

# How to Survive Being the Center of the Universe

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*Black Swans Rising - "Excelling at the Unexpected"*

# LINCHPIN OR BOTTLENECK?



## Have you ever:

- Been told you were too important to be reassigned elsewhere (or to be promoted)?
- Found work piling up in your inbox and people waiting outside your door for you to finish their requests?
- Asked for career enhancing training only to be turned down because your projects “need” you too much for you to be out of the office?
- Been out of the office for training or taken time off but still been working anyway or getting calls from work?
- Find you can’t ever let go of a project or hand a task off to a colleague to complete or carry on?

These are all signs that you could be a linchpin... or a BOTTLENECK.

# LINCHPIN OR BOTTLENECK?

## What is a LINCHPIN?

- A physical linchpin is a pin passed through the end of an axle to keep a wheel in position.
- At work, it is a person or thing vital to an enterprise or organization.



“A Linchpin is the person in your organization who is indispensable, who leads with or without a title, and creates so much value they alone are worth 4-5 “typical” employees.”

– Leah Crawford of Higher Echelon



## What is a BOTTLENECK?

- A narrow route or point of traffic congestion
- Someone or something that retards or halts free movement and progress
- An Impasse



**KNOWLEDGE is POWERFUL but  
INFORMATION is NOT POWER.**

*Here are a few tips on how to become a linchpin*

# Abilities of a Linchpin



- **Seth Godin defines a Linchpin as an individual who can walk into chaos and create order; who can invent, connect, and create and make things happen.**
- **He goes on to say Linchpins have 7 abilities – they:**
  - Provide a unique interface between members of the organization
  - Deliver unique creativity
  - Manage a situation or organization of great complexity
  - Lead customers
  - Inspire staff
  - Provide deep domain knowledge
  - Possess a unique talent

# Tips to Become a Linchpin



- **Seth Godin and Leah Crawford recommend, if you want to become a linchpin and be indispensable, you should:**
- To be that interface between people in your org, you have to be open to others and their inputs;
- Be humble – having a big ego shuts you off from people and new ideas that help you grow
- Raise your hand – be open to new opportunities and challenges, and willing to take a little risk to grow new skills/knowledge
- Don't forget to lower your hand... know your capacity, keep the balance, leave time for learning
- Keep an attitude of “I can figure this out!” and trust yourself to problem solve
- Constantly learn – formal, informal, tools, tips from peers – something exciting to you

# SINGLE POINT FAILURES



- **Single point failures often occur at BOTTLENECKS**
  - Bottlenecks can help identify single point failure nodes
- **Bottlenecks can be found in facilities, equipment, processes, and in PEOPLE!**
  - Ever have a colleague leave your organization and leave you holding the bag (with no tools in it)?
- **Sustaining single point failures or an organizational tolerance for them is NOT GOOD SYSTEMS ENGINEERING!**
  - It's also a bad idea, high risk, and often financially unpleasant.

*Are you a linchpin under control?*

*What can you do when you work with  
bottlenecks?*



# LET'S TALK ABOUT YOUR COMPANY



## **How do your organizations handle situations when linchpins or bottlenecks develop in personnel and expertise?**

- How are linchpins in your organization identified?
  - By position? Role? Function?
- What kind of “legacy planning” does your organization do or encourage employees to do to prevent their world coming to a screeching halt with the exodus of a “Key Person”?
- What MBSE tools or approaches can be leveraged to reduce single point failures in an organization?

## **What behaviors does your organization REWARD? Info hoarding or info sharing?**

- How can you be the recognized expert if you have knowledge no one else knows about?
- How does your organization record, transmit or embrace use of tribal knowledge?

# NOW LET'S TALK ABOUT YOU



## Now just the LINCHPIN folks...

- When and how did you come to realize you were a linchpin?
- Are you a linchpin/bottleneck at work AND at home?
- How do you let go of “important work” and still gain more value and grow in your career? CAN YOU?
- How can you help others who are stuck at bottleneck and enable/encourage them to choose linchpin instead of choosing bottleneck?

**How have you successfully (or not) handled being a linchpin?**

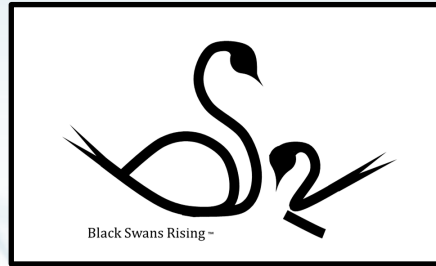
# IF YOU ARE A SINGLE POINT FAILURE



**If you find yourself as a single point failure node in your organization, there is hope!**

## **It's time to:**

- BE VERY, VERY CAREFUL! At least until you can...
- Identify a good “second” for your role and train them up (and 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup>, and...)
- Ensure critical information is properly capture (knowledge management!) AND is located where your colleagues/boss can easily access it without you
- Practice good SYSTEMS ENGINEERING MANAGEMENT processes and document your formal and informal PROCESSES that you follow and use in routine course of work (Config and Tech Data Management)
- Learn more – Seth Godin’s “*Linchpin*” ebook
  - <https://sharkinfestedcustard.files.wordpress.com/2011/10/seth-godin-linchpin.pdf>



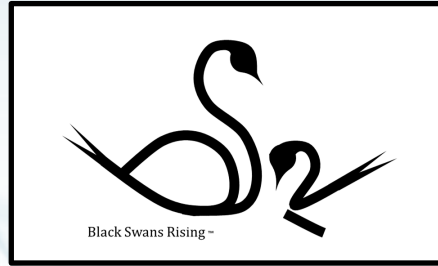
***Thank you for your time today!***

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***What can BSRi answer  
for you today?***

# WHO IS BSRi?



Black Swans Rising (BSRi) is a woman-owned small business established in 2018 and headquartered in Huntsville, Alabama. We are a Business Consulting and Advisory firm specializing in custom solutions for optimally aligned corporate strategies, effective management execution, efficient operations, and continuous process improvement.

BSRi is co-founded by Ms. Rebecca Falcon and Ms. Susan Askew.

## **Rebecca Falcon PMP, CISM**

BSRi Chief Operations Officer

- Over 29 years of experience in Industry and Government agencies
- Small Business CEO for 10 years
- Portfolio, Program, and Project Manager
- Project rescue/turnaround specialist
- DoD Agency Customer Relationship Manager
- Cybersecurity Program design, implementation, and operations SME
- Strategic planning and operations analyst and consultant
- Talent management assessment, planning, and recruiting consultant
- Information Technology assessment, planning, and operations SME
- Certifications: Project Management Professional (PMI), Certified Information Security Manager (ISACA)

Rebecca's approach to life is to help others achieve their goals efficiently and effectively by identifying their REAL requirements. Rebecca's passion is problem solving, root cause analysis, project rescue, and building operational resilience for her clients.

## **Susan Askew PE, CSEP-Acq**

BSRi Chief Technical Officer

- Over 30 years of experience in Industry and Government agencies
- Chief Systems Engineer and Test & Evaluation Engineer
- Supervisor and team lead for Engineering and cross-functional teams
- Portfolio, Program, and Project Manager
- Repeatable and streamlined processes and tools developer
- Commercial and Government Customer Liaison / Account Manager
- International marketing & cross-cultural communications consultant
- Youth Volleyball program volunteer, coach, and booster club officer
- Military family support lead
- Certifications and Licenses: Licensed Professional Engineer (AL), Certified Systems Engineering Professional-Acquisition (INCOSE)

Susan's philosophy is to start with the end in mind. Susan's passion is applying creative analytical thinking to everyday challenges to develop collaborative and innovative solutions and repeatable processes across all realms of business, education, and life.

# WHAT IS A BLACK SWAN EVENT?



## The Black Swan Theory

The “black swan theory” describes a highly improbable event, characterized by 3 qualities: it’s unpredictable, has a massive impact, but in hindsight the event can be reasoned to be less random and more predictable than it really was.

**“A Black Swan Event is a ‘failure of imagination.’”**

*~ John W. Heltzel, Director of Resilience Planning at the Electric Infrastructure Security Council*

## Black Swan Effects

- Organizations find themselves unprepared for situations they never expected to encounter.
- They are unsure how they got there or how to go about getting out of it quickly (and profitably).
- They “failed to imagine” this situation as possible or likely enough to warrant their attention.

***What are your Black Swans?***

# WHAT BSRI CAN DO FOR YOU



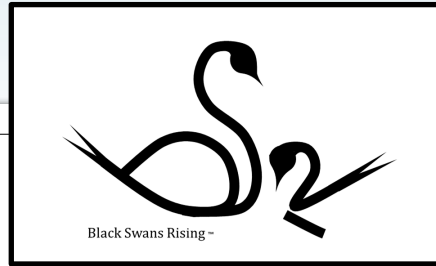
Black Swans Rising (BSRi) is a Business Consulting and Advisory firm that specializes in custom solutions for optimized and aligned corporate strategies, effective management execution, efficient operations, and continuous process improvement.

## **BSRi offers you and your organization...**

- **A unique approach** to corporate assessments by fusing the best Program Management and Systems Engineering methods to discover the unexpected – both the good and the challenging – and help our clients develop their own innovative custom solutions
- **Objective analyses** of your mission, corporate, and stakeholder objectives, policies and processes to determine how well they are aligned – with each other and with those of the workforce – and how well they work together or are at odds
- **A thinking partner** who works with you to apply divergent critical thinking to develop innovative non-traditional approaches for optimizing your business operations

We help you to collaborate and increase internal communications, identify strategy and process alignment conflicts, develop solutions that increase efficiencies and ultimately improve the business bottom line.





***Thank you for your time today!***

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