



the Igniter

By Todd Nordstrom

A New Tune for Team-Building with **Robert Van Arlen**

It's more than a buzz. It's a rumble, a rhythm, a melody, and a harmony. It's an orchestra sweeping the corporate landscape. It's a man. It's a vision. And, if all of this has yet to capture your intrigue, then take a step back and get ready to be consumed with wonder—because it's all accompanied by Boomwhackers®.

A boom-what? Go ahead—make your colleagues think you've lost your mind. Say this really loudly, "Boomwhackers!" ...not ready to have a conversation with a magazine article yet? No worries. Keep reading. But, by the end of this article, don't be surprised if you burst into song.

"Interaction is critical if you want to create organizational synergy," says Robert Van Arlen, renowned Keynote Speaker, Corporate Trainer, and Leadership Alignment Consultant. "Most people want to interact with their teams, their

colleagues, their leadership, or their staff, but are blocked by language barriers. I'm not talking about Spanish versus English. I'm talking about the fact that many teams and organizations never get into sync—to create an orchestra."

Recruiters, Hiring Managers, and HR Professionals, if you haven't heard of Robert Van Arlen yet then you might be missing the beat when it comes to building your team. Almost like folklore, Van Arlen's message has been passed around the world—music is the universal language, and the discovery of music can create synergy within any organization.

So, who is Van Arlen? What are Boomwhackers? And, what in the world does all this have to do with recruitment?

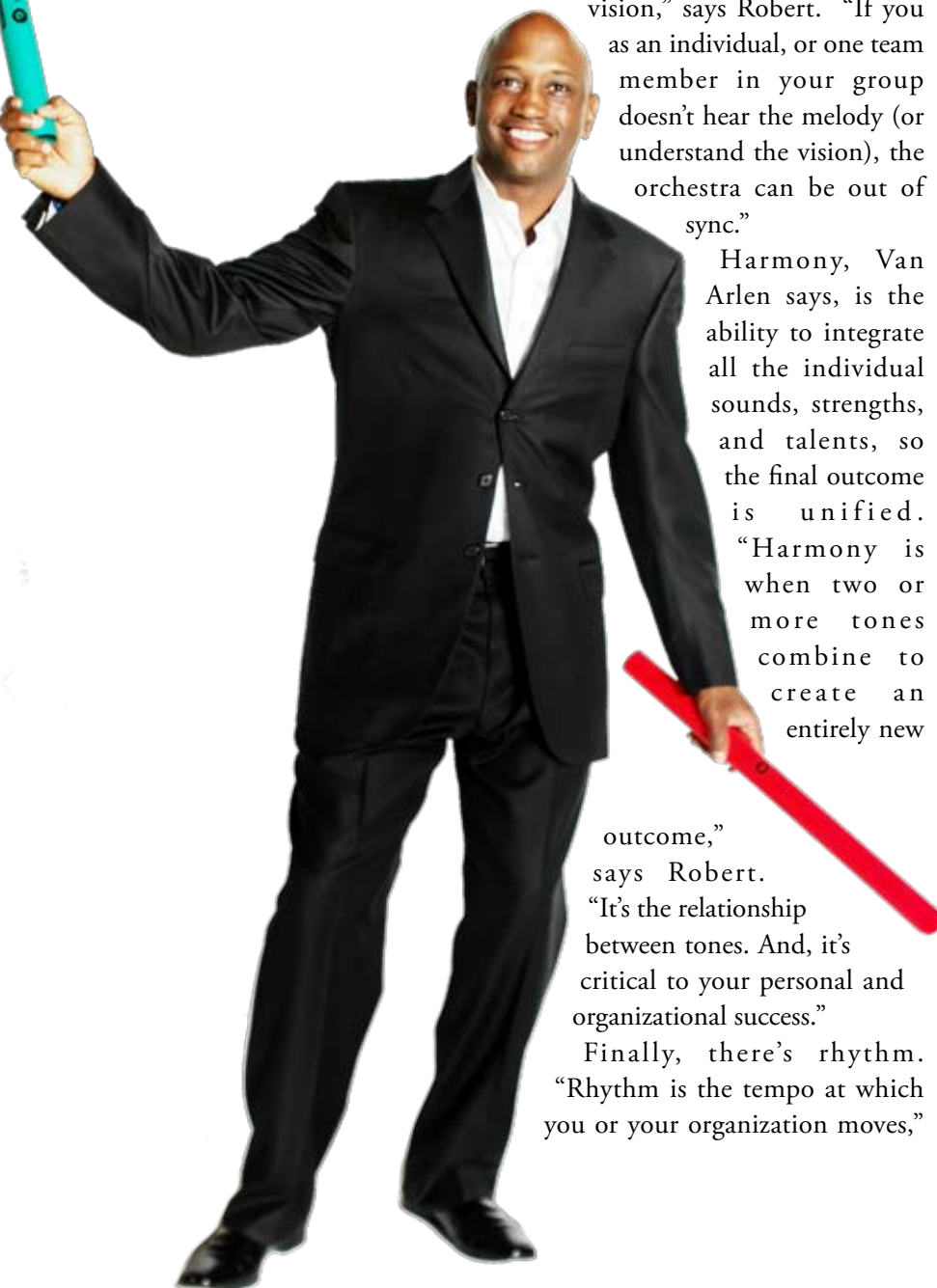
"Years ago I was leading sales teams for a company in Canada," says Van Arlen. "One day I was asked to make a presentation—with

the purpose of creating synergy. I had always held a passion for music. However, I had no idea that when I incorporated music into my presentation that day, I would create a response that I had never imagined—and unveil a tool for alignment that has many companies singing a new tune."

What does Van Arlen do when he enters a company?

"My keynotes and training sessions are extremely participatory," he says. "Yes, Boomwhackers are musical instruments. They're hollow tubes. Different lengths of the instrument create different sounds—and everyone in my audience learns to play one. But, as much as you might be thinking that the purpose is simply to make noise, the objective of my presentations is to teach individuals, teams, and entire organizations how to align themselves, their strengths, and their skill sets to reach goals."

“ Synergy can only be accomplished when people listen to their own internal music, and that of their team members. ”



Okay, so how does all this relate to recruiting?

“If you’re looking to bring people into an existing group, you need to figure out if they can ‘play in your band’ so to speak,” says Robert. “And, just like any piece of music, all people, teams and organizations share attributes of music—melody, harmony and rhythm.”

Van Arlen says that melody is the central or unifying theme—the thread, purpose, and anchoring force for bringing all the elements together. “For an organization or an individual, melody is the vision,” says Robert. “If you as an individual, or one team member in your group doesn’t hear the melody (or understand the vision), the orchestra can be out of sync.”

Harmony, Van Arlen says, is the ability to integrate all the individual sounds, strengths, and talents, so the final outcome is unified. “Harmony is when two or more tones combine to create an entirely new

outcome,”

says Robert.

“It’s the relationship between tones. And, it’s critical to your personal and organizational success.”

Finally, there’s rhythm. “Rhythm is the tempo at which you or your organization moves,”

says Robert. “It basically is a definition of your pace. It may be the easiest to synchronize within your organization, yet, it also may be the easiest to lose at various points of your personal or organizational growth.”

So far, Van Arlen’s points are easy to understand. Life and business, in correlation to music, makes perfect sense. But, is it easy to accomplish?

Not to sound self-promoting, but that’s where I come into the picture,” says Robert. “Every time I get the opportunity to enter into someone else’s world, magic happens—and it’s not because I think I’m so wonderful. The beautiful thing about showing companies just how aligned they can become is that everyone in the room shares a powerful moment of synergy—an instant where they understand their role is part of a larger purpose and a greater force.”

Wait a second. Can all people be “musically” trained to get in sync and align with their organization’s melody, harmony and rhythm?

“This is where recruitment is critical,” says Robert. “Synergy can only be accomplished when people listen to their own internal music, and that of their team members.”

Van Arlen places people into three distinct categories. And, he says, these three categories are not only important to recognize during the recruitment process but they’re also important to recognize in our personal lives—the people we align ourselves with.

1. Draggers: “Draggers are people who deplete our energy. Draggers are negative forces. They’re self-serving. They’re great at keeping

score and placing blame—and especially keeping score of mistakes and shortcomings. Draggers will only offer help when they see a clear benefit to themselves. A tell-tale sign of dragger is negative gossip. Draggers struggle to keep his or her thoughts and comments positive, and actually find comfort in passing their negativity on to someone else.

How to spot a dragger in an interview: “Ask questions about personal goals,” says Robert. “Draggers will rarely have personal goals but will most likely be able to share plenty of information about negative past experiences.”

2. Supporters: “Supporters are people that encourage others to strive onward,” says Robert. “Supporters typically have your best interest at heart and will help you when asked. Supporters will support someone or something (a cause or an organization) because it’s the right thing to do. They may thoroughly understand your vision and will do everything in their power to help you reach it. Supporters support—and they’re fantastic people to have in your organization.

How to spot a Supporter in an interview: “Again, ask questions about personal goals. In an organizational setting, Supporters may respond with questions about the future with vague, “whatever it takes to help you” answers.

3. Igniters: “These are the people that ignite your soul,” says Robert. “Igniters are motivators, idealists and magnets. They are prolific and full of ideas from one moment to the next. They not only will



support your organizational vision but they’ll strive to go above and beyond—for themselves and their teams. Igniters understand that they have the power to choose their behavior and their attitudes. They are positive energy forces, capable of turning negative situations into winning outcomes. These people are the “must hires.”

How to spot an Igniter in an interview: “When you ask about an Igniter’s goals, you’ll get specific answers,” says Robert. “Igniters know exactly what they want out of life. If you ask about their professional networks, Igniters may respond by mentioning accomplishments of others and names of people they admire.”

Van Arlen paused. For a guy that had held an aggressive tempo throughout this entire interview, the immediate silence was almost haunting—it created an anticipation that was unsettling. And, just like we were standing front and center at concert, we knew the “big note” was about to launch us into another dimension. Quick, grab your Boomwhacker—this was about to become highly participatory!

“The fundamental drivers of creating synergy are people and knowledge,” said Robert.

“Recruitment is the process of finding people who not only can ‘play in your orchestra’ but will also lift your song to the next level. If you want to really find out what kind of person sits in front of you during an interview, ask them questions about the steps they take to improve themselves. What are the last three books you’ve read? What organizations do you belong to? What are your goals for the next five years and what are you doing to achieve those goals? If you get a candidate who can tell you about recent knowledge they’ve acquired, people they’ve recently met who have inspired them, or even a recent personal achievement—like becoming physically fit—dig deeper. You just may have an Igniter in your presence. And, I don’t think any organization can suffer from having too many Igniters playing in their orchestra.” ♦



About **Robert Van Arlen**
Today, Robert Van Arlen will ignite a leader, a team and an organization. The only question is will it be yours?

International Speaker, Emcee and Author, Robert Van Arlen is an expert in transforming organizational culture through a process called “Focused Synergy.” Born in Honolulu, Hawaii, the former Fortune 500 executive built his reputation during a 15-year career of changing the culture of his teams from “winners” to winners. Robert gained international experience as the leader of the Canadian sales, service and technical support divisions of CCH Limited and its French counterpart CCH FM. Through Focused Synergy, he challenges his audiences to think, react and achieve the results they desire. Leaders gain techniques to inspire growth, individuals learn to practice excellence, and teams will improve alignment.

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