



**JUDI  
NEAL**

# Sunsets In The Boardroom

Introduction To An  
Edgewalker

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## JUDI NEAL



*I like to soar beyond normal boundaries, I dare myself to see what is beyond the obvious and make a connection to the reality that is before me.*

— “M. A. S.”

What is an “edgewalker”? To answer that, let me talk about a special person I know. I’ll call her “Mary Ann Samhain.” She is a real person; in fact, she holds a doctorate in science — but this is not her real name. Her ideas about organizations are so on the edge, it’s better to use a pseudonym. She is a vice president of marketing. She is also the granddaughter of Eastern European Gypsies and a practitioner of Wicca — otherwise known as witchcraft or “The Craft.”

Edgewalkers are the new breed of leader, those who have the potential to help us create a world that works for all. And edgewalkers are desperately needed in today’s business environment.

Why do I call Mary Ann an “edgewalker”?

The definition of an edgewalker is someone who walks between two worlds. In ancient cultures, each tribe had a shaman or medicine man. This was the person who walked into the Spirit world to bring back guidance for the tribe. Without a shaman, the tribe would be at the mercy of the unseen gods and spirits, the vagaries of the cosmos.

It took years of training under an elder to become a shaman, and often there was great personal risk and testing. Then he or she would receive amazing powers to see into the future, to heal the sick, and to speak with the spirits for tribal guidance.

Being able to walk between the two worlds was necessary for survival back then. It is just as necessary in today's secular world, although most people are not aware that edgewalkers are in their midst in the corporate world. Incorporation of this way of being and seeing is the next level of development for people who are leaders of the future.

The organizations that will thrive in the 21st century are organizations that learn to nurture edgewalkers like Mary Ann. She brings many unique talents to her work. For example, she learned to see into the future from the older women in her family. Now this is something you are not likely to find as a required skill in a job description, but imagine how effective leaders would be if they had a better way of knowing what is likely to happen before it unfolds. This may sound like something airy-fairy, but there is a significant body of research that has shown that the most successful leaders have a high degree of intuitive ability. Mary Ann feels that she was born with this ability and that her family helped her to hone it to a fine skill.

Another unique talent that edgewalkers like Mary Ann bring to the workplace is a deep level of understanding of multi-cultural issues. We're not just talking ethnicity, race, or gender here. We're talking about the skills required to operate in two very different worlds. Mary Ann has learned to interpret and act upon extremely subtle cues. She has learned to value differences and to bring out the best in people who might otherwise get overlooked. As a researcher, she has strong analytical skills and is very effective at gathering and interpreting data. As a spiritual person, she has learned how to call upon her own inner inspiration and how to bring that out in others.

One of the basic tenets of Wicca is a deep respect for Mother Earth, the seasons and cycles, and all living things. Mary Ann

has developed quiet rituals in the workplace that have begun to attract other employees and nurture their souls. The executives in her financial institution often have the need to work late. Mary Ann discovered one evening that the boardroom on the 14th floor in the corporate headquarters has a beautiful view of the sunset. Now she, and a few other employees who are working late, take a moment from their work to go up to the boardroom and watch the sunset slowly sink over the water. They stand there in silence and then drift back to their work with a sense of feeling renewed and connected to something larger.

It is important to nurture the edgewalkers in your organization. These are the people who see the bigger picture, who intuit the future, and who have the ability to call on unseen forces in difficult situations. They tend to be very loyal, highly creative, successful risk takers, and effective decision makers. People who don't understand the spiritual underpinnings of their skills often think that they are just lucky. But it's more than luck. It is a commitment to higher values, and a holistic lifestyle that includes time for spiritual discipline and practice.

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