

*A Recipe to Nourish
Your Team and Culture*



SOUP



JON GORDON

International bestselling author of *The Energy Bus*

Praise for *Soup*

“It’s often said you get out what you put in. Same goes for how we lead our teams (at work, home, or school). In *Soup*, Jon Gordon has done a masterful job of illustrating the necessity of this point for anyone who wishes to increase their influence, build a better team, or expand their leadership effectiveness. The one who stirs the pot is the one who impacts the flavor of the soup, just as the one who leads the team is the one who creates the culture around it. This book will help you add flavor to your life, the lives of others, and your team.”

—Carl Liebert
CEO, 24 Hour Fitness

“Once again, Jon cooks up a world-class recipe for business, emphasizing that the key to ultimate leadership success is enabling your employees to deliver excellence.”

—Ryan Magnon
VP of Quality, The West Paces Hotel Group

“If you are ready to stir the pot and lead your team with more optimism, passion, and trust, you will love this book.”

—Deborah Gilmore
President, Women’s Council of REALTORS®

SOUP

A Recipe to Create a
Culture of Greatness



JON GORDON

WILEY

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*For my grandparents, Martin and Janice Gordon.
Your love made the difference.*



Jon as a young boy with his grandparents
and a big pot of SOUP.

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Thank you to all the soup makers out there who stir the pot with love. I hope you enjoy this book.

Most of all, I thank God for the most important relationship in my life. Thank you for your daily bread. You nourish me and give me strength. I am here to know you, love you, and serve you.

Introduction

When I think of soup, I think of my grandmother. She loved to cook, and food and love were one and the same to her. When she cooked, she wasn't just making a meal. She was pouring out the love in her heart and sharing this love with her family. When we ate her food, we loved her back. And no soup, no matter who made it, ever tasted as good as hers. Her love made the difference.

I've discovered that who stirs the pot has an impact on what's in the pot. For example, did you know that some wine experts can determine the personality of a winemaker simply by tasting the wine? There is a common challenge experienced by chefs I call the "stirring-the-pot phenomenon." No matter how carefully different chefs follow the same recipe, the final product always varies a little bit because we can't separate who stirs the pot from what's in the pot.

The same is true in business and in every aspect of life. Every day you are stirring the pot of life, and the most important ingredient you can put into your soup is you. Your love, optimism, trust, vision, communication, authenticity, appreciation, and passion make life delicious, and the

relationships you create at work and at home determine the substance and quality of your soup.

In my work with countless businesses, professional sports teams, hospitals, and school districts, I've seen first-hand how one person who grabs the spoon and decides to stir the pot can make a difference. One person who decides to bring out the best in others by sharing the best within him- or herself can transform teams and organizations.

My hope is that in reading this book, you will decide to be that person—that by your example, you will lead your company, your team, your family, your classroom, your church, your hospital. That you will invest in others and create engaged relationships that foster teamwork and create a culture of greatness.

Soup is meant to be enjoyed together. So, let us read together, learn together, eat together, lead together, and create success together.

Enjoy!

Chapter 1

Hungry



Nancy's stomach growled as she walked with Brenda toward their favorite lunch spot—a burrito joint with dirty floors, old furniture, and cheap, oversized burritos. After a long morning analyzing spreadsheets, reading reports, and engaging in heated discussions that lasted well into the lunch hour, Nancy was tired, hungry, and in need of food . . . quickly.

She didn't want to think about the bad news the spreadsheets revealed. She didn't want to worry about the reports anymore. And she didn't want to talk to one more person about the future of her company. All she wanted to do was eat. Yet instead of turning left into the burrito joint, she grabbed Brenda's arm and whispered, "Keep walking." Her intuition was stronger than her hunger, and it told her that the man with the mustache in the blue suit was following them.

"What's the matter?" Brenda asked, as Nancy began to jog instead of walk.

Nancy pointed and nodded toward the man following them.

“Again,” Brenda said.

“Yes, again. Come on. Let’s lose him,” Nancy said as she grabbed Brenda’s arm and they ran down the street. Moments later, they came to an intersection, turned left, made a quick right, and then took the next left, zigzagging their way through downtown, hoping to lose their pursuer.

The first time Nancy realized that someone was following her, a few months ago, it terrified her. She’d called her husband, a retired police officer, in a panic, only to learn at her board meeting later that day that it was probably some form of corporate spying. *More like idiot espionage*, she thought. She was told it came with the job of being the newly appointed CEO of a company that everyone was watching. With its stock price in the tank, revenue falling, and rumors swirling, the company was a likely acquisition target, which meant that business reporters, investors, potential acquirers, and powerful businesspeople were doing their due diligence on the company, and it also meant that they wanted to know more about the new CEO.

Her life wasn’t in jeopardy, but her privacy was, and Nancy didn’t like it one bit. She did whatever it took to keep the prying eyes out of her life, even if it meant forgoing mouthwatering burritos and running through downtown streets. Thankfully, her effort paid off, and when Nancy and Brenda stopped in the middle of the street and looked around, their pursuer was nowhere in sight. They had lost him, and now it was time to eat. But where?

Nancy noticed a long line of people at the end of the street, and as she and Brenda approached, they realized

that these people were waiting to eat at a restaurant. Brenda looked up and read the sign on the building: GRAND-MA'S SOUP HOUSE.

"Let's eat here," Brenda said.

"Are you serious?" replied Nancy. "We *make* soup. We live and breathe soup. We are surrounded by soup every day of our lives. Do you think I really want to eat soup for lunch? I've had enough soup."

"Oh, come on," Brenda said. "Where else are we going to eat? And besides, look at this line. It's almost 1:30 and the place is still packed. It must be good. Plus, they probably have sandwiches and salads, too."

"Fine," Nancy said, realizing that her hunger was getting the best of her. "But if it's not good, you're buying the burritos tomorrow."

"Deal," Brenda replied.

Chapter 2

Grandma's Soup House



The lunch line moved quickly, and before long they were ordering from a cute young lady who stood behind the counter. It was one of those fast, casual places where you place your order, receive a number, and wait at your table for someone to bring the food. The good news was that the place was clean, the people were nice, and the smell was amazing. The bad news for Nancy, however, was that they didn't serve sandwiches, wraps, or salads. In fact, they didn't serve anything except soup and bread.

Just great, Nancy thought, as she and Brenda ordered their soup and were handed an empty plastic soup bowl with their order number on it. The person working at the cash register told them to simply place the soup bowl at the edge of the table, with the number facing outward, and someone would bring their soup shortly.

In most restaurants, when they say the food will be out "shortly," it usually means a wait of 15 to 20 minutes. But in this case, the register person meant it. Within two minutes, a good-looking twentysomething with dark hair and blue