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## A Christmas Carol

by Ken Embley, CPPA

This time of year, I always get a little joy out of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* and my favorite character, Ebenezer Scrooge—"bah humbug!" I picture Scrooge in his dark and cold counting house with his dreary view of life, concentrating on the task with little care for others or, for that matter, the demands of tomorrow. You know what is scary—I really like old Scrooge!

Do you think I like Scrooge because I know how the story ends?

*I don't know what to do!* cried Scrooge, laughing and crying in the same breath; and making a perfect Laocoon of himself with his stockings. *I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy. I am as giddy as a drunken man. A merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to all the world! Hallo here! Whoop! Hallo!*



After all, a prize turkey for the Cratchit family, "It's twice the size of Tiny Tim" has to leave a warm fuzzy. Nevertheless, I must be a wicked old soul. The new Scrooge is okay, but I really like the old Scrooge, and that leaves me to wonder.

Okay, come on, isn't there a little of the old Scrooge in all of us? For me, spending time alone in my own little "counting house" to accomplish what are sometimes dreary but important tasks without constant interruptions from others or having to think about tomorrow's demands is something I like to do. Honestly, I think most of us like normal patterns of work without the burdens of self-reflection and self-improvement and having to worry if what we are doing today will matter tomorrow. Hey; is it just my little secret—or one we share?

I suppose I can take comfort in that Bill and Marilyn Veltrop ([www.theinfinitegames.org](http://www.theinfinitegames.org)) think there are a lot of us who really like the old Scrooge because so many of us find great satisfaction in doing what Bill and Marilyn call **A-Work—all the normal patterns of work**. Steven Covey calls **A-Work—important and urgent work**.

Bill and Marilyn are quick to point out that A-Work is necessary. However, they also point out that only doing Scrooge like A-Work stops us for doing **B-Work—that work intended to improve A-Work and requires self-reflection, individual or process-improvement and change**. Steven Covey calls **B-Work—important but not urgent work**.

In a way, the three ghosts in Dickens' story introduce Scrooge to B-Work and B-Work thinking—the challenge of self-reflection, individual or process-improvement and change. For Scrooge, this was not a pleasant experience.

Bill and Marilyn point out that B-Work develops in us the capacity to be resilient and masterful at learning and change, and is a key to long-term sustainability and real mission achievement. They point out a masterful architect of B-Work learning and change is able to appreciate and draw upon the capacities and needs of stakeholders in any given development or change initiative. They point out that B-Work ensures understanding of the diverse learning and change expertise that is relevant to given capacity-building challenges or opportunities. Dang, those three ghosts really messed with Scrooge when they encouraged him to do B-Work.

So do you see why I like the old Scrooge? The old Scrooge gets to do A-Work, real work, the kind of work that leaves me to say, "I really did something today." Besides, it is rewarding to eat the prize turkey.

Then again, I suppose B-Work is important for those who want more than a dark and cold counting house. After all, the prize turkey would look nice on the Cratchit family dinner table and just maybe there is something about B-Work concepts to benefit Tiny Tim.

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