



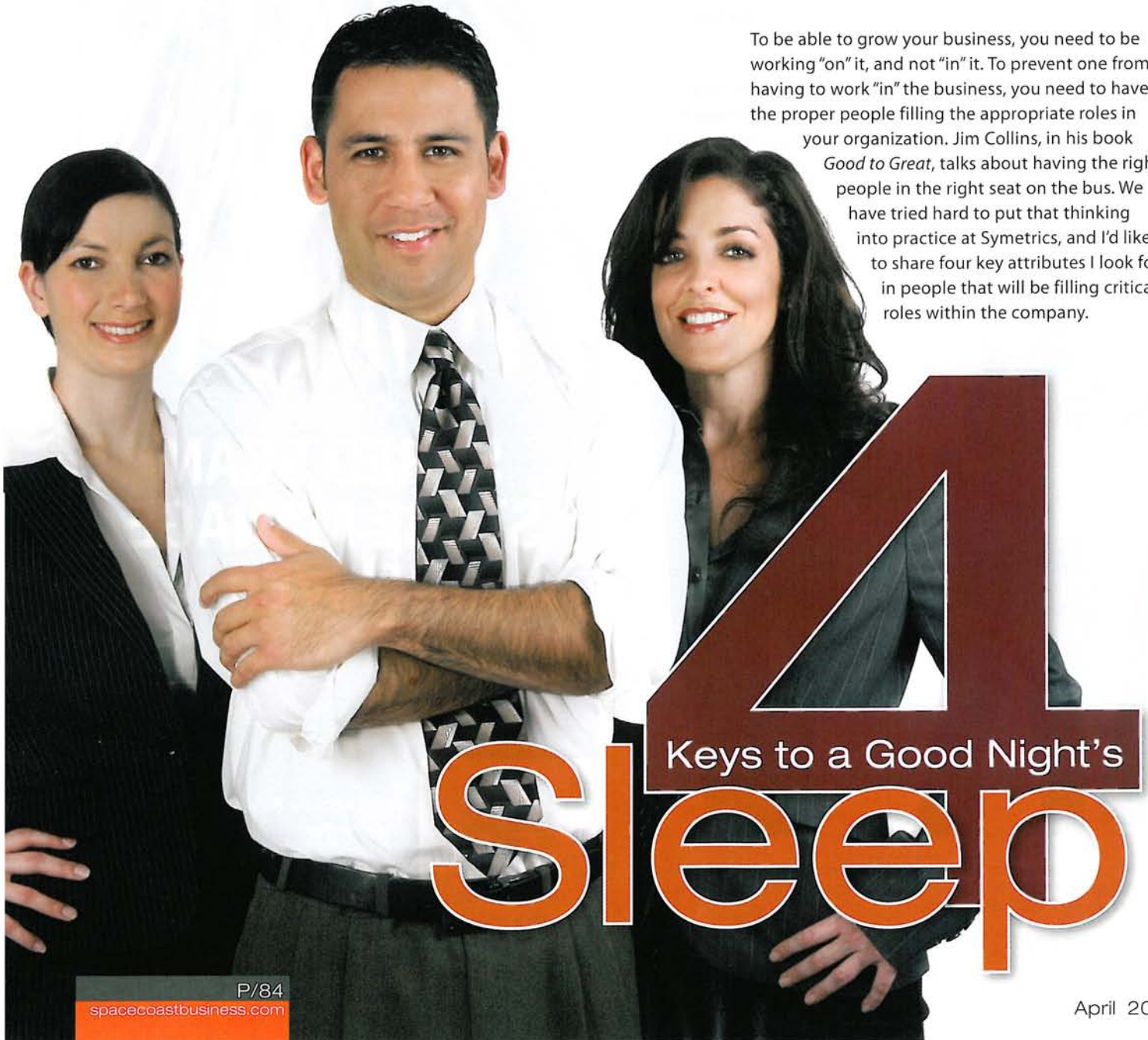
MITCH GARNER

Does your Staff Keep You Up at Night?

Factors in Building the Right Team

"Up," as in wide awake? Or do they allow you to sleep soundly? If your answer is the former, then my advice to you would be to surround yourself with a staff you can rely upon. I believe one of the best things I have done in my eight-year tenure leading Symetrics is to build a cohesive management staff that is reliable and dependable. The wrong people can really sidetrack one's thinking and energies on a day-to-day basis. Conversely, the right people can make your job so much easier.

To be able to grow your business, you need to be working "on" it, and not "in" it. To prevent one from having to work "in" the business, you need to have the proper people filling the appropriate roles in your organization. Jim Collins, in his book *Good to Great*, talks about having the right people in the right seat on the bus. We have tried hard to put that thinking into practice at Symetrics, and I'd like to share four key attributes I look for in people that will be filling critical roles within the company.



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Keys to a Good Night's

Sleep

Like-mindedness: I want my senior staff to think like I do. Does that mean I want a bunch of “yes-men”? Absolutely not. I definitely want the outside-the-box thinking and I want to hear the creative ideas. I want the internal debate as we wrestle with the big picture. This idea has more to do with how they respond to day-to-day issues, and the way they relate to people. Are they encouraging their subordinates? Are they earning respect throughout the company by the way they behave and handle themselves? We have tried hard to establish a family-type atmosphere at Symetrics, and this has been a huge factor. I want people with similar mindsets, similar goals, and similar approaches to relational issues that I have.

Loyalty: Your staff must be loyal to you first and the company second. As soon as an upper-level executive starts thinking that their loyalties lay first with the company and not with their boss, negative things can start to happen. That person can begin to think that they have a better idea of what’s best for the company than you do. That person can start working against what you are trying to accomplish without you even knowing it. As the leader, you will always have a larger field of view than your subordinates, even at the higher levels of the organization. You will comprehend with greater detail the other angles and business issues and nuances that they could not possibly fathom. That is why their loyalties must lie with you first.

Integrity: Personal integrity is an absolute must. Lying, cheating and stealing should have no place in your culture, let alone your business. Notice that I said “should have.” We all know that it exists, but that is to our shame as a society and a nation. If someone cheats a little bit on their tax return, what’s to prevent them from cheating on an expense report? If someone has deceived or been unfaithful to their spouse, why wouldn’t they be deceptive towards a business associate or a boss? Your customers and employees are often excellent judges of character. If a key staff member has a serious issue with their character, it can reflect on you and your company, and you will ultimately be held responsible.

Subject Matter Expertise (SME): This is the primary reason that Symetrics’ business has grown over the past few years. I have placed persons with the best overall technical knowledge in charge of developing new business in their particular business areas. As I travel with these people and see their skills in front of a group of customers, it becomes very apparent why this is so important. Having the right person on the front lines – in front of the skeptical audience, in front of the potential customer, in front of the next big contract opportunity – makes all the difference in the world.

These four attributes may not be the most important ones for you. I would bet, however, that at least one of them is. Evaluate your staff against these criteria. If your key people stack up favorably, then you are probably getting a good night’s sleep!

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