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## A flip in perspective

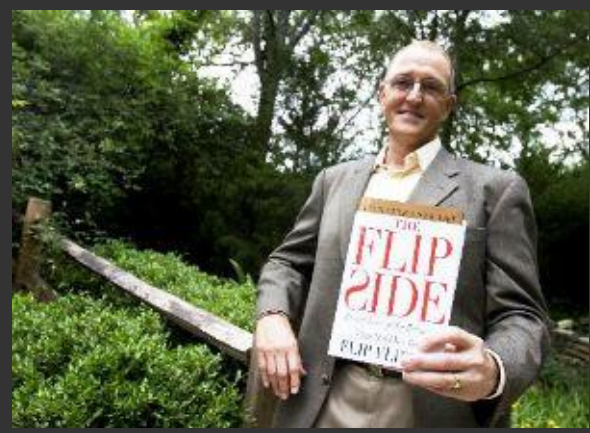
Professional counseling guru: Relationships, not money, key to success

By JANET PHELPS  
Eagle Staff Writer

For Flip Flippen, work isn't about money, he said. That's an interesting statement coming from the owner of a company voted by Texas Business Partners in Texas Monthly in 2007 as the second-best company to work for in the state, as well as the author of a best-selling book, *The Flip Side*.

"That's a great advantage I have in business," Flippen said. "I don't care about money."

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Flip Flippen, who owns The Flippen Group, will be in College Station on Thursday to sign copies of his book, *The Flip Side*.

The *Flip Side*, released May 2, has made the top 150 books list from USA Today and will be ranked No. 10 on the New York Times best-seller book list May 20, officials said.

Flippen said he has built his corporate counseling company, The Flippen Group, his Teen Leadership program and numerous other businesses and nonprofits on a principle he calls

"contextual performance," which, to him, means improving performance in the context of relationships.

"All of us do better in relationships," he said. "We perform for people we love."

In the hallway of his office building, a restored historic barn in College Station, are framed pictures of many of The Flippen Group's 72 employees when they were young.

Flippen smiles as he points to a joyous girl in a swimsuit, a baby picture and a posed school portrait.

"This man is a genius," he said, picking up a framed picture of a smiling boy in a plaid shirt who now works for Flippen's company.

It's this approach to business that has made his company stand out among the other educational and corporate counseling agencies.

"My goal is my team's success," he said.

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The Flip Side outlines Flippen's theory of personal constraints, examines the behavioral weaknesses that impact performance and describes how to overcome these problems, he said.

"It's not your gifts and talents that ultimately determine your success," he said. "It's the impact of your personal constraints."

Flippen's idea is different from the leading trends in business psychology, which is to "play to your strengths," he said. Instead, he aims to accelerate performance by confronting the weaknesses that hinder performance, he said.

"You cannot rise above the constraints you can't or won't address," he said.

In the first few weeks since his first book was released, Flippen has been touring nationally promoting the book, an experience he described as fun.

"It's humbling to have someone say, 'I want to read your book, I want to know your ideas,'" he said.

So, what about Flippen's own personal constraints?

"Not listening well and being too creative," he said, explaining that his creativity has often led to his employees feeling pressure to do impossible tasks.

He formed The Flippen Group in 1990. The firm offers counseling and training series to companies and schools to improve their performance, according to its Web site. The Flippen Group - which has offices in five states including Texas, as well as Australia and France - has three main focuses: education, corporate and executive development and sports, Flippen said.

He declined to disclose his company's revenue or value.

In business, Flippen said, "leadership determines the culture."

"The Flippen Group is a transformation company," the Web site states. "We create champions - organizations that grow and succeed, and individuals who achieve their full potential. We accelerate performance by helping organizations recognize and eliminate the fundamental constraints that hold them back."

The Flippen Group, which is based in College Station, has counseled the FitzBradshaw Nascar race team, the ITT Corporation and various Fortune 500 companies. Flippen's leadership curriculum also has been used at Bryan High School and Sam Rayburn Middle School, as well as in school districts nationwide.

"Being successful in business is easy," he said. "But being successful in relationships is everything."

Flippen's passion is focused on education, he said. From his Teen Leadership Program, which he developed in the 1980s, to the Still Creek Ranch nonprofit home for abused or neglected children and teens that he established, his work has centered on youth and education.

"Education is the key to the future success of this country," he said.

Flippen, who originally is from Orange, and his wife have helped raise 20 children, only two of whom were their own. Flippen said they took guardianship of the other 18 "because it was a good investment and because I knew that they had greatness in them."

One of them lives with the Flippens at their home in College Station.

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A big part of Flippens' job as parents and guardians is to be a teacher, he said.

The acknowledgments page in *The Flip Side* has a paragraph dedicated to his own teachers, who gave him the ability to write a book by teaching him to read and write, he said.

"I am a man of great passion, of deep convictions and of great humility," Flippen said, explaining his wide-ranging interests. He said he's already working on his next book.

Flippen didn't reveal the topic, but said, "our publisher is very excited."

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