



## Stanford eCorner

### Getting Ideas to Work with Others

Steve Young, *Former NFL Quarterback*

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/1769/Getting-Ideas-to-Work-with-Others>

Young explains how he was able to negotiate with former 49ers offensive coordinator Bill Walsh to play some of his strategies. He would commend Walsh for his ideas and would add a few suggestions. Walsh noticed Young had good ideas and would eventually come to ask for his opinion.



#### Transcript

I remember that your offensive coordinator had some pretty specific ideas about what plays he wanted you to run. You're one of the few quarterbacks in the NFL to be calling your own plays. How did you negotiate with him? How did you prepare so that you could get the plays run like you wanted and not have a conflict with him? On campus, you're Bill Walsh. I could spend the next hour and fifteen minutes talking about Bill Walsh and I'll have you weeping about how great a coach he was, how innovative, ahead of the game and enlightened he was and how he brought football into the next generation. Football was archaic. Every coach used a whip and never used to carry it very effectively. It was through submission; "I'm going to pound you into submission to get you to do what I want," very old school stuff. It was embodied by the fact that no one would ever give him a drink of water. That was the old way. "I'm going to break these guys." Bill was like "Give them some water.

They're thirsty. Let's not pound them into submission." He was just an enlightened guy. Being here on campus, Stanford gets to take a lot of credit for that. He was in Silicon Valley before Andy Grove... .. I don't know if that's true. I'm going to be on YouTube so I've got to be careful. Bill gets a lot of credit for being in Silicon Valley before anyone, even before Steve Jobs started Apple. Bill was doing that in 1981 or '82, that enlightened kind of human relations. One of Bill's soft spots, for me, was that he loved to come up with great ideas.

He was ingenious. I noticed that if you could feed him something with which he could come up with an idea, he could actually get your play called. If I said "Bill, here's a play that I've been working on. I think it'll really work." I don't know if he'd be "Oh, that's nice," but I say "Bill, that play you brought up yesterday was really interesting. Think about if this guy went this way and that way. What do you think about that?" He'd be like "Now that's an idea. That's a great idea. Let's call it this, this and this." Then - boom - we're on our way. I guess that's what you mean. So you're making it about them and not about you.

Right. He was ingenious. He was so good at creating plays that you almost get in with the flow. If he's going to create all these plays and I think I've got some good ideas, I'm going to get in with him. Rather than fighting him and saying "I have good ideas too," "Hey, what about me?" gain his respect. If you come up with enough good ideas, he'll start saying "That young kid has got some good ideas." After a year or two, he's going to start saying "Steve, what do you think?" That was impossible two years ago. That's another piece of understanding people around you and "Getting to Yes" kind of thing. It sounds goofy, I know. In football, there's a score and there's a time. There's no time to cock it or rethink it or say "Let's sleep on it." That wasn't the profession; it was here and now.

We're in and there are no excuses, no getting out. The lights are on and they're on for another three hours. They'll be off soon but for right now, we're in this together. It's going to be embarrassing or it's going to be great depending on how we handle it for the next three hours.