

The Key To



Excellence

Featuring **John Spence, David Marquet, Jeff Klein,
Charlie Kim, Dr. Ted Prince, Ben Lichtenwalner,
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The Key To Leadership Excellence

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Introduction

With this eBook, you possess something pretty amazing. You have access to well over 100 years of the combined experience of excellent leaders who have been founders, CEOs, high-level executives, thought leaders, and even one of the most successful leaders in the history of the US Navy.

To create this book, I simply asked each of these leaders a question:

How does someone become a great leader?

What follows are the answers to that question.

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Chapter One:

Great Leaders Must Lead Themselves First

John Spence



At the age of just 26, [John Spence](#) was named CEO of an international Rockefeller foundation, overseeing projects in 20 countries and reporting directly to the Chairman of the Board, Winthrop P. Rockefeller III. Three years later Inc. Magazine’s “Zinc Online” recognized him as one of America’s up and coming young business leaders. He has twice been named by *Trust Across America* as one of the Top 100 Business Thought Leaders in America.

Known for making the very complex “awesomely simple”, John has presented workshops, speeches and executive coaching to more than 300 organizations worldwide including Microsoft, IBM, GE, Abbott, Apple, Merrill Lynch, AT&T, Verizon, and Qualcomm, and dozens of private companies, government offices and not-for-profits. He has also been a guest lecturer at over 90 colleges and universities across the United States including Harvard, Cornell, Stanford and the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania, and the Entrepreneurial Masters Program at MIT. John currently serves as the Director of Best Practice Innovation for the Best Practice Institute and as an advisor/board member to several companies.

Great Leaders Must Lead Themselves First

Often times when I'm teaching a teambuilding class I will ask the attendees to give me a short list of the most critical skills, abilities, and characteristics of an "Ideal Team Member," someone they would absolutely love to have on their team. After more than 15 years of asking for this list, the ones that come up over and over again are:

- Honesty
- Integrity
- Proactive
- Excellent Communicator
- Highly Competent
- Innovative
- Creative
- Takes Accountability
- Works Well On A Team
- Delivers Results
- Good Strategic Thinker
- Enjoyable To Be Around

As you read over that list you probably thought to yourself, "Yes, I would love to have someone who had all of those characteristics as a member of my team." Here is the hard truth for the leader; you don't get anybody like this on your team unless you are like this first! People who have all of the attributes on the list above will only follow a leader who has all of them as well. So to be a successful leader the first thing you must do is take a look in the mirror and realize that your greatest challenge is to be a living example of what you expect from your followers.

Once you accept the mantle of leadership, whether you lead two people or 20,000, you have given up part of your life because you now live on a stage. Your followers see everything you do, they hear everything you say... they see what you don't do and hear what you don't say... and make up a story about it. They go home at night and sit around the dinner table and talk to their family about YOU. They talk about whether they enjoy the person they work for, if they are learning and growing, if they feel like they're being treated fairly, if they might have a chance for a raise or a promotion. Or they talk about how bad it is at the office, how unfairly they are treated, that they never get a simple "Thank You" from their boss...which is you! Once you understand this you realize that you truly have a huge amount of impact and influence on the lives of the people that you lead, and if you want to be a great leader you will take that

responsibility very, very seriously and work as hard as you can to be a leader who builds up other leaders and improves people's lives.

I recently did a survey of more than 8,000 high potential employees at companies around the globe. This included top employees at firms such as Microsoft, Merrill Lynch, Abbott, Qualcomm, GE and IBM. These high potentials are the employees who have been hand selected as the next group of senior leaders of their organization, the best-of-the-best in companies with as many as 100,000 employees.

These sorts of people are what I call "voluntary employees," they are so good at their job and so incredibly talented that if they quit at 10 AM in the morning, they would have a job at any competitor by noon the same day. In other words, they could work at just about any company they wanted to, so I was curious to ask them, "What is it about your company that makes you want to stay?" The vast majority responded that their major reason for staying was that they respected their leader and truly enjoyed working for them. So my next question was: "Then please tell me; what are the key characteristics of your leader that makes them so fantastic?"

The answers from around the world came back highly consistent and constitute what I call: The Seven Cs of Leadership.

Character

Without question, the single most important thing that people look for in a leader is character. They expect a leader to be someone who is honest and displays impeccable integrity. In another global research study conducted by my colleagues James Kouzes and Barry Posner for their superb book *The Leadership Challenge*, they state that 89% of the people they surveyed (1.3 million over a 30-year period) said that honesty was the single most important factor they look for in a leader they would willingly follow. It is really quite simple, if you're going to be a successful leader: TELL THE TRUTH ALL THE TIME.

Competence

To be an effective leader you must demonstrate high levels of competence in two areas: your actual job function and your leadership skills. This means that you will have to become a serious student of your profession and of how to be a great leader. Luckily, we now live in an era with access to more information (free information) than ever before in the history of the world. Great leaders take time to read, study, listen, watch and learn as much as they can about how to improve and grow. They are committed lifelong learners and value that trait in the people they surround themselves with. It is

the single most important thing I've learned in 25 years as a leader and teacher of leaders: You become what you focus on and like the people you spend time with.

Courage

We, of course, expect leaders to be courageous, to take big bold risks, and make important decisions, but what the respondents to my survey said is that they also want a leader who could be courageous enough to be *vulnerable*. Everyone knows that there is no way to be successful completely on your own. Things move too fast and there's too much going on. No one can handle all of this alone. Yes, we all want a leader who can be courageous in the face of difficult times, but we also want a leader who can admit that they don't have all the answers, that they are scared too, and that they need our help. Leadership is not about being invincible; it is about being honest and at times even vulnerable.

Collaboration

As was clearly stated above, we don't like or want Lone Ranger leaders, we want a leader who can roll up their sleeves and do the work shoulder to shoulder with us. What my respondents told me was, "We know you're the leader, but you don't have to

lord it over us. Treat me like a peer and partner most of the time, and if every now and then you have to pull rank on me that's okay, but I really want a leader who is part of the team – not standing apart from the team." Great leaders today are superior at working with and through other people.

Communication

Again, we all expect our leaders to be great communicators, to be able to stand up at the front of the room and give an inspiring speech that gets the team pumped, but what the people in my survey said was that in addition to speaking well, great leaders are highly skilled at asking focused questions and then listening intently. There is no argument that one of the keys to success in business is to hire the absolute best people you can possibly get on your team, and great leaders understand that if they get these sort of people to work with them it would be foolish not to ask them lots of questions, listen carefully and learn as much as they can from their incredibly talented employees.

Compassion

Because most of the high potential employees at large companies are in their mid-30s to early 40s, there is a generational difference in the way they view work. Although

highly committed to their organizations and very excited about the work they do, these folks also said they wanted a leader who had enough compassion to understand that they would not sell their soul to the company; they wanted to have a vibrant life outside of the office. Working 9 to 5 or even 8 to 6 was absolutely fine with them, but after that it was time to go volunteer, hang with friends, or make some microbrew. It was time to have a life.

Contribution

The final characteristic of the truly great leader is the ability to plant the seeds of trees under which they may never sit. To embody a sense of enlightened self-interest that allows them to balance the short-term decisions of running a successful business today, with the long-term decisions of contributing to the world around them in a strongly impactful way. A wise leader understands that with great power comes great responsibility and they use that power to leave a legacy, not just achieve great quarterly earnings.

So if you asked more than 8,000 of the top employees in the world what they look for in their leaders, what you read above is what they would tell you. I will admit that this list is a bit challenging, perhaps even daunting. But this is what it takes to be a great leader.

Just remember that tough does not mean impossible. It all starts with you.

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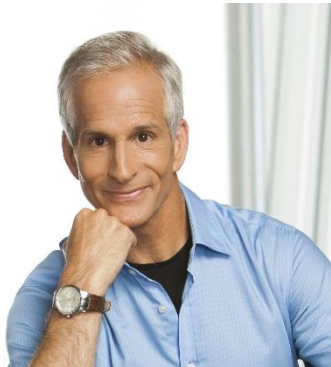


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Chapter Two:

Great Leaders Are Conscious Leaders

Jeff Klein



As CEO of [Working for Good](#), Jeff Klein activates, produces and facilitates mission-based, Stakeholder Engagement Marketing™ campaigns and Conscious Culture development programs.

Jeff serves as Director of Marketing & Business Development for [Conscious Capitalism](#) and producer of Conscious Capitalism events.

He authored the award-winning book, *Working for Good: Making a Difference While Making a Living* and the newly released book, *It's Just Good Business: The Emergence of Conscious Capitalism & the Practice of Working for Good*.

Great Leaders Are Conscious Leaders

Leadership seems to be an essential function in mammalian social groups. Wolf packs have leaders. Ape troops have leaders. Cattle herds have leaders. Indigenous tribes have leaders. Businesses have leaders.

Something about groups requires the role of leadership, and more often than not, the role is principally embodied by specific individuals for a period of time.

So what does it take, if you aspire to being a leader and, specifically, to becoming a great leader?

Evolutionary Role of Leaders

*“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more,
do more and become more, then you are a leader.”*

~ John Quincy Adams

At the core of being human are some basic drives, survival being foremost among them. Without survival, the game is over and the other drives become irrelevant. After

survival, we've got perpetuation over time – propagation, reproduction. Then there is the drive to flourish – to enhance the conditions of our lives and increase our capacity and ability to survive, perpetuate and flourish.

When I think about great leaders, people like Moses, Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Abraham Lincoln and Einstein are the first that come to mind. When I think about contemporary leaders, I think about many of the business leaders I know in the Conscious Capitalism community: John Mackey and Walter Robb at Whole Foods Market, Doug Rauch, formerly at Trader Joe's now at Conscious Capitalism, Kip Tindell at The Container Store, Casey Sheahan at Patagonia, and Fedele Bauccio at Bon Appétit Management Company.

What stands out about all of these is the way their actions inspire others and the way they purposefully encourage others to aspire to expressing more of their inherent abilities: to dream big and work to fulfill their dreams. They point in the direction of a promised land, encourage others to envision that land for themselves, and to take tangible steps towards reaching it.

In doing so, they facilitate survival in part by transcending it, by activating and cultivating life force that reaches for flourishing.

One of the four core principles of Conscious Capitalism is conscious leadership. Conscious leaders understand and embrace the higher purpose of their business and focus on creating value for and harmonizing the interests of their business' stakeholders. They recognize the integral role of culture and purposefully cultivate conscious culture where people are encouraged to be and do their best.

What Does It Take to Be A Great Leader and What Can You Do to Become One?

Great leaders recognize that they are affected by what is going on inside and around them, including interactions with other people. And they recognize that they have an effect on others, on the organization and on the greater systems of which it is a part. They cultivate the skill of conscious awareness, to foster an expanded perspective and to transcend reaction-based responses to challenges and stresses.

Conscious awareness is a process of recognizing what is going on inside and out, the effects of decisions and actions, and the interaction between a complex array of factors

and forces. It is seeing our seeing, observing our thoughts, recognizing our feelings and the effect they are having on us and others.

Conscious awareness is a meta skill – one that enhances the performance of other skills. It functions much as a mirror functions for a dancer – reflecting position and movement, providing feedback for the organism to adjust to, or as the coach in the press box serves a football team, providing a perspective on the whole field.

As we cultivate conscious awareness, we are able to see more, to expand our perspective – on ourselves, our experience and on others.

Cultivating conscious awareness can be as simple as watching our breath or noticing sensations in our bodies. Repeated application of practices over time will develop habits and skills (that’s why they call them practices!). Here’s an example of a basic awareness practice, which I refer to as “tuning in” and which I use all the time.

Tuning in is a process of noticing what is going on within ourselves, with others and around us. We can tune in to body sensations and processes – like our breath, to emotions, to thoughts, to what is going on around us and to any combination of these.

Here's a taste of tuning in:

Sit or stand in a comfortable position. If you'd like, close your eyes (after you read the rest of the instructions!). Notice your feet on the floor. Notice the quality of your breath.

Is it deep or shallow? Is it quick or slow? Take a few deep, purposeful breaths. As you exhale allow your shoulders to drop.

Now focus your attention to the top of your head, and allow it to slowly move down your body, all the way to your feet. Continue to breathe as you move your attention. Notice any sensations or tension calling for attention along the way. When you do, just notice, breathe and move on. When you are ready, take another deep breath or two, open your eyes.

Did you notice anything you hadn't noticed before? Did you find any tension in your body? Notice anything else? We can do the same thing with thoughts and feelings, and invariably find things we hadn't noticed before focusing our attention in this way.

Observe yourself at work (with whatever frequency and duration you choose) and

recognize what is going on inside that you may not be aware of. For instance, sitting at your desk or in a meeting, tune into your body, recognize how you are breathing, observe any sensation in your body, notice thoughts or feelings that may be floating under the surface. Just that. Just observe, notice and move on.

What you can do: Cultivate conscious awareness. Engage in regular awareness practices, encourage and listen to feedback from others, and apply conscious awareness to everything you do, especially in relation to the people you work with and the conditions that directly influence and affect your business.

Great leaders appreciate the vastness of the universe, realize the profound limitations of human knowledge and embody humility.

This is a traditional Taoist story that reminds us to not to be so certain of anything we presume to be so. (This is a modified version of the story):

One day the farmer's only horse broke out of the corral and ran away. Upon hearing the news, the farmer's neighbors came to his house to see for themselves. They said, "Oh, what bad luck!" To which the farmer replied, "Maybe it is, maybe it isn't."

Within a week the horse returned, accompanied by a beautiful wild stallion, which the farmer and his son quickly corralled. Once again, upon hearing the news, the neighbors came to see for themselves. This time they proclaimed, "Oh, what good luck!" The farmer replied, "Maybe it is, maybe it isn't."

While he was working to break the wild stallion, the farmer's son was thrown against a fence and broke his leg. True to form, the neighbors gathered round to console the farmer with "Oh, what bad luck!" And once again, the farmer replied, "Maybe it is, maybe it isn't."

During this period of time in China, two rival warlords were at war with each other. The warlord ruling over the Taoist farmer's village, one of the two combatants, visited the village to conscript young men to fight in the war. When his men came to take the farmer's son, they found him unable to walk, and left

him behind, taking the beautiful stallion instead. The farmer's neighbors didn't know quite what to say. The farmer smiled.

What you can do: Reflect on the limitations of knowing and find ease in being present and open to what emerges.

Great leaders understand the inspirational, motivating power of purpose. They evoke and pursue higher purpose.

“We need red blood cells to live (the same way a business needs profits to live), but the purpose of life is more than to make red blood cells (the same way the purpose of business is more than simply to generate profits).”

~ Ed Freeman

Here's a process for identifying and defining your purpose. Tune in to your breath and body as you reflect on the question: What beliefs form the foundation of your orientation to work or to your business? And write them down.

Now reflect on this question and write down your response to it: What do I do? Spend some time with it. Describe what you do in some detail, including for whom you do it.

Now address this question and write your answer succinctly: Why do I do that?

Now reflect on your response, answer it again, succinctly: Why do I do that?

And reflect on the last answer and ask yourself again: Why do I do that?

One more time: Why do I do that?

Now look back at all of your responses and find the pieces that fit together to describe your core purpose. Once you have done this, take time to distill it down to the shortest statement that captures the essence of your purpose.

Live with it. Reflect on it. See how your body responds to it. Share it with others.

When it feels true and grounded, begin to use it to orient yourself, your work, your business. Explore how your “Why” informs what you do and how you do it, how it guides your decisions and the way you relate to your stakeholders.

What you can do: Clearly articulate your organization’s purpose and hold it up every day as a point of reference for daily decisions.



Great leaders serve other people.

“Good leaders must first become good servants.”

~ Robert Greenleaf

The servant leader is first a servant, motivated by the drive to serve. Through the act of serving, the aspiration to lead emerges naturally. The nature and expression of this leadership is dramatically different from leadership generated from the desire to lead.

The rewards for leading through service are profound, including deep personal growth and strength, the joy of witnessing others flourish, and the confidence that comes from the trust, engagement, commitment, energy, and more that servant leadership evokes from others.

What you can do: Learn how to serve. Ask others what they need. Observe what they seem to need for their learning, growth and development, and do what you can to create a supportive context or refer them to resources that can deliver what they need.

Great leaders are secure in themselves, and don't seek or require recognition. They understand that leadership is a role and do not identify with "owning" leadership. They recognize the interdependence and essential role of all of the stakeholders in their business.

*When the Master governs, the people
are hardly aware that he exists. ...
The Master doesn't talk, he acts.*

*When his work is done,
the people say “Amazing:
we did it, all by ourselves!”*

~ Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching

The leaders who work most effectively, it seems to me, never say “I.” And that’s not because they have trained themselves not to say “I.” They don’t think “I.” They think “we”; they think “team.” They understand their job to be to make the team function. They accept responsibility and don’t sidestep it, but “we” gets the credit. This is what creates trust, what enables you to get the task done.

~ Peter Drucker

What you can do: Lead quietly. Focus on others and encourage their initiative. Celebrate their value and contributions.

Clearly, the suggestions above are merely that, suggestions. And they are not exhaustive. There are an infinite number of insights, understandings and practices you can explore and cultivate.

One final thought: Give yourself a break. Recognize that becoming a great leader is an ongoing process, not a fixed destination.

*We fail to realize that mastery is not about perfection.
It's about a process, a journey. The master is the one
who stays on the path day after day, year after year.
The master is the one who is willing to try, and fail,
and try again, for as long as he or she lives.*

~ George Leonard

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Chapter Three:

Leadership Is Service

Ben Lichtenwalner



Ben Lichtenwalner, founder of ModernServantLeader.com, is also an advisor to Philanthropist.org and the Senior Manager of Internet and eCommerce at Whirlpool Corporation. Ben has held senior leadership roles and overseen technology teams across other Fortune 500, Inc. 500 and non-profit corporations. Having learned from both positive and negative leadership styles, he now shares his experiences and lessons learned to promote greater awareness of Servant Leadership.

Ben has an M.B.A. with a concentration in Entrepreneurship from Lehigh University and a B.S. in Management Science and Information Systems from the Smeal College of Business at The Pennsylvania State University.

Ben enjoys spending time with his family, reading (The Good Book, business and technology publications), and riding his motorcycle. He spends his time between Westchester County, New York and Southwest Michigan.

Leadership Is Service

Who do you serve with leadership? It's a simple question, really. Yet many leaders pause when they hear the question framed this way. This is because leadership is often misunderstood as an accomplishment to be reached, rather than a commitment to serve. You either serve yourself or others and if you're not serving others, you're not leading.

Service is the core of the matter when it comes to leadership. Unfortunately, the term "leadership" has become misunderstood by so many that we need a term to clarify its definition. Those who comprehend what leadership really is advocate "Servant Leadership."

Servant Leadership is a focus on serving, first, through leadership. In other words, the servant leader desires to help their stakeholders, so they serve those stakeholders. As time passes, the individual comes to realize they can best serve their stakeholders by leading them.¹

Popular leadership philosophy – particularly in business – is opposed to Servant Leadership. In most organizations, leaders seek the official position of leader for the

benefits it offers. These benefits range from compensation to title. Executives desire the admiration of their peers and the publicity and fame from outsiders. This is where the term “leadership” has run ashore on the rocky reefs of pride.

Flip the Pyramid

Leadership is traditionally pictured using a pyramid, with the leader at the top and the stakeholders at various levels below. For example, the leader would be placed at the tip of the pyramid, with employees at the next level down, and consumers below employees. This pyramid suggests that each level below supports the level above. Consumers, purchasing products, support employee compensation. Employees, in turn, support the decisions executed by the leader.

Servant Leadership is often depicted visually as the same pyramid, flipped on its head. In other words, instead of consumers meeting the needs of employees, who serve the leader, the reverse is true. The leader serves the needs of employees, who in turn serve the needs of consumers.

Without Serving, You're Not Leading

The leader who serves others leads them. The leader who serves self-interest leads none.

“He that thinketh he leadeth and hath no one following him is only taking a walk.”

~ John C. Maxwell

As Maxwell points out – those with no followers are not leading. The saying can be easily extended to those with controlled or forced followers. If someone is obligated to follow you for compensation, security, or other reasons they deem a necessity, they are not truly following. Instead, those “followers” are a form of dependent.

In a world of openness and transparency, your followers see the difference between leaders with self-interest and those serving others. Therefore, focus on service – not leadership. Through service, the leadership will come naturally. If you're serving stakeholders, you will be yourself and find yourself in the right role, at the right organization with the right culture. Through service, your followers, stakeholders, and team will desire your leadership.

Traditional Models of Servant Leadership

The term Servant Leadership was coined by former AT&T executive Robert K. Greenleaf in *The Servant as Leader*.² In this essay, Greenleaf said:

“The servant-leader is servant first . . . It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions . . . The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types.

“The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived?”

While Greenleaf coined the term when this essay was published in 1970, we can see these principles of Servant Leadership in practice throughout history. As a result, there

have been many different models of Servant Leadership. The most popular models, though, are the Christian and the Greenleaf/Spears models.

Christian Model

The concept of Servant Leadership is secular. However, most major world religions have their own take on what Servant Leadership means for their followers. There are both Jewish and Islamic blogs that discuss the concept and advocate Servant Leadership principles, but the world religion with the most prevalent position on this is Christianity.

Christianity, my own faith, looks to Jesus of Nazareth as our Lord and Savior. His example on earth was the ultimate example of Servant Leadership. The humility and service of Jesus were godly. Biblical verses that point to Servant Leadership for Christians include (New International Version):

John 13:12-15: “When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. ‘Do you understand what I have done for you?’ he asked them. ‘You call me “Teacher” and “Lord,” and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should

wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.”

Matthew 20:26-28: “Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Philippians 2:3-8: “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross!”

These verses, among others, and the life and example of Jesus Christ reflect the call for Servant Leadership for Christians. If you're Christian, it's actually hard to argue for any other form of leadership.

Greenleaf / Spears Model

The Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership has been an amazing resource for spreading Servant Leadership awareness. As such, the bulk of references to Servant Leadership point back to the previous quotes and use this model for describing the philosophy.

Larry Spears was the CEO of the Greenleaf Center for nearly twenty years and now runs the Spears Center for Servant Leadership. His extensive research on Robert Greenleaf's writings drove his framing of the Greenleaf model into the Ten Characteristics of Servant Leadership.³ Through ModernServantLeader.com, I categorized these ten characteristics into three focus-areas: Servant, Leadership, and the combined Servant Leadership.

These characteristics include:

Servant	Leadership	Servant Leadership
Listening Empathy Healing	Awareness Persuasion Conceptualization Foresight	Stewardship Commitment to People Building Community

I am often asked to describe Servant Leadership. In our culture today, people desire elegant simplicity. This is another reason I am partial to the term Servant Leadership: it is self-descriptive. Still, I found it difficult to really explain Servant Leadership in a concise manner with the existing models. Therefore, I came up with the following Acronym model.

Acronym Model of Servant Leadership

Servant Leadership advocates today stand on the shoulders of giants. However, to spread awareness and adoption of these principles for leaders today, we must be perceived as more relevant than historic models.

Of course, my job of making Servant Leadership more relevant is easy in this world of social media. The ease with which individuals organize around issues is greater than ever before. Organizational stakeholders, especially employees, investors and consumers are making their voices heard online. Therefore, organizations' need for greater leadership is frequently being raised through social media channels.

These changes in our culture are obvious to many. As a result, many people seek something new and better when it comes to leadership. The irony is that what we want and what we need has been in front of us all along. It is Servant Leadership and, while it dates back to early history, it is more in demand today than ever before.

The Servant Leadership Acronym Model is really just a mash-up of so many predecessors. In keeping with the elegant simplicity perspective, Servant Leadership is the following acronym:

Selfless
Empathetic
Resolute
Virtuous
Authentic
Nascent
Thorough

As I cover each of these concepts below, I refer back to the Spears Model. This is because the Spears Model is the most frequently-referenced model and connects us to the origin of the Servant Leadership term. As a result, this shows a consistency across definitions and grounds our forward-looking model in the best of our past.

Selfless

Earlier, I said that if you're not serving, you're not leading. This captures the selfless nature of leadership in a simple statement. Selflessness is about putting the needs of others before yourself. Specifically, we speak here of putting the needs of those you

serve first. In the Spears model, he captured this by including values such as humility, listening, stewardship, building community, and commitment to people.

Empathetic

In order to lead another person, you need to know what it feels like to walk a mile in their shoes. Even if you've never been in their position yourself, you must have the empathy to perceive their circumstances. This is why so many corporate leaders like Bob Nardelli, who distance themselves from those they serve, lose the commitment of their people. Leaders who lose the ability to empathize lose the ability to lead. In the Spears model, key attributes of empathy also included healing, awareness, and persuasion.

Resolute

The resolve of a leader is often overlooked in traditional Servant Leadership perspectives. But revolutionary leaders of all types have faced detractors. It would have been easy for the founders of the United States to say, "We don't really need a unique culture" or "it'd be easier to give into the British directive," and nothing would have changed. Servant Leaders must be resolute in their mission and actions.

Virtuous

Character and integrity are more important today than ever. People have always demanded leaders to be virtuous. Today, failures of character are identified, documented, and shared at the speed of a keystroke. It's well-documented that people love to see powerful leaders fall. Nothing undermines a leader's mission faster than a failure of their character. Stakeholders don't want leaders who are only good at their job; they demand leaders who represent what is best in all of us. The well-rounded leader is one with strong virtues.

Authentic

If being virtuous is about constantly embodying moral qualities, authenticity is about proving those qualities to your stakeholders. To serve others effectively, you must be transparent about actions and intentions. This authenticity is demanded by stakeholders. If you want loyalty and commitment from others, they must know that you are candid, sincere about your intentions, and opposed to practicing dirty politics. If a follower is uncertain about your intent, they will not convert. If a customer thinks your primary objective is increased sales and revenues rather than mutual benefit, forget about them buying from you.

Nascent

Organizations are constantly changing, whether for better or worse. In order for organizations to thrive, their leaders must always be on the lookout for great new ideas. This is why Servant Leaders must be open-minded. Great leaders understand that great ideas may come from anywhere. The people closest to the problem are often the ones best prepared to find a solution – not the senior executive who hasn't been on the front lines in a decade. Therefore, Servant Leaders realize they must constantly grow and evolve, listening to the requirements and contributions of their stakeholders. As Darwin Smith, CEO of the “good” turned “great” company, Kimberly-Clark, in Jim Collin's *Good to Great* said, “I never stopped trying to become qualified for the job.”⁴

Thorough

A major failure of leaders today is an emphasis on short-term benefits without regard for the long-term costs. This trade-off, to make themselves and their results look great while pushing the costs and impact downstream, weakens institutions everywhere. In contrast, Servant Leaders are extremely thorough.

It may seem less exciting, but communications by Servant Leaders are very clear on what trade-offs must be made. Servant Leaders do not micromanage, but they do ensure that the leaders they put in place are equally thorough. Servant Leaders maximize the sustainability of results. This sustainability of results requires a great deal of planning for the future.

These results must also consider all stakeholders – not just a subset. For example, we cannot benefit investors at the excessive cost of employees. In the Spears model of Servant Leadership, he highlights the thorough attributes of Conceptualization and Foresight.

This is a simplification of a major concept. Great leadership is Servant Leadership. Now, more than ever, Servant Leadership is demanded from stakeholders. If this is the first time you've heard of Servant Leadership, I encourage further reading. Check out

the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership (Greenleaf.org), Spears Center for Servant Leadership (SpearsCenter.org) or my own site at ModernServantLeader.com.

Until then, remember to be Selfless, Empathetic, Resolute, Virtuous, Authentic, Nascent, and Thorough.

In other words, remember to serve as you lead.

Footnotes:

1. Adapted from the work of Robert K. Greenleaf – More on Greenleaf’s work at <http://Greenleaf.org>
2. Greenleaf, Robert K. *The Leader as Servant*. Original publication: June 1982. Revised Edition: The Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership. January 1, 2008.
3. Spears, Larry. *Practicing Servant Leadership: Succeeding Through Trust, Bravery, and Forgiveness*. Jossey-Bass. 20 September, 2004.
4. Collins, Jim. *Good to Great*. Harper Collins. 16 October, 2001.

The Key To

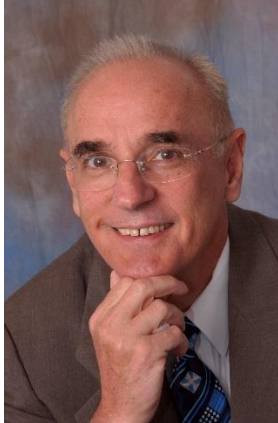


Excellence

Chapter Four:

The Power of Mental Agility

Ted Prince



Dr. E. Ted Prince, author of *The Three Financial Styles of Very Successful Leaders*, is the CEO and Founder of the [Perth Leadership Institute](#), a research-based company that provides programs to senior executives in large corporations worldwide focusing on behavioral finance in leadership and business acumen in leadership utilizing innovative new approaches.

Dr. Prince served at the CEO level for 20 years, including six years as Chairman and CEO of Clearstory, Inc. (formerly INSCI Corp), a publicly-traded company.

In addition to his training and coaching work, Dr. Prince is a frequent speaker at industry conferences for senior executives, including CEOs and senior human resources and other executives.

Dr. Prince holds the positions of Visiting Professor at Shanghai University of Finance and Economics where he teaches finance in leadership and for a number of years was a Visiting Professor in Entrepreneurship at the University of Florida.

The Power of Mental Agility

There is a huge body of literature on leadership. The vast majority of it concerns the interpersonal and communication skills needed to be a “good” leader. However little in this corpus talks about the results part of the leadership equation. What are the behaviors that are needed to achieve the results desired by investors and stockholders? That has been the focus of the research conducted by the Perth leadership Institute.

The question we started out with in our research was “what are the individual and team behaviors that need to be in place to achieve competitive financial results?” Our definition of results meant those desired by investors and stockholders. So, ultimately “results” in this context means “valuation relative to a company’s competitors.”

We came up with a radical reformulation of leadership. In that reformulation, a leader is defined as good only if the valuation of the organization he leads increases relative to his competitors. In the reverse case, if his valuation decreases relative to competitors, he is a bad leader.

We call this an outcome-based model of leadership as distinct from approaches which focus on the personality and competency characteristics of the leader. Even today, this is still a radical approach, at least among leadership practitioners.

As part of our research we developed an empirical model which links financial behaviors to financial and valuation outcomes. The central concept was the *Financial Signature*® of an individual, team or organization. This is defined as the behavioral propensity of an individual, team or organization to create capital. We developed assessments to measure Financial Signature®. You can view Financial Signature® as business acumen, and the behavioral ability of an individual, team or organization to create capital and thus to achieve a higher valuation than its competitors.

It turns out that the Perth Leadership Outcome Model® (PLOM) independently developed many of the concepts of behavioral finance before they passed into common currency. Our concept of the behavioral drivers underlying a Financial Signature® was essentially the same as certain cognitive biases that are now regarded as the basis of modern behavioral finance and economics.

The two cognitive biases that we identified as comprising Financial Signature® were the *status quo bias* and the *illusion of control bias*. The status quo bias drives the level

of value-adding behaviors by a person and thus the level of gross margin relative to competitors. The illusion of control bias drives the level of resource utilization of an individual and hence the level of expenses relative to competitors. Together these two cognitive biases are the basis of a model which can predict both profitability and valuation based purely on behavioral factors.

Our model can predict the actual valuation outcomes of leadership behaviors at the level of a specific individual, team or company. The model goes well beyond just financial outcomes at individual team and organizational levels. It also shows how industries and markets evolve, based on these cognitive biases, how they drive business strategy, and how they are related to innovation and capital intensity in markets at both early and later stages of evolution. This is set out in my book *The Three Financial Styles of Very Successful Leaders*, published in 2005 by McGraw-Hill, and in numerous articles since.

Does This Have Relevance to Leadership Beyond the Private Sector?

So what about government and nonprofits? Surely this model is not relevant to them since they don't have competitors and they don't need to make a profit. What is the

use of a Financial Signature® when there aren't any shareholders or investors and instead we have voters or recipients of aid?

Actually the two cognitive biases that underlie Financial Signature® each are highly relevant to government and nonprofit sectors. The status quo bias drives innovation and the adding of value to products and services. Value-adding outcomes don't have to be measured in financial terms, although this can be useful sometimes.

Value-adding outcomes can be measured in numerous other ways, invoking concepts such as voter or recipient welfare, measures of happiness and well-being and the like. In the nonprofit and governmental sectors we still need to find organizations and leaders that can innovate new approaches to improve happiness, well-being and good health, mental and physical. Innovation is absolutely not just a matter for the private sector and the status quo bias is one that impacts all humans, no matter what organization they are in. We want to increase innovation so that we can impact issues such as voter and welfare outcomes more effectively than we do now.

The second cognitive bias behind Financial Signature® is the illusion of control bias. This influences the resource utilization driver. It's obvious that the aim of all organizations is to achieve higher levels of value, no matter how value is defined, for

lower levels of cost and resource utilization. Normally we would measure this using financial metrics but we can also measure it in other ways such as number of people involved and the amount of effort, time or energy, physical or psychic, involved. Our over-riding aim then is to achieve the highest levels of value-added possible for our organization at the lowest possible levels of resource use so that we become more effective and efficient at developing and delivering products and services to people, whether they be consumers, voters, service recipients, or whatever else.

So What Does This Mean For Leadership?

It has always been known that it's difficult to find good leaders. In the sphere of leadership development the idea was always that it was difficult to find leaders who had the high-level combination of interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence coupled with the ability to inspire and communicate to keep followers engaged and loyal.

But the implication of our research means this task is even harder. Now we actually have to find leaders who possess all these “soft” skills coupled with the ability to achieve hard financial results that show up in the bottom line. We are faced with a common dilemma given these two approaches. We may find leaders with high-level soft skills

who can't get the results that investors and shareholders require. Or, on the other hand, we might get leaders who achieve these financial and valuation results but who have poor soft and communications skills and who achieve their results through fiat and fear.

In other words, we can't assume that if we get leaders with the traditional soft skills that they will also get good results. Nor can we assume that leaders who get good results will be good leaders in a traditional sense. The implication of our approach is that developing and sustaining good leaders is much harder than we all thought. Indeed, that is why we believe it is so hard to find leaders who tick all the boxes.

Innate Financial Signature® Vs. Actual or Learned Financial Mission

Our Financial Signature® is innate. But that doesn't mean that it drives all of our behavior and our management and financial decisions. Our model shows us that each of us tend to act in different ways to those driven by our Financial Signature®. The way we act in practice is what we call our *Financial Mission*.

Your Financial Mission may be different to your Financial Signature® for a variety of reasons. You may be following the lead of a boss, or aligning yourself with the financial

culture of an organization whose mission happens to be different from your signature. Your compensation package might drive you to act in different ways from your Financial Signature®. Your Financial Signature® is your comfort zone but any of these influences might motivate you to move away from it, so it is not enough to know your Financial Signature®; you also have to know your Financial Mission.

Matching Financial Signature® to Company, Industry and Market Evolution

The core of our approach is the Financial Signature® and particularly the behavioral drivers underlying innovation. In our model, different Financial Signatures® are needed for different stages of company, industry, and market evolution. Unless you get it right, you won't get successful leadership, even if you have smart, committed, ethical leaders with great soft skills and even if they have a Financial Signature® that is capital-creating. That's very different from the traditional soft skills approaches which assume that possession of these skills at a high level of competence will be effective at all levels of company, industry and market evolution. So again it makes the task of finding leaders even harder than we all thought.

Matching Individual and Team Financial Mission to Your Organization's Financial Mission

What this all means is that often, if not usually, the best choice is to match your Financial Mission to that of your team and organization. That way, the manner in which you have all decided to achieve value is the same and you are on the same page in terms of the value you want to add for the resources necessary to the value-adding level you wish to achieve. This means you not only have to know your own Financial Mission, but also that of your team and the organization. Then you can make the right decision for yourself, your team and the company.

Financial Literacy Not Business Acumen

It might be thought that there's an easy way out; that is, find leaders who have high levels of education in finance and business which will guarantee that they have the right educational background to achieve valuation that exceeds that of their close competitors.

Unfortunately it isn't that easy. Financial Signature® is a function of innate preferences and cognitive bias, not of intelligence (however defined) or education. It's

now well established that economic crises don't spare highly educated business people; in fact there's substantial evidence to suggest that such leaders often do worse than people who are not so educated at least in part because of their vulnerability to the over-confidence cognitive bias. The inescapable conclusion is that business acumen is not a function of financial literacy and might even sometimes be inversely correlated to it.

Leadership Agility and Self-Awareness More Important Than Educations, Skills Or Intelligence

It's becoming increasingly obvious that great leadership is not just dependent on intelligence, competencies, soft skills, other interpersonal skills or even Financial Signature®. More than anything else it requires a high level of self-awareness and mental agility that allows the leader to keep an open-mind and to be able to switch gears even when some of their basic beliefs might be infringed. We are starting to realize, with the advent of the new behavioral disciplines, that we all possess unconscious biases and preferences that often override good decision-making without us realizing that this is what is happening.

The first port of call for a leader is to become aware of these unconscious biases so that they can address their own behavioral vulnerabilities which lead to poor decisions and actions. If this doesn't happen, it doesn't matter what the competencies and personality attributes of the leader are, they are going to face problems that they can't address because they are simply not aware of where their behavioral failure points are.

Recommendations for Leadership Success

Based on our research, we believe that the best solution to the challenge of developing leaders who have both the people skills and business acumen required for optimal performance is to combine traditional approaches to leadership development with the PLOM. By being made aware of your unconscious cognitive biases, you have the best chance of becoming free from their adverse effects.

Without knowing your Financial Signature® and Mission, and those of your organization, we cannot offer the optimal solution, customized for your situation. However, as mentioned above, our research has shown that regardless of what your Financial Signature® is, the most important attribute of a great leader is having high levels of self-awareness and mental agility.

Following are some ideas, based on our research and my experience as a CEO and executive trainer, which can help you to improve both your self-awareness and mental agility.

Speak Last

Don't speak first if you are in a leadership position. If you speak first, your followers will think that your initial idea is where you want to go and many of them will not offer up other ideas. If you speak last you will be showing others that you are receptive to their ideas and will consider them before resorting to favoring your own ideas just because they are your own. This practice will prevent you from attaching to your own ideas before considering others, so it great for increasing mental agility.

Speak Less Than 10% of the Time

Leaders often become focused on their own importance and often they believe they know more than their subordinates, so they feel they have the license to speak as much as they want. For many leaders, speaking more is a way of showing others that they feel more important than them. So speak less than 10% of the time. That forces you to think before you speak. It forces you to be more precise when you do speak because

you won't have much time. It also shows others that you don't think you are more important than them, even if in fact you are. Again this will act to increase your level of mental agility because you are going to have to have much greater impact in communicating with much less time available.

Don't Offer Your Own Opinions Until You Have Heard Everyone Else's

Immediately after a leader offers his own opinions it shuts off the opinions of many others. It also subtly shades what your people will tell you because they will change their own opinions to be more aligned with what you have said. That means you will cut off both opinions and shades of opinion without realizing you are doing that.

Once you utter your own opinions you have actually cut off many sources of information and views without for the most part even realizing that is what you have done. So offering your opinions last is a great way of increasing you own level of mental agility. This will help you lessen the effects of your systematic biases by reducing the degree to which you unconsciously filter information from people while simultaneously helping you be less fixated on your own ideas, more open-minded to new ideas, and more agile.

Practice Constructive Disbelief

Constructive disbelief is a technique in which you look at one (or more) of your more cherished views and then imagine that it isn't true. Maybe you have gained an MBA degree. What if it is totally false? What would you do then?

Constructive disbelief is a technique you can also use with your own people if you are a leader. You can challenge them to practice constructive disbelief while in meetings, both public and private, as a way to open up thinking and other approaches. In using this technique on yourself it will force you to become more self-aware about the extent to which you are dependent on certain belief systems and make you more sensitive to how responsive you are to other beliefs and approaches.

The Key To



Excellence

Chapter Five:

Helping Others Helps the Bottom Line

Charlie Kim



Charlie Kim is the Founder and CEO of [Next Jump](#), described by the New York Times as “a bellwether for the next generation of ecommerce.” What sets Next Jump apart is their culture and focus on human capital. Experts have called Next Jump the “Demonstration Project,” proving the combination of caring for your employees and helping them grow as human beings is possible while at the same time making money and helping the world become a better place.

Charlie has been a keynote speaker at many conferences including: Tim O’Reilly’s Web 2.0 and Gabe Zichermann’s GSummit, and is also the highest rated mentor for the NYC Venture Fellows Program, a mentorship program built by Mayor Bloomberg for top technology companies in NYC. He has also served on Bloomberg’s Applied Sciences NYC Advisory Committee, ultimately selecting Cornell to build a \$2-billion technology campus in NYC.

Charlie resides in Manhattan with his wife, Ella and son, Jackson.

Helping Others Helps the Bottom Line

Good leaders empower others to be leaders. You cannot dictate that someone become a leader, but rather, need to invest in setting up the right environment for those behaviors to naturally occur. We have developed a framework that focuses on growing leaders in our company, but it could be used at an individual level as well. The key is starting with self and then helping others. Here is how we have scaled this philosophy at Next Jump.

We have made a conscious decision to invest in a people-focused culture to develop leaders. Our formula for culture, which we believe is universal, is *Better ME + Better YOU = Better US*. Better ME is investing in self-growth, learning and getting better to build mastery. We've found it is important to start with self, as you cannot help others if you are not continually growing yourself. Better YOU is building purpose: why are we on this planet? When we are 80 years old, looking back at our life, thinking about what matters most, what was it all about?

We believe through mastery and purpose, we can build an entire company of leaders and happier people, which can change the world – Better US. In order to achieve our audacious goal to better the world, we have recognized the importance of leaders. Next

Jump is dedicated to grooming our people toward becoming leaders of the world. This all starts with the right environment.

Better ME

There are two important parts of the Better ME philosophy – physical & mental.

Physical

You need to start with your physical health so you have the energy to grow and learn when you are stressed and strained mentally. With a strong foundation, you are more equipped to handle pressure during your down times. Energy (comprised of sleep, nutrition and exercise) is the foundation for growth.

Surprisingly, it starts with exercise. As you exercise, you sleep better and eat healthier. When we're in our early 20s, not many give it thought. We abuse our bodies, sleep late, eat late and bounce right back. However, science has discovered that starting at 25 years old, the human body is starting to deteriorate. It's "slowly dying."

It's kind of depressing when you wake up one day, doing the same things you've done, and realize, "I need to eat better, exercise more regularly and sleep better." The good

news is that our body is a vehicle that has the capacity for infinite upgrades. Sleep, exercise and nutrition are the foundations of this upgrade. You need to continually upgrade your physical self to tackle your mental challenges. Without sufficient energy, we're unlikely to help others (or want to).

Mental

The second part of Better ME is around mental growth. Everyone wants to succeed. However, people are often caught in a rut of repeated errors, poor decisions, and poor judgment calls. These thematic errors are rooted in an imbalance of character muscles. By working towards a balance you will minimize the repetition of errors in your life.

We have found that everyone falls under one of two character imbalances. They are either too confident or too humble. When too swayed to the confidence side, one is arrogant. When too far on the humble side, one is insecure. If you are insecure under a point of stress you will not be optimistic, or assertively speak up when you need to.

Working to correct that imbalance through training and practice in stress is critical. If you are insecure, practice your confidence. If you are arrogant, practice your humility.

As your character becomes more balanced you will find yourself making better judgment calls and as a result, becoming a more competent leader.

Most people don't have a *competence* gap. They have a *confidence* gap (or if arrogant, a humility gap). So the question is, “What is your backhand?” What is your imbalanced character trait that at the point of stress results in you making the wrong call?

How do you practice your backhand? Create a safe practice ground where you can take risks, invest in loss and consequently grow through experimenting.

At Next Jump, culture initiatives are our practice ground. They are “above the waterline” initiatives, meaning that if you blow a hole in the ship or mess up, it won't sink. This promotes learning and growing at the highest level.

Better YOU

The Better YOU part of our equation is around purpose: who we helped or what we gave away. My mother always said, “All the money, all the material things... you can't take those to your grave.” We have so much to do before leaving this planet if we want to dramatically change the world in a positive way.

Better YOU is about helping others in both a scalable way and a personal way. It is important to give in an area of strength. We started with our Code For A Cause (CFAC) program, giving away our expertise, something better than money. Here are links to two great posts by the captains of recent CFAC initiatives: [A New Philanthropy – Donating Our Best Asset: Our People](#) and [Corporations Can Create a Better World](#).

Other Better YOU programs include [Vendor Appreciation Day](#) for holiday gifts, contributing 10% of our salaries to the forgotten population during [Hurricane Sandy](#), as well as becoming one of the largest contributors to [DonorsChoose.org](#) and visiting some of the schools we impacted: [School Trip with Laura](#).

Our most recent Better YOU program is Adopt A Charity, which began with the question, “What if every successful for-profit company partnered with a quality non-profit?” Picture thousands of companies doing this. We’re investing in staff development programs for charities which will pay far more dividends than simply donating money, and will give back in perpetuity. Here’s a link to a great blog post on this initiative “[Outrageous Generosity](#)” by Will Marré, who co-founded Covey Leadership with the late Stephen R. Covey.

When you build a culture of people who give back, your people will feel more connected to other people, like themselves more, have higher self-esteem, and focus on contributions bigger than themselves and getting better as a human being. At Next Jump we say: “We use business as a platform to build people of higher character.”

Better for Business? Yes, But It’s Also Simply the Right Thing to Do.

At Next Jump, we’re proving that if you build an environment that is focused on developing great human beings and giving back, your organization will thrive. We are able to attract and retain the most talented people in our industry. Our people are so engaged that they often spend the night in one of the bedrooms they asked to have put in our New York City office. Our turnover is 1% versus the industry average of 22%. Clearly, a culture like ours has incredible effects on business results. But that’s not why we do what we do.

I grew up as a child in Nigeria, West Africa. After living there three years, my mom started planting trees at our house. There were about a 100 visiting agriculture scientists and every house had wild fruit trees, but none with any really good fruit. So my mom bought some great fruit. She started to dry tangerine, orange, lemon and mango seeds and then planted them around our house.

I thought this was a waste of time and actually yelled at her in frustration, saying, “You are crazy! Trees take 10 years to grow. We’ll be gone in two or three years! Why are you doing this?” Her answer was so simple, “It’s the right thing to do. Whether we are here or not, this is the right thing to do.”

People often ask me, “Why do you focus so much on your employees?” My answer is, “Because it’s the right thing to do.” My mom knew this then – I am honored to live it now. In order to be a great leader you need to focus on people – at a company or individual level. Constantly work on growing yourself and then giving back. If you do, you will find yourself inspiring and empowering more leaders.

The Key To

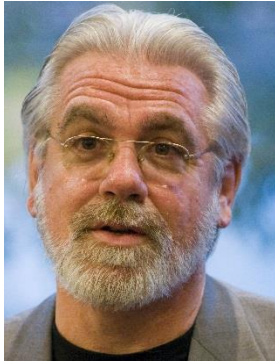


Excellence

Chapter Six:

Greatness and Our Quality of Being*

Michael Carroll



Michael Carroll is the author of *Awake at Work* (Shambhala 2004), *The Mindful Leader* (Shambhala 2007) and *Fearless at Work* (Shambhala 2012) and over his 30-year business career has held executive positions with such companies as Shearson Lehman/American Express, Simon & Schuster and The Walt Disney Company. Michael is presently the COO of [Global Coaching Alliance](#) and has worked with client firms such as Procter & Gamble, Google, AstraZeneca, Viropharma, Starbucks, RED, National Geographic Expeditions, Merck, and others.

Michael holds degrees in theology, philosophy and adult education and has written for Forbes, Fast Company, Templeton Foundation, Shambhala Sun, Huffington Post and many other blogs and magazines. Michael has lectured and taught at Wharton Business School, Columbia University, Yale University, and numerous others.

Michael has also been studying meditation and Tibetan Buddhism since 1976. He graduated from Buddhist seminary in 1980 and is an authorized meditation teacher in the Kagyu-Nyingma lineage of Tibetan Buddhism.

Greatness and Our Quality of Being*

Being a defining and inspiring leader is often associated with reaching the summit, achieving the unachievable and rallying the troops. And while such an approach is often the case, being a mindful leader also includes doing absolutely nothing at all.

In the 1990s, as educational publishing was confronting the arrival of technology in the classroom, I was invited by the president of a successful K-12 publishing business to help him manage the rapidly unfolding changes. The president, Frank, intended to shift his business away from an editorial-centered approach toward a marketing driven business model designed to adapt to technology trends, and leading the organization through the process was going to be traumatic and tough.

Working with Frank was truly a joy: he was bright, energetic and his instincts were unusually astute. Yet, he was very protective of his business and was wary of fostering too much change too quickly. After many weeks of planning and analysis, Frank and his staff produced a top notch change management plan called “*The future is now.*” Technology trends were reviewed; competitors were assessed; markets quantified, financials tightened and timelines were set. A central problem loomed however: *How*

do we get the 40 person editorial team to relinquish control, embrace technological innovation and drive the change?

Historically, editorial directors in K-12 publishing set the pace for the business keeping in touch with what teachers needed in the classroom. But with the advent of technology, no one – let alone teachers – could say where education was headed and what the classroom really needed. The desktop was becoming the dominate platform, but what about handheld devices and classroom management systems? Web-based tools were emerging in higher education and surely would trickle down to K-12, but when and how? While editorial leaders focused on the traditional model of classroom education, funds were shifting towards technology and marketing savvy needed to take the fore.

The sales force – supported with marketing data, new marketing personnel and consulting expertise – was fast taking the lead engaging teachers, principals, and superintendents in discussions about the future of K-12 education and the editorial staff was beginning to grumble, feeling left out and left behind. The traditional fissures and frustrations between editorial and sales were growing and we needed to act fast and skillfully.

During a meeting between the president, the head of sales and the three editorial directors, we all mapped out a plan.

“We’ll be launching ‘*The future is now*’ at our annual sales meeting in two months,” the sales director announced, “and our regional managers are already reviewing the new tools. Of course, there’s a lot more to do on product knowledge, samples, demos and the like, but we are moving along quite well.”

“Well I’m glad to hear you’re ready,” sighed one of the editorial directors, “since we are producing the product you are going to sell maybe you can let us in on how the plan works....”

While the tension lingered, another editorial director piped in. “It would be nice to have a launch for our editorial teams like the sales force gets. Our staff hears a lot about ‘*The future is now*’ but not the specifics.”

Frank glanced my way and we were thinking the same thought. We had been moving so fast to integrate marketing into the sales force that we had neglected the editorial team.

“Do the editorial staff members ever attend sales meetings?” I asked.

“Too expensive,” quipped the sales director. “We always have the editorial directors there, of course, but flying all those folks down to Sanibel or San Francisco is too much cost and little return.”

The editorial directors rolled their eyes.

“Well maybe we should do something different this year,” suggested Frank. “This rollout of the new business model is probably the most important change in our past 20 years and taking a new approach may be just what we need.”

“For my part,” I said, “I think inviting all 40 editorial staff to attend the sales meeting would send just the right message, that we are all in this together. Plus, we would all know that everyone – sales, marketing and editorial – had received the same marching orders. I think it would be an excellent team building opportunity.”

“I like it,” committed Frank. “Let’s plan on having all of editorial at the meeting and see if we can negotiate some volume pricing on the T&E. Having us all together as we launch I think is worth the price.”

As the meeting broke up, Frank took me aside. “What do you think? We’ll need to course correct a bit, but I think it will mark a fresh start having everyone at the offsite.”

As I was about to respond, we overheard the editorial directors talking among themselves as they left the room. “Oh the fur is going to fly at this meeting,” one director laughed. “I hope they know what they are getting themselves into.”

Frank grimaced and shook his head.

As planning proceeded for the sales meeting, I suggested that I lead a morning discussion among all the editorial staff and the 60-person sales and marketing team.

“This is a rare opportunity to get this team talking and building rapport,” I observed. “I think if we survey all participants prior to the meeting and have a well-managed open discussion we could clear the air and create much needed momentum.”

Frank was nervous.

“There will be a lot of old grudges in that room, Michael,” Frank fretted, “I think a meeting like that could really get out of hand and do more harm than good.”

“Well, if you want to accelerate change and build trust, these grudges have to be surfaced and dealt with,” I encouraged. “And we have everyone in the room, so from my viewpoint let’s go at it. Managing this kind of change requires candor and leadership and if there was ever a moment for both, this is it.”

“OK,” he agreed hesitantly.

When the morning arrived for the large group meeting, we had an added surprise. The chairman of the company had heard about the offsite and wanted to come along. He was impressed by Frank’s business plan and was equally impressed with how Frank intended to launch it at the sales meeting with all the editorial, marketing and sales force in attendance. Frank had been nervous about the meeting to begin with, but now he was silently having his doubts. Not only were we going to air our dirty laundry, but now in front of the chairman of the entire company.

“Maybe we made a mistake planning this free-for-all” he quipped to me over coffee. “The survey returns were not so optimistic and I’m not sure we should go ahead with this now that the chairman is here.”

“Pull the band aid off, Frank,” I reassured him. “It will only hurt a bit. Plus we have nothing to hide. You have a great company that’s about to become even better, so cheer up!”

The room was full with over 120 people: sales reps, editors, marketing managers, and some from corporate. Frank stepped to the podium welcomed everyone, especially the chairman, and launched:

“Everyone in this room is responsible for building one of the most successful educational publishing businesses ever, educating millions of children in math, science, reading and literature and much more. We have a lot to be proud of,” Frank beamed. “But as we all know our industry is changing quickly and we need to keep pace, so we are here to launch our new business plan ‘*The future is now*’. I am particularly encouraged by having all of you from editorial, marketing and sales in this room – we don’t all get together often so I want to take advantage of this opportunity.”

As Frank introduced me to the group I could feel his hesitation.

“If we are going to successfully change, embrace technology and continue to be the leading K-12 publisher, we will need to listen to one another, build new bridges and work together in new ways. That’s why I have asked Michael to bring us through our morning discussion.”

I began the discussion with some preliminary observations and some ground rules on giving and receiving feedback: listen openly, be honest and respectful, and appreciate others as they take risks. And we dived in:

“Everyone here was asked to fill out a short survey before today and over 90% of you shared your views, so thank you,” I began. “Let’s take a look at what we all said.”

As I referred to an overhead displayed on a large screen, “Here’s an item the editorial team addressed:

“I believe the sales force values my opinion on how best to present curriculum and educational materials to the customer.”

And the editorial team responded:

“8 out of 10 disagreed or highly disagreed with this statement.”

I paused for a moment to let the findings sink in and I could see Frank squirming as the chairman adjusted his glasses.

“This is a very powerful statement,” I summarized. “80% of us here who make the product for our customer feel their views are not valued by the people who sell the very same product to the very same customer. Anyone want to clarify this?”

A long silence came over the room and finally an editor raised her hand and I handed her the microphone.

“I think it’s even worse than not being valued,” she fumed. “Not one marketing piece has ever included wording, design or headlines recommended by anyone on our team. We’re just flat ignored. I wish the marketing people would stop asking us for our opinion.”

The flood gates opened.

“Yeah,” chimed in another editor, “when was the last time that any of us went on a sales call. Our competitors do it all the time, but not us...we’re like second class citizens.”

The back and forth went on for 45 minutes and the discussion was contentious and robust. Grievances were aired, opinions shared, feathers were ruffled and some voices were raised. And through it all Frank sat up straight, clearly on edge as the chairman occasionally took a note or leaned over to share a remark.

“OK, let’s take a break,” I announced to the group. “This has been a powerful discussion and we’ll pick it up in 20 minutes.”

As the group slowly left the room to refresh their coffee and make some business calls, Frank took me aside out of ear’s reach and he was panicked.

“This is a disaster Michael and this discussion is ruining my company!” he fumed with clenched teeth. “The results of the survey say that we’re not a team, people are pissed off and no one trusts each other. And now you’re opening this whole thing up – in front of my boss no less – and making matters worse.”

Frank paced.

“Let me ask you a question, Frank,” I interrupted. “What do you think the team needs from you right now?”

“They need me to get control of this and get the genie back in the bottle!” he bristled.

“What they need for you right now Frank is for you to lead,” I spoke pointedly. “And that means *be a flagpole!*”

“A flagpole, what is that supposed to mean?” he asked.

“Look, your organization is disoriented and off its game right now. You know it; they know it and the numbers in our survey show it. The organization has to face its confusion, sort it out, resolve issues and that’s exactly what they’re doing this morning. But when they look to you they need to know it’s all right – they need to have something they can look to that orients them – that lets them know

that despite the difficulties and confusion they are moving in the right direction. They need a flagpole, Frank, and you are it.”

He began to calm down.

“You’ve asked your people to take a risk today and they are. They are speaking their minds openly and honestly for the first time in a long time. And to do that in front of you and your boss takes courage and that means they trust you. You’re their flagpole; you are what they can look to knowing that they can take risks, speak their minds, and confront difficulties. This is how it feels to lead Frank and instead of panicking may I suggest that you take note of what you see.”

I led him out toward the coffee line.

“What do you see, Frank?” I asked. “Take a good look at your people and tell me what you see.”

We both surveyed the room. People were animated, talking and laughing. We noticed editors speaking with sales reps; marketing specialists sharing coffee with editors and two sales managers chatting intently with an editorial director.

The chairman was sitting with several sales reps and two editors talking, nodding and listening.

“I don’t know about you Frank, but this looks like a success so far. Your people are moving past the grudges and disappointments right before your eyes and they are actually acting like the team you need: speaking their minds, listening to one another, trying to sort out the future. All you have to do is just sit there and *be a flagpole* – which is exactly what they need. It may not be easy, but it is simple.”

For a moment Frank paused to soak in his team and what I had said. And as if on cue the chairman ambled over to us and asked.

“So how do you think it’s going, Frank? People sure seemed fired up.”

Frank looked at me for a moment and smiled. “I think they’re doing great. It takes a lot of courage for them to speak their minds and I give them all a lot of credit.”

The team spent the rest of the morning processing the survey results, meeting in smaller groups, and planning for future collaboration. There were some tough conversations but with them came some insights and understanding. And when Frank brought the group together to close he asked:

“What did we learn this morning? Anyone want to sum this up?”

After a few people offered some final remarks, a young sales rep stood up.

“I joined this company from one of our main competitors 2 months ago. I’d heard so much about what a great publishing house this was but I never *really* knew until today. This meeting took a lot of guts – nobody runs meetings like this. We all got a true picture of each other today. We didn’t just go over slide decks and business plans; we told each other the truth and I, for one, want to thank you, Frank for having the confidence in us to have this discussion. I learned more this morning about my team than I could have in years of meetings and telephone calls. We’ve got a long way to go, but I am looking forward to doing it with this team.”

While no one applauded or cheered after the new sales reps short speech, there was a quiet shared recognition among many that they had taken an important step that morning. And sure enough they went on, under Frank’s guidance, to successfully execute their “*The future is now*” business plan, publishing award-winning programs that led the way in bringing technology into the K-12 classroom.

The slogan *Be a flagpole* reminds us that leadership is not always moving forward, getting it done or driving for results. Sometimes, it requires us to stop and simply *be* – often in the midst of the most difficult circumstances. Such a gesture can orient those pressed by daily demands and reassure those willing to step out and take a risk. And if we were to pause and *Be a flagpole* for a moment, we may notice that by simply stopping we are showing confidence in our colleagues and getting a true and wide view of how to be fearless at work.

*Adapted from a chapter in *Fearless at Work* (Shambhala 2012), entitled “Be a flagpole.”

The Key To



Excellence

Chapter Seven:

Great Leaders Develop Other Leaders

David Marquet



[David Marquet](#), an experienced naval officer, was used to giving orders. He received last-minute orders to be captain of the nuclear-powered submarine USS Santa Fe, plagued with poor morale, poor performance, and the worst retention in the fleet.

One day David unknowingly gave an impossible order, and his crew tried to follow it anyway. That's when he decided to re-think everything he'd been taught about leadership.

His book *Turn the Ship Around!* is the true story of how the Santa Fe rocketed from worst to first in the fleet by challenging the traditional leader-follower approach in favor of a leader-leader approach.

Turn the Ship Around! was named the #1 must read business book of 2012 by *Fortune Magazine*, and has been the number #1 rated leadership book on Amazon.

David heads Human Capital Engineering at Next Jump, an e-commerce company in New York, teaches leadership at Columbia University and speaks about embracing the superhero in all of us.

Great Leaders Develop Other Leaders

When I think about human acts of greatness it strikes me that there are two characteristics. First, these acts are always about other people, not about us. Whether it's a fireman entering a burning building, a waiter shielding dining guests from a terrorist's bullets, or a lifeboat operator returning to save people from a stricken vessel, acts of greatness are for others. The second thing that strikes me is that acts of greatness are never ordered. You could not order people to do the kinds of things they do when achieving great deeds. As a result, we have a serendipitous view of these acts. We don't expect them and we don't count on them. If someone in our midst does something great, we look on with admiration.

I believe all humans have the potential for acts of greatness. I call it the everyday superhero within. Unfortunately, fear, intimidation, posturing and deception suppress any desire for people to embrace their potential. This is the case in most work places today where 70% of workers are disengaged¹ and just want to make it through the day without making mistakes. This mindset to avoid errors rather than achieving greatness biases people toward inactivity, reactivity, disengagement, and dissatisfaction. Minds are turned off or are on "just getting by" mode.

But wouldn't it be neat – wouldn't it be really amazing – if we could somehow encourage acts of greatness. Not order them, but create the environment where people feel they can embrace the superhero within and achieve great things.

Well, I think we can do just that. Human behavior is always a combination of how a person's instincts nudge them (let's call it personality) and how the environment pushes them. Nudge and push are deliberate as our human hardwired tendency is to overweight the importance of personality and underweight the importance of the environment. In a toxic environment, everyone is capable of evil acts. In the right environment, everyone is capable of great acts. Our job as leaders is to shape the environment because we cannot reform personalities.

What does that environment look like? I believe it starts with trust, a feeling of safety and connection. When I say trust I probably mean something different than what you are thinking. Trust does not mean agreement that you are always right or know best, but trust does mean that we are in it together and the criteria by which you make decisions includes optimizing outcomes for the group. In other words, if you say there's a pink elephant behind me, I believe that you believe there is a pink elephant behind

me. Whether there is or not is not an issue of trust, it's a condition of the physical world.

Next, people need to train their decision-making and thinking muscles to see reality and take action. Since acts of greatness cannot be ordered, the degree to which we order people around and provide explicit instructions to follow is the degree to which we suppress any chance of greatness. Leadership is not about you making great decisions and issuing great orders, as I once thought. The fundamental objective of leadership is to create trusted environments where people practice winning at being responsible, winning at making decisions and winning at taking action.

What follows is the story of how I discovered that simple truth.²

“Make all preparations to get underway,” I ordered the second in command of the USS Santa Fe, in a bold and confident tone. “Make all preparations to get underway, aye, aye, sir.” He acknowledged the order and went off, issuing subsequent commands and making things happen. Several hours later, I ordered the engineer to start up the reactor. Then, when all preparations had been made and the tugboat tied up alongside, I directed the Officer of the Deck (OOD), the officer who directly ordered the submarine’s course, speed, and depth, to “get underway.”

The ship slipped away from the pier and we headed down the main Pearl Harbor channel toward the Pacific Ocean. “Submerge the ship!” and we sunk beneath the surface, “ahead flank!” and Santa Fe surged ahead, deep in the sea. The crew was all too eager to please their new captain, and that was going to be the problem.

When I took command of Santa Fe in 1999 I thought I would be a leader who empowered his subordinates. The submarine was not performing well. People were doing what they were told, initiative was non-existent and fear of making mistakes paralyzed most decision makers into inaction. We had lost sight of the connection between our day-to-day actions and our mission to protect the Constitution. People were working in isolation.

Plagued with poor morale and operational problems, almost every sailor who could was leaving the navy. Having only reenlisted 3 sailors from a crew of 135 the previous year, retention was at the bottom of the fleet. Officers were resigning their commissions and the previous captain had quit. Based upon my leadership training, I set about inspiring and empowering my men, upholding high standards of professionalism and exhorting the benefits of teamwork. As we prepared to go to sea for the first time I found myself issuing orders instead of coaxing my crew. It was awesome and heady. I was acting

solidly in the image of great leaders, or so I thought, confidently walking the ship and telling a compliant crew what to do.

The next day, it all changed.

We ran an exercise where we intentionally shut down the reactor to test our ability to find and correct faults. In the control room, the OOD was the officer with the longest time on board, and he was doing all the right things. We had shifted propulsion from the main engines to a backup motor. The backup can only power the ship at low speed and draws down the battery. During the long troubleshooting period while the nuclear technicians were isolating the fault, I started thinking things were going too smoothly. I couldn't let the crew think their new captain was easy!

Since I was vectored to Santa Fe at the last minute I wasn't the technical expert that I would have been had I gone to my originally assigned submarine. As a result, I did what no captain of a nuclear submarine should ever do – I made a mistake. I suggested to the OOD that he order something that was not possible at the time – to speed up on the backup motor. The startling thing was that he immediately ordered it. He later told me that he knew it wasn't executable but ordered it anyway because I “told him to.” I

realized that we had a crew that was trained for compliance, and a captain trained for the wrong submarine. If we didn't fix that, it could prove to be a disaster.

The officers and I gathered in the wardroom to discuss how we were going to survive the next three years. We decided that we'd flip the typical leadership paradigm. Instead of "taking control, making followers" I would "give control, create leaders." From then on I stopped giving orders and had the officers state their intentions with "I intend to..." and I would respond with "very well." In addition to creating ownership in the mind of the officer, they all had to think like the captain. This released a torrent of passion and initiative. Not only did this result in immediate performance improvements, it proved powerful in the long run. Ten of those Santa Fe officers have already commanded or are selected to command submarines.

What I learned was that if you want people to think, telling them what to do is not the best way to do it.

We found dozens of examples where the way we did business sent the signal that people were supposed to do what they were told, and absolved them of responsibility. It turns out that if your leadership is based on the belief that there are leaders and there are followers, empowerment is just a Band-Aid for the fact that you've turned your people

into followers. Once treated like followers, people act like followers. It saps their passion and initiative.

In the military we love briefings. In a briefing the boss tells people what is going to happen and what is expected of them. We think this is helpful but only so in a top-down way. A brief is an active event for the briefer but passive for everyone else. Members “are briefed.” In other words, show up, we’ll tell you what to do.

Recognizing this limitation onboard Santa Fe we eliminated all briefs and replaced them with certifications where the junior officers and sailors reported their anticipated actions to a senior officer. That senior officer weighed the depth of the responses and decided whether or not the team was ready to conduct the event. Thus, a certification was different from a briefing in two key ways: firstly, it was active for the entire team, not passive; secondly, it was a decision point. I now have health care providers interested in how they could apply this practice before surgical procedures.

Another example where we had been taking responsibility and control away from people was the practice of “checking out” with your boss. Typically these checkouts consisted of asking if there was anything else the boss had for them. Again, the problem is that this checkout is premised on the assumption that the boss is responsible for

determining what needs to be done in your job, not you. We replaced these check outs with “here’s what I’ve done” and “here’s what I need help with” discussions. The same is true with the elaborate tracking and “to-do” systems we had, so we eliminated those as well. The key is that when giving control, you need more communication among members of the organization, not less. This isn’t an approach of “fire and forget” where subordinates go off and do what they want without keeping management informed. Far from it!

We didn’t have a lot of time for speeches so all of our changes followed the same basic approach: we worked hard to discover the DNA, the genetic code for what was driving that cultural impression and then we went and made the appropriate changes to our policies and procedures that would eventually be reflected in perceived cultural changes.

Here’s an example.

Three months later we arrived in San Diego and one of our sailors went AWOL – absent without leave. I discovered we had kept him up for 36 hours with excessive watchstanding, all-hands training, and the preparations for pulling into port. He was standing watch 6-hours on/6-hours off while at the same time supervisors were 6-on

and 24- or even 36-hours off. This upset me tremendously as one of the things I'd been harping on was taking care of our people. I discovered that when I gave those speeches my crew assumed I was talking about someone else, and that they were in fact "taking care of their people."

Thus, we made a new rule. Supervisors could not stand watch in a rotation better than the watchstation immediately below them. This upset some supervisors who viewed their advancement as a path to privileges not obligation. With time, the supervisors, wanting to make their own rotation better, qualified enough sailors so that the entire crew was in a 6-hours on/18-hours off rotation – a tremendous feat. The supervisors stood the same rotation as the most junior enlisted man. People who visited the ship were astounded to see that and remarked that we had a strong culture of taking care of our people. But I had stopped talking about it. What we had was a rule.

We made more changes to the organization manual. We eliminated the requirement for vacation requests for the crew to go to any officer. The senior enlisted man would sign all of them.

These, and dozens of other mechanisms shifted the culture on the boat from "you tell me what to do and I'll do it" to "I'll figure out what needs to be done, and get it done."

The late Stephen R. Covey of 7 Habits heard what we were doing and asked to ride the submarine. The navy set it up and he met us in Hawaii. We spent a day together and observed the officers coming up to me all day long stating their intentions. He called Santa Fe the “most empowered workplace he’d ever seen.” But again, we didn’t have a policy of empowerment, we had a rule where officers stated their intentions instead of waiting for orders. It was perceived as a culture of empowerment.

But giving control can be tricky. Giving control without ensuring technical competence and organizational clarity will result in chaos.

We learned a tremendous amount as we gave more and more decision-making authority to the crew. (We called this control.) We learned that control by itself is not enough, just as empowering people to make decisions is not enough. Control needed to be coupled with higher levels of technical competence and higher levels of organizational clarity in order to align the decision making of the crew. While distributing control is the bridge to releasing the passion of your employees, competence and clarity are the pillars that hold it up.

My crew responded brilliantly to these initiatives and came up with many more. Some worked out and we kept them. Others didn’t work out and we dropped them. The

problem was me. Every time we'd hit a bump my reaction was to immediately take control again. I was tired of getting blamed for mistakes my crew had made.

Of course, since I was responsible for what decisions I had delegated to the crew and for training them, I was accountable. I realized that my perceptions of leadership, my instincts, and my images from the movies all biased me toward the strong, leader-follower model. Repeatedly I needed to go into my stateroom and close the door, collect my thoughts and try again. After thinking it through, I would steel myself, re-emerge, and continue to push authority down the chain of command.

Eventually, these efforts paid off.

Santa Fe performed superbly while I served as its captain. The release of intellectual power, distributed decision-making, and passion were overwhelming. We went from worst to first in most operational measures including retention. Even though I assessed that people were working harder and thinking harder than they were before, retention skyrocketed. From 3 re-enlistments the previous year, we re-enlisted 33 sailors. That put us at the top of the fleet. What was special, however, was that the leadership structure embedded the “goodness” of what we did in the people and practices of the submarine, which continued to do well long after my departure. Only 10 years later

can we assess the true success of that work – with Santa Fe’s continued operational excellence and the implausibly high promotion rates for its officers and crew. This is the legacy of giving control, creating leaders.

I am guessing that, like me, you will feel discomfort as you give control to others. This is normal. I frequently failed to live up to the image I’d created for myself as a leader. I’d come down hard on myself and sulk, but this wasn’t helpful behavior. Once I got over it, I was out there trying again and again. As you face these challenges you will find your own kryptonite, you will struggle, and you will overcome. And your greatest achievement will be helping those around you embrace their inner superhero.

Footnotes:

1. 2013 Gallup poll reported in the Hampton Roads Pilot online accessed here: <http://hamptonroads.com/2013/07/gallup-poll-most-us-are-blah-about-work>
2. This story was originally published in the Summer 2013 Leader-to-Leader Journal of the Frances Hesselbein Institute, Marquet, L. D. (2013), How to Release the Untapped Creativity, Passion, and Intellect of Your Employees. Leader to Leader, 2013: 42–47. doi: 10.1002/ltl.20087. The Frances Hesselbein Institute was formerly the Peter F. Drucker Foundation for Non-Profit Management and was borne of the collaboration between the great leadership thinking of the two namesakes. Their website, www.hesselbeininstitute.org provides a host of well thought out leadership material.

The Key To



Excellence

Chapter Eight:

How the Little Things Inspire Greatness

Matt Tenney



[Matt Tenney](#) believes that kindness, compassion, generosity, and service are the most powerful secrets to success as a leader, and in life.

Since 2006, after transforming his greatest failure into the most important experience of his life, Matt has had a successful career as a sales team leader, co-founded and led two non-profits, and become a trainer with the prestigious Perth Leadership Institute, whose clients include numerous Fortune 500 companies.

As an author and professional speaker, Matt shares leadership insights from his journey as a prisoner, monk, and social entrepreneur to help organizations develop highly effective leaders who are devoted to serving and inspiring greatness in others. His company donates all after-tax profits to charity.

How the Little Things Inspire Greatness

I believe that greatness is simply a function of consistently doing the little things in life that really matter.

One of my favorite examples of how powerful it can be to do the “little things” comes from the work I’ve done with Kids Kicking Cancer. Through this program we teach youth battling serious illnesses like cancer and sickle cell anemia to lower their own pain levels and achieve peace of mind using the mindfulness-based secrets of the martial arts.

Although I co-founded the Gainesville chapter of [Kids Kicking Cancer](#) and currently serve as the program director, I spent over two years as an instructor, working directly with patients. As inspired as I’ve often been by the heroes I’ve met through my work with Kids Kicking Cancer, I never thought that I would learn incredible lessons about leadership from a patient on a pediatric cancer unit. But, in early 2013, while I was still instructing group classes for our Gainesville program, that’s exactly what happened.

I had the pleasure of meeting a teenager named Daniel. It didn't take long to realize that he is one of the most kind, polite, and positive people I have ever met. He has also lived an incredibly challenging life.

Years ago, he was diagnosed with cancer. He had surgery, went through the hell of chemo and radiation therapies, and left the hospital free of cancer thinking that he would live the rest of his life without having to worry about it.

But, within a couple years, the cancer came back. He went through the hell again, and again left the hospital thinking he was finally done with being sick.

This time, though, when the cancer came back, it was everywhere. He was told that there was nothing that could be done to treat it and that he would probably only live a few more months. I spent time with him minutes after he had received this news. It was obvious that he had cried.

It's OK for leaders to cry.

He told me that he hadn't started to cry until he saw his mother crying. Apparently, being told you're going to die is not that bad. What really hurts, he said, is seeing those you love deal with the fact that they're going to lose you soon.

Despite this news, Daniel still came to the class I led that day. In fact, he was the first to arrive and the last to leave. He was incredibly positive during the class and was a great role model for the younger students.

Great leaders continue to lead by example even when things are really, really tough.

A few days later, I was spending time with Daniel in his room. He had just eaten a whole meal of delicious steak nachos. He was playing a video game and chatting with me between levels. After a few moments, the woman who delivers the hospital meals came in. She placed the food on the table on wheels, and slid the table to the bed so that it fit snugly against Daniel's chest.

This forced Daniel to pause his game. But he looked at the woman with a smile and thanked her sincerely. The woman smiled as she left. The moment the door closed, he pushed the table away from the bed, having no interest in the food, and went back to playing his game.

Although this may seem subtle, it was a very powerful teaching for me. I consider myself a fairly kind and patient person, but I'm quite certain that if I were Daniel I

would have politely told the woman that I wasn't hungry and that she could leave the food over on the table away from the bed.

But Daniel didn't do that. After receiving the worst news you could ever receive only a few days earlier, he was so sensitive to the woman's feelings that he allowed her to do her job and thanked her for it, despite the fact that it interrupted his game and he had no interest in the food, because, as he later told me, he knew that it would make her feel good.

Great leaders know that there's nothing more important in leadership and in life than doing what we can to make the people around us happy.

A few days later, I spoke with a friend of mine who is a director at a Fortune 100 company. She told me about a VP who had led a meeting that afternoon, likely trying to "rally the troops," in which he said variations of the "f---" word nearly 20 times. At one point, he told his people that he didn't give a "f---" about them. He later said to not take it personally because he wears his emotions on his sleeve, and that when he's having a bad day people will know he's having a bad day.

His people left that meeting feeling completely demoralized, with no desire to follow him anywhere. I wouldn't be surprised if some of his people are actually plotting ways to do less than before and maybe even help him get fired so that they won't have to deal with him anymore.

When I heard this, I thought of Daniel, and I cried. That VP has no idea what a bad day is.

I thought, "I wish Daniel could lead those people." Daniel has the emotional intelligence and strength of character to go through years of hell that will likely culminate in watching his mother watch him die and, burdened with this knowledge, still be able to treat a woman who delivers food in the hospital who had just disrupted him as though she is the most important person in the world.

What could the people at that Fortune 100 company achieve if they had a leader who was more like Daniel?

Greatness, I believe.

Afterword

I hope this book inspired you and provided you with many ideas and tactics that you can apply to become a great leader.

If so, please share this book with others by sending them this link –
www.MattTenney.com/the-key-to-leadership-excellence.*

On that web page, you can also leave comments or ask questions about the book.
I'd love to hear from you!

(*I do ask that you share this link versus just sending the PDF itself. I trust that you'll do the right thing.)