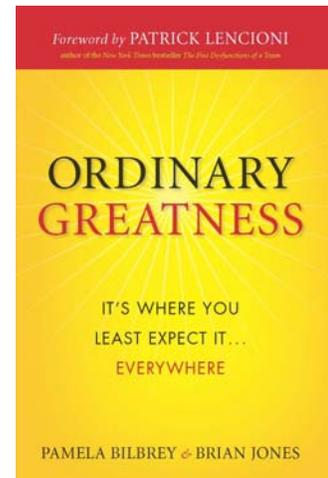


For Immediate Release

For a review copy of the book or an interview with one of the authors, please contact Dottie DeHart, DeHart & Company Public Relations, at (828) 325-4966 or DSDeHart@aol.com.



**The Great Recession Rescue Plan: Why Your Employees’
“Ordinary Greatness” Can Save Your Company (and How to Put It to Work)**

The men and women who work with you already possess the skills, the knowledge, and the insights to pull your company out of its slump. Pam Bilbrey and Brian Jones, coauthors of Ordinary Greatness, offer some strategies for bringing them out of hiding.

Hoboken, NJ (July 2009)—Well, the recession has settled in for the long haul, and if your company is like most, you’re definitely feeling it. Revenues are down. Customer demands are up. Employees seem frozen in place with anxiety. And their fearless leader (that would be you) is not living up to the title. More than you care to admit, you find yourself wishing that some business superhero would sweep in and rescue you from the recession. But rather than seeking outside help, you might try looking a bit closer to home, say Pam Bilbrey and Brian Jones. Greatness doesn’t always come with a (symbolic) flowing cape and superpowers—sometimes, it’s dressed in a polo shirt and well-worn khakis and working quietly in a cubicle.

“Everything you need to be successful already exists in your workforce,” notes Bilbrey, coauthor along with Jones of *Ordinary Greatness: It’s Where You Least Expect It...Everywhere* (Wiley, July 2009, ISBN: 978-0-470-46172-3, \$24.95). “You’re just not using it. Organizations like to say, ‘People are our most valuable asset,’ but they simply do not capitalize on their human resource asset. Very few leaders fully leverage the knowledge, ideas, and talents of their people to drive business results. If they started doing so, they could rescue themselves from the recession.”

Your employees are a storehouse of passion, energy, skills, and commitment just waiting to be tapped, say the authors. By recognizing and reinforcing their “ordinary greatness,” you help them bring their unrealized potential to the surface. Not only will this benefit your company right away, it will generate more of the same.

“Organizations that are able to access and harness the ordinary greatness of their people align *themselves* for greatness—even in challenging economic times,” adds Jones.

Here are a few strategies that will help yours achieve its own brand of ordinary greatness:

- **Make sure employees are absolutely clear on where your organization is headed.**

Remember the Cheshire Cat from *Alice in Wonderland*? His words of wisdom seem prophetic: “If you don’t know where you are going, any road will get you there.” In times when we are re-evaluating and redefining everything we know as “normal,” the importance of a clear vision and a clear direction for the future is ever more important. If leaders are fuzzy on the details (which is a common problem), it’s time to buckle down and get focused. Then, make certain to communicate your plan to the entire company.

“Don’t force your employees to guess where the organization is headed and what they should be focused on right now,” says Bilbrey. “They will guess wrong. The fear, anxiety, and frustrations the workforce are experiencing will not disappear entirely, but a sense of comfort and trust will develop when leadership provides clarity around the strategies and actions needed to move past existing challenges and take advantage of opportunities. It’s the road map that will point to where you are going.”

- **Inspire ownership by involving employees in major decisions.** Are your employees renters or owners? If they’re the former, they treat the company much like they might a hotel bathroom (they leave wet towels piled on the floor) or a rental car (they turn it in with a bug-splattered windshield). If they’re the latter, they actively look out for the company’s best interests and its bottom line. Leaders inspire ownership by involving employees at all levels in resolving problems and pinpointing opportunities.

“We all make decisions about how much we are willing to commit to an organization,” says Jones. “The most successful companies are the ones that have figured out that employee ownership is the magic ingredient that can propel an organization to success. That’s especially true in the middle of a recession, when your very survival likely depends on engaging staff and getting their best ideas on the table.”

- **Don’t hide the (scary) truth.** Transparency is a hallmark of good leadership. This is even truer in times of uncertainty. Ironically, that’s when leaders display a natural tendency to “hunker down” and communicate only the positive aspects of the situation with employees. Sure, you’re trying to protect your workforce—but what you’re really doing is undermining their trust. Employees know, or at least suspect, the company is facing serious issues, and without accurate information from you, they will “fill in the gaps” themselves. Assumptions and rumors will run rampant.

“Leaders must break through the rhetoric and tell it like it is,” asserts Bilbrey. “Communicate with employees in a way that is timely, understandable, meaningful, and inspirational. Open, frequent communication will generate the commitment and energy needed to rally the organization with a sense of ownership that says, ‘We can do this.’”

• **Identify faulty systems and processes.** Finger-pointing can be a hallmark of stressful times. Leaders may be tempted to suggest that employees are at fault for lackluster results, missed deadlines, and low morale. While this may be true in some instances, Jones says leaders must never rush to judgment. Instead, they should examine the systems and processes that dictate how work gets done. Frankly, they may be the culprits who are holding employees back.

“Many companies have existed for years with broken systems or misaligned processes or both,” Jones says. “But, perhaps, back when customers were beating down the door and money was flowing, they were able to succeed in spite of these shortcomings. Now, of course, it’s a whole different ballgame. Work to solve these structural problems and you’ll find that your employees’ ordinary greatness can finally shine through.”

• **Make sure leaders are well trained in creating desirable workplaces.** Ordinary greatness thrives in companies with strong leadership. In fact, a recent survey of federal workplaces found that the quality of an organization’s senior leadership is *the* important element in building a great place to work—coming in even above pay and benefits. (See <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/19/AR2009051903621.html> for more information.)

“The *Washington Post* article that reported the study mentioned that employees value bosses who communicate well and provide workers with sufficient training and opportunities,” notes Bilbrey. “So perhaps the most important thing you can do to make sure you get a positive return on your ‘human investment’ is making sure all leaders are thoroughly trained in these precepts and tools.”

Ultimately, say the authors, committing to these strategies will go a long way in reducing the elevated absenteeism, lack of focus, conflict among coworkers, and general feeling of apathy that are often present in challenging times.

“Don’t just pay lip service to the idea, but actually prove that your people are your ‘most valuable asset’ by recognizing, promoting, and cultivating the ordinary greatness that is right before your eyes,” Jones urges. “You will be shocked by the difference it makes. If you’re seeking rescue from the recession, the men and women who come to work every day are your last, best hope.”

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About the Authors:

Pamela Bilbrey helps organizations maximize their current strengths and bring out their ordinary greatness to achieve extraordinary results. A sought-after consultant, coach, and international speaker, she has authored three books and over fifty articles on employee engagement, leadership and team development, and organizational change.

Brian Jones has been described by his clients as “a breath of fresh air” and “the most effective consultant we’ve ever hired.” He travels the country helping teams and organizations achieve real results with ordinary yet great tools and advice. He is the author of several articles on leadership development and employee engagement.

For more information, please visit www.ordinarygreatnessbook.com.

About the Book:

Ordinary Greatness: It's Where You Least Expect It...Everywhere (Wiley, July 2009, ISBN: 978-0-470-46172-3, \$24.95) is available at bookstores nationwide, major online booksellers, or directly from the publisher by calling 800-225-5945. In Canada, call 800-567-4797.

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