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**Sharon Hoyle Weber**

## About Sharon:

Sharon Hoyle Weber began her career as a modern dancer and choreographer. Seeing how little money followed when she was doing what she loved, she started working with Forum Corporation, a training and management firm. She was initially a project manager, but soon became certified as a corporate training facilitator.



For fourteen years, she has been traveling around the country teaching skills that help people work most effectively together. Through her relationship with Forum and Results by Design, she has worked for many Fortune 1500 companies such as Deloitte, Liberty Mutual, Bank of America, and Hasbro Toys. Her experience with such a variety of organizations has taught her that the real self is at risk in the workplace.

She describes her own experience as if “my real self was dripping out of me every day.” Once her colleague described it as the “Boiled Frog Syndrome,” she could immediately relate to feeling boiled.

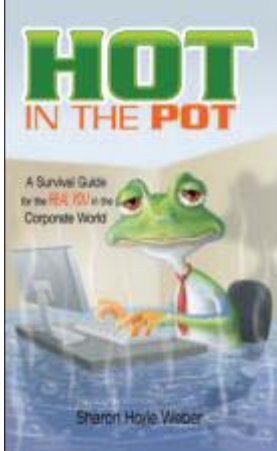
After meeting thousands of employees and interviewing thirty Thrivers, people who make a good living and maintain a sense of authenticity at work, she discovered the Twelve Secrets of Thrivers that contribute to reviving and sustaining the real self in the workplace.

Ms. Weber lives in Cohasset, Massachusetts with her husband, Steve.

## Hot in the Pot

### A Survival Guide for the Real You in the Corporate World

#### Summary



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**Hot in the Pot** is a quick read that is a wake-up call to the corporate workforce whose real selves are boiling one degree at a time to make a living.

The book is based on the boiled frog analogy that has worked its way into our lexicon (Al Gore used it in *Inconvenient Truth*.) If you have not heard the story, it goes like this: Not that you would, but if you did want to boil a frog and tried putting it in a boiling pot of water, you couldn't do it. The frog will sense the danger and squirm out of your hands before its little feet even touch the surface of the water. But, if you take that same frog and put it into a pot of tepid water, it will happily swim about. By turning up the heat, one degree at a time, the water will eventually boil, and, sadly, so will the frog. Why, because as the water temperature increases, the frog adapts to each change. Gradually, the frog boils because it simply never recognizes the point of danger and adapts to the environment that is killing it.

Now, of course, we don't want to go around boiling frogs, but aren't our real selves suffering a similar fate? We start a new job swimming about happily only to gradually adapt to policies, procedures, and pressures ending up faded, demoralized versions of who we really are. **Hot in the Pot** wakes us up to what we are adapting to, and inspires us to take charge.

Ms. Weber opens the book with her experience of realizing she was becoming . . . a Corporate Boiled Frog, and then shares shocking and funny stories of others who are "hot in the pot." You will be inspired by how people have found a way to work, enjoy their jobs, make relationships, grow as people and professionals, and build a nice nest egg along the way. . . Thrivers. How are they doing it? Thrivers share their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and a few mischievous tricks that help them keep cool.

Take your "temperature" with a tongue-in-cheek [self assessment](#). Your score will tell you how "boiled" you are and give you a diagnosis of what is causing the heat. Drop a few "Ice Cubes" (tips to cool off) into your work experience and feel your real self coming back to life. Even your family and friends will be glad to see the real you again!

Step on the "Life Scale" to determine how off balance you are and where you can start bringing real enthusiasm back into your life. Finally, for those hot and sticky situations with co-workers that really get us hot under the collar, ADVANS is a way to cool tensions, stop fighting each other and, together, focus on the problem. What is exciting is that there are ways to restore your real self at work, no matter what your job situation is.

**Hot in the Pot** is a book for anyone who trudges to and from work every day unconscious of how they are losing their sense of enthusiasm, purpose, and enjoyment. They are finding themselves caring more about budgets and schedules than people and it is making them sick. If they don't wake up to it, some day they will look back on years of their lives asking, "How did I let this happen?"

## Introduction

Everything was exciting about the first day at my new job: riding the commuter boat, feeling important as I swiped my badge through security, and seeing the big "Welcome, Sharon!" sign on my cubicle signed by all my new colleagues. I arrived like a kid on the first day of school playing office, setting up my desk, getting acquainted with the computer system, scheduling all my on-boarding meetings. My job was to act as liaison between the contract employees and the firm. This had gone neglected for a while and, having been a contract employee myself, I was full of great ideas.

As the weeks passed, I began to sense something was off. It wasn't anything in particular, just walking by cubicles the size of horse stalls, the mind-numbing office chit-chat, and the endless "occasion" parties. I began feeling deflated, my spirit hissing out of me.

The physical space didn't help. The floor was a maze of beige cubicles and corporate "art." One day bleeding into the next with a stream of meetings, meetings to debrief meetings, meetings to decide on more meetings...so much talking, so little to show for it.

Judging from the looks of some of my colleagues, cubicle life accelerates the aging process. One woman I had worked with a few years earlier looked twice her age! She had gained weight and could use a hair and wardrobe update. Those who had left and were on their own looked ten years younger, and had that twinkle in their eye and humor in their voice

And, what's with how people talk? "Let's set up a window of time to strategize a consistent and predictable response to the depletion of available and interested resources in the next quarter." Huh? Oh, we need people to do the job. Gotcha.

Everyone was so serious, no laughter, no energy, no enthusiasm.

It was really starting to affect me. The best part of me was leaking out little by little each day. I was tired and withdrawn. I can be fun at a party, but nobody at work would ever know it. A general malaise of emptiness and aimlessness hung over the office. I couldn't figure out what was sucking the life out of us. It was as if we were checking our souls at the revolving door.

I befriended a colleague who felt it, too. We would meet in those hidden corners where we couldn't be overheard and whisper about what was going on. She described it as the "boiled frog syndrome." I asked, "What's that?" She said, "If you want to boil a frog, not that anyone would, but if you did, and you tried to put it in a pot of boiling water, the frog would sense the danger and wiggle and squirm out of your hands. But, if you put the frog into a pot of tepid water, it would swim happily. If you increased the temperature one degree at a time, the frog would adjust

one degree at a time, never recognizing the point of danger. Sadly, it would boil to death." That was me! I was that frog adapting to something that was sucking the me out of me. I was turning into a ... (doom music here) ... Corporate Boiled Frog.

During the change management movement in the early 1990s, the boiled frog analogy was used as a strategic tool, pointing out that companies could change anything as long as it was done gradually: demotions, reorganizations, policy changes, compensation depletions—all very sinister. But for me, it is a wake-up, shake-up call to my colleagues and me that we are living a diluted existence during our many hours at work and because it is happening so gradually, we aren't fully aware of it.

What exactly is a Boiled Frog at work? It is someone who hauls his or her self off to work every day, gradually becoming a mere shell of his or her REAL self, and has no clue it is happening. BF's are adapting one degree at a time, one concession, one compromise, one sacrifice, one pressure and one choice at a time. They are getting less and less satisfaction out of their work and feeling more and more trapped by the income, vestments, and benefits, thus, caught in "the pot."

Sometimes BFs get so consumed by the stresses and demands of their jobs that they gradually stop taking care of themselves; getting exercise, a haircut, picking up something to freshen up their wardrobe. The workweek drains so much out of them, they begin to feel indifferent to loved ones. They don't have the energy to make time to have fun or do the things they once enjoyed. With the pressures of living expenses, there doesn't seem to be any relief in sight.

I got thinking about all the millions of us who work in the corporate world; mothers, brothers, aunts, husbands, neighbors. There is a collective spirit being diminished day in and day out. Imagine the impact on our families, communities! How different it would be if all the BF's felt alive, free and energized no matter what job they have. I began looking for people in the corporate world who aren't getting boiled, but are thriving. *Thrivers*: people who make a good living, are learning and growing in their jobs, enjoy genuine relationships, look fresh and are healthy, have a sense of humor, and keep it all in perspective.

The first person I asked was a friend of mine who has been consulting in *Fortune* 1,500 companies for 30 years and has written a few business books. I asked if he knew anyone who fit my description. He responded, "No one comes to mind." Oh, great, do they even exist?

Well, eventually Thrivers did surface, and they knew other people and soon I was interviewing Thrivers from various age groups, industries, roles, and incomes. The good news is that there are specific ways to thrive without getting boiled.

I'd like to share what I have learned after formally interviewing thirty Thrivers and talking with hundreds of corporate employees about how the REAL SELF thrives in the heat of the corporate pot!



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## Talking Points

It's **not** your fate to be miserable at your job. Sharon Hoyle Weber is an expert on making every ordinary day meaningful.

- Do you work with a jerk? Sharon Weber gives practical, stealth tips for not only disarming your office foe, but even (seriously!) learning to appreciate her.
- Is spending time with family and friends and doing things you enjoy a vague memory? Sharon shares secrets about how to be the captain of your Life Boat and bring balance back to your life.
- Are you feeling drowsy? Lazy? Complacent? Check yourself...you're probably getting boiled alive! Sharon shows how to recognize when you're becoming a boiled frog, and more importantly, helps you adjust the temperature before your real self is cooked.
- You think you've got it bad! Sharon heard some stories from workplaces that will shock you, surprise you, and make you laugh...she'll share these with you and help you learn from others' mistakes.

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