – Bruce R. Wright.

### Hairy Chewy Pig Ears

(How to Choose the Best Advisors and Team Members)

When my children were growing up, they went through quite a menagerie of pets. Their favorite pet store was Theresa's Pet Store. Its wide array of creatures is a real treat for animal lovers of all ages. Whether one is seeking a pet shark, a frog, a snake, lizard, cat, dog, sheep or horse, Theresa will set you up. One day while my children and I were standing in line to make our latest acquisition, I noticed a large barrel that contained chew toys for pet dogs to enjoy; typical rawhide bits and pieces that most dogs would crave. Right next to that barrel was another one that contained one of the more disgusting things I had seen in quite awhile. It held dried out pigs' ears that could be given to dogs as chew toys. If that wasn't gross enough for you, each ear still had at least a few intact ear hairs. How yummy, hairy, chewy, pigs ears!

Since that memorable life experience, I've noticed that my aging process has caused me to lose most of the hair on top of my head. In exchange for this loss, nature has provided me with the wonderful benefit of new hair growth elsewhere. What a trade off, a baldhead but prolific hair growth in my nose as well as inside and outside of my ears! Now, I'm not really complaining about this, it's a relatively common phenomenon for many men. What I am complaining about are all the guys who either consciously or unconsciously decide NOT to rid themselves of their overabundance of nose and ear hair. I just find it at least distracting, maybe a bit annoying. I wonder if these guys can see themselves when they look in the mirror. Maybe they don't notice it because they are so concerned about other things that they are oblivious to their appearance. I wonder if they have anyone in their life that will mention it to them, perhaps give them a nose and ear hair trimmer for their birthday or something. I don't think I am preoccupied with other people's (or my own) ear and nose hair, but I do notice it. Unfortunately, every time I notice someone with hairy ears, it triggers my memory of those disgusting hairy pig ears.

No matter how you slice it, it's irrational and ineffective to choose a professional based upon whether or not he keeps his ear hair under control, yet I have found myself doing just that. I came to realize that even though I've built a solid reputation as a rational, objective advisor and selector of other professionals, even I could get "swayed" out of my normally, very rational hiring process by the mere presence of hairy ears. Intellectually, I knew it was ridiculous to dismiss (even only in part) a person because of unkempt ear hair. After all, Albert Einstein was a poorly groomed individual. If you pay reasonable attention to photographs of Dr. Einstein, you soon see that he had hairy ears and his nose hairs grew right into his mustache. Yuck.

My own distaste for hairy ears, however irrational, left unchecked could become a bias and potentially interfere with my ability to hire a brilliant thinker and dedicated doer of great deeds such as Einstein. In their book *Sway: The Irresistible Pull of Irrational Behavior*, brothers Ori and Ron Brafman brilliantly present how all human beings are prone to being "swayed" away from rational into irrational thinking and behavior. I strongly urge you to read their book. May I be so bold as to suggest that you read it immediately upon finishing this book? Better understanding of how people are swayed or pulled into irrational rather than rational thought and behavior is critical to your personal success.

My work, writing, teaching and mentoring addresses both effective macro and micro thinking as well as specific "how to" action steps that produce meaningful results. Over the years, I've witnessed many undesirable results when people are "swayed" into irrational thinking, behaviors and choices. I don't want you to be sucked into such dysfunctionality, so please read, "Sway". The Brafmans' book is so well written and instructive that it is the best of its kind. Do yourself and everyone around you a big favor and read their book. Then read it again, give it to family members, colleagues, clients and your advisors so you can help to elevate those around you. It will serve you well to remind those around you of Mark Twain's wise observation: "The person, who does not read good books, has no advantage over the person who cannot read them."

### The story of Bill

One hairy eared colleague and friend of mine, let's call him Bill, is a Harvard law graduate, now investment banker; Bill was complaining to me that people did not take him as seriously as he'd like. As he sat there whining about how taller, better-looking guys (like me) get more respect, even though he was better educated (presumably smarter) and highly experienced in his field. I couldn't help but notice that his ears seemed even hairier than usual. To make matters worse, he also had a nasty tear in the crotch of his pants. His white undershorts were peaking out through a rather large tear in his dark grey trousers. Since he seemed to really want my input, I decided to offer my opinion. Perhaps I could help him improve his outcomes and possibly curtail his whining.

I responded by saying, “there is no accounting for people’s taste. People value things and other people based upon a variety of factors. That range of factors runs the gamut from the very well reasoned and rational all the way to the extremely unreasonable and irrational.” I went on to draw the comparison between people and dogs. I said, “Hitler’s dog was probably fond of Adolph; that dog probably thought Hitler was the greatest guy in the world. Then again, many people thought of Hitler as a great man, unfortunately some still do. Some people have no more discernment than the average dog. It’s the old adage; beauty is in the eye of the beholder. One man’s trash is another man’s treasure. I asked Bill if he had ever consulted with a professional stylist, someone who would advise him on wardrobe, hairstyle, etc. He responded, “No, I have no use for anyone like that.” I told him that every couple of years I retain a stylist to assist me in such matters. Then I said, “If you change your mind, let me know and I’ll recommend someone.” Bill’s response; “It’s unlikely that will ever happen.”

Getting back to the topic of “how to choose the best advisors and team members”; first of all, it is very difficult to find people that deserve your trust on either a personal or professional level. Simply stated, HAWPs (**H**= high, **A**= awareness, **W**= wise, **P**= professional, person or people) are far too rare. Therefore, there are not enough people talented, dedicated, principled and disciplined enough to become brilliant in their occupation and trustworthy enough for us to entrust them with our lives, wealth and or well being. In fact, unless you are a HAWP yourself, the odds are against you finding even one HAWP, let alone assembling an entire team of folks with these characteristics, but it can be done. Here is a helpful hint; it is far easier for those who are HAWPs themselves. For such people, the universal law of attraction magnetically draws HAWPs together. Right now, this very moment, you probably have at least one advisor or key employee that is seriously lacking in either high awareness, competence, honesty or some combination of the characteristics listed above.

This condition is easier to explain than it is comfortable to read, hear or learn that you are suffering from it. It’s much harder still to correct this condition of being “under represented”.

The barriers to *finding* a great advisor are overcome first with your own awareness of what you want to accomplish, what type of help you need, and then attracting the HAWPs who *already* possess the meaningful experience and prior success achieving the outcomes you desire. What you really want to find is a person with all of the expertise you need, plus the wisdom to apply it in a timely effective manner. As you will read later, the business models adhered to by advisors, doctors etc. play a critical part in what your outcomes may be. Of course, it will help you if each team member is a living example of all of the characteristics listed above. On the other hand, choosing great or at least highly effective team members and advisors is mostly in your head and at least somewhat in the heads of those that surround you. Unless of course, you are

truly your own person and will not be “swayed” from your *great vision* by others. Choices or how we make them, run the gamut of well-reasoned intelligent selections all the way through the other end of the spectrum. At the other end lies, overly emotional, poorly reasoned and even totally irrational thoughts and biases such as how hairy a person’s ears may be.

Back to my friend, Bill with the torn crotch and stunningly hairy ears. Bill was complaining about how so often, business owners reject him even though he is immensely competent, trustworthy and effective at achieving positive outcomes related to investment banking. Instead, they choose the smartly groomed; hairless eared “pretty person” wearing the \$5,000 suit, only to learn later that the “pretty person” failed to achieve their desired outcome. After losing several months, wasting lots of money and suffering a lot of emotional anxiety will they admit to themselves that they made a poor choice? Realizing that, at best, they are back to where they started nine months ago (sometimes in a worse place), they look once again to hire someone else to achieve their goals.

More often than not, the second time around does not turn out any better than the first time around. Why is this so often the case? Can it be that the owner did not learn from his mistake? On the other hand, are the reasons more complex than that?

There are several key factors in play here.

- 1) Your own level of awareness will play the biggest role in what you value in others. People are inclined to retain their existing level of awareness, what they think, how they process data, how they feel, etc. until they encounter an epiphany, or enough pain. This helps explain why so many people continue to receive deficient outcomes. Insufficient awareness begets ineffective thinking, which leads to the types of actions that produce undesired results. It is all rather predictable.
- 2) If a person is inclined to make irrational selections, i.e. attractive personal appearance given too much credence, they are very likely not to change their thoughts, biases and perceptions. It’s more likely that they will hold onto the flawed selection process they are used to, regardless of how deficient it may be. People tend to be creatures of habit.
- 3) Most people lack a well-reasoned, scientifically sound process and deep enough understanding of how to rationally hire people or choose a mate or a friend. A person who habitually applies a deficient selection process will constantly choose people who cannot or will not achieve their desired results.
- 4) Once taught a truly effective, rational process for *finding* and *choosing* brilliant advisors, most people will not fully adopt the new process. They are simply more comfortable with what they are used to, albeit ineffective and wasteful. For example, they might stretch themselves enough to hire a couple of A-level professionals; yet refuse to replace certain B and C-level advisors with whom they are emotionally comfortable or attached.

Adopting the diverse menu approach (mixing A, B and C players) can be emotionally comforting; however, it is very unlikely that it will lead to optimum results.

- 5) Water seeks its own level. In this regard, people are somewhat similar to water, although substantially less fluid and conforming to actual conditions. Those who have grown comfortable with C or B-level team members and their awareness, thinking and behaviors, often find it too uncomfortable to hire and trust A-level people. Additionally, some of the existing C & B players will snipe at the solutions offered by “A players”. If attacking A-level ideas does not “sway” you, they will attack the “A players” on personal levels. If you are awash in a sea of B and C level awareness, thinking and behaviors (personally) or from advisors it will be hard to substitute them for A-level advisors and their awareness, thinking, strategies, tactics, tools and timing. Choosing to inflict B and C limited awareness upon HAWPs is almost certainly a recipe for disaster. Simply stated, the HAWPs (A players) will stop working for you.
- 6) Those people you are used to trusting (if anyone) have much to do with how much help you can accept. Those surrounded by B and C players are used to being “pitched” or sold to. If your awareness begins to transcend that of your advisors, most if not all of the ideas and solutions offered by lower awareness players will strike you as ineffective. It’s only normal for people to develop skepticism when they have learned through experience that most of the common ideas and solutions are more likely to be “presenter-centered” rather than in the clients’ best interest. Skepticism can help save you from “buying” less effective ideas, tactics, tools and the outcomes they produce. But skepticism can also hurt if you allow it to keep you from attaining your greatest desires when it inhibits your ability to discern the HAWPs from the rest of the pack. You will then have to muster the courage to believe in the HAWPs advice and trust their recommended goals, strategies, tactics, tools, timing, capitalization and personnel.
- 7) Most but not all B and C players are threatened by the presence of anyone who could be perceived as smarter than they are or more helpful to you. Defending their relationship (and profit status) with you by sniping at others is an indication of under evolved awareness, thinking and behavior. It is one way for you to discern who has the best ideas and solutions. The greatest advisors or team members tend to be supportive of wise thinking and solutions. This is because HAWPs seem to be constantly striving to learn from others and most of what they encounter around them. At the very least, you can insist that the snipers must provide alternative solutions rather than allowing backbiting.

One of my credos that may help you if you remember to apply it is this: *the greatest solutions are discovered after the best questions have been fully exhausted.* How long it takes to identify then fully consider the best questions

has much to do with how aware you and your advisors are at the start of the process.

Back to my friend Bill who went on to explain, “Perhaps some people choose someone else because I’m too honest with them. I tell them what they really have to do in order to get their company into optimum shape for a sale, merger or recapitalization. The list of things to be done to make the company as attractive and as valuable as possible can be exhausting, expensive and with all that done, there are still no guarantees they will get what they want. My competition downplays all of this. They present a prettier picture, an easier experience, and a lower estimated cost. In contrast, my view seems too time intensive, and expensive. The competition won’t guarantee the desired outcome but they certainly intimate that if they are chosen, success is all but guaranteed. Plus it will be less expensive and easier.”

Most people prefer easier and less expensive. It sounds so appealing.

I pointed out to Bill that all of the successes we shared with clients, involved people (owners and buyers) that were well above average in awareness and business acumen. Aware, experienced people have broader and deeper perspective. They are less likely to fall into the “easier and cheaper” trap. I observed that most of the time, Bill “won the beauty contest” whenever the client was more aware, experienced and capable of making a rational well reasoned choice vs. those owners who were less aware, experienced, rational and reasoned in their approach. I reminded him of one of my credos: You can lead a horse to water but it is hard to make him drink. That being true, it helps to start with a thirsty horse!

A-level players know that it’s more effective to share their time, talents and resources with people who are aware enough to have the capacity to really appreciate them. For A-level players, effectiveness is more important than personal comfort. They know that great results often require one to transcend personal or professional discomfort. In contrast, personal comfort tends to be the preferred feeling of those who are entrenched in or comfortable with B and C level thinking and its outcomes.

Some people are not thirsty enough to accept the input and advice from A-level advisors. If you’re used to choosing B and C level team members or advisors, you will be inclined to hold onto those relationships rather than replace them with A-level players. When faced with the choice of choosing an A-level player to replace an existing management team member or advisor that doesn’t fit your future needs, you will be most inclined to hold onto the existing advisor or replace them with *another* B or C level advisor. This is especially true if some of the existing C or B players are family members or close friends. Sure, it’s irrational, but breaking out of any irrational thought or behavioral process is very difficult for all human beings. Besides, the new A-level player will challenge your past and

current thinking that has actually put you right where you are now. They know that for you to achieve bigger and better outcomes, you will need to adopt some new thinking, action steps and behaviors. A-players know that change is essential and precedes the new and better outcomes that you want. They also know that along with your own past thinking it is likely that your current advisors' thinking and behaviors are partially responsible for holding you where you are. That new and better future is not just a challenge for you; achieving it often requires skills, connections and other resources that some of your existing advisors, management team and family members do NOT possess. It is amazing how much energy people will invest in maintaining the status quo. Especially when they feel that their intellect, integrity, livelihood, belief systems, comfort, lifestyle or hold on you is at risk!

We humans are naturally resistant to change and perhaps especially to improvement. Some people (most) tend to view themselves as smart enough or good enough right where they are. Too few people are humble enough to remain teachable, especially once they have achieved their construct of or societies view of success. Constantly striving for greater awareness, knowledge, wisdom and effectiveness will put you in rare company. Plus, it will alienate you from those who desperately want the status quo to continue forever! If your status quo defenders are a spouse, top manager, trusted advisor or parent, you will have to be extraordinarily strong and courageous if you are to achieve goals they do not share with you. It is people in these positions in your life that are most likely to become the snipers looking to kill your dreams for a more magnificent future. The people in your life that do not share your dreams for the future or view your new future as a threat to their own comfort or goals are your second biggest obstacle. Either through passive aggressive behavior or through assertive interference, they will hedge up your way.

Those who know you the best are most aware of your intellectual and emotional "hot buttons". They will push those buttons in assertive or subtle ways to get you to "self-sabotage". Thus giving up the dream or at least firing, the new A-level players will seem to be your very own idea. They know that if it "feels" like your idea you are far more likely to stick with it. Those who are either unaware of or not adequately committed to supporting you in your quest for a new and better future should not be counted upon to help you. It is delusional to think otherwise!

Choosing the best advisors and team members is a lot harder than finding them. Lacking a solid truly rational process for finding and then actually hiring A-level advisors and management team members is intolerable to those who truly desire majestic and magnificent results. Tolerating C and B-level thinking and behavior from any team member, advisor, family member or especially from yourself is the surest way to impede your progress. Tolerating B and C level awareness, thinking and behavior sustains the status quo and assures less than optimum results, but it is more comfortable emotionally for many people. It is also perceived to be, "less risky", easier and cheaper although it rarely is! Let's not

forget the old saying, “you are where you are comfortable.” The sad truth is this: you are also, where those around you are most comfortable with you. If this were not true, more people in your life would be challenging, supporting and guiding you towards becoming more powerful and majestic than you are right now. Their degree of inaction with you and or lack of guidance towards this journey, speaks volumes about their own awareness and capability to get themselves on the path towards a more majestic life, business or relationship. It has been my experience that HAWPs tend to be not only self aware, but also “others” aware. They seem to thrive and find great joy and fulfillment in helping others accept the path towards a more majestic life. See what your own findings are. I suspect that as you increase your awareness and your association with HAWPs, the people and other resources you need will begin to show up in your life.

Back to Bill, there are some things Bill could do to improve his chances in “the beauty contest” for new clients, I suggested that he write a book that helps business owners and management teams gain greater knowledge of the details, expenses and time associated with making their business more saleable, transferable or investment worthy. That would probably be the most effective thing to do, as it would educate potential clients and improve their discernment. Bill’s attention to detail, his comprehensive understanding, wisdom and value would be clearly articulated and stand in contrast to those less capable “pretty people” with their hollow promises of “easier and cheaper”. It would “exercise the horses so they would be “thirstier” for his help, plus it would improve their discernment and ability to use more “reason” in their selection process. When I suggested this to him, he acknowledged it was a great idea. Then he said, “Once I graduated from law school, I vowed that I would never again write a paper or thesis, so there’s no way I’d ever write a book.”

Albert Einstein suggested this: “One definition of insanity is to continue doing the same thing while expecting a different result.” Without the book or at least a thesis, Bill is destined to bang his head against the same wall repeatedly. Who knows, perhaps if he bangs his head against that wall enough times, it may kill off the hair follicles in his ears. Perhaps, then he will win a few more of those “beauty contests”.



Bruce R. Wright is the inventor of Macro Strategic Planning™ also known as the *Universal Success Formula*. He is an internationally respected mentor, entrepreneur, author and teacher. Through his book, *The Wright Exit Strategy; Wealth: How to Create it, Keep it and Use it*, his



speeches and private mentoring, Bruce has empowered thousands of people to take control of and optimize their lives and businesses. Bruce is best known for “getting in the trenches” with his clients, implementing key strategies and action steps that produce tangible results. Helping people achieve greater success, fulfillment and peace of mind are some of Bruce’s greatest passions. If you wish to learn more about how to achieve your ideal life, perfect calendar and greater personal freedom, please visit his website:

[www.balancedsuccessinternational.com](http://www.balancedsuccessinternational.com)

There you will find free articles, and a workbook entitled *Macro Strategic Planning™ Your Life and Business* you can download as well as details about upcoming speaking events or workshops you can attend. His next book, *An Elephant’s Guide to Majestic Living* is scheduled for release in late 2009.