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CEO Coaches Try to Make Honchos Human

By STEPHEN CHAPEK

Santa Barbara business consultant Kate Ludeman, and her business partner-husband, Dr. Eddie Erlandson, both strongly believe that integrity and accountability are essential ingredients in creating effective business leaders. Even without considering the recent climate of corporate scandals, demand for their corporate coaching service, embodied by their firm, Carpinteria-based Worth Ethic Corporation, has been strong.

Last week the management team of Caw Networks, from Silicon Valley, flew to Santa Barbara to meet with Dr. Ludeman and Dr. Erlandson to discuss strategies on integrating executive personnel in an acquisition. Caw is being acquired by Spirent Communications, a network technology firm based in Camarillo.

Dr. Ludeman, formerly a vice president of human resources at a Silicon Valley firm, started her corporate coaching and consulting business in 1989. She has a Ph.D. in psychology and is the author of several management books, including the "The Corporate Mystic."

She has coached a variety of executives, at an impressive roster of Fortune 500 companies, including Motorola, AT&T, Adecco and GE. In particular, Dr. Ludeman has worked closely over the past seven years with Michael Dell, CEO, and some of his top executives at Dell.

Reflecting on her motivation to coach, Dr. Ludeman said, "I realized that if I worked with people at the top, I'd have a big ripple effect, because when decisions are made at a management level, it can affect thousands of people."

Another recent client, the Defense Logistics Agency, supplies the armed forces to help them carry out their combat missions. DLA hired Worth Ethic to help its management team become a more responsive, proactive force to cope with the changed national security

landscape since the events of Sept. 11.

Dr. Ludeman and Dr. Erlandson, who joined the firm after marrying Dr. Ludeman, concentrate on helping corporate chieftains become better leaders. Often the companies they consult with are experiencing communication problems, even interpersonal conflicts within their management team.

In times of transition, whether it involves a corporate acquisition or implementing a new company-wide software system, these management misunderstandings can become real business liabilities, according to



Dr. Ludeman. Worth Ethic begins the consulting process with a 360 assessment, which involves indepth interviews with 20 or 30 people who work closely with the executive being coached. "This allows us to give the executive accurate but confidential feedback about the effectiveness of his or her style and areas that most need to be changed," she said.

Early in her consulting career, Dr. Ludeman recalled joking to a colleague that what she did for a living was to "humanize the jerks of the world."

Although what passed for acceptable management behavior (screaming and yelling) has softened consid-

