JOHN C. MAXWELL

10 Lessons

DEVELOPING *the* LEADER WITHIN YOU 2.0

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Developing the Leader Within You 2.0 Workbook
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PREFACE TO THE
2.0 EDITION

I can hardly believe it's been twenty-five years since I wrote the original manuscript of *Developing the Leader Within You*. I can't tell you how excited I am to share with you the things I've learned since I first wrote this book. And how excited I was to turn the ten chapters of the book into ten vital leadership lessons.

I have extensively rewritten this entire workbook, but it still contains the foundational lessons for becoming a good leader. This is the edition I recommend that people read to start their leadership development journeys. This is still what I recommend that leaders use to mentor others in leadership. Having it in workbook form will make the development process even easier. I've taken great pains to give this workbook greater depth, to focus it more specifically on a leader's needs. For example, instead of doing general teaching on integrity and attitude, as I did in the original version, I look more specifically at how those characteristics can make someone a better leader.

In addition, I also removed two lessons that were focused on developing staff (which I cover in depth in other books) and replaced them with two new ones on topics vital to developing you as a leader: servanthood, which is the heart of the leader, and personal growth, which is the expansion of leadership. I look back now and think, How in the world did I miss those the first time around?

If you read the original version of the book, you're going to be pleased by all the new material and insights I've included in this new 2.0 edition celebrating the book's twenty-fifth anniversary. I can't imagine offering a better leadership development tune-up than this.

If this workbook is new to you, you're in for a treat, because you're going to receive everything you need to take a significant step in your leadership journey, along with in-depth exercises designed to develop the leader within you. If you complete all of the exercises and answer all of the questions, you will be amazed at how much your influence, your effectiveness, and your impact will increase in

such a short time. And if you're going through this process with a group, you'll enjoy the discussion questions I've included at the end of each lesson so that you can explore ideas in even greater depth and grow along with others.

And just one more thing before you get started: the first two lessons will be the most time-consuming, but they will be the most rewarding. The work you do will have a very high return on your leadership development. So if they seem difficult, please don't become discouraged. And don't expect everything in the workbook to take that long to do. Keep at it. I guarantee it will be worth the effort.

So are you ready? Let's go. Turn the page, and begin developing the leader within you.

Thank you to:

Charlie Wetzel, my writer Stephanie Wetzel, who edited the first draft Carolyn Kokinda, who typed my manuscript notes Linda Eggers, my executive assistant

LESSON ONE

THE DEFINITION OF LEADERSHIP:

INFLUENCE

Why has leadership become so important? Because people are recognizing that becoming a better leader changes lives. Everything rises and falls on leadership. The world becomes a better place when people become better leaders. Developing yourself to become the leader you have the potential to be will change *everything* for you. It will add to your effectiveness, subtract from your weaknesses, divide your workload, and multiply your impact.

CONSIDER

How would your life change if your influence increased, your workload decreased, and you focused on using your strengths while others used their strengths in your areas of weakness?

[Your Response Here]

Why Many People Don't Develop as Leaders

More and more people recognize the value of good leadership, yet not very many work to become better leaders. Why is that? Despite the widespread prevalence of leadership books and classes, many people think leadership isn't for them. Maybe it's because they make one of these assumptions:

I'm Not a "Born Leader," So I Can't Lead

Leaders are not born. Well, okay, they're *born*. I've never met an unborn leader. (And I wouldn't want to.) What I really mean is that your ability to lead is not set at birth. While it's true that some people are born with more natural gifts that will help them lead at a higher level, everyone has the potential to become a leader. And leadership can be developed and improved by anyone willing to put in the effort.

A Title and Seniority Will Automatically Make Me a leader

I believe this kind of thinking was more common in my generation and that of my parents, but it can still be seen today. People think they need to be appointed to a position of leadership, when the reality is that becoming a good leader requires desire and some basic tools. You can have a title and seniority and be incapable of leading. And you can have no title or seniority and be a good leader.

Work Experience Will Automatically Make Me a Leader

Leadership is like maturity. It doesn't automatically come with age. Sometimes age comes alone. Tenure does not create leadership ability. In fact, it's more likely to engender entitlement than leadership ability.

I'm Waiting Until I Get a Position to Start Developing as a Leader

This last assumption has been the most frustrating to me as a teacher of leadership. When I first started hosting leadership conferences, people would say, "If I ever become a leader"—meaning if they were ever appointed to a leadership position—"then maybe I'll come to one of your seminars." What's the problem? As legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden said, "When opportunity comes, it's too late to prepare." If you start learning about leadership now, not only will you increase your opportunities, but you'll also make the

most of them when they arrive.

CONSIDER

Which of these false assumptions may be holding you back? Mark whether you have thought or said these statements.

YES	NO	
☐	☐	I’m not a “born leader,” so I can’t lead.
☐	☐	A title and seniority will automatically make me a leader.
☐	☐	Work experience will automatically make me a leader.
☐	☐	I’m waiting until I get a position to start developing as a leader.

What must you do to change the way you think in any area you marked yes?

[Your Response Here]

How Will You Develop the Leader Within You?

The bottom line is that if you've never done anything to develop yourself as a leader, you can start today. And if you have already begun your leadership journey, you can become a better leader than you already are by intentionally developing the leader within you.

What will that take? That's the subject of this workbook. These ten lessons contain what I consider to be the ten *essentials* for developing yourself as a leader.

Let's start with the most important concept of the ten: *influence*. After more than five decades of observing leaders around the world and many years of developing my own leadership potential, I have come to this conclusion: *Leadership is influence.* That's it—nothing more, nothing less. That's why my favorite leadership proverb is "He who thinketh he leadeth and hath no one following him is only taking a walk." For you to be a leader, someone has to be following you. I love what James C. Georges, founder and chairman of the PAR Group, said in an interview I read years ago: "What is leadership? Remove for a moment the moral issues behind it, and there is only one definition: *Leadership is the ability to obtain followers.*"[1]

Leadership is the ability to obtain followers.

James C. Georges

Anyone—for good or ill—who gets others to follow is a leader. That means Hitler was a leader. (Did you know that *TIME* named Hitler their Man of the Year in 1938 because he had greater influence on the world than anyone else?) Osama bin Laden was a leader. Jesus of Nazareth was a leader. So was Joan of Arc. Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill, Martin Luther King Jr., and John F. Kennedy were leaders. While the value systems, abilities, and goals of all these people were vastly different, each of them attracted followers. They all had

influence.

CONSIDER

What is your reaction to the negative leaders listed among the positive ones? What does that say about leadership?

[Your Response Here]

Influence is the beginning of true leadership. If you mistakenly define leadership as the ability to achieve a position instead of the ability to attract followers, then you will go after position, rank, or title to try to become a leader. But this type of thinking results in two common problems. First, what do you do if you attain the status of a leadership position but experience the frustration of having no one follow you? Second, what if you never achieve the “proper” title? Will you keep waiting to try to make a positive impact on the world?

My goal with this workbook is to help you understand how influence works, and use it as the starting point for learning how to lead more effectively. Each lesson is designed to help you acquire skills and abilities that further develop you as a leader. With the addition of each skill set, you will become a better leader.

Insights About Influence

Before we get into the particulars of how influence with others works and how to develop it, let's nail down a few important insights about influence:

1. Everyone Influences Someone

My friend Tim Elmore, the founder of Growing Leaders, once told me that sociologists estimate that even the most introverted individual will influence ten thousand other people during his or her lifetime. Isn't that amazing? Every day you influence others. And you are influenced by others. That means no one is excluded from being both a leader and a follower.

If you are observant, you can discover the prominent leader of any group. Titles and positions don't matter. Just watch the people as they gather. As they work to resolve an issue or make a decision, whose opinion seems most valuable? Who is the person others watch the most when the issue is being discussed? Who is the one with whom people quickly agree? Whom do others defer to and follow? Answers to these questions point you to who the real leader is in a particular group.

You have influence in this world, but *realizing your potential* as a leader is your responsibility. If you put effort into developing yourself as a leader, you have the potential to influence more people and to do so in more significant ways.

CONSIDER

Who do you influence? List their names here. Be sure to include people not only in the workplace but also in other areas of your life.

[Your Response Here]

2. We Don't Always Know Who or How Much We Influence

One of the most effective ways to understand the power of influence is to think

about the times you have been touched in your life by a person or an event. Think about the people who influenced you in a powerful way, or the little things that meant a lot to you. I can point to the influence of a camp I attended as a youth and how it helped determine my career choice. My seventh-grade teacher, Glen Leatherwood, began to stir a sense of calling in my life that I continue to live out today in my seventies. When my mother bought bubble lights for our family Christmas tree, there was no way for her to know that they would evoke the feeling of Christmas in me every year. The affirming note I received from a professor in college kept me going at a time when I was doubting myself. My list is endless. So is yours.

We are influenced every day by so many people. Sometimes small things make big impressions. We have been molded into the people we are by those influences. And we mold others, often when we least expect it. Author and educator J. R. Miller said it well: "There have been meetings of only a moment which have left impressions for life, for eternity. No one of us can understand that mysterious thing we call influence . . . yet out of every one of us continually virtue goes, either to heal, to bless, to leave marks of beauty; or to wound, to hurt, to poison, to stain other lives."[2]

CONSIDER

In what ways are you influencing the people you already listed? Are you healing, blessing, and helping them? Or are you wounding, hurting, and poisoning them? Why do you do what you do?

[Your Response Here]

3. The Best Investment in Tomorrow Is to Develop Your Influence Today

What's your greatest investment possibility for the future? The stock market? Real estate holdings? More education? All of these things have value. But I would argue that one of the best investments you can make in yourself is to develop your influence. Why? Because if you have the desire to accomplish

something, you will be in a better place to do it if others are willing to help.

In the book *Leaders*, Warren G. Bennis and Burt Nanus say, “The truth is that leadership opportunities are plentiful and within reach of most people.”[3] That’s true in businesses, volunteer organizations, and social groups. If you’re an entrepreneur, those opportunities are multiplied exponentially. The question is, will you be ready for them when they come? To make the most of them, you must prepare for leadership today and learn how to cultivate influence and use it positively to make a difference.

The Five Levels of Leadership

When I began studying influence, I also drew upon my own leadership experience and what I observed in leaders I respected and admired. What I discovered is that influence can be developed in five stages. I turned those stages into a tool that I call the 5 Levels of Leadership. It provides a model of influence that can help you better understand the dynamics of leadership, and it also creates a road map you can follow to develop influence with others. I've been teaching this model of leadership for more than thirty years, and I can't count the number of people it's helped. I hope it helps you in the same way it has others.

Take a look at the graphic of the 5 Levels. As you work to develop influence with others, your goal is to earn each level and add it to the dynamics of your relationship with others. Most of the time that occurs in order from Level 1 up through the levels. However, that's not always true. You can develop more than one level simultaneously.

Let's examine each of the levels. You'll quickly get a handle on how they work.

Level 1: Position

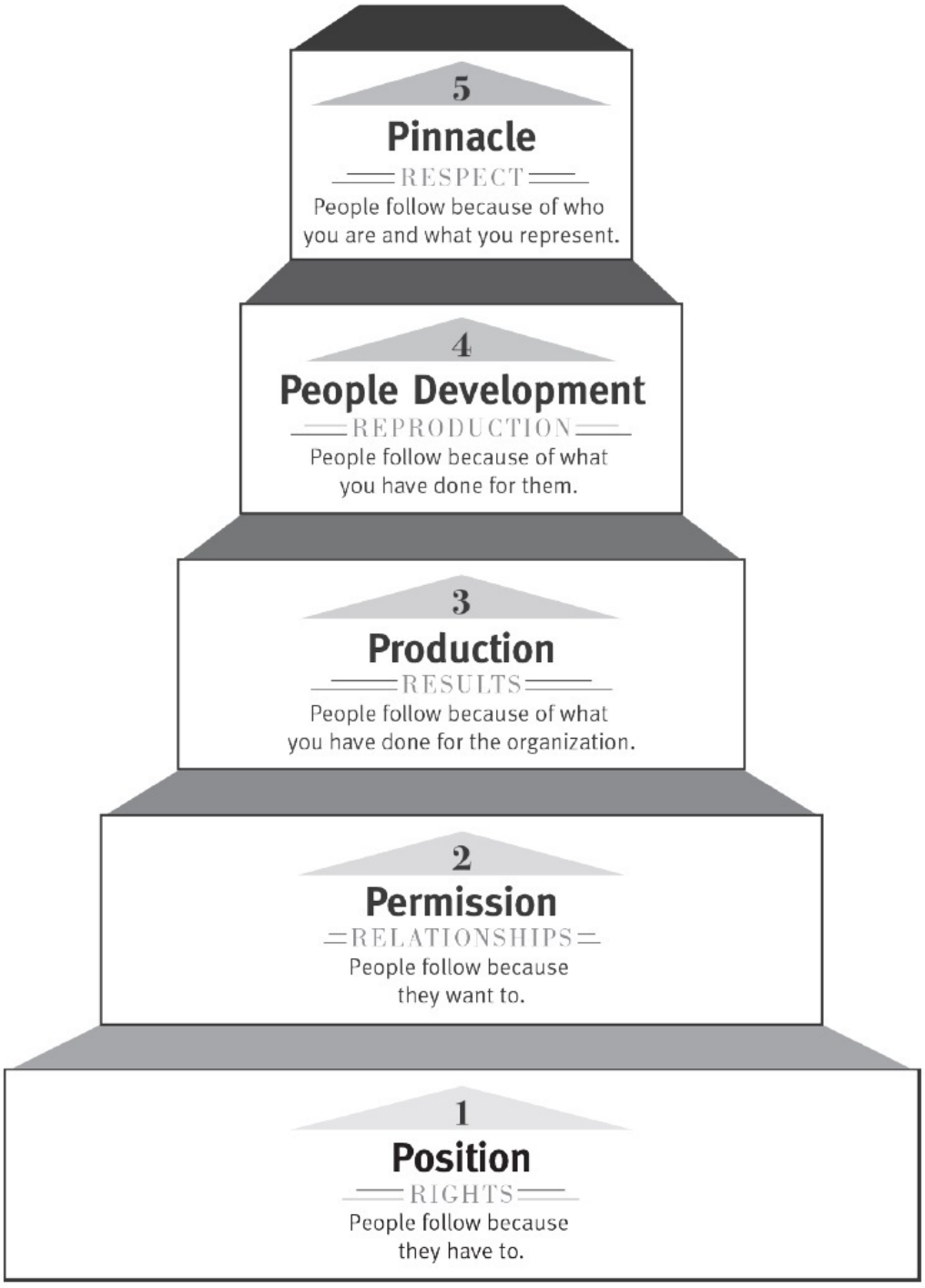
The most basic entry level of leadership is the Position level. Why is this the lowest level? Because Position represents leadership *before* a leader has developed any real influence with the people being led. In generations past, people would follow leaders simply because they possessed a title or position of authority. But that is not very common today in American culture. People will follow a positional leader only as far as they *have* to.

When I took my first job as a leader in 1969, people were respectful of me. They were kind. But I had no real influence. I was twenty-two. They could see how little I knew, even if I couldn't. I found out how little influence I had when I led my first board meeting. I started the meeting with my agenda in hand. But then Claude started to talk. He was just an old farmer, but everyone in the room looked to him for leadership. Whatever he said held the most weight. Claude wasn't pushy or disrespectful. He didn't do a power play. He didn't have to. He already had all the power. He just wanted to get things done.

POSITION IS A GOOD PLACE TO START IN LEADERSHIP, BUT IT'S A TERRIBLE PLACE TO STAY.

It's very clear to me now that in that first job, I was a leader living on Level 1. All I had going for me at first was my position—along with a good work ethic and a desire to make a difference. I learned more on Level 1 than at any other time in my early years of leading. I figured out pretty quickly that a title and position won't get a person very far in leadership.

The 5 Levels of Leadership



People who have been appointed to a position may have authority, but that authority doesn't exceed their job description. Positional leaders have certain *rights*. They have the right to enforce the rules. They have the right to tell people to do their jobs. They have the right to use whatever power they have been granted. But real leadership is more than having granted authority

Position is a good place to start in leadership, but it's a terrible place to stay. Anyone who never leads beyond Position depends on territorial rights, protocol, tradition, and organizational charts. These things are not inherently negative—unless they become the basis for authority. They are poor substitutes for leadership skills.

If you've been in a leadership position for any length of time, how do you know whether you are relying too much on your position to lead? Here are three common characteristics of positional leaders:

Positional Leaders Look for Security Based on Title More Than Talent

There's a story about a private during World War I who saw a light in his trench on the battlefield and shouted, "Put out that match!" Much to his chagrin, he discovered that the offender was General "Black Jack" Pershing. Fearing severe punishment, the private tried to stammer out an apology, but General Pershing patted him on the back and said, "That's all right, son. Just be glad I'm not a second lieutenant."

The higher people's level of ability and the resulting influence, the more secure and confident they become. A new second lieutenant might be tempted to rely on his rank and use it as a weapon. A general doesn't need to.

Positional Leaders Rely on Their Leader's Influence Instead of Their Own

Baseball Hall of Famer Leo Durocher, who managed the Giants from 1948 to 1955, was once coaching at first base in an exhibition game played at the United States Military Academy at West Point. During the game, a noisy cadet kept shouting at Durocher, trying to get under his skin.

"Hey, Durocher," he hollered. "How did a little squirt like you get into the major leagues?"

Durocher shouted back, "My congressman appointed me!"[4]

Just because people may be appointed to a position of authority doesn't

automatically mean they can develop influence. Because some positional leaders can't, and possess no influence or authority of their own, they rely on the authority of their boss or the person who appointed them. Anytime they fear that their team members won't follow them, they're quick to say, "We need to do this because the boss says so." That kind of borrowed authority can wear thin after a while.

Positional Leaders Can't Get People to Follow Them Beyond Their Defined Authority

A common reaction of followers to positional leaders is to do only what's required and nothing more. If you've observed leaders asking people to do something extra, stay late, or go out of their way, only to have the people refuse or say, "That's not my job," then you might be seeing the results of positional leadership. People who define their leadership by position will find themselves in a place where people will do only what's required based on the *rights* granted by that position. People do not become committed to vision or causes led by positional leaders.

If any of these three characteristics describe you, then you may be relying too much on your position, which means you need to work harder at cultivating influence. Until you do, the team you lead will have low energy and you will feel as if every task is a major ordeal. To change that, you'll need to start focusing on the next level of leadership.

CONSIDER

What do you rely on for your authority? Respond to the following:

YES	NO	
❑	❑	I tell people to do things because my boss wants it done.
❑	❑	I quote or reference policies or rules to get people to do things I want done.
❑	❑	I tell people I'm their boss and I therefore make the decisions.
❑	❑	I make sure people know my title.
❑	❑	I remind people that I have seniority.

- ☐ I remind people that I'm more experienced than they are.
- ☐ I tell people to do things because I said so.
- ☐ I tell people to do a task because it's their job.

If you checked yes to any of these statements, you're relying too much on your position, and you need to develop greater influence with people you lead.

Level 2: Permission

My friend and mentor Fred Smith says, "Leadership is getting people to work for you when they are not obligated."[5] That is the essence of the second level of leadership, Permission.

Leaders who remain on the Position level and never develop their influence often lead by intimidation. They are like the chickens that Norwegian psychologist Thorleif Schjelderup-Ebbe studied in developing the "pecking order" principle that is commonly used to describe all kinds of groups. Schjelderup-Ebbe found that in any flock, one hen usually dominates all the others. This dominant hen can peck any other without being pecked in return. The second in the order can peck all the others except the top hen. The rest are arranged in a descending hierarchy, finally ending with one hapless hen who can be pecked by all but who can peck no one else.

In contrast, Permission is characterized by good *relationships*. The motto on this level could be written as, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." True influence begins with the heart, not the head. It flourishes through personal connections, not rules and regulations. The agenda on this level is not pecking order; it's people connection. Leaders who succeed on this level focus their time and energy on the needs and desires of the individuals on their team. And they connect with them.

People who are unwilling or unable to build solid, lasting relationships soon discover that they are also unable to sustain lasting, effective leadership.

The classic illustration of someone who didn't do this is Henry Ford in the early days of the Ford Motor Company. He wanted his laborers to work like machines, and he attempted to control their interactions outside of work with rules and regulations. And his focus was totally on his product, the Model T, which he believed was the perfect car, and which he never wanted to change. When people started asking for it in colors other than black, he famously responded, "You can have any color you want as long as it's black."

People who are unwilling or unable to build solid, lasting relationships soon discover that they are also unable to sustain lasting, effective leadership. Needless to say, you can care about people without leading them, but you cannot lead people well without caring about them. People won't go along with you if they cannot get along with you. That's just the way it is.

On Level 2, as you connect with people, build relationships with them, and earn their trust, you begin to develop real influence with them. That makes you want to work together more. It makes you more cooperative with one another. It makes the environment more positive. It boosts everyone's energy. And in work settings, people stay longer and work harder.

CONSIDER

Keeping in mind the people you lead and the environment you help to create, answer each of these questions:

YES	NO	
☐	☐	The people I lead know that I care about them as individuals.
☐	☐	The people I lead can and do trust me.
☐	☐	I know my people's personalities, talents, values, and aspirations.
☐	☐	The people I lead are willing to do more than the minimum for me.
☐	☐	I like my work environment and so do the people who work with me.

Gaining Permission from people you lead requires a personal connection. If you answered no to any of the questions, make the effort to develop relationships with people so that you can answer yes.

If you've been given a leadership position, then you've been given your boss's permission to lead. If you've earned influence on Level 2, then you have acquired your people's permission to lead. That's powerful. However, I do have to caution you. Staying too long on this level without adding Level 3 will cause highly motivated people to become restless. So let's talk about Production.

Level 3: Production

Nearly anyone can succeed on the first two levels of leadership. People can receive a *position* and develop *permission* with little or no innate leadership ability. It's a fact that if you care about people and are willing to learn how to work with them, you can start to gain influence. But that influence will only go so far. To really get things going, you need to win the Production level.

On Level 3, people get things done. And they help the members of their team get things done. Together they produce *results*. That's when good things really begin to happen for the organization. Productivity goes up. People reach goals. Profit increases. Morale becomes high. Turnover becomes low. Team loyalty increases.

Organizations with leaders who are effective in leading on the first three levels of leadership become highly successful. They start winning. And when they do, they start to benefit from what I call "the Big Mo"—momentum. They grow. They solve problems more easily. Winning becomes normal. Leading becomes easier. Following becomes more fun. The work environment becomes high-energy.

Be aware that most people naturally gravitate to either the Permission or the Production level of leadership, based on whether they tend to be *relationship* people or *results* people. If people naturally build relationships, they may enjoy getting together, but they do it with the sole objective of being together and enjoying one another. If you've ever worked in an environment where meetings are pleasant and everyone gets along—but nothing gets accomplished—then you may have worked with someone who gets Level 2 but not Level 3. (And if you've worked where meetings are productive but relationally miserable, you may have worked with someone who gets Level 3 but not Level 2!) However, as a leader, if you can add *results* to *relationships* and develop a team of people who like each other and get things done, you have created a powerful combination.

CONSIDER

Which comes more naturally to you, Permission or Production? Why? What can you do to improve in the area that is more difficult for you?

[Your Response Here]

When you lead a productive team of people who like working together, you give others a reason to want to work with you, to follow you. For example, if you and a friend were picking players for a basketball game, and you could choose between me and LeBron James, it's clear who you'd pick: the guy who wins championships, not the guy who played basketball in high school more than fifty years ago! You want the guy who can produce and inspire his teammates to produce right along with him.

CONSIDER

Which members of your team are most productive? In what role or with which skill are they most productive? And what can you do to improve their productivity and help them work better with the team? Write your answers below:

TEAM MEMBER	AREA OF CONTRIBUTION	HOW YOU CAN LEAD HIM OR HER BETTER
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Level 4: People Development

If you gain influence with your team on Levels 1, 2, and 3, people will consider you a fantastic leader. You will get a lot done, and you will be considered successful. But there are higher levels of leadership, because the greatest leaders do more than just get things done.

There are so many different kinds of leaders, both male and female. They come in all shapes and sizes, ages and degrees of experience, races and nationalities, from genius to average intelligence. What separates the good from the great?

Leaders become great not because of their power but because of their ability to empower others. Success without a successor is ultimately failure. To create anything lasting, to develop a team or organization that can grow and improve, to build anything for the future, a leader's main responsibility is to develop other people: to help them reach their personal potential, to help them do their jobs more effectively, and to help them learn to become leaders themselves. This kind of people development leads to *reproduction*.

Leaders become great not because of their power but because of their ability to empower others.

People development has a multiplying effect. Teams and organizations go to a whole new level when leaders begin developing others. One team develops enough leaders to create additional teams. One division, operation, or location develops enough leaders to create additional ones. Because everything rises and falls on leadership, having more and better leaders always leads to having a better organization.

The People Development level has another positive side effect: loyalty to the

leader. People tend to be loyal to the mentor who helps improve their lives. If you watch a leader develop influence through the levels, you can see how the relationship progresses. On Level 1, the team member *has to follow* the leader. On Level 2, the team member *wants to follow* the leader. On Level 3, the team member *appreciates and admires* the leader because of what he or she has done for the team. On Level 4, the team member *becomes loyal* to the leader because of what the leader has done for him or her personally. You win people's hearts and minds by helping them grow personally.

CONSIDER

What would happen if you focused more attention on People Development? How would it benefit your team and your organization? How would it help you personally? How would it help your career? How would it help the people you develop?

[Your Response Here]

Not every good leader works to develop influence on Level 4. In fact, most leaders aren't even aware that Level 4 exists. They are so focused on their own productivity and that of their team that they don't realize they should be developing people. If that describes you, I want to help you. I've created some questions you should ask yourself about developing people that can help position you for success on Level 4:

1. Am I Passionate About My Personal Growth?

Only growing people are effective at growing others. If you still have that fire within you, people will feel it around you. I'm seventy years old, and I'm still fixated on growth.

2. Does My Growth Journey Have Credibility?

The first thing people ask themselves when you offer to help them grow is whether you have anything to offer that can help them. The key to that answer is

your credibility. In their book *The Leadership Challenge*, James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner expound on what they call the Kouzes-Posner First Law of Leadership: If you don't believe in the messenger, you won't believe the message. They go on to say of credibility, "Loyalty, commitment, energy, and productivity depend on it."[6]

3. Are People Attracted to Me Because of My Growth?

People want to learn from leaders they see growing and learning. One year at the Leadership Open, which my nonprofit organization EQUIP hosted at Pebble Beach, many people remarked about the incredible growth they were seeing in Mark Cole, my CEO. That kind of dramatic yet humble growth is very attractive to people.

4. Am I Successful in the Areas Where I Want to Develop Others?

You cannot give what you do not have. When I develop people, I try to help them primarily in areas where I'm successful: speaking, writing, and leadership. Do you know the areas where I never give advice? Singing. Technology. Golf. Nobody wants to hear what I have to say about these subjects. I'd be wasting their time and mine.

5. Have I Crossed Over the Spend Time / Invest Time Line?

Most people spend time *with* others. Few invest time *in* them. If you want to succeed at Level 4, you need to become an *investor* in people. This means adding value but also expecting to see a return on your investment—not in personal gain but in impact. The return you're looking for is in people's personal growth, the betterment of their leadership, the impact of their work, the value they add to the team and organization. I learned this lesson at age forty when I realized my time was limited and I could not work any harder or longer than I already was. (I'll tell you more about this in the second lesson.) The only solution was to reproduce myself by investing in others. As they got better, the team got better. And so did I.

6. Do I Have a Teachable Way of Life?

Teachable people are the best teachers. To develop people, I need to remain teachable. That means wanting to learn, paying attention to what I learn, desiring to share what I learn, and knowing with whom to share it.

7. Am I Willing to Be a Vulnerable Role Model and Coach?

Developing people by investing in them doesn't mean pretending you have all the answers. It means being authentic, admitting what you don't know as much as what you do know, and learning as much as you can from the people you're developing. Learning is a two-way street. Continuing to develop myself as I develop others brings me great joy.

8. Do the People I Develop Succeed?

The ultimate goal in developing people is to help them transform their lives. Teaching may help someone's life *improve*. True development helps an individual's life *change*. How can you tell if that's happened? The person you've invested in succeeds. Not only is that the greatest sign of transformation, it's the greatest reward to a leader who develops people.

CONSIDER

How prepared are you to develop leaders? Answer the following:

YES	NO	
❑	❑	I am passionate about my personal growth.
❑	❑	My growth journey as a leader has credibility.
❑	❑	People are attracted to me because I am growing.
❑	❑	I am successful in the areas where I want to develop others.
❑	❑	I now *invest* time in people, not just spend time with people.
❑	❑	I am a teachable person.
❑	❑	I am willing to be authentic and vulnerable with the people I coach.
❑	❑	When I develop people, they experience greater success.

How did you do? The more yeses you can honestly answer to the eight questions, the better you're positioned to develop people. If your noes outnumbered your yeses, don't lose heart. Make growth your goal to set you up for future success on Level 4. You won't regret it because this is

where long-term success occurs. Your commitment to developing leaders will ensure ongoing growth in the organization, in the people you lead, and in your leadership impact. Do whatever you can to achieve and stay on this level.

Level 5: Pinnacle

The final level of leadership is the Pinnacle. If you read the original version of this book, you may recall that I called this level *Personhood*. But I think *Pinnacle* is a more descriptive name. This highest level is based on *reputation*. This is rarified air. Only a few people reach this level. Those who do have led well and proven their leadership over a lifetime, have invested in other leaders and raised them up to Level 4, and have developed influence not only in their own organizations but beyond them.

People at the Pinnacle level are known not only outside of their own organizations but outside of their fields, their countries, and even their lifetimes. For example, Jack Welch is a Level 5 leader in business. Nelson Mandela was a Level 5 leader in government. Martin Luther King Jr. was a Level 5 leader among social activists. Leonardo da Vinci was a Level 5 leader in the arts and engineering. Aristotle was a Level 5 leader in education and philosophy.

CONSIDER

Do you know anyone who has achieved the Pinnacle? If so, what did this person do to get there? Why is he or she given such high regard? Can this person function as a role model to you? Might he or she be willing to mentor you? Ask!

[Your Response Here]

Can everyone reach this level of leadership? No. Should we strive for it? Absolutely. But we shouldn't focus on it. Why? Because we can't manufacture respect in others, nor can we demand it. Respect must be freely given to us by others, so it's not within our control. For that reason, we should focus instead on

developing influence on Levels 2, 3, and 4 and work hard to sustain it day after day, year after year, decade after decade. If we do that, we've done all we can do.

Navigating the Levels of Leadership

I hope you can use the 5 Levels of Leadership as a clear visual reminder of how influence works. It's a paradigm *for* leadership and a pathway *to* leadership. Now that you can see the model, I want to give you a few insights that will help you not only to embrace it but to navigate using it as a leader:

- The 5 Levels of Leadership can be applied to every area of your life, both personal and professional.
- You are on a different level with each individual person in your life.
- Each time you add a level in your relationship with another person, your level of influence goes up.
- You never leave behind a previous level once you achieve a new one. The levels build and add to one another. They are not replaced.
- If you skip a level to try to speed up the process, you will have to circle back and earn that level anyway for the longevity of the relationship.
- The higher you go up the levels, the longer it takes.
- Each time you change jobs or join a new circle of people, you start on the lowest level and have to work your way up again.
- Once a level is earned, it must be maintained. No one ever "arrives" as a leader. Nothing is permanent in leadership.
- Just as you can add influence at a level, you can also lose influence at a level.
- It takes less time to lose a level than it does to earn it.

At this point in my life and career, the 5 Levels of Leadership have become second nature to me. As soon as I meet people, I begin working on the relationship. As soon as we've developed a connection, I try to add Production and achieve something together. And I begin looking for ways to add value to people and invest in them. I believe you can develop your influence in the same way I have. All it takes is will and intentionality.

If you're like me, you have goals. You want not only to achieve success but to experience significance. You want your leadership to make a difference. The level you achieve is more dependent on your influence than on any other single factor. That's why influence is so important. You just don't know how many lives you'll touch. All you can do is develop your influence so that when

opportunities come, you can make the best of them. Never doubt the power of one person of influence. Think of Aristotle. He mentored Alexander the Great, and Alexander conquered the world.

ASSIGNMENT

One of the great challenges of applying the 5 Levels of Leadership is that you must earn each level of influence with every person in your life. While it's true that your level of influence with others is either increasing or decreasing every day, you will find it beneficial to focus your attention on intentionally increasing your influence with only a limited number of people at first.

For that reason, I suggest you pick two people in your life right now with whom to intentionally build your influence. Choose one important person from your professional life, maybe your boss, a key team member, a colleague, or a client. And choose one important person from your personal life, perhaps your spouse, your child, a parent, or a neighbor. (Yes, it is possible to be on only the Position level with your spouse or child, and yes, you have to earn—or re-earn—influence at the higher levels.) If you are a high-capacity person with lots of ambition and energy, you may choose *three* people.

ASSESS

Write the names of the two or three people with whom you are choosing to increase your influence.

Person 1:_____
Person 2:_____
Person 3:_____

Place a check next to each statement below that is true for persons 1, 2, and 3.

Level 1 – Position

1 2 3

- ❑ ❑ ❑ This person acknowledges me as a leader.
- ❑ ❑ ❑ This person would say that I am authentic and trustworthy.
- ❑ ❑ ❑ This person would agree that I am suited for the leadership position I hold.

Level 2 – Permission

1 2 3

- ❑ ❑ ❑ I listen to this person and know facts about his or her family and personal life outside of their work.
- ❑ ❑ ❑ I know this person's personality, talent, values, and aspirations.
- ❑ ❑ ❑ This person trusts me and I trust him or her.

Level 3 – Production

1 2 3

- ❑ ❑ ❑ This person respects my professional abilities and qualities.
- ❑ ❑ ❑ I listen to this person and know facts about his or her family and personal life outside of their work.
- ❑ ❑ ❑ This person has become more productive because of my influence.
- ❑ ❑ ❑ This person would acknowledge that the team is more productive because of my leadership.

Level 4 – People Development

1 2 3

- ❑ ❑ ❑ I have given this person specific training and ongoing feedback that has helped him or her to perform better in work tasks.
- ❑ ❑ ❑ I have mentored this person or put him or her in a development process that has helped him or her to become a better leader.
- ❑ ❑ ❑ This person is now leading others because I have given opportunities and training for him or her to lead.

Level 5 – Pinnacle

1	2	3	
❑	❑	❑	This person not only is leading others because of my development but has trained those he or she leads to develop leaders, thanks to my input.
❑	❑	❑	This person could step into my role with a very high probability of success if I were to step down.
❑	❑	❑	This person is my advocate and champions me with other leaders so that I have others' respect even before I meet them.

To determine which level of leadership you are currently on with each person, examine which boxes you checked. If you checked all of the boxes on a level, then you have probably already earned influence on that level with the person. If any box on a level has not been checked, then you have probably not earned that level—or any of the levels above it, regardless of how many boxes have been checked in those other levels. In other words, the highest level you've achieved with a person is the lowest one with *all* the boxes checked.

ACTION PLAN

Begin creating a specific, personalized action plan for each person with the goal of earning influence at the level above the one you have already earned. Use the following suggestions to help you create your plans:

Level 1: Position—Influence Based on Rights

- Know your role or job description thoroughly.
- Do your job with consistent excellence.
- Do more than expected.
- Accept responsibility for yourself and your leadership.
- Learn from every leadership opportunity.
- Be aware of the history that impacts personal dynamics.
- Don't rely on your position or title to help you lead.

Level 2: Permission—Influence Based on Relationship

- Value the other person.
- Learn to see through the other person's eyes by asking questions.
- Care more about the person than about the rules.
- Include the other person in your journey by shifting your focus from *me* to *we.*
- Make the other person's success your goal.
- Practice servant leadership.

Level 3: Production—Influence Based on Results

- Initiate and accept responsibility for your own personal growth.
- Develop accountability for results, beginning with yourself.
- Lead by example and produce results.
- Help the other person find and give his or her best contribution.

Level 4: People Development—Influence Based on Reproduction

- Embrace the idea that people are your most valuable asset.
- Be open and honest about your growth journey.
- Expose the other person to growth and leadership opportunities.
- Place the person in the best place to be successful.

Level 5: Pinnacle—Influence Based on Respect

- Focus your influence on the most promising 20 percent of the people you lead.
- Teach and encourage them to develop other high-level leaders.
- Leverage your influence to advance the organization.
- Use your influence outside the organization to make a difference.

MY PLAN

Write what you intend to do with each person to get to the next level with him or her.

1. How I intend to earn influence with Person 1:

[Your Response Here]

2. How I intend to earn influence with Person 2:

[Your Response Here]

3. How I intend to earn influence with Person 3 (optional):

[Your Response Here]

INFLUENCE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

If you are part of a group going through this workbook, use the following questions to engage in group discussion. Keep in mind that the goals of good discussion are changing yourself and taking positive action.

1. Do you naturally desire to lead people or is taking leadership something you must push yourself to do? Explain your answer.

[Your Response Here]

2. In your opinion, what is the purpose of leadership?

[Your Response Here]

3. Why do you desire to become a better leader?

[Your Response Here]

4. Who are the leaders in your personal or professional life that you admire?

Explain why you admire them.

[Your Response Here]

5. What was your single greatest takeaway from this lesson? Why?

[Your Response Here]

6. Based on what you've learned in this lesson, how do you need to change? What concrete, measurable step can you take this week to grow in the area of influencing others?

[Your Response Here]

NOTES

[Your Response Here]

LESSON TWO

THE KEY TO LEADERSHIP:

PRIORITIES

Do you have plenty of time to do all that you want and need to do in a day? I'm guessing the answer is no. I have yet to meet any busy leaders who feel they have more than enough time to do all they want. In lesson one I mentioned that at age forty, I realized I alone couldn't work any harder or any longer, so I started investing in people. But I also realized that I needed to improve the way I managed myself and my time.

People used to talk a lot about time management, but the reality is that you can't manage time. Managing something means controlling it, changing it. When it comes to time, there is nothing to manage. Everybody gets twenty-four hours in a day. We can't add another hour or subtract one. We can't slow it down or speed it up. Time is what it is.

Coach and speaker Jamie Cornell wrote, "Time cannot and will not be managed, and you will never get more of it. The problem is rooted in the choices you are making with others and your own choices. You choose how to use it every moment of every day, whether you believe you do or not."[1]

For anyone who leads, the question is not, "Will my calendar be full?" but "Who and what will fill my calendar?" When I feel that I don't have enough time, I need to examine myself—my choices, my calendar, my *priorities*. These are the things we can control, not time. We need to determine how we will spend the twenty-four hours we have every day. That requires us to prioritize our time so we get more production out of those hours. That's especially true for leaders because our actions impact so many other people.

That's why I want to help you identify what you ought to want as a leader—not according to my priorities but according to yours. And I want to help you follow through on those priorities effectively to enhance your life and improve

your leadership.

Priority Principles

Someone once said, “An infant is born with a clenched fist; an adult dies with an open hand. Life has a way of prying free the things we think are so important.” If you want to develop the leader within you, don’t wait for tragedy to realign your priorities. Become proactive about the process starting today. Begin by acknowledging the following principles:

1. Working Smarter Has a Higher Return Than Working Harder

Novelist Franz Kafka said, “Productivity is being able to do things that you were never able to do before.” How do you make that happen? Doing the exact same things with greater intensity rarely works. As Albert Einstein allegedly pointed out, the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.

Disciplined use of the time everybody else wastes can give you the edge.

Dan Kennedy

So how do you get better results? You have to *rethink* how you do something. You have to work smarter. That means finding better ways to work and making the most of the moments you have. Marketing expert Dan Kennedy says, “Disciplined use of the time everybody else wastes can give you the edge.”[2] What leader doesn’t want that?

CONSIDER

What would it mean for you to work smarter rather than harder? You may want to narrow down your thinking to just a single area to help you

explore this concept. Pick an area where you have already tried hard work as the solution and have not succeeded.

[Your Response Here]

2. You Can't Have It All

When my son, Joel, was a young child, every time we entered a store, I would have to tell him, "You can't have it all." Like many people, he had a hard time narrowing his want list. But I believe that 95 percent of achieving anything is knowing what you want. That's especially important for someone who is leading others.

Years ago, I read a story about a group of people who were preparing for an ascent to the top of Mont Blanc in the French Alps. The evening before the climb, their French guide explained the main prerequisite for success. He said, "To reach the top, you must carry only what's necessary for climbing. You must leave behind all else. It's a very difficult climb."

A young Englishman disregarded the expert's advice, and the next morning he showed up with a bunch of items in addition to his equipment: a brightly colored blanket, large pieces of cheese, a bottle of wine, a couple of cameras with several lenses, and some bars of chocolate.

"You'll never make it with all that," said the guide. "You can only take the bare necessities to make the climb."

But the Englishman was young and strong-willed. He set off on his own in front of the group to prove that he could do it.

On the way up to the summit of Mont Blanc, the rest of the group, carrying only the necessities under the guide's direction, began to notice items along their path: first, there was a brightly colored blanket. Then a bottle of wine and some pieces of cheese. Camera equipment. And finally, chocolate bars.

When they reached the top, there was the Englishman. Wisely, he had jettisoned everything unnecessary along the way and had made the summit.

Many years ago, I read a poem by William H. Hinson that communicates a great lesson about priorities:

He who seeks one thing, and but one,

May hope to achieve it before life is done.
But he who seeks all things wherever he goes
Must reap around him in whatever he sows
A harvest of barren regret.

If you want to be successful as a person and as a leader, you must make choices. You must prioritize. You cannot have it all. No one can.

CONSIDER

If you were asked to list all of the important things in your life and then to narrow down the list until you identified the single thing that is most important, what would that one thing be? Write your list. Then circle your top five and put a star beside your number one.

[Your Response Here]

Do your daily activities and the time you spend reflect the priority of that one thing?

[Your Response Here]

3. The Good Is Always the Enemy of the Best

Most people can prioritize between the good and the bad or between right and wrong. The real challenge arises when they are faced with two good choices. Which should they choose?

An excellent illustration of this can be found in a parable of a lighthouse keeper who worked on a rocky stretch of coastline before the days of electricity. Once a month he received a supply of oil to keep the light burning.

Not being far from town, he often had visitors. One night an old woman from the village begged for some oil to keep her family warm. He had pity on her and gave her oil. Another time a father asked for some oil for his lamp so that he could search for his missing son. Another person needed some oil to keep

machinery going so that he and his employees could keep working. Each request was good, and each time, the lighthouse keeper gave them oil for their worthy cause.

Toward the end of the month, he noticed the supply of oil was very low. By the last night of the month, it was gone, and the beacon went out. That night in a storm, a ship wrecked on the rocks and lives were lost.

When the authorities investigated, the man was very repentant. But there was only one reply: "You were given oil for one purpose—to keep that light burning!"

As you become more successful and busier, you must learn to navigate the choice between two good things. You can't always have both. How do you choose? Remember that the good must sometimes be sacrificed for the best.

CONSIDER

What criteria do you use to evaluate what's important in your life? How do you differentiate the good from the best? If you've never considered this question, think about it now, and try to determine what factor determines your priority choices. If you're still not sure, review your calendar, to-do lists, and finances from the last six months. Based on how you spend your time and money, analyze what your deciding factor is.

[Your Response Here]

4. Proactive Beats Reactive

Every person is either an initiator or a reactor when it comes to planning. In my opinion, you can choose or you can lose. Proactive means choosing. Reactive means losing. The question isn't "Will I have things to do?" but "Will I do things that make a difference?" To be an effective leader, you need to be proactive.

CONSIDER

Take a look at the difference between initiators and reactors. Check the phrase on each line that better describes you:

INITIATORS	**REACTORS**
☐ Prepare	☐ Repair
☐ Plan ahead	☐ Live in the moment
☐ Pick up the phone and make contact	☐ Wait for the phone to ring
☐ Anticipate problems	☐ React to problems
☐ Seize the moment	☐ Wait for the right moment
☐ Put their own priorities in their calendars	☐ Put others' request in their calendars
☐ Invest time in people	☐ Spend time with people

Based on what you checked, which are you??

[Your Response Here]

YOU CAN CHOOSE OR YOU CAN LOSE.
PROACTIVE MEANS CHOOSING. REACTIVE MEANS LOSING.

If you have any doubt about how initiating versus reacting impacts your productivity, just think about the week before you go on vacation. It's probably your most productive and efficient time at work. Why? Because you have clear priorities and a hard deadline. Before leaving the office for vacation, we need to make decisions, finish projects, clean off the desk, return calls, and close the loop with colleagues.

Why can't we always run our lives that way? Actually, we can, but it requires a change in mind-set. Instead of focusing on efficiency, which is a survival mind-set, we need to think about effectiveness, which is a success mind-

set. Instead of focusing on doing things right, we need to focus on doing only the right things. We need to become fervently and continuously proactive.

5. The Important Needs to Take Precedence over the Urgent

The more responsibility you carry as a leader, the more you have on your plate. The ability to juggle multiple high-priority projects successfully is something every successful leader must learn how to do. As the list of tasks grows, you can agonize or organize. I'd rather organize.

Here is a simple but effective way to classify tasks that can help you quickly prioritize them in any given moment. The goal is to determine how important the task is and how urgent it is. Ineffective leaders jump on the urgent tasks without thinking. Effective leaders weigh both factors for each task and act accordingly. Here's how:

- ***High Importance/High Urgency:*** Tackle these tasks first.
- ***High Importance/Low Urgency:*** Set deadlines for completion and fit these tasks into your daily routine.
- ***Low Importance/High Urgency:*** Find quick, efficient ways to get these tasks done with minimal personal involvement and time. If possible, delegate them.
- ***Low Importance/Low Urgency:*** If these tasks can be eliminated, then get rid of them. If they can be delegated, then find someone to do them. If you must do them, then schedule a one-hour block every week to chip away at them, but never schedule them during your prime time.

It doesn't take much time or effort to review your to-do list every morning and evaluate each task using the importance/urgency criteria. And it's an effective way to help you prioritize, put things into order quickly, and plan your day.

Having a strategy for evaluating your daily to-do list by priority is invaluable. After all, a life in which *anything goes* will ultimately be a life in which *nothing goes well*. But if you have no solutions for determining priorities other than that, you will still be too reactive instead of proactive as a leader. So I want to give you some tools that will help you with priorities in the bigger picture.

CONSIDER

Make a list of things you need to do in the coming week or weeks. Then take time to evaluate it, and give each task a grade according to importance and urgency:

A High Importance/High Urgency

B High Importance/Low Urgency

C Low Importance/High Urgency

D Low Importance/Low Urgency

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

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Work to focus your time, energy, and resources on As and Bs. (You may want to make this a weekly practice. If you do, after giving each task a grade, number the As in order of importance, then the Bs, then the Cs.)

Proactive Priority Solution #1: The Pareto Principle

A veteran of many years of decision making gave me this simple and direct advice: decide what to do and do it; decide what not to do and don't do it. I love that, but the evaluation of priorities often isn't that simple. Many times, knowing what to do is not black or white but many shades of gray.

Many years ago, while I was taking business courses, I was introduced to the Pareto principle, named for Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto. It is commonly called the 80/20 principle. I quickly saw the value of the concept and began applying it to my life. Forty-five years later, I still find it a most useful tool for determining priorities for myself, for anyone I coach, and for any organization. The Pareto principle, when applied to business, says:

> 20 percent of your priorities will give you 80 percent of your production, IF you spend your time, energy, money, and personnel on the top 20 percent of your priorities.

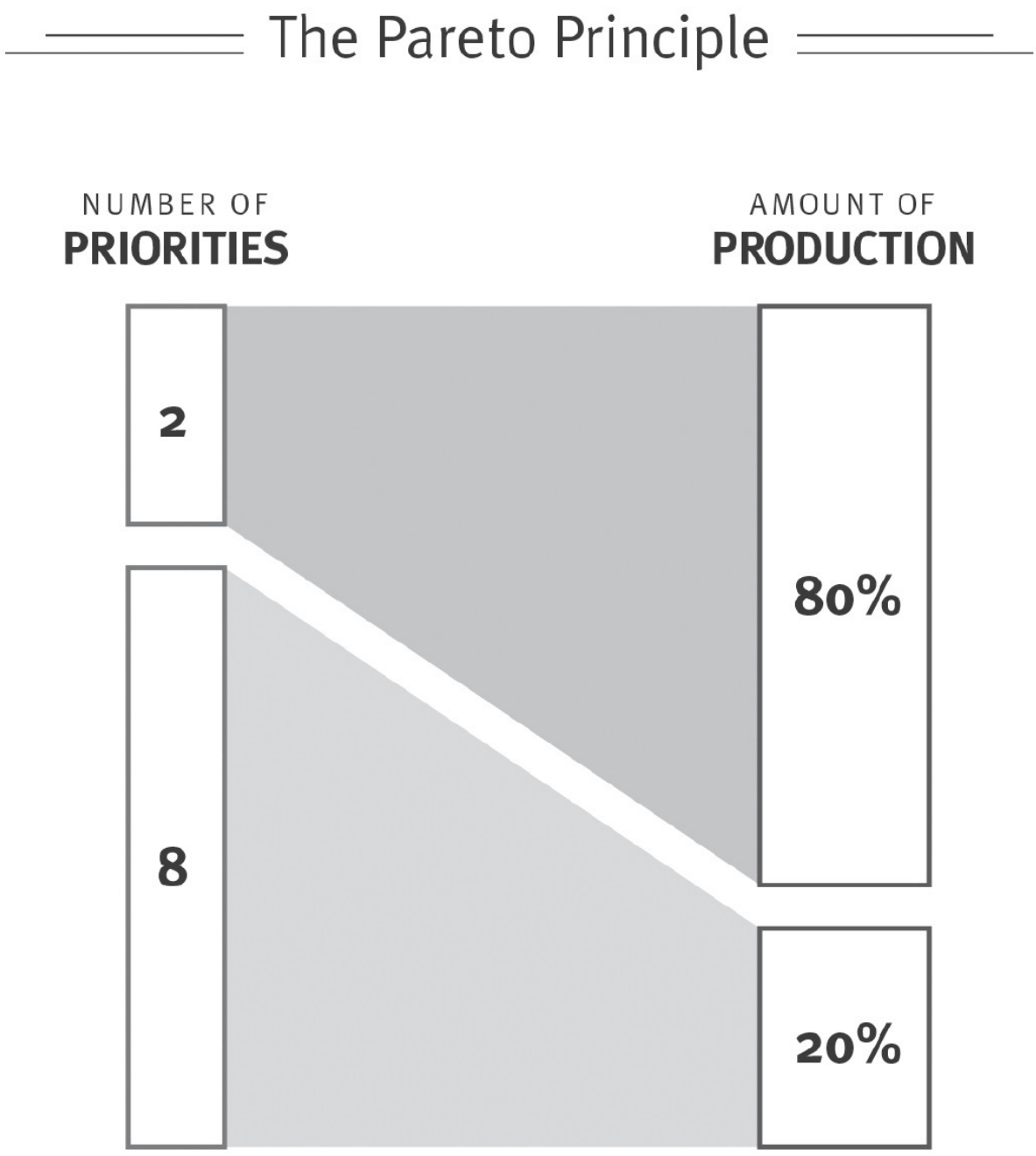
Here are some examples of how the Pareto principle plays out in life. Some of these are humorous, but all of them are true:

Time: 20 percent of our time produces 80 percent of our results
Counseling: 20 percent of the people take up 80 percent of our time
Products: 20 percent of the products bring in 80 percent of the profits
Books: 20 percent of the book contains 80 percent of the content
Jobs: 20 percent of our work gives us 80 percent of the satisfaction
Speeches: 20 percent of the presentation creates 80 percent of the impact
Donors: 20 percent of the donors give 80 percent of the money
Taxes: 20 percent of the people pay 80 percent of the taxes
Leadership: 20 percent of the people make 80 percent of the decisions
Picnics: 20 percent of the people will eat 80 percent of the food

Look at just about any situation, and you'll find that the 80/20 rule applies. Why? I don't know. It just does.

As a leader, you need to understand this principle, because it comes into play

in everything you do as a leader. Visually, here's how the 80/20 rule looks if you have ten priorities:



The upper left rectangle in the illustration represents your top two priorities. Spending time, energy, money, staff, and so forth on those two items would result in a fourfold return in productivity. However, the remaining eight items

would give a minimal return.

The implications are clear: since the top 20 percent of the items on your to-do list give you an 80 percent return, you should focus on them. The top 20 percent of your staff give you an 80 percent return: focus your time and energy on them. The top 20 percent of your clients give you 80 percent of your return: focus on them. The top 20 percent of your offerings produce 80 percent of your return: focus on selling them.

The place this principle impacts leaders most is in the people they lead. Employees do not impact an organization equally. The top 20 percent carry the greatest load and make the greatest difference. Unfortunately, the people who require the most time and attention are often those in the bottom 20 percent. In contrast, the people at the top often demand the least from their leaders because they are motivated and self-directed. But who should you be taking time to invest in? The top 20 percent.

Here's how to apply the Pareto principle to the people on your team:

- Determine which people are the top 20 percent when it comes to production.
- Spend 80 percent of your people time with this top 20 percent.
- Spend 80 percent of your personal development dollars on this top 20 percent.
- Help the top 20 percent to determine what their top 20 percent return is, and allow them to give 80 percent of their time to it.
- Allow them to delegate the other 80 percent of their tasks to others to free them up for what they do best.
- Ask the top 20 percent to do on-the-job training for the next 20 percent.

How do you identify the top 20 percent on your team, in your department, or in your organization? If there are five people on your team, your number one person is your top 20 percent. If ten, then the first and second on the list. If twenty, then the top four. You get the idea. Your top 20 percent are the people you should be investing in, giving resources to, and providing with leadership opportunities. They will make or break the team.

PARETO PRINCIPLE WORKSHEET

The Pareto principle can be applied to almost any area of your personal or professional life. For leaders, the most critical application comes in your investment in people. You need to identify the top 20 percent of the people you lead.

1. Write the names of everyone on your team in the spaces below.

ABC	**#**	**Name**

2. In the far left column beside each name, write one of the following letters to complete this sentence: *This person leaving the team or working against me . . .*

    a. Could make or break the team, and it would greatly impact our effectiveness.
    b. Would negatively impact our effectiveness, but it would not break the team.
    c. Would not negatively affect the team, and it might even improve it.

3. Now rank the importance of your As by writing a 1 by the name of the most impacting person, a 2 next to the next most impacting, and so on. Then rank your Bs. Then your Cs.

4. Place an asterisk (*) next to the names of your top 20 percent (one name if you have a total of five on your list, two names if you have ten, etc.).

5. Look at anyone you marked with a *C*. If you have the authority, try to help these individuals find a place on another team where they might be more effective.

PARETO PLAN

Now create a plan for developing your top people. List two to five ways you can add value to each person.

[Your Response Here]

Proactive Priority Solution #2: The Three Rs

If you are from my generation, you remember teachers talking about the three Rs: reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic. (I know—two of the three Rs don't even start with *R*!) I want to offer you a different three Rs to help you become highly proactive in identifying and living your priorities. To do that, you have to look at your life from a bigger-picture perspective. Think of it as a thirty-thousand-foot perspective. The three Rs are *requirement*, *return*, and *reward*. (See, they actually start with *R*.) You can discover your major priorities by asking yourself three questions based on these three Rs:

What Is Required of Me?

Every role has responsibilities that are nonnegotiable. There are things you must do that you cannot delegate to anyone else. Do you know what they are? When I became the leader of Skyline Church in San Diego, I asked the board who was hiring me, "What must I do that only I can do and cannot delegate to anyone else?" We talked it through for a couple of hours. They decided there were only a few things only I could do, such as being the primary communicator most Sundays, carrying the vision of the church, and maintaining my personal integrity. These were my nonnegotiables and could be fulfilled by no one but me.

In the end, a leader can give up anything except final responsibility. If you work for a boss or a board, they can help you answer the requirement question. If you work for yourself or you own your own business, the question may be more difficult to answer. But it's critical. Otherwise, you'll end up focusing on the wrong things, which could waste your time, talent, and energy.

What Gives Me the Greatest Return?

What are you good at? I mean, really good at? This is at the heart of the return question. What brings the greatest return on your investment of time and energy for your organization? That's a question I continually ask myself. I understand that activity is not accomplishment; productivity is. I'm at my most productive using my best talents, gifts, and experience to do three things: communicating, writing, and leading. Those give the greatest return to me and to my organizations. They are my sweet spot. Anything else I do is second-rate—or worse.

Knowing what activities give you the greatest return is vital. What do people continually compliment you for doing? What tasks or responsibilities do colleagues continually ask you to take on? What do you do that makes the biggest positive impact or brings in the most revenue? These are clues to help you answer the return question.

ACTIVITY IS NOT ACCOMPLISHMENT; PRODUCTIVITY IS.

WHAT IS MOST REWARDING?

Life is too short not to be fun. Our best work is accomplished when we enjoy it. It gives us great internal rewards, which can be mental, emotional, or spiritual. And here's the standard I often teach to help people answer the reward question. Find something you like to do so much that you would gladly do it for nothing. Then learn to do it so well that people are happy to pay you for it. Here's a clue for knowing what's most rewarding. When you do something and you think to yourself, *I was born for this*, you're on the right track.

Your long-term career goal should be to align the tasks that answer your requirement, return, and reward questions. If what you must do, what you do well, and what you enjoy doing are all the same things, then your career priorities are in sync and you will live a productive and fulfilling life. It often takes time and hard work to bring those things together.

THREE RS WORKSHEET

List your main responsibilities below. Then use each column to evaluate them. Beginning with the "Requirement" column, score them with either a 3 (high importance), 2 (moderate importance), or 1 (low importance). Then do the same for the "Return" and "Reward" columns. Once you've created ratings for every item in all three columns, add the scores. Based on the scores, rank your responsibilities in order, using the far left column.

#	**Responsibilities**	**Rqrmt**	**Return**	**Reward**	**Results**
					=
					=

					=
					=
					=
					=
					=
					=
					=
					=
					=
					=
					=
					=
					=
					=
					=
					=

When you're done, you may have something that looks like this:

#	Responsibilities	Rqrmt	Return	Reward	Results
1	New Client Acquisition	3	3	2	= 8
2	Closing Deals with Clients	3	3	3	= 9
3	Answering Emails	1	1	1	= 3
4	Supervision of Staff	3	2	1	= 6
5	Leadership Development of Staff	1	3	3	= 7
6	Project Oversight	2	2	2	= 6
7	Monthly Reports	3	1	1	= 5

CONSIDER

Assess whether your daily activities are aligned based on your scores. Are you giving the most time and effort to the responsibilities with the highest scores? If you're not sure about the answer, ask a friend, family member, or colleague who is willing to be honest with you. Now, write a plan for better aligning your life with the things that give you the highest score in reward, return, and requirement.

[Your Response Here]

Proactive Priority Solution #3: Make Room for Margin

For years I've practiced the discipline of spending a few hours during the last week of the month planning out my time schedule for the upcoming month. I would literally schedule my priorities and requirements into hourly time blocks, day by day. And I used to pride myself on how I valued and prioritized my time. I had mistakenly convinced myself that if I could keep to the schedule and work fast and long enough, I would get to a place where I was caught up on everything. And that would create margin in my life.

After years of this fruitless exercise, I discovered that I was deceiving myself. I realized that Parkinson's law is true: work expands so that it fills the time available for its completion. Unless I did something intentional to create margin, I would never have it in my life.

Physician and author Richard Swenson has written extensively on the idea of margin. In his book *Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives*, he wrote, "Margin is the space that exists between our load and our limits. It is the amount allowed beyond that which is needed. It is something held in reserve for contingencies or unanticipated situations. Margin is the gap between rest and exhaustion, the space between breathing freely and suffocating. Margin is the opposite of overload."[3]

Margin is the space that exists between our load and our limits.

Richard Swenson

Instead of filling every space in my calendar, what I needed to do was create some white space. If I didn't, nobody else was going to. People who keep burning the candle at both ends aren't as bright as they think they are. I needed to change by creating margin in my life.

By no means do I follow through with this perfectly, but I *do* work persistently to create margin in my life. If you desire to be a leader who lives according to your priorities and reaches your potential, then you need to learn how to create margin too. Here's why:

1. Margin Improves Self-Awareness

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is the ability to recognize and understand emotions in yourself and others, and to apply this awareness so that you manage your behavior and your relationships with others. There are few abilities more important than EQ when it comes to leadership. The training and consulting organization TalentSmart has tested more than a million people for EQ and found that 90 percent of top performers rate high in EQ.[4]

One of the fantastic things about EQ is that, like leadership, it can be developed. A foundational characteristic of EQ is self-awareness. A strong recognition and understanding of your own emotions can be developed during times of reflection, often when you're alone. Those windows of time don't come if you're overloaded and never have time for self-reflection. Margin creates such times, which provides you with the opportunity to grow in your EQ.

2. Margin Gives You Needed Think Time

Most leaders I've met have a strong bias for action. I know that's true of me. But if I spend all my time acting and never thinking about what I'm doing, I won't be a very effective leader. When I lead others, it's my responsibility to try to see more and before others see. I have to think more and before the people I'm leading. Truett Cathy, the founder of Chick-fil-A, told me, "We need to be thought leaders before we can be market doers." Creating margin lets us do that.

If you're constantly running from one to-do or appointment to the next from sunup to sundown, you'll never become a better thinker.

It is true that we are today where our thoughts have brought us, and we will go tomorrow where our thoughts take us. That's why I'm dedicated to reflective

thinking and have written about it in so many of my books. If you want to become a good thinker, you need to create white space in your calendar for it, not just settle for a minute here and a few seconds there. You need to schedule significant blocks of time for it. If you're constantly running from one to-do or appointment to the next from sunup to sundown, you'll never become a better thinker.

3. Margin Provides You with Energy Renewal

We live in a culture of busyness, and leaders are often the busiest people of all. Founder and CEO of the Energy Project, Tony Schwartz, has studied and written extensively on energy and performance. He wrote in a *New York Times* article, "More and more of us find ourselves unable to juggle overwhelming demands and maintain a seemingly unsustainable pace." His solution? "Paradoxically," he said, "the best way to get more done may be to spend more time doing less. A new and growing body of multidisciplinary research shows that strategic renewal —including daytime workouts, short afternoon naps, longer sleep hours, more time away from the office, and longer, more frequent vacations—boosts productivity, job performance and, of course, health."[5]

All of the things Schwartz described as beneficial require margin. And he said that human beings are designed not to expend high energy continuously, but to alternate between spending energy and recovering energy. So if you want to be at your best, you need to find ways to recharge. You can do that by creating space for relationships, exercise, recreation, travel, music, and so on. Whatever recharges your personal batteries is good. But you need to find margin for it.

CONSIDER

On a scale of one (poor) to ten (fantastic), how good are you overall at creating margin?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

If you were better at creating margin, how would it benefit you mentally, emotionally, physically, relationally, and professionally? Think about each of these areas. By how many points do you think you could improve in

each, and how would you benefit from your improvement?

Mentally _____
Emotionally _____
Physically _____
Relationally at Home _____
Relationally at Work _____
Professionally _____

How to Create Margin

As I've said, creating margin is a challenge for me. But I keep fighting for it because I know it helps me live out my priorities and be a better leader. Here are two things I do th at I believe can help you too.

Evaluate and Eliminate Continually

I'm constantly on the lookout for ways to simplify my life. I try not to spend time on things that are out of my sweet spot. I delegate or dump anything that doesn't fit into the three Rs.

Fight to Keep 20 Percent of Your Calendar as White Space

My days of automatically filling up my calendar with tasks are done. Instead, I schedule white space into my calendar. With a nod to Pareto, my target is always to leave 20 percent of my time free. I would suggest that you fight for that same percentage.

What might that look like? You could choose to create margin every day. If you spend on average sixteen hours a day awake, creating margin means leaving three hours and twelve minutes unscheduled every day. If you wanted to think in terms of your week, you would need to leave about twenty-two and a half hours unscheduled every week. Margin by the month: leave six days totally open. By the year: seventy-two unscheduled days.

You may be saying to yourself, "I can't do that. I can't spare three hours a day or six days a month. And I'm definitely not taking more than seventy days off!" I think the same way. That's why margin is so difficult to maintain. Tony Schwartz agrees: "Taking more time off is counterintuitive for most of us. The idea is also at odds with the prevailing work ethic in most companies, where downtime is typically viewed as time wasted. More than one-third of employees, for example, eat lunch at their desks on a regular basis. More than 50 percent assume they'll work during their vacations."[6]

Yet to create margin, taking essential time off is exactly what we need to learn how to do. You can't maintain your priorities if you fill your life with busyness.

EVALUATE

Examine your calendar. How much white space does it contain? If it contains less than 20 percent, you need to begin to do some cutting. (If you don't use a calendar of any kind, then start using one today. You have a different kind of problem with priorities.) Use the work you've already done in this lesson as your guide concerning what to cut and what to keep.

If you're a high-energy doer, you may find it difficult to stop, take stock of your activities, think through your priorities, and reevaluate what you do and how you do it. But you need to do it—not just once but day after day, year after year. Priorities never stay put. Yet if you can learn to master the principles of priorities, and you develop the discipline of applying them continually, your personal and professional effectiveness will be off the charts. Few things give a leader as great a return as good priorities. That's why I say they are the key to leadership.

PRIORITIES NEVER STAY PUT.

PRIORITIES

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

If you are part of a group going through this workbook, use the following questions to engage in group discussion. Keep in mind that the goals of good discussion are changing yourself and taking positive action.

1. How are you naturally wired? Are you a planner? Or do you prefer to play it by ear? Explain why.

[Your Response Here]

2. How did you answer the question regarding how you differentiate between

the good and the best?

[Your Response Here]

3. In which parts of your life are you most frustrated by not having enough time?

[Your Response Here]

4. Which of the three concepts introduced in the lesson offers the most value to you: the Pareto principle, the three Rs, or creating margin? How will you apply it?

[Your Response Here]

5. What was your single greatest takeaway from this lesson? Why?

[Your Response Here]

6. Based on what you've learned in this lesson, how do you need to change? What concrete, measurable step can you take this week to grow in the area of priorities?

[Your Response Here]

NOTES

[Your Response Here]

LESSON THREE

THE FOUNDATION OF LEADERSHIP:

CHARACTER

What is the most difficult task any leader ever faces? Without a doubt, it is leading ourselves. It is a difficult task we must face every day. It's much easier to tell others what to do than to do it ourselves. I know that's true of me.

THE REALITY IS THAT LEADING OURSELVES IS OFTEN THE MOST DIFFICULT TASK WE FACE EVERY DAY.

To keep myself on track, I must continually remind myself why character is so important, and I have to examine my thinking, motives, and actions.

Character in Leadership

Recently I came across a helpful article in the *Harvard Business Review* by Gary Hamel, a management consultant and founder of Strategos. The article was primarily about a meeting Pope Francis had with a group of church leaders in which he outlined the problems inherent in leadership. But also included in the article was a list of questions designed to help leaders with the self-examination process. I find it useful to ask myself these questions. You may too.

CONSIDER

Answer each question with either yes or no.

YES	NO	
☐	☐	Do I sometimes feel superior to those who work for me?
☐	☐	Do I often demonstrate an imbalance between work and other areas of life?
☐	☐	Do I substitute formality for true human intimacy?
☐	☐	Do I rely too much on plans and not enough on intuition and improvisation?
☐	☐	Do I spend too little time breaking silos and building bridges?
☐	☐	Do I fail to regularly acknowledge the debt I owe to my mentors and to others?
☐	☐	Do I take too much satisfaction in my perks and privileges?
☐	☐	Do I isolate myself from customers and first-level employees?
☐	☐	Do I sometimes denigrate the motives and accomplishments of others?
☐	☐	Do I exhibit or encourage undue deference and servility?
☐	☐	Do I often put my own success ahead of the success of others?
☐	☐	Do I fail to cultivate a fun and joy-filled work environment?
☐	☐	Do I exhibit selfishness when it comes to sharing rewards and praise?

- ☐ ☐ Do I encourage parochialism rather than community?
- ☐ ☐ Do I sometimes behave in ways that seem egocentric to those around me?1

Questions like these heighten my awareness of the need to keep improving my character, especially in the context of leadership, because the heightened influence of leaders magnifies their impact on others—both positively and negatively. How did you do answering them? Every yes indicates a place where you need to develop better character as a leader.

Working on my character is a never-ending yet totally worthwhile effort. Mahatma Gandhi said, “A man of character will make himself worthy of any position he is given.” I want to be a worthy leader, yet I know I sometimes fall short. I want to improve my character—and encourage you to improve yours—not because it gets me what I want but because it helps me to *be* what I want. And I find that the more I focus on valuing people, practicing self-leadership, and embracing good values, the stronger my character becomes.

Character Value Statements

Having good character does not ensure that you will be successful in life or leadership. But you can be sure that having poor character will eventually derail you personally and professionally. But here's the good news: if your character is not what you want it to be, you can change it. It doesn't matter what has happened in your past. You can choose a better path moving forward, starting today. As one of my favorite sayings goes, "Though you cannot go back and make a brand-new start, my friend, anyone can start from now and make a brand-new end."

Here are three great reasons why good character is worth pursuing:

1. Good Character Builds Strong Trust

Recently I asked a small group of executives to list the names of the top three people they trusted. Family and friends were on everyone's list. Amazingly, no one named a leader or a coworker as one of their top trusted people.

I then asked them to list three people on whom their well-being and happiness depended. Everyone named either their boss or a coworker.

Then I asked one more question: "If I were doing this exercise with *your* subordinates, and I asked them to create their 'most trusted' list, would they name you as one of their three most trusted people?" There was a murmur. That got their attention. "What difference might it make if you were someone they put on their list?"

The consensus was that if people trusted their coworkers and leaders, the working environment would be more positive, people would be more productive, and turnover would be reduced. That's consistent with my own observation that people quit people, not companies. The greatest cause of turnover in organizations is lack of trust.

Stephen M. R. Covey, in his book *The Speed of Trust*, pointed out how low trust costs time and money, and he used a fantastic example to illustrate it. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the nation's trust in flight security went down. Covey said that before the attacks, he could arrive at his home airport thirty minutes before his flight and have no problem making it quickly through security. However, after the TSA tightened security, he had to arrive two hours ahead of domestic flight departures and three hours ahead for international flights. "As

trust went down," he said, "speed also went down and cost went up."[2]

Too often we talk about trust as if it is a singular thing. It is not. Trust is a relationship between a trustor and a trustee. Just as it takes two to tango, it takes two to trust. The role of the trustor is to take the risk of trusting; the role of the trustee is to be trustworthy. When both people do their parts well, the result is a trusting relationship.

And trust doesn't just go in one direction. The people exchange roles, the trustee becoming the trustor, and vice versa. It's a two-way street. But if either party fails in his or her responsibility, trust disappears.

Authors James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner explain the importance of the development of trust in leaders:

> In the final analysis only you can decide whether to take the risk of trusting others and whether the risks are worth taking. This means to have others trust you, you must actively take some initiative and can't wait for others to make the first move. As many leaders explained, "Trust is a risk game. Leaders must be the first ones to ante-up." Leaders always find the ante worth risking. Sowing seeds of trust with people creates the fields of collaboration necessary to get extraordinary things done in organizations.[3]

TRUST IS A RISK GAME. LEADERS MUST BE THE FIRST ONES TO ANTE-UP.

JAMES M. KOUZES AND BARRY Z. POSNER

For years I have taught leaders that in their interactions with others, they create "accounts" of trustworthiness. Every interaction with another person either makes deposits in that person's account or makes withdrawals from it. The best way to make regular ongoing deposits is by modeling good character consistently. Why? Because people are convinced more by what a leader does than by what a leader says. I find myself agreeing with the idea expressed by industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, who said, "As I grow older I

pay less attention to what men say. I just watch what they do." Words can be cheap. Journalist Arthur Gordon was right when he said, "Nothing is easier than saying words. Nothing is harder than living them, day after day. What you promise today must be renewed and re-decided tomorrow and each day that stretches out before you." That's why in leadership, a pint of example equals a gallon of advice.

IN LEADERSHIP, A PINT OF EXAMPLE EQUALS A GALLON OF ADVICE.

In the beginning of a relationship, words hold more weight than actions. Because people do not know you, they may assume that your words represent who you are and that your walk matches your talk. However, as the relationship continues, your actions begin to weigh more than your words. People see what you do. Leadership confusion occurs when your words and your walk do not match. If that incongruity continues, not only will you confuse your people—you will lose your people. Mark Twain was right-on when he said, "To do right is wonderful. To teach others to do right is even more wonderful—and much easier." Easier? Yes. More effective? No.

At the opposite end of the spectrum from inconsistency and broken trust is moral authority. This is the highest level of leadership. It is earned by demonstrating consistently good character and continually making deposits into trustworthiness accounts with others. Charisma may get leaders a following early on, but only credibility prompts people to keep following them. When leaders possess true moral authority, the only words they need to say are "Follow me," and people join them. They know that their walk matches their talk and is headed in the right direction. Can we all gain moral authority as leaders? Maybe not. But we should strive to do our best to develop and display good character so that we are at least candidates to develop it.

CONSIDER

What phase are you in when it comes to trustworthiness with the people you lead? Which currently carries more weight: your words or your actions? If words, what must you do to make the shift to actions without creating confusion among your followers? If actions, what can you do to gain greater credibility building toward moral authority?

[Your Response Here]

I have to confess, my view on character and moral authority has changed over the years. I used to see trust as black or white. Now that I'm older, I've grown. And I think I have greater insight into how trust works and how character comes into play with it. I'd like to share with you some of the changes I've had in my thinking. See if you agree with them. Maybe you will, maybe you won't. That's okay. Another good thing about getting older is that I'm very comfortable with people not always agreeing with me.

I Thought Trust Was "Nice to Have"

Early in my leadership journey, I didn't recognize the importance of trust. I thought it was nice to have. Who doesn't want to be trusted, given the choice? But now I understand that in leadership, trust is essential. It's not something you can take or leave. If you leave trust, you're going to leave leadership.

Trust dramatically impacts real leadership issues, such as follower engagement, connection, buy-in, and effectiveness. Trust is the foundation of leadership. A strong foundation isn't a luxury. It's not just "nice to have." It's critical.

I Thought Trust Was Up to Others

Some leaders, especially those who rely on their position or title to lead instead of on their influence, take the posture that they should be implicitly trusted by their people, but that their people must prove themselves to be trustworthy. They put all the burden for developing trust on others, not themselves. But developing trust is a leadership responsibility. If I want to be a good leader, it's not up to my followers; it's up to me. I must take the first step in trusting the people I lead. And I must take steps to earn their trust. Good leaders take the risk in both directions. If my people learn to trust me, I'll get their attention. But if I initiate

trust in my people, I'll get their action. And the essence of successful leadership is getting things done.

If my people learn to trust me, I'll get their attention. But if I initiate trust in my people, I'll get their action.

I Thought Trust Could Only Grow Slowly

While it's true that trust often does grow slowly, it doesn't always have to work that way. For example, when individuals you trust vouch for someone they trust, you're likely to give this new person the benefit of the doubt and trust him or her. Why? Because of the relationship you have with your trusted friend. You transfer your trust—at least until you discover reasons of your own to withdraw that trust.

Another instance where trust can be earned quickly comes when someone performs an unselfish act of significance for another person. I experienced this as a young leader when another leader stuck up for me at a crucial time. His endorsement of me in a meeting gained me favor with others. I was grateful, because I had done nothing to earn it, and he could gain nothing for himself by giving it. He immediately gained my trust.

I Thought a Single Mistake Automatically Destroyed Trust

While it's true that a single mistake can destroy trust, that is not always the case. When the trust level is already low, then that's often all it takes. However, if the trust level is high, one mistake seldom destroys what people have built in the relationship.

I have a much longer view of character now than I did years ago. I recognize that character development is a lifelong process. In his book *Build Your Reputation*, networking expert Rob Brown described this ongoing process.

> In the world of work and business, your "go-to" status won't happen overnight. It won't even happen by chance. You're building a platform here. A house if you like. Brick by brick. Comment by comment.

> Conversation by conversation. Even if you could build it fast, how sturdy would it be? . . .
>
> You don't want to be a one-hit wonder. Any fool can get hired or booked once. The best, most sought-after thought leaders and prime promotional candidates didn't start out yesterday. It's a slog. It means some heavy lifting. It's going to take a little time. And it's going to be so worth it! . . .
>
> But be under no illusions, building a great reputation requires a consistent, focused effort. Tortoise and the hare. Slow and steady wins the race. Marathon, not a sprint, and all that. With a few spurts here and there.[4]

So much of leadership relies on good character. Trust is created through it. Talent is protected by it. Internal peace is fostered by it. People cannot climb beyond the limitations of their character. Leaders cannot succeed beyond the depth of their character. Good leaders have the potential to be difference makers, and character makes a difference for them and protects them. Good leaders are often a gift to the world. Character protects that gift.

2. Successful Leaders Embrace the Four Dimensions of Character

In his book *Derailed,* Tim Irwin wrote that there are four dimensions to character: *authenticity, self-management, humility*, and *courage*.[5] I agree with his perspective and want to use those four dimensions as my framework for describing the process of character building. Let's look at each of them:

Authenticity

I've observed that a lot of leaders have a difficult time with authenticity. Many don't want to let down their guard. They may feel that they are in a no-win situation. They worry that if they reveal their failures, they'll lose credibility. Yet if they try to hide their failures, they come across as phony. If they hide their successes, they fear they won't have as much credibility. But if they highlight only their successes, they come across as arrogant and unrelatable. How does a leader navigate this situation?

There are four dimensions to character:

AUTHENTICITY, SELF-MANAGEMENT, HUMILITY, AND COURAGE.

My advice to leaders is to try to live between the lines. Let me explain. As I travel the road of leadership, to my right is the line of success. When I'm over near that line, everything is going well, I'm achieving success, and I'm winning. To my left is the line of failure. When I'm close to that line, nothing seems to go right, and I'm living Murphy's Law: anything that can go wrong will go wrong, and at the worst possible time.

Most of the time we live between those two lines. When people see us on the success line, we have to be careful not to think that is who we really are. We can be like the athlete who wins a gold medal or a Super Bowl and starts to believe he's spectacular all the time at everything he does. It's not reality. People may try to put such individuals on a pedestal, but they will surely fall off.

There are also times when we travel along the failure line. We all make mistakes. We all make bad choices. We all fall short. If we believe that's who we are, we won't want to get out of bed. We shouldn't buy into that either. Both lines—of success and of failure—are extremes. We're neither as good nor as bad as they might indicate.

Authenticity is about living an open life between those lines. In my early years, I only wanted to tell others about my experiences on the success line. I wanted to impress people. As I grow older, I feel an opposite pull to share my failures so that I can encourage people. Because I'm a public figure, people often only see me at my best, not my worst. For that reason, some people give me more credit than I deserve. That bothers me. Instead of wanting to point to my breakthroughs, I want to direct people to the *brokenness* that has *led* to my breakthroughs.

None of us is flawless. Good people do bad things. Smart people do dumb things. We all find ourselves in moments when we feel tempted to do something we know in our hearts isn't the right thing, and we've all veered off course. It's humbling. Sharing that with others is authentic.

CONSIDER

How would you rate your authenticity? Consider each of these aspects of authenticity and rate yourself on them on a scale of one (low) to ten (high):

_____ I am aware of my own weaknesses.

_____ I am honest and open with others about my weaknesses.

_____ I am aware of my motives.

_____ I am honest and open with others about my motives.

_____ I am aware of my own strengths.

_____ I use my strengths for the team, not against people I lead.

_____ I am aware of my feelings.

_____ I am honest and open with others about my feelings.

_____ When I make a mistake, I admit it.

_____ When I hurt another person, whether intentionally or accidentally, I apologize.

_____ Total and divide by 10 to get your average. Write it here: _____

How could you increase your authenticity score? Identify specific steps that you will take.

[Your Response Here]

Self-Management

Author and speaker Ruth Haley Barton says, “We set young leaders up for a fall if we encourage them to envision what they can do before they consider the kind of person they should be.” What she’s speaking about is the strengthening of character that comes from good self-management.

WE SET YOUNG LEADERS UP FOR A FALL IF WE ENCOURAGE THEM TO ENVISION WHAT THEY CAN DO BEFORE THEY CONSIDER THE KIND OF PERSON THEY SHOULD BE.

Character is not about intelligence. It's about making right choices. David Gergen, the political commentator who worked in several White House administrations, points out that if intelligence and character were the same things, presidents Nixon and Clinton would have been two of the best. Gergen said, "Capacity counts, but once a candidate passes that test, character counts even more."[6]

Many leaders score high on IQ but low on CQ—character quotient. To increase our CQ, we need to practice self-management. One of the best ways to help ourselves do that is to establish character guardrails to keep from going off course. On a highway, guardrails keep cars from going over a cliff. With them in place, you may crash, but you likely won't die.

When it comes to character, I believe the best guardrails are the decisions you make *before* you face high-pressure situations. It's easier to manage yourself if you've already made the tough decisions related to your values. It's impossible to maintain good character when you don't know what you value.

CONSIDER

Do you value honesty and integrity? Then what is your guardrail? What *won't* you do? Decide that before you face temptation. Do you value relationships? If so, what is your guardrail? What *must* you do to maintain the important relationships in your life? Identify your values and decide what boundaries you won't cross long before you may be tempted to cross them. For each value, write out your personal guardrail.

VALUE	**GUARDRAIL**
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Humility

Nobody likes working with leaders who are full of themselves and work only for their own benefit. People want to work with a leader who displays humility. What does it mean to be humble? I like what Robert F. Morneau wrote in *Humility: 31 Reflections on Christian Virtues*. He said of humility, "It is that habitual quality whereby we live in the truth of things: the truth that we are creatures and not the Creator; the truth that our life is a composite of good and evil, light and darkness; the truth that in our littleness we have been given extravagant dignity. . . . Humility is saying a radical 'yes' to the human condition."[7]

I love that. Yes, we are flawed. Yes, we make mistakes. Yes, we are human. That's okay.

HUMILITY IS SAYING A RADICAL "YES" TO THE HUMAN CONDITION.

ROBERT F. MORNEAU

Dale Carnegie said, "If you tell me how you get your feeling of importance, I'll tell you what you are." Where and how we seek validation impacts character. As a young man, I wanted to make a big splash. That's what was important to me. In the beginning it was all about me, my goals, and my success. Slowly I realized that I was not on earth to see how important I could become but to see how much of a difference I could make in the lives of others.

Artist John Ruskin asserted, “I believe that the first test of a truly great man is his humility. I don’t mean by humility, doubt of his power. But really great men have a curious feeling that the greatness is not of them, but through them.” For most people, humility has to be earned. It is developed over time as you accept your weaknesses and give grace to others for theirs.

In college I read these words written by Thomas à Kempis: “Be not angry that you cannot make others as you wish them to be, since you cannot make yourself as you wish to be.” That made a strong impression on me because at the time I did want to change others. I had to learn how to focus on changing and improving myself. That happens only when you acknowledge that your flaws are great enough that they need to be addressed. That requires—and creates—humility. And when you begin to develop humility, you are in a better position to serve the people you lead.

ASSIGNMENT

Complete the following exercise. Write a list of your weaknesses. Identify your top ten—you could do more, but this exercise is to help you become humble, not depressed! Along with each weakness, write how you could ask someone to help you.

WEAKNESS	**HOW CAN SOMEONE HELP YOU IN THIS AREA**
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Courage

Courage makes character possible. It empowers us to do what's right in the face of fear, fatigue, or uncertainty. Character is not developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience and trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened.

There are times in every leader's life when he feels obligated to take people where he himself has not yet gone, to talk farther than he has walked. I know that has been true for me. At such times I do not feel competent enough, experienced enough, strong enough, faithful enough, wise enough, or qualified enough. At those times I must acknowledge my weaknesses, ask for God and others to help me, and summon the courage to take action.

Continuing to live a life of character requires ongoing reflection, brutal honesty, and courage to do the right thing. And sometimes we have to work to restore good character after making bad decisions. That takes time, intentionality, and effort.

If you want to develop the kind of character that will sustain you as a leader, then embrace the four dimensions to character: authenticity, self-management, humility, and courage. And never be afraid to admit you are wrong. Doing so is like saying you are wiser today than you were yesterday.

CONSIDER

Most of us have a tough decision we currently need to make, yet we put off making it. What's yours? If you know you need to make it because it will benefit the team or organization, then schedule it, prepare for it, and follow through with it.

Decision _____
Scheduled Date _____
Desired Outcome _____
Preparation Needed _____

3. Character Makes You Bigger on the Inside Than on the Outside

Plutarch, an ancient Greek philosopher, said, "What we achieve inwardly will change outer reality." That has always been true. Character is built on the inside

before it shows up on the outside.

Be not angry that you cannot make others as you wish them to be, since you cannot make yourself as you wish to be.

Thomas à Kempis

The difference between our inner and outer selves is described by *New York Times* columnist David Brooks, who says that inner character

> lives by an inverse logic. It's moral logic, not an economic one. You have to give to receive. You have to surrender to something outside yourself to gain strength within yourself. You have to conquer your desire to get what you crave. Success leads to the greatest failure, which is pride. Failure leads to the greatest success, which is humility and learning. In order to fulfill yourself, you have to forget yourself. In order to find yourself, you have to lose yourself.[8]

Success leads to the greatest failure, which is pride. Failure leads to the greatest success, which is humility and learning.

David Brooks

The inner voice wants to make you bigger on the inside. The outer voice wants to make you bigger on the outside. The voice you listen to wins the battle. When your inner voice says, *I have done wrong*, you have a chance to deal with the feelings of character incongruence or hypocrisy by making changes. That allows you to regain your character equilibrium.

The outer voice encourages you to *appear* bigger on the outside, often at the expense of who you are on the inside. It creates a cognitive dissonance, an unhealthy hypocrisy. That outer voice might say something like, "What I say and what I do are not the same and never will be. That's the way it is. Just keep up appearances." That's not a good road for anyone to go down. It's especially bad for leaders, because they can become inauthentic, rationalizing, and unteachable.

To develop character and become bigger on the inside than the outside, I must deal with my weaknesses. I must embrace failure and learn from it. I must choose the better path forward. You must, too.

Parker J. Palmer, activist and founder of the Center for Courage and Renewal, described what happens when we allow ourselves to become divided:

> I pay a steep price when I live a divided life—feeling fraudulent, anxious about being found out, and depressed by the fact that I am denying my own selfhood. The people around me pay a price as well, for now they walk on ground made unstable by my dividedness. How can I affirm another's identity when I deny my own? How can I trust another's integrity when I defy my own? A fault line runs down the middle of my life, and whenever it cracks open—divorcing my words and actions from the truth I hold within—things around me get shaky and start to fall apart.[9]

The result of developing strong character on the inside is self-respect, which comes, not from accomplishments or achievements, but from making the right choices. Brooks wrote, "It is earned by being better than you used to be, by being dependable in times of testing, straight in times of temptation. It emerges in one who is morally dependable. Self-respect is produced by inner triumphs, not external ones."[10]

Self-respect is produced by inner triumphs, not external ones.

David Brooks

Where do you look to establish your identity? At your image, your accomplishments, your recognition? Or do you get it from your internal character? Do you focus on making right choices, on improving yourself, on following through with your commitments, on nurturing the health of your soul? If you focus on the outside, you will neglect the inside. However, if you focus on the inside, the outside will always benefit.

ASSIGNMENT

Character development is internal, and it is most often developed by making good choices. List three to five areas in your life where you are not currently making the best choices for good character. For each one, write what you must do differently to improve and change.

[Your Response Here]

Recently I read an article about Theo Epstein, the president of baseball operations for the Chicago Cubs. People have begun recognizing him because in 2016 the Cubs finally won the World Series, something that hadn't happened since 1908! He had worked for several teams, including the Boston Red Sox, before going to Chicago. But by the time he got there, he'd learned the importance of character.

"I used to scoff at it, when I first took the job in Boston," Epstein said, referring to a focus on character. "I just felt like, *You know how we're going to win? By getting guys who get on base more than the other team, and by getting pitchers who miss bats and get ground balls.* Talent wins. But . . . it's like every year I did the job, I just developed a greater appreciation for how much the human element matters and how much more you can achieve as a team when you have players who care about winning, care about each other, develop those relationships, have those conversations. It creates an environment where the sum is greater than the parts."[11]

Epstein was hired as the Cubs' president in October 2011. In January 2012, he met with all of the organization's managers, coaches, trainers, and operations

personnel. They spent one day talking about hitting, one on pitching, one on defense and baserunning, and one on character. Those became the foundation to achieve the one goal Epstein had for the organization: win a world championship.

In his fifth season with a young team, Epstein was on the cusp of achieving that goal. *Sports Illustrated* writer Tom Verducci said the defining moment occurred during a rain delay following the ninth inning of game seven of the World Series, after the Indians had come back to tie the game. The young Cubs team didn't crack. They didn't shrink. They didn't stumble. What did they do? The players called a meeting. Verducci wrote, "The Cubs packed shoulder-to-shoulder for a players-only meeting in a small weight room behind the visiting dugout at Progressive Field." He called it "a strong visual of Epstein's ideals of collaboration and character." In the top of the tenth, the Cubs scored two runs. It was enough to win the game, by a score of 8-7.

The Cubs' character had carried them through when they needed it. And that's what we should all work for, whether we're team members or leaders of the team. Character always counts.

CHARACTER

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

If you are part of a group going through this workbook, use the following questions to engage in group discussion. Keep in mind that the goals of good discussion are changing yourself and taking positive action.

1. Why do you think leading yourself is said to be the most difficult task in leadership?

[Your Response Here]

2. In your growing-up years, what was emphasized more: character or appearance? Give an example of an incident that illustrates this.

[Your Response Here]

3. Who have been your role models when it comes to character? Explain.

[Your Response Here]

4. If you could instantly change one thing about yourself internally, what would it be? Explain why.

[Your Response Here]

5. What does it take for you to change and improve one of your character traits? Give an example of one you have improved.

[Your Response Here]

6. Based on what you've learned in this lesson, what concrete, measurable step are you willing to commit to in order to grow in character, and how will you empower others to hold you accountable?

[Your Response Here]

NOTES

[Your Response Here]

LESSON FOUR

THE ULTIMATE TEST OF LEADERSHIP:

CREATING POSITIVE CHANGE

The ability to create positive change is the true test of leadership. Being able to turn around an entire organization or large department takes even greater leadership skill. Nearly anyone can get out in front of people who are already going in the right direction and encourage them to keep going. Very few can make the changes necessary to turn around a group of people who are headed the wrong direction.

Leading Change Can Be Difficult

Any person who has led change knows creating change is challenging. But I believe that people do not naturally resist change; they resist *being* changed. Recently I saw a two-frame cartoon in which the leader asks, “Who wants change?” and every hand is raised. But in the second frame, when he asks, “Who wants to change?” not one hand is raised. That pretty much characterizes human nature. We want the benefits of positive change without the pain of making any changes ourselves. Why is that? I believe there are several reasons:

- People Feel Awkward and Self-Conscious Doing Something New
- People Initially Focus on What They Will Have to Give Up
- People Are Afraid of Being Ridiculed
- People Personalize Change and May Feel Alone in the Process

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People do not naturally resist change; they resist being changed.

I confess that I didn’t do this well as a young leader. I would often encourage people to ignore their feelings during times of change. I would tell them, “It’s no big deal. We’re all in this together. Don’t worry about it.” But that’s like a dentist saying, “This won’t hurt a bit.” When you hear that, you know he’s right. It won’t hurt a bit. It will hurt a lot!

We Overestimate the Event and Underestimate the Process

As a young leader, I made the mistake of treating change as if it were an event instead of a process. It took me awhile to realize that people are always at different levels in their readiness to change. You can't just announce a change, implement it, and move on. That only causes resistance. You have to give people time and allow them to process changes. While not everyone will get on board or "catch up," many will if you are willing to help them. Remember: the people are why you do what you do as a leader. How far you can travel isn't the point; it's how far you are able to take your people. That's the purpose of leadership.

How far you can travel isn't the point; it's how far you are able to take your people.

CONSIDER

How do you react to the emotions of people you lead? Do you dismiss them? Do you expect people to process change too quickly? Or do you acknowledge how people feel and help them work through their emotions? What could you do to become better in this area as a leader?

[Your Response Here]

It took me about five years of leading people before I finally figured out that I couldn't just change something and expect everyone to happily fall in behind me. At age twenty-seven, I was facing the need to introduce a big organizational change—the construction of a new building and the repurposing of the existing

one—and I realized that if I was going to succeed as a leader, I would need to develop a process to plan what needed to be changed, communicate it to the people, help them process the changes mentally and emotionally, and put the plan into action.

To do that, I developed something I called PLAN AHEAD. Yes, it's an acrostic. That may seem hokey, but it makes it easy to remember and easy to teach to other leaders. I've used it for almost fifty years, and it works! Here's what the acrostic represents:

P redetermine the change that is needed.
L ay out your steps.
A djust your priorities.
N otify key people.

A llow time for acceptance.
H ead into action.
E xpect problems.
A lways point to the successes.
D aily review your progress.

I want to walk you through the steps of Plan Ahead so that you can use it to create positive change. To do that, you'll need to pick a project or initiative as your test case. It needs to be something that requires the participation of many people, and will probably be resisted by some of the people involved.

Predetermine the Change That Is Needed

My friend Rick Warren, the founder of Saddleback Church, said, "The greatest enemy of tomorrow's success is yesterday's success."[1] To be a good leader, you cannot become complacent. You cannot become satisfied with today's success. That means you need to not only welcome change but champion it. If you don't, your team, department, or organization will be in trouble. You only need to read the first edition of the book *The 100 Best Companies to Work For in America* to know that's true. It was published in 1984. When the second edition was published nine years later, nearly half of the original companies no longer existed.

The greatest enemy of tomorrow's success is today's success.

Rick Warren

Identifying what needs changing in our organizations can be difficult, because we can become so accustomed to the problems that we no longer see them. That's what happened at British Rail in the 1970s. In 1977, the rail company's chairman, Sir Peter Parker, was trying to decide whether to give the organization's advertising business to a huge, established agency or to the smaller, newer Allen Brady and Marsh (ABM). Parker arrived at ABM with other British Rail executives, where they found the agency's lobby to be a grimy mess. The ashtrays were overflowing, half-empty coffee cups were left here and there, and magazines lay on the floor.

The receptionist didn't make the situation any better. One account says she ignored the group while making a personal phone call.[2] Another says she smoked a cigarette while filing her nails and answered, "Dunno" to a question about how long they would have to wait.[3]

After waiting twenty minutes, Parker told the receptionist they were leaving.

At that moment, Peter Marsh, the chairman of ABM, stepped into the reception area and said, “You’ve just seen what the public think of British Rail. Now let’s see what we can do to put it right.”

As a leader, you carry the responsibility for reviewing what your team does and looking for what needs to be changed. I like this standard for review:

- If you’ve done something for one year—look at it carefully.
- If you’ve done it for two years—look at it with suspicion.
- If you’ve done it for five years—stop looking at it and do something to change it.

The first step is always predetermining what needs to be changed.

IDENTIFY

Describe in detail the initiative or project you are choosing. Be sure to include a description of what a complete success would look like.

[Your Response Here]

Lay Out Your Steps

As I mentioned, I developed the PLAN AHEAD process in response to a big leadership challenge at my second church, in Lancaster, Ohio. We were running out of space in our current facility, so I could see we needed to make changes. We needed to construct a new building and repurpose the old one. The problem was that the fifteen hundred people loved that facility and didn't want to change it. Furthermore, I needed to raise the money to build from that same group of people. If I didn't lay out my steps carefully, I risked alienating everyone and failing to take them where I knew they needed to go.

I spent a good amount of time thinking through the process and carefully laid out my blueprint for successful change. I decided I needed to ask questions, listen to people's answers, discuss the challenges, and empower key leaders to search for answers to our space problem. I let that run its course for a year. And as I hoped and expected, the other leaders came to the same conclusion I had, and recommended the course of action I also believed was best. But by then they came to the table with evidence to support their conclusion, they had bought into it personally, and they had convinced others to join them.

Was I happy to move so slowly? No, but I knew the task was huge. And as the saying goes, how do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. That's what we were doing. And each step forward increased our confidence and strengthened my leadership.

CONSIDER

Write all the steps that will be needed to complete the change. Start by stating where you are now, and outline the logical process, step-by-step, needed to get to your ending point. This may take you a significant amount of time. And additional steps may occur to you as time goes by. That's okay. Think of this as a working document. (After you complete your first pass at this, you may want to create an electronic version of the document that you can later modify.)

[Your Response Here]

Adjust Your Priorities

Critical changes make an impact. They also cost you something in time, energy, resources, creativity, goodwill, or influence. If they *don't* cost you, you need to question if real change is occurring. Of course, not changing also costs you. If I had chosen to throw in the towel as we were running out of space in Lancaster, the entire organization would have plateaued, and it would have been the beginning of the end. Instead, as the core leadership team came together, we changed our priorities and prepared for the next steps in the process. So I knew we needed to engage in this process for the future of the organization, and I started to consider what things we *wouldn't* be able to do as a result.

CONSIDER

What will it cost your team or organization to plan and complete this initiative? What won't you be able to do as a result? What additional resources will you need to complete it? How will you get them?

[Your Response Here]

Notify Key People

Good leaders don't share information about changes with everyone in the organization at one time. They don't try to make communication "fair." They make it strategic. As a leader, before you let the masses know what's going on, you need to meet with key people and communicate with them.

Which key people? I identify them by asking myself two questions: "Who needs to get behind this to make it fly? And who actually has to fly it?" The answers to those questions point me to the people who need to know about changes before everyone else does.

I meet first with the people whose influence is needed to make the changes fly, because if they don't buy in, the plan is never going to work. I'll need to work with them to earn their buy-in. Usually these meetings occur one-on-one or in very small groups.

CONSIDER

Who are the influencers you need to meet with?

PERSON OR GROUP	MEETING DATE
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

I often take an approach that I wrote about in the chapter "Share a Secret with Someone" in my book *25 Ways to Win with People*. By telling them about

the change before it's public knowledge, I'm giving them valuable information, making them feel special, and including them on the journey. It's an act of inclusion that most people appreciate. This personal approach also allows for open discussion, honest reactions, questions, and objections. I think of these connection times as the meetings before the meeting.

If these go well, I share the information with the people who care the most: the ones who will carry out the implementation of the plan.

CONSIDER

Who are the people who are vital to the implementation of the plan?

[Your Response Here]

When will you meet with them? Date: _____

After that, I begin to hold other meetings with larger groups throughout the organization.

CONSIDER

Identify the additional groups of people with whom you need to meet and when you will meet with them. (Set these only after you've successfully met with your influencers and implementers.)

PERSON OR GROUP	**MEETING DATE**
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

And if a meeting before the meeting doesn't go well, then I meet with those key individuals again, and keep meeting with them until we can work through their objections and they buy into the change. The key players on the team or in the organization must be willing participants and involved in the process for it to work.

That takes care of the PLAN part of the process. Now let's look at the next part based on the word AHEAD.

Allow Time for Acceptance

People usually take a long time to accept change. And usually that acceptance goes through three phases:

1. It will not work.
2. It will cost too much.
3. I thought it was a good idea all along.

Seriously though, allowing time for acceptance is a challenge that leaders face because they often see more and before their people do. And the announcement of change can be confusing, misunderstood, or even chaos-producing on the team or within the organization.

By the time most leaders have recognized the need for change, analyzed the problems and possible solutions, and strategized the plan to implement it, they are ready for action. But trying to take action before the key people accept the change leads to disaster. My friend Norwood Davis, CFO of the John Maxwell Company, summed it up with a formula that he recently shared with me:

$$E = Q \times A$$

That stands for Effectiveness = Quality × Acceptance. And as Norwood reminded me, if you multiply an idea with a quality value of ten times a zero acceptance rate, its effectiveness will still equal zero. Acceptance is key to getting results as a leader. Good leaders always allow time for acceptance.

CONSIDER

How much time will people need to accept the planned changes? This will be hard to gauge in advance. Plan based on your intuition. Complete this sentence:

For this initiative to be successful, it will take _____ weeks for the critical core group of people to accept this change.

Then as the process unfolds, use your eyes, ears, and intuition to judge when people have had enough time to get on board. Adjust your timeline accordingly.

Head into Action

Once you have the buy-in of the key players, the change train can finally leave the station and start moving. Of course, that doesn't mean everyone will be on board. To paraphrase an observation by former senator Robert Kennedy: 20 percent of the people are against everything 100 percent of the time.[4] But you can't wait for everyone. If you have the influence and the people who will execute the change, you have enough to get started, and many others will get on board in time.

Often I hear people say, "Vision unites people." I disagree. Vision divides people. It separates the people who will from the ones who won't—and that's a good thing. When you start heading into action, people get "off the fence," and you find out who's who. You never know the level of your people's commitment until you call them to action. You want to enlist the committed people to help you.

How do you know the likelihood that people will join with you? You need to take stock of your personal influence. Every leader has a certain amount of "change" in his or her pocket. By that I mean emotional support in the form of bargaining chips. Every time the leader does something positive, it increases the amount of change he possesses. Anytime a leader does something that's perceived as negative, it weakens the relationship and costs the leader some of the "change" in his pocket. If a leader keeps doing things that weaken the relationship, it's possible for him to become bankrupt with his people.

You never know the level of your people's commitment until you call them to action.

Always remember: It takes "change" to make change. The more "change" you have in your pocket, the more changes you can make in the lives of the people. The less "change," the harder it is to move into action.

Expect Problems

Anytime anyone initiates any kind of movement, problems arise. It's as the old adage says: motion causes friction. Some of those problems come from unforeseen difficulties. Others come from people and their objections. People inevitably exaggerate about the joys of the past, saying it was so much better back then—even if it wasn't. They complain about the pain of the present, as if life were supposed to be conflict-free—it's not. And they fixate on their fears for the future—even the future isn't promised to us. But these reactions are perfectly natural.

The best solution to solving problems is to be proactive on the front end by anticipating the worst-case scenarios:

- ***Think the Worst First:*** What possibly can go wrong? Spend time running through every possibility you can think of, and enlist other leaders to help you be prepared.
- ***Speak to the Worst First:*** Let people know that you know how they feel and what they think. And if you discover problems, acknowledge them. Many times, people's greatest worry is that they know more than their leaders do and their leaders aren't prepared to work on problems. When you assure people that you know what's happening and you're working on it, you give them a sense of security.
- ***Answer the Worst First:*** When people start to ask questions and express their worries and concerns, don't avoid the discussion or paint a rosy picture. Give answers.
- ***Encourage Them Through the Worst First:*** People desire the encouragement of their leaders. If you let people know you're in it together and that you need them, they are likely to want to work with you.

Even the most highly proactive leaders who work to be out ahead of problems still encounter unanticipated difficulties. But if you possess a mind-set in which you *expect* problems and you're proactive, you've done all you can to give the needed changes a chance to succeed.

CONSIDER

What problems do you expect to face? What will you need to communicate about them? How will you encourage people through them?

[Your Response Here]

Always Point to the Successes

In their book *Change Is Good . . . You Go First*, Mac Anderson and Tom Feltenstein wrote about the importance of communicating positive reinforcement:

> I'm sure you've heard the three keys to purchasing real estate . . . location, location, location. Well, you'll now hear the three keys to inspiring change . . . *reinforce, reinforce, reinforce*. Many leaders in times of change grossly underestimate the need for continuous reinforcement. *In a perfect world we hear something once, record it in our brain, and never need to hear it again. But in reality, our words are far from perfect.* During a time of change we have doubts, fears, and occasional disappointments. Sometimes there are friends, family, and co-workers reinforcing those doubts saying, "It won't work."[5]

With all the challenges, obstacles, conflict, and naysayers working against people's efforts to implement change, we as leaders need to encourage our people to keep going and keep doing the right things. One of the best ways we can do that is to celebrate their successes, both large and small.

One of my idols, John Wooden, the highly successful coach of the UCLA men's basketball team, always emphasized the team aspect of the game. Anytime a player received a good pass allowing him to score, Wooden used to encourage the player who received the pass to point to the player who threw it to him to share the credit. It's been said that when one of Wooden's players asked, "Coach, what happens if I point to the player who gave me the assist and he isn't watching?" Coach Wooden replied, "He will always be watching." People desire validation and encouragement. It's human nature.

Positive reinforcement of the successes that people experience as they champion change continually validates the changes they make, so point to the good things about the change and point to the people who made them happen.

CONSIDER

How will you plan to celebrate the success of this initiative? How will you recognize and thank the people who contributed to its success?

[Your Response Here]

Daily Review Your Progress

This last step in the PLAN AHEAD process is vital for two reasons. First, it prompts you to make sure you are on track and moving forward. Second, it reminds you to keep communicating the message of change to your people. That's always a challenge because until the change becomes part of the organization's or team's culture, people lose sight of it and go back to their old way of doing things.

Winston Churchill quipped, "To improve is to change, so to be perfect is to have changed often."[6] Certainly we can't achieve perfection, but we can try to get as close as we can, and that means changing daily. As you work to keep the change message of progress alive with your people:

- Talk about the change clearly.
- Talk about the change creatively.
- Talk about the change continually.

If you do that along with your daily review of progress, the change will be lived, experienced, valued, and shared.

To improve is to change, so to be perfect is to have changed often.

Winston Churchill

CHANGE AGENT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

If you are part of a group going through this workbook, use the following questions to engage in group discussion. Keep in mind that the goals of good discussion are changing yourself and taking positive action.

1. When you have to deal with a change imposed on you by someone else, how does it usually make you feel? How do you respond? How do you respond to self-imposed changes?

[Your Response Here]

2. What is the most difficult change you've had to go through either professionally or personally?

[Your Response Here]

3. Would you rather lead others to change or be led through change by someone else? Explain.

[Your Response Here]

4. For you, what is the most difficult part of leading others to change? Why?

[Your Response Here]

5. What was your single greatest takeaway from this lesson? How was it valuable?

[Your Response Here]

6. The next time you need to be a change agent on your team or in your organization, what will you do differently?

[Your Response Here]

NOTES

[Your Response Here]

LESSON FIVE

THE QUICKEST WAY TO GAIN LEADERSHIP:

PROBLEM SOLVING

Many years ago, when I read M. Scott Peck's book *The Road Less Traveled*, it changed my life. The first pages of the book shook me out of my innate desire for life to be easy, for things to always come my way. Peck wrote:

> This is a great truth, one of the greatest truths. It is a great truth because once we truly see this truth, we transcend it. Once we truly know that life is difficult—once we truly understand and accept it—then life is no longer difficult. Because once it has been accepted, the fact that life is difficult no longer matters.
>
> Most do not fully see this truth that life is difficult. Instead they moan more or less incessantly, noisily or subtly, about the enormity of their problems, their burdens, and their difficulties as if life were generally easy, as if life *should* be easy.[1]

It's true that life is hard for everyone. And if life is tough for individuals, its difficulty is multiplied for leaders. Individuals can think *me*, but leaders must think *we*. A leader's life is not his or her own. Thinking *we* means other people are included, and that means their problems are also yours to deal with.

This lesson is my positive take on solving the problems that make leadership so challenging. My hope is that this simple, practical advice helps you step up and gain credibility in the quickest way as a leader.

Problems don't have to be problems unless you allow them to be. Why do I say that? Because they do hold potential benefits, which is why problem solving is the quickest way to gain leadership. Problems introduce us to ourselves; problems introduce us to others; and problems introduce us to opportunities. I

want to spend the time in this lesson to help you understand and embrace these principles so that you can become a better problem solver.

Problems Introduce Us to Ourselves

I've shared some of my early leadership journey, including the three years I spent in my first leadership role where I learned about Position, the lowest level of influence in the 5 Levels of Leadership. Like any other leader, as soon as I stepped into a leadership role, I was confronted with problems. And facing those problems caused me to "meet myself" as a young, developing leader. Here are the six biggest lessons I learned.

1. Our Decisions Are Often Impacted by Our Proximity to the Problem

Years ago, I heard that when spacecraft were being developed for the Apollo missions, a rift developed between the scientists and the engineers at NASA. Knowing that weight and space were limited, the scientists insisted that every available ounce of weight should be reserved for scientific equipment that could be used to explore and report on the astronauts' experiences in space. The goal, the scientists proclaimed, should be to design a space vessel that would be free from all defects. That would leave a large proportion of space and weight for scientific equipment.

The engineers argued that perfection was an impossible goal. They contended the only safe assumption was that something *would* go wrong, but they argued that they could not predict with certainty where a malfunction would occur. Their solution was to build in a series of backup systems to compensate for every possible malfunction. Unfortunately, that would reduce the available space for scientific equipment.

Supposedly the conflict was resolved when the astronauts were asked to weigh in with their opinions. They all voted in favor of the backup systems. Not surprising, since they were the ones who would be stranded in space if something went wrong!

As a leader, the more disconnected you are from your people, the more disconnected you may become from the problems. If that happens, you may lose the human touch in your leadership. As a young leader, I began to understand this and determined to stay close to the people I was leading. Instead of staying in my office, I went to where the people were and walked slowly through the crowd. I wanted what affected them to affect me so I would make good

decisions.

CONSIDER

How connected are you to the people you lead and the work they do for the organization? How does that impact your problem solving as a leader? How could you become better connected?

[Your Response Here]

2. Our Plates as Leaders Will Always Be Filled with Problems

Early in my leadership career, a dairy farmer told me, “John, the hardest thing about milking cows is that they never stay milked.” As a leader, I feel that problems are like cows. You’re never really done with them.

THE HARDEST THING ABOUT MILKING COWS IS THAT THEY NEVER STAY MILKED.

Someone said, “If you can smile whenever anything goes wrong, you are either a nitwit or a repairman.” I’d say you’re a leader in the making. That is the life of a leader. Problems are what you deal with every day. Expecting anything other than that is being unrealistic. So if you’re a leader, don’t be surprised when problems arise and it’s your responsibility to solve them.

3. Pragmatism Serves Us Well as Leaders

As a young leader in my first position, I was bombarded with problems and called to make decisions. Because there were so many things to tackle and I had no staff, I started seeking solutions through trial and error. With every problem I sought to discover what worked and what didn’t.

My experimentation with problem solving trained me to be very pragmatic,

and my approach enabled me to lead with a patience-persistence mind-set. Because I didn't always know the best answers, I had to be patient to figure them out. The benefit of that patience was that I was beginning to develop wisdom. When I was successful, it fueled my persistence, and I kept getting better at problem solving and decision making.[2]

Over the years my approach to problem solving has evolved. I have become aware of my strengths (strategy), limitations (impatience), and emotions (confidence). The result? I have had to let go of my need to *be* right and focus on the greater need to *do* right. And I try to keep in mind something author Jim Collins said: "There is a sense of exhilaration that comes from facing head-on the hard truths and saying, 'We will not give up. We will never capitulate. It might take a long time, but we will find a way to prevail.' "[3]

4. Believing There Is Always an Answer Is an Asset

Perhaps the most important problem-solving skill that I have learned and practiced over the years is mental agility. I am always looking for answers, I always believe I can find them, and I'm always convinced that there is more than one solution to any problem.

Perhaps the most important problem-solving skill that I have learned and practiced over the years is mental agility.

I've found that when good leaders are in problem-solving mode, it's as if they are looking at and solving two puzzles at the same time. The first puzzle is the immediate problem, the situation that needs to be resolved. They work on that, but at the same time, they also look at the puzzle of the big picture—of their organization, of the industry, of trends. They look at how the small problem relates to the bigger picture and all its complex pieces. The big-picture puzzle may never be completed because it's constantly changing and has too many pieces to count, but good leaders solve the small puzzle, while being informed by the context of the big puzzle. That requires mental agility.

Here's how I like to think mental agility works for a leader. When you have it, you are able to:

- Move from one puzzle to the other without being distracted.
- Hold a piece of the puzzle in your mind for weeks or longer with the belief that it will fit somewhere at the appropriate time.
- Allow the big picture to influence the small one, and at the same time give priority and respect to the small one.
- Live with the tension of two opposing forces: the precision needed to solve the problem and the fluidity to determine when to take those steps.

To tap into mental agility, you need to believe you can solve problems.

CONSIDER

On a scale of one (never) to ten (always), how much do you believe there are solutions to all problems?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Does your belief serve you well or harm you as a problem solver? Explain.

[Your Response Here]

5. Our Actions Can Make Our Problems Increase in Number and Size

So far, most of what I've shared about the lessons I learned and self-discoveries I made while solving problems has been positive. But believe me: I made many errors during my trial-and-error process. Sometimes those errors not only failed to solve the problems but made them worse! My problems always tended to multiply whenever I:

- Lost my perspective.
- Gave up on an important personal value.

- Lost my sense of humor.
- Felt sorry for myself.
- Blamed others for my situation.
- Wished for them to go away instead of working for them to go away.

Through these errors I learned that I needed to take responsibility for addressing the problem, take responsibility for my attitude and emotions, and give my best effort to landing a solution that was good for my team and organization.

CONSIDER

In the past, what actions, attitudes, or habits of yours made problem solving more difficult?

[Your Response Here]

6. Problems Handled Well Often Make Us Better

And that leads me to the final thing I learned about myself. When I didn't give up and I did the right thing in the face of a problem—even if I had not initially handled it well—the experience made me a better person and a better leader. The bang-ups and hang-ups of life have a way of humbling us. When I was a new leader, I used to think, *I wish life were easier*. But over time, as I continually faced problems—because they weren't going away—I started to experience a shift in my mind-set, and I began to think to myself, *I wish* I *were better*. I call that the problem promise. When you handle them well, problems promise to make you better.

The problem promise: when you handle them well, problems promise to make you better.

When leaders of good character face problems, they rise to the occasion and are often defined by their response. Bury a person in the snows of Valley Forge, and you have a George Washington. Raise him in abject poverty, and you have an Abraham Lincoln. Strike him down with paralysis, and he becomes a Franklin D. Roosevelt. Burn him so severely that the doctors say he will never walk again, and you have a Glenn Cunningham, who set the world record for running a mile in 1934. Oppress them in a society filled with racial discrimination, and they become a Booker T. Washington, a Marian Anderson, a George Washington Carver, and a Martin Luther King Jr. Call him retarded and write him off as uneducable, and you have an Albert Einstein. Problems don't have to break us. Instead, they can make us.

CONSIDER

Can you recall a time when the way you responded to a problem made you a better person or leader? If so, how did you benefit? What specifically in the way you responded made it possible for you to learn and grow? Be sure to identify the type of response because you may be able to use it again to help you in the future.

[Your Response Here]

Problems Introduce Us to Others

I recently asked a friend about the character of an acquaintance of ours whom neither of us knew very well. His reply: "I'm not able to comment on his character. I've never seen him handle adversity." And I thought, *How true*. You can learn a lot about yourself by the way you deal with problems, but you can also find out a lot about other people based on how they react. If you're a leader, that information is critical. People's responses to problems and adversity impact the chemistry of your team and the outcome of their efforts.

People Who Make Problems Worse

When some people face a problem, they can make it worse. I used to tell my staff that all people in an organization carry with them two "buckets." One is filled with gasoline, the other with water. When they come across the "spark" of a problem, they choose which bucket to use on it. Will they dump gasoline on the spark and create a real fire, or will they throw water on it and put it out?

How do the people around you react to the sparks of life? Are they fire lighters who blow things up, or firefighters who calm things down? Anyone who enjoys throwing gasoline on the fire is a liability to you and the organization.

How do the people around you react to the sparks of life? Are they fire lighters who blow things up, or firefighters who calm things down?

People Who Become Problem Magnets

When you have people who focus on problems, collect them, or multiply them, they also tend to attract other problem seekers. It's an example of the Law of Magnetism from *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*: "Who you are is who you attract."[4] Such people often eventually *become* the problem.

If you're someone who sees nothing but problems, guess what you get in life: more problems. If you see nothing but possibilities, guess what: you receive

more possibilities.

The first law of holes says, “When you are in one, stop digging.” As a leader, can you help someone to stop being a problem magnet? Can you take the shovel away from him and stop him from digging his own grave professionally? The answer is yes, but the person has to *want* to change and may need a lot of support to change the way he thinks.

THE FIRST LAW OF HOLES SAYS, “WHEN YOU ARE IN ONE, STOP DIGGING.”

PEOPLE WHO GIVE UP IN THE FACE OF PROBLEMS

Many years ago, I hired a new executive assistant. Her name was Barbara Brumagin. She had been my assistant only a few weeks when I asked her to find a phone number for someone I wanted to contact. Within a few minutes, Barbara returned to my office and told me she couldn’t find the number. She had given up in the face of a problem.

I sensed that this had the potential to set the tone for our relationship, so I said, “Barbara, bring me your Rolodex.” This was in the days before Google and the internet. “Then come sit down next to me.”

I thought for a moment, then started flipping through the phone numbers in the Rolodex until I found a starting point. Then I began making calls. I don’t remember how many people I had to call, chasing down the train until I talked to someone who could give me the number, but I think it took me about forty-five minutes.

I wrote the number down and handed it to Barbara so she could put it in the Rolodex.

“There’s always a way to solve a problem if you don’t give up,” I told her. Then I made my call.

Barbara later shared with me that she learned three things that day: First, there is always an answer. Second, the answer is not always easy to find. And third, she was determined to never dump a problem back on my desk; rather, she would deliver the answer. Barbara was willing to change, and that day she went from being a problem spotter to a problem solver. She took responsibility for

finding solutions.

People Who Use Problems as Stepping-Stones for Success

In their book titled *Cradles of Eminence*, Victor and Mildred Goertzel wrote about their study of the backgrounds of more than four hundred highly successful men and women who would be recognized as brilliant in their fields. The list included Franklin D. Roosevelt, Helen Keller, Winston Churchill, Albert Schweitzer, Clara Barton, Mahatma Gandhi, Albert Einstein, and Sigmund Freud. The intensive investigation into their early home lives yielded some startling findings:

- Three-fourths of them as children were troubled by poverty, broken homes, or difficult parents who were rejecting, overly possessive, or domineering.
- Seventy-four of the eighty-five writers of fiction or drama surveyed and sixteen of the twenty poets came from homes where they saw tense psychological drama played out between their parents.
- More than one-fourth of the sample suffered physical handicaps, such as blindness, deafness, or other crippling disabilities.[5]

Why did these achievers overcome problems while many others are overwhelmed by theirs? They didn't see their problems as stumbling blocks. They were spurred on by problems and used them as stepping-stones. They understood that problem solving was a choice, not a function of circumstance.

CONSIDER

Think about the members of your team. Write the name of each person in the category in which he or she best fits:

People Who Make Problems Worse:

[Your Response Here]

People Who Become Problem Magnets:

[Your Response Here]

People Who Give Up in the Face of Problems:

[Your Response Here]

People Who Use Problems as Stepping-Stones for Success:

[Your Response Here]

As a leader, you need to pay attention to how your people respond to problems, and you need to help them respond correctly if possible. What does that take? Time, to begin with. You need to observe people up close as they encounter problems to see how they respond. And you need to spend time helping them learn to deal with problems positively. You can't solve problems *for* them. If you do, you'll be forever solving their problems. You must solve problems *with* them—at least until they get the hang of it.

Once they start to see how you approach problems and begin to take a similar approach, ask them to consult with you before they deal with anything major. And ask that they bring three possible solutions with them when they present the problem to you. If all the solutions are bad, ask them to come up with more options. If all the solutions are great, ask them which they would pick and why. If only one of the solutions is good, ask which of the three they would pick and why. If they pick the right one, affirm them. If they pick a wrong one, use it as a teaching moment.

The day before John F. Kennedy was inaugurated as president of the United States, outgoing president Dwight D. Eisenhower shared some wisdom with him. "You'll find no easy problems ever come to the president of the United States," said Eisenhower. "If they are easy to solve, somebody else has solved them."

That may be true at the presidential level, but it's only true in other organizations if employees are encouraged to solve problems at the lowest level possible, and if they have been equipped and empowered to deal with problems and make decisions. If small problems keep getting sent up to you, then you are

creating a problem for yourself by not helping your people to be better problem solvers.

Problems Introduce Us to Opportunities

Albert Einstein said, “In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.” Not everyone sees things this way. But any leader who can shift his or her thinking from *Is there an answer?* to *There is always an answer* to *There must be a* good *answer* has the potential to become not only a fantastic problem solver but also a change agent for opportunity.

In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.

Albert Einstein

Leadership author and speaker Glenn Llopis has written about the power of this problem-solving perspective. He quoted Karl Popper: “All life is problem solving.” Then he went on to say, “The best leaders are the best problem solvers. They have the patience to step back and see the problem at-hand through broadened observation. . . . The most effective leaders approach problems through a lens of opportunity.”[6]

So how do you look at problems through the lens of opportunity? I recommend that you think about a significant problem that you are currently facing and do these eight things:

1. Recognize a Potential Problem Before It Becomes a Real Problem

Great leaders are seldom blindsided. Like boxers, they recognize that the punch that knocks them out is usually the one they didn’t see coming. For that reason, they are always looking for signs and indicators that will give them insight into any potential problems ahead. Every problem is like the one faced by the trespasser at an Indiana farm who saw a sign on a fence post that said, “If you cross this field, you’d better do it in 9.8 seconds. The bull can do it in 10 seconds.”

Good leaders anticipate problems so they can position themselves and their

team for success. What potential problems do you see in your world, and what is your game plan to fix them when they happen? Downsides rarely have an upside unless you are ready for them on the front end.

CONSIDER

In one sentence, state the problem you are choosing to address at this time:

[Your Response Here]

DOWNSIDES RARELY HAVE AN UPSIDE UNLESS YOU ARE READY FOR THEM ON THE FRONT END.

2. GET A CLEAR PICTURE OF THE PROBLEM

Have you ever heard the saying "Assumption is the mother of mess ups"? (There are also less polite versions of this.) If assumptions create mess ups in everyday life, they create train wrecks in leadership. The place to start is by getting a clear picture of the problem you face. Financier and business titan J. P. Morgan asserted, "No problem can be solved until it is reduced to some simple form. The changing of a vague difficulty into a specific, concrete form is a very essential element in thinking."

That process begins by identifying what constitutes a problem. My friend Bobb Biehl, who has given me wonderful advice over the years, once told me, "A decision is a choice you make between two or more alternatives. A problem is a situation that's counter to your intentions or expectations." So what must you do when you find yourself facing one of these counter-situations? Follow the advice of author Max De Pree, who said, "The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality."[7]

You can't solve problems and make progress without having a clear picture

of the situation and then taking appropriate steps forward. Otherwise, you risk doing what my friend author Harvey Mackay calls watering the weeds.

CONSIDER

What is your process for recognizing a potential problem and getting a clear picture of it so that you can tackle it?

[Your Response Here]

3. Ask Questions to Help You Solve Problems

Okay, I have to admit that I love questions. Not only do they help me gather information and seek solutions, but they also enable me to understand what people think and feel before I lead them. I think most leaders are too quick to talk and lead, and too slow to ask questions and listen.

Here is a series of questions I hope will help you to problem-solve and solution-implement.

The Information Question: "Who knows the most about this problem?"

One of the mistakes confident leaders sometimes make is starting to solve problems before they have enough information. They jump to conclusions. Instead, one of the best things you can do as a leader is talk to the people closest to the problem to hear their observations and suggestions. They may already know what needs to be done and only lack the resources and permission to solve the problem.

The Experience Question: "Who knows what I need to know?"

Playwright Ben Jonson said, "He that is taught only by himself has a fool for a mentor." If you are your only source of information and ideas, you're in trouble. Who do you know who can help you, advise you, mentor you?

He that is taught only by himself has a fool for a mentor.

Ben Jonson

The Challenge Question: "Who wants to tackle this problem?"

The tendency when solving problems is to look first at the capacity of people on our team. "Who can do this?" we ask. That's a good question, but a better question is, "Who *wants* to do this?" Dealing with problems requires energy. The person with desire is less likely to get worn down by the problem. Capacity alone is not enough.

The Magnitude Question: "Who needs to buy in, and how long will that take?"

So much of problem solving in leadership is gauging where your people are, what they feel, and whether they are ready to go somewhere with you. As you think about solutions to problems, you need to ask yourself questions: How big an issue is this? How will people's work be impacted? How will it affect their lives? The larger the impact, the greater the repercussions, and the bigger the decisions, the more buy-in you need people to have.

The Trust Question: "Have we earned enough trust to make needed changes?"

This is one of the most crucial questions you can ask when preparing to initiate changes. When trust within the team or organization is high, we can make more changes without negative fallout. If trust is low, our leadership is limited and we can make relatively few changes before people resist. That means that even if you have great solutions, you can fail to solve a problem if people haven't bought in. People won't accept change if they don't trust you.

The Personal Question: "What questions do I need to ask myself?"

This final question is a check to make sure you're on track. As a leader, I continually take my own "temperature" as I deal with problems. Do you have a process for self-examination and reflection related to problem solving? You don't want to rely on knee-jerk solutions. Good leaders don't just resolve the

issue to get it off their plates quickly for the sake of their own comfort. They help create solutions that take their people and their organization forward and put them in a better position than they were in before they experienced the problem. That's what you're shooting for.

CONSIDER

Think about a problem you're currently facing. Answer each of the questions below related to that problem. What you write can help you find good solutions.

1. Who knows the most about this problem?

[Your Response Here]

2. Who knows what I need to know?

[Your Response Here]

3. Who wants to tackle this problem?

[Your Response Here]

4. Who needs to buy in, and how long will that take?

[Your Response Here]

5. Have we earned enough trust to make the needed changes?

[Your Response Here]

6. What questions do I need to ask myself?

[Your Response Here]

4. Create a Framework to Examine Problems and Solutions

Once you know you have a problem and you work to get a clear picture of it, you can start to gather information. But whatever data you collect will help only if you have a framework for judging what you find out. Otherwise, how will you interpret what you discover?

My framework has six critical keys. As you think about the problem you have identified, start creating your framework:

Leadership: How does this problem affect our people?

[Your Response Here]

Personnel: Do we have the right people to help us with this problem?

[Your Response Here]

Timing: Is this the right time for a solution, and do we have enough time for it?

[Your Response Here]

Vision: How does this problem affect where we're trying to go?

[Your Response Here]

Priorities: Are my problems taking me or the team away from our priorities?

[Your Response Here]

Values: Are my values or my team's being compromised by this problem?

[Your Response Here]

Problems can very easily cause us to lose our way or take our "eye off the ball." Often the big picture gets obscured while we deal with the emotion and disruption problems cause. My framework helps me maintain proper perspective. I encourage you to develop a framework of your own to keep from being put off track.

5. Value Shared Problem Solving

The best problem solvers don't work alone. They enlist the aid of other thinkers to help them. And they use the Socratic method of asking questions to gain from other people's thinking. This method helps them become better problem-solving leaders.

CONSIDER

Who will you enlist to help you solve this problem?

[Your Response Here]

THE BEST PROBLEM SOLVERS DON'T WORK ALONE.

6. Always Come Up with More Than One Solution

For years I was a very limited problem solver. I would find one answer for a problem, and then I would champion that solution to my people. Today I try to be more creative. I look for many solutions and let the best one champion itself.

As you seek to solve problems, list as many solutions to a problem as possible. The more, the better. Keep in mind that seldom is there just one way to solve a problem. The more options the better, because problems continually shift and change. Leaders who don't have backup solutions soon find themselves in trouble.

CONSIDER

Together with the people you have enlisted to help you solve the problem, come up with as many solutions as possible. Be sure you generate at least five:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

The truth is that big ideas don't appear—they evolve. But that only happens when you are determined to explore ideas and look for more and better solutions.

7. Cultivate a Bias for Action

One of the greatest dangers for a thoughtful person is to spend too much time on problem solving and too little time on solution implementing. Leaders who don't or can't follow through are in danger of thinking, *Ready, aim, aim, aim* . . . but never *fire!*

DEVELOP A BIAS FOR ACTION. DON'T THINK, CAN I? INSTEAD THINK, HOW CAN I?

The solution is to develop a bias for action. Don't think, *Can I?* Instead think, *How can I?* Then start moving forward. The moment you confront *and act* on a problem, you begin to solve it. If great inventors and explorers hadn't taken tangible, deliberate steps forward, would they have made the contributions they're known for? No! Their belief prompted action and their action created results. Ideas evolve as you move, and better solutions come into view as you move forward. Ultimately, you can't *wish* or *wait* your way through difficulties. You must *work* your way through them.

CONSIDER

When is the soonest you can implement the best solution you have discovered?

[Your Response Here]

8. ACTIVELY LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES AND LESSONS IN EVERY PROBLEM

President John F. Kennedy was once asked how he became a war hero. With his customary dry wit, Kennedy replied, "It was quite easy. Somebody sunk my boat!"[8] That is the essence of seeing opportunity in the midst of a problem. No matter how difficult your circumstances may seem, there is likely a solution that not only resolves the problem but has the potential to improve your life and your leadership.

As a leader, you need to see opportunities differently than most people. They are a chance for you to learn about yourself, your team, and your opportunities. They provide you a way to improve your own life, improve the lives of others, and gain influence. That's why I say that problem solving is the fastest way to

gain leadership.

CONSIDER

What have you learned about yourself, your team, and your opportunities through this process?

[Your Response Here]

I hope this gives you a new perspective and you begin to use challenges and problem solving as assets to your leadership.

PROBLEM SOLVING

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

If you are part of a group going through this workbook, use the following questions to engage in group discussion. Keep in mind that the goals of good discussion are changing yourself and taking positive action.

1. Do you *expect* to face problems in your work and personal life, or do you usually assume the road will always be smooth and easy? Explain your answer.

   [Your Response Here]

2. How do you think your attitude toward problems helps or hurts you?

   [Your Response Here]

3. Which of the following best describes your mind-set as you start the problem-solving process:

- ❑ There is no answer.
- ❑ I have an idea.
- ❑ There could be more answers.
- ❑ There are more answers.
- ❑ There could be an answer.
- ❑ There is an answer.
- ❑ I have more ideas.
- ❑ There are better ideas.

4. How does your attitude impact your success as a problem solver?

[Your Response Here]

5. What solution are you most proud of as a problem solver? What process did you go through to create that solution? Who, if anyone, helped you?

[Your Response Here]

6. What was your single greatest takeaway from this lesson? Why?

[Your Response Here]

7. Based on what you've learned in this lesson, how do you need to change? What concrete, measurable step can you take this week to grow as a problem-solving leader?

[Your Response Here]

NOTES

[Your Response Here]

LESSON SIX

THE EXTRA PLUS IN LEADERSHIP:

ATTITUDE

Think of a friend, colleague, family member, or mentor whom you greatly admire. Stop. Don't keep reading. Really think of a name, and write it down. Now write five things you admire most about this person.

Person I Admire: _____

The Reasons Why

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Why did I ask you to do this? Because I've found that most of the time, many of the characteristics we admire in others have to do with attitude. We admire and like to be around people who are positive, tenacious, and expectant. People with a good attitude lift us up and inspire us.

When it comes to leadership, attitude becomes even more important. You need to see possibilities when others don't, encourage people when they are feeling defeated, and demonstrate commitment when others want to quit.

Author and pastor Charles Swindoll pointed out how the right attitude is central to success. He said:

> The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness, or skill. It will make or break a company, a church, or a home. The remarkable thing is that we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past. Nor can we change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We also cannot change the inevitable. The only thing that we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude. I am convinced that life is 10 percent of what happens to me, and 90 percent how I react to it. And so it is with you . . . we are in charge of our attitudes.[1]

A good attitude is an extra plus in life. It makes our lives better. And it also makes our leadership better, because leadership has less to do with position than it does disposition. The attitude or disposition of leaders is important because it influences the thoughts and feelings of the people they lead. Good leaders understand that a positive attitude creates a positive atmosphere, which encourages positive and productive responses from others.

Whatever It Takes—A Leader's Attitude

If you asked me to identify the single most important aspect of a successful leader's attitude, it would be possessing a whatever-it-takes mind-set. The invisible line that separates those who get things done from those who merely dream about them is an attitude of total commitment. Great leaders are sold out to achieving success—in the face of any problem—and are willing to pull out all the stops to help the team win. This whatever-it-takes attitude is common in all great leaders, and serves both the leader and the people well.

If you asked me to identify the single most important aspect of a successful leader's attitude, it would be possessing a whatever-it-takes mind-set.

This lesson is going to put some muscle in your attitude. To be an effective leader, you don't have to be happy all the time or be a cheerleader. But you do need to model an attitude of positive vision during tough times. A leader's attitude must exemplify resolve, tenacity, focus, determination, and commitment. It must demonstrate consistency, see possibilities, and fight for victories during tough times.

This kind of attitude isn't hard to understand, but it can be hard to live, so I want to give you some steps you can take to develop it and embody it as a leader.

1. Disown Your Helplessness

Whatever-it-takes leaders aggressively pursue solutions. You never hear them say, "There's nothing we can do about it." Those are the words of someone with a victim's mind-set. Professor and expert on organizational behavior Robert E. Quinn wrote:

> A victim is a person who suffers a loss because of the actions of others. A victim tends to believe that salvation comes only from the action of

> others. They have little choice but to whine and wait until something good happens. Living with someone who chooses to play the victim role is draining; working in an organization where many people have chosen the victim role is absolutely depressing. Like a disease, the condition tends to spread.[2]

Unfortunately, the victim disease has spread throughout America. More and more people have slipped from a can-do attitude to one of helplessness. In John F. Kennedy's inauguration speech, he charged the young people of America to ask not what their country could do for them but what they could do for their country. Hundreds of thousands rose up and responded to that challenge, becoming part of the Peace Corps, which served people around the world. President Kennedy had a whatever-it-takes mind-set, and his attitude as a leader spread to others.

CONSIDER

To be successful, leaders need to disown their helplessness and help the people on their teams do the same. They can do that by empowering others. You can gain insight into how by answering the following questions:

YES	NO	
❑	❑	I never make excuses.
❑	❑	I create a can-do environment where people are expected to solve their problems.
❑	❑	I model a whatever-it-takes attitude to my team.
❑	❑	I provide training that enables team members to succeed.
❑	❑	I challenge people to take responsibility for their performance.
❑	❑	I make everyone feel valued and important as part of the team.
❑	❑	I give solid feedback after team members try to tackle a challenge.
❑	❑	I celebrate with team members who are succeeding.
❑	❑	I give people increasing challenges to test their growth and give them

wins.

The more yeses you answered, the more likely you are to have a whatever-it-takes attitude as a leader.

In our current culture, it may seem like a tremendous challenge to inspire people to give up their helplessness and become more proactive. But all it takes is belief in our ability to make a difference. Years ago, I read a story from columnist Nell Mohney about a double-blind experiment conducted in the San Francisco Bay area. The principal of a school called some teachers together and said, "Because you three teachers are the finest in the system and you have the greatest expertise, we're going to give you ninety high-IQ students. We're going to let you move these students through this next year at their own pace and see how much they can learn."

The teachers and students were delighted. Over the next year the teachers and the students thoroughly enjoyed themselves. The teachers loved teaching the brightest students. The students benefited from the close attention and instruction of highly skilled teachers. By the end of the year, the students had achieved 20 to 30 percent more than the other students in the area.

At the end of the experiment, the principal called the teachers back together and said, "I have a confession to make. You did not have ninety of the most intelligently prominent students. They were run-of-the-mill students. We took ninety students at random from the system and gave them to you."

The teachers said, "This means that we are exceptional teachers."

"I have another confession," the principal admitted. "You're not the brightest of the teachers. Your names were the first three names drawn out of a hat."[3]

How could three average teachers accomplish so much with ninety average students? The teachers and students possessed an exceptionally positive and proactive attitude. They didn't feel helpless. They didn't think of themselves as victims. They believed they could succeed, and they did.

2. Take the Bull by the Horns

President Theodore Roosevelt said, "There is nothing brilliant nor outstanding about my record, except perhaps one thing: I do the things that I believe ought to be done . . . and when I make up my mind to do a thing, I act." That's a great description of whatever-it-takes leaders. They are fearless and don't hesitate to

take a bull by the horns and wrestle it to the ground. They take action.

THERE IS NOTHING BRILLIANT NOR OUTSTANDING ABOUT MY RECORD, EXCEPT PERHAPS ONE THING: I DO THE THINGS THAT I BELIEVE OUGHT TO BE DONE . . . AND WHEN I MAKE UP MY MIND TO DO A THING, I ACT.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Author Danny Cox said he interviewed a reform school graduate who had become a successful entrepreneur not once but twice. When he asked the man the key to his success, he said that he asked himself the following questions and *really* paid attention to his own answers:

- What do I really want?
- What will it cost?
- Am I willing to pay the price?
- When should I start paying the price?[4]

Notice that the last question is designed to prompt action. If a leader doesn't answer the last question and make a commitment to a start date, the first three questions don't really matter. And of course, the best answer to that last question is now.

3. ENTER THE "NO WHINING ZONE"

Whatever-it-takes people know how to handle their feelings. They put their attitude in charge of their emotions. We all experience times when we feel bad. Our attitude cannot stop our feelings, but it can keep our feelings from stopping us. After all, what's the use of complaining? It doesn't get us anywhere.

WE ALL EXPERIENCE TIMES WHEN WE FEEL BAD. OUR ATTITUDE CANNOT STOP OUR FEELINGS, BUT IT CAN KEEP OUR

Nobody likes a whiner. Whiners wear people out. There is nothing attractive about someone who complains. That's true for leaders and their teams. When I meet leaders who allow their team members to whine and complain, I wonder why they would have someone like that on their payroll. They can get people to do that for free!

What's the best solution to guard against becoming a complainer? Cultivate gratitude. It is by far the most effective antidote to a negative attitude and a complaining spirit. Here are three suggestions for how to do that.

- Express Gratitude Independent of Your Feelings
- Express Gratitude for the Small and Ordinary Things
- Express Gratitude Especially in the Midst of Adversity

CONSIDER

How successful are you at being grateful and expressing that gratitude? Rate yourself on a scale of one (terrible) to ten (excellent)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What can you do to make yourself better?

[Your Response Here]

When we are grateful, fear disappears and faith appears. And that gives us strength and motivation to act. Good leaders are never complainers. They're doers. When things go wrong, they start working and rallying people to help them.

4. Put on a New Pair of Shoes

The art of leadership is getting things done with and through other people. As a person develops the leader within, she spends less time on personally producing and more on working with others to help her produce. To be successful at that, you need to be able to see things from their point of view, or as the old saying goes, spend a day in their shoes. I think President Harry Truman was wise when he said, "When we understand the other fellow's viewpoint—understand what he is trying to do—nine out of ten times he is trying to do right."

As a leader, I always try to see things from two perspectives: that of the person I'm working with and my own. I use the other person's perspective to make a connection; then I use mine to give direction. But I am able to see things from another person's point of view only if I am willing to be open to that person. Tim Hansel, teacher and founder of Summit Expedition, described the importance of this in his book *Through the Wilderness of Loneliness*. He wrote:

> It is difficult to receive when your fists are clenched.
> It is impossible to embrace when your arms are crossed.
> It is difficult to see when your eyes are closed.
> It is hard to discover when your mind is made up.
> And a heart that has sealed itself off from giving has unknowingly sealed itself off from the ability to receive love.[5]

Leaders need to connect with people, not just for the sake of building relationships, which is important, but also for the sake of building their organizations.

CONSIDER

List the names of the members of your team. Next to each person's name, write a sentence or phrase that describes that person's perspective or outlook. The sentence must be positive, giving the person the benefit of the doubt for how he or she sees the world. If you're having difficulty describing someone's perspective, you need to get to know him or her better so that you can articulate the person's point of view.

TEAM MEMBER	PERSPECTIVE

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

5. Nurture Your Passion

Leaders with great attitudes and whatever-it-takes mind-sets usually exude energy and enthusiasm, and those things fuel them to strive for excellence. That's why I believe the best career advice any person can receive is "Find your passion and follow it." That's what I've done for fifty years. Because I'm passionate about what I do, I feel like I've never had to work a day in my life. I've simply done what I love to do.

Author and pastor Ken Hemphill says, "Vision does not ignite growth; passion does. Passion fuels vision and vision is the focus of passion. Leaders who are passionate about their call create vision." I couldn't agree more.

CONSIDER

Do you know what things you're passionate about? If so, write them here:

[Your Response Here]

6. Exceed Expectations

I believe that 75 percent of people fall short when it comes to delivering on expectations, and only about 5 percent of all people exceed them in the service they provide, but the people who comprise that 5 percent make the world go around. They also receive the benefits that come from possessing that attitude and delivering on their promises.

Early in my career, I decided that wherever I am, whoever I am with, whatever I am doing, and whenever I have an opportunity, I will set the bar of expectations for myself higher than others do for me. That commitment has shaped my development as a leader for fifty years. It made me responsible for my own leadership growth. By setting my own bar high, I *had* to grow to reach it. If you're wondering how to do that, consider these things:

- ***Giftedness:*** I set the bar for myself the highest in my areas of strength because that is where I have the greatest potential to grow and become excellent. In areas of weakness, I ask for help from others.
- ***Growth:*** As I grow in the areas of my strengths and achieve some level of success, I don't rest on that achievement. I try to build upon it. That means raising the bar for myself again. If I don't do that, I will plateau.
- ***Opportunities:*** I see any opportunity that uses my strengths as an opportunity to improve by practicing and applying what I've learned. That attitude helps me continue growing and improving.
- ***Others' Expectations:*** I always ask to find out the expectations of people who desire my services. I can't meet or exceed an expectation I am unaware of. I have built my career by making the meeting of their expectations my *minimum*.
- ***My Own Expectations:*** Since I use the expectations of others as the ground floor for my own expectations, I am able to build upon them. I put effort into discerning what more I can give that will please them and add the most value. My desire is always to blow them away.

This attitude of exceeding expectations will deliver a high return to you as a leader. As I tell my people, if you deliver on what you promise and meet expectations, you will get paid. If you exceed expectations, you'll get another contract. Everything you give above their expectations is *everything*!

CONSIDER

What are your expectations for yourself? Take time to write an expectations manifesto:

[Your Response Here]

7. Never Be Satisfied

The final attitude characteristic of whatever-it-takes leaders is positive discontent. Good leaders are never satisfied with what is. They see what could be, and they continually seek to achieve it. This is what drives them to get better, to achieve more, and to lead their people to new territory. The future belongs to people who are dedicated to making their world, their teams, and themselves better.

Putting a Whatever-It-Takes Attitude into Action

Someone I know who is never satisfied with past accomplishments is Paul Martinelli, the president of the John Maxwell Team. I have known few people dedicated to a relentless pursuit of improvement like his. Under his leadership, the company has experienced explosive growth. Yet he is still working hard to do more. Recently when I congratulated him for another very successful year, he smiled and said, "John, we aren't even close to reaching our potential. We are still learning our way through failure." As a leader, Paul has a whatever-it-takes attitude, and that's why he is so successful.

I want to acquaint you with the way Paul puts his whatever-it-takes attitude into action. I believe it will help you develop the leader within you in this area of your life.

1. Test

While others are crippled by worry, fear, or anxiety, Paul is taking action. He never waits for the "perfect moment" to act. It's the job that is never started that takes the longest to finish. Paul tests his ideas by implementing them and seeing how far away he is from his ideal outcome.

It's the job that is never started that takes the longest to finish.

T. Boone Pickens reminded leaders of how important it is to take positive steps forward, to put things into motion. He said:

> Sometimes the window of opportunity is open only briefly. Waiting is not a decision, although many people think it is. Be willing to make decisions. That's the most important quality in a good leader. Don't fall victim to what I call the ready-aim-aim-aim-aim syndrome. You must be

willing to fire.[6]

How will you know whether your test is successful? How will you go about finding better ways of doing things? The answer is to ask hard questions. You can't allow any fear of hearing negative answers to keep you from asking questions. Hard truths—responded to correctly—help you become better. Ask the following:

- Is there a better way to do what we do?
- What can we learn from others who do what we do?
- Who can help us do better in what we do?
- Are the current numbers the best that we can do?
- Am I growing each year doing what I do?
- How can I become better to help my team become better?

Paul calls questions like these the door to willingness—to try new things, take more risks, change what isn't working, and stretch to be better than we were in the past. I love that.

To make great progress, leaders must benchmark against the future potential of their team or organization, and the opportunities before them. Testing is a way to challenge the status quo and reach for that potential.

CONSIDER

On a scale of one (never) to ten (always), how likely are you to test an idea by taking action on it?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Is your attitude holding you back or helping you? What must you do to get yourself to take more risks?

[Your Response Here]

2. FAIL

Testing can be a challenging and frightening experience. Why? Because it can lead to failure. However, failure is an essential step in the cycle of success. Paul said, “The willingness to fail is essential for the leader to model and the team to embrace.” If we allow the fear of failure to control our attitude and actions, we’ll never become the leaders we have the potential to be. And we’ll never take our teams or organizations where they have the potential to go, accomplishing all they could accomplish.

Paul worked at coaching people to reach their potential for more than a decade. As a young entrepreneur, he wanted to teach other business leaders what he had learned through trial and error. He’s aware that some people have a hard time taking risks. Paul said:

> Most people—leaders included—try everything in their power to avoid failure. And they should. But they should not avoid making the big bets, taking the big risks, or initiating the new efforts that put them and their team in the position to fail so that they can seek the rewards of growth. I think what has led us to some of our greatest achievements has not been my or my team’s willingness to do our best. We should always be doing our best. Rather, it’s our willingness to do our all. To test every possible opportunity, to test every new innovation, to test every person’s ability and potential.

To be successful, you need to be willing to fail. You need to maintain a positive attitude and a strong belief in yourself even when you fall flat. What does that mean? How can you maintain the right attitude?

See Failure as a Constant Companion of Success

Progress always means entering uncharted territory. It means putting yourself out there to be scrutinized and criticized. It means exposing yourself to new pressures and demands. It’s only human to wonder if you’re up to the challenge. A small, anxious part of you would probably rather not take the risk. That part is what keeps many would-be leaders from taking action and becoming productive and effective.

The price of success is failure. As someone said, rockets blowing up on the launchpad is why we have footprints on the moon, and blown circuits are why the world is illuminated with electricity. If we want success, we need to embrace

failure.

THE PRICE OF SUCCESS IS FAILURE.

See Success as Colorfully Varied, Not "Monochromatic"

What would life be like if everything you tried was successful? I think it would be boring, predictable, and bland. The struggles we experience make the successes we achieve worthwhile. Without the pain, how would we be able to appreciate our progress? We need to welcome the unexpected and be open to a picture of success different from the expected.

THE STRUGGLES WE EXPERIENCE MAKE THE SUCCESSES WE ACHIEVE WORTHWHILE. WITHOUT THE PAIN, HOW WOULD WE BE ABLE TO APPRECIATE OUR PROGRESS?

A productive life is colorful, not monochromatic gray, and a person's progress can take on many different forms. Failure to achieve what you intended can often lead to an entirely different kind of success—maybe even to a better version of success than you ever imagined.

Have a Game Plan to Get Over Failure

Why do so many people get bogged down by failure? Sarah Rapp, a social impact startup consultant, said, "When it comes to failing, our egos are our own worst enemies. As soon as things start going wrong, our defense mechanisms kick in, tempting us to do what we can to save face." In an article Rapp wrote after interviewing economist Tim Harford, author of *Adapt: Why Success Always Starts with Failure,* she said that failure causes a variety of reactions. The first is denial: "It seems to be the hardest thing in the world to admit we've made a mistake and try to put it right. It requires you to challenge a status quo of your own making," she said. Another is chasing our losses: "We're so anxious not to

‘draw a line under a decision we regret’ that we end up causing still more damage while trying to erase it. For example, poker players who’ve just lost some money are primed to make riskier bets than they’d normally take, in a hasty attempt to win the lost money back and ‘erase’ the mistake.”

Rapp suggests trying to become dispassionate about our failures and working not to get too attached to our plans. “The danger is a plan that seduces us into thinking failure is impossible and adaptation is unnecessary,” Rapp wrote, “a kind of ‘Titanic’ plan, unsinkable (until it hits the iceberg).”[7]

CONSIDER

What is (or will be) your game plan for getting over failure? Describe it here:

[Your Response Here]

3. LEARN

A friend once gave me the formula for becoming an overnight success. He said:

> You show up every day.
> You work hard.
> You try new things.
> You fail.
> You improve.
> You grow.
> You face countless challenges and rejections.
> You doubt yourself.
> You want to quit.
> But you don’t.
> And you do it all over again and again.
> Do this for months, years, or even decades, and you can become an “overnight” success.

One of the most important benefits of having the right attitude as a leader comes after testing and failing. That's when we have the greatest opportunity to learn. As leadership trainer Roland Niednagel commented, "A mistake is only a failure if you don't learn from it." Not all leaders embrace this truth. In my experience, people do one of three things when they fail:

- They resolve not to make a mistake again—that's foolish.
- They allow their mistakes to make cowards of them—that's fatal.
- They develop the security to learn from their mistakes—that's fruitful.

CONSIDER

Which of those descriptions best describes you? What stands between you and the fruitfulness that comes from being secure enough to learn from your mistakes? How must you change?

[Your Response Here]

A MISTAKE IS ONLY A FAILURE IF YOU DON'T LEARN FROM IT.

ROLAND NIEDNAGEL

I have yet to meet a highly successful leader who wasn't a learner. And the best part is that it doesn't take talent to learn. It doesn't take experience. It takes the right attitude. If we see failure as normal and experience learning from it as positive, we can take risks. We can strike out into uncharted territory. We can face loss. We have the potential to achieve almost anything as leaders. And we can help our people to achieve beyond their wildest expectations for themselves.

4. IMPROVE

What's the greatest value of learning? I believe it comes when we improve.

That's where the rubber meets the road. Otherwise, what we learn is only academic.

Success often asks the question, "What am I getting?" Improvement always asks, "What am I becoming?" Improvement through growth is the only guarantee that tomorrow will be better. The profile of someone who improves looks different from that of other people.

Social psychologist Heidi Grant Halvorson characterizes the difference between those who desire to improve and those who desire to prove to others that they've got it all together. She wrote:

> People approach any task with one of two mindsets: what I call the "Be-Good" mindset, where your focus is on proving that you have a lot of ability and already know what you're doing, and the "Get-Better" mindset, where your focus is on developing ability. You can think of it as the difference between wanting to prove that you are smart, and wanting to get smarter.
>
> The problem with the Be-Good mindset is that it tends to cause problems when we are faced with something unfamiliar or difficult. We start worrying about making mistakes, because mistakes mean that we lack ability, and this creates a lot of anxiety and frustration. . . .
>
> The Get-Better mindset, on the other hand, is practically bullet-proof. When we think about what we are doing in terms of learning and mastering, accepting that we may make some mistakes along the way, we stay motivated despite the setbacks that might occur.[8]

CONSIDER

Which mind-set do you possess: Be-Good or Get-Better? How would you benefit from becoming more of a Get-Better person?

[Your Response Here]

Kouzes and Posner in *The Leadership Challenge* wrote, "Leaders must

challenge the process precisely because any system will unconsciously conspire to maintain the status quo and prevent change."[9] If you're leading a group of people, then it's your responsibility to bring an attitude of improvement to the team and to help others embrace it. When individuals experience improvement and it adds value to them in ways they value most, it changes their perspective on what's possible and expands their potential.

LEADERS MUST CHALLENGE THE PROCESS PRECISELY BECAUSE ANY SYSTEM WILL UNCONSCIOUSLY CONSPIRE TO MAINTAIN THE STATUS QUO AND PREVENT CHANGE.

JAMES M. KOUZES AND BARRY Z. POSNER

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5. REENTER

Once you've tested a new way of doing something, failed, learned, and applied what you've learned, you're ready to reenter the race with your whatever-it-takes attitude strengthened and with new ways to approach challenges and lead others. I've found that when I've gone through this process, my commitment has increased, and that has made me a better leader.

I hope this lesson has inspired you to dedicate yourself to developing a whatever-it-takes attitude so that you experience the extra plus in leadership. That plus will give you an edge, not only in your own thinking but also in your ability to attract, lead, and inspire others.

If you're like me, you benefit from reading positive words to maintain a positive attitude. I'm always on the lookout for books and quotes that inspire me to keep my head up and encourage the members of my team. Recently I discovered something from Mark Batterson, author of a book called *Chase the Lion*. In it he offers what he calls the Lion Chaser's Manifesto. Mark, like me, is a person of faith, so I hope you won't be offended by his perspective. But even if you skip over his remarks related to God and faith, I believe you will find his words inspiring.

Lion Chaser's Manifesto

Quit living as if the purpose of life is to arrive safely at death. Run to the roar.
Set God-sized goals. Pursue God-given passions.
Go after a dream that is destined to fail without divine intervention.
Stop pointing out problems. Become part of the solution.
Stop repeating the past. Start creating the future.
Face your fears. Fight for your dreams.
Grab opportunity by the mane and don't let go!
Live like today is the first day and the last day of your life.
Burn sinful bridges. Blaze new trails.
Live for the applause of nail-scarred hands.
Don't let what's wrong with you keep you from worshiping what's right with God.
Dare to fail. Dare to be different.
Quit holding out. Quit holding back. Quit running away.
Chase the lion.[10]

Whatever the lion is in your life, I encourage you to adopt a whatever-it-takes attitude and to chase the lion for all you're worth. Even if you never catch it, you'll never regret it.

ATTITUDE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

If you are part of a group going through this workbook, use the following questions to engage in group discussion. Keep in mind that the goals of good discussion are changing yourself and taking positive action.

1. What is your natural bent? Do you see the glass as half-full or half-empty? Why do you think you see the world the way you do?

[Your Response Here]

2. What's the difference between people who see themselves as victors or victims? Which ones usually win?

[Your Response Here]

3. As a leader, how do you work with people who have a victim mind-set? What has worked to help them change or grow?

[Your Response Here]

4. What is your greatest intellectual or emotional challenge when it comes to facing a potential failure?

[Your Response Here]

5. What was your single greatest takeaway from this lesson? Why?

[Your Response Here]

6. Based on what you've learned in this lesson, how do you need to change when it comes to your attitude? What concrete, measurable step can you take this week to grow in the area of attitude?

[Your Response Here]

NOTES

[Your Response Here]

LESSON SEVEN

THE HEART OF LEADERSHIP:

SERVING PEOPLE

The first time I went to see Zig Ziglar speak, I heard him say, "If you help people get what they want, they will help you get what you want." What he was really talking about was servant leadership, and that idea rocked my world.

Zig's comment made me realize something: I was trying to get others to help me, not trying to help them. I realized my attitude toward people wasn't right. And that knowledge started me on a journey that eventually made me realize that the heart of leadership is based on serving others, not myself. It challenged me to invert the traditional hierarchical "power pyramid," putting others at the top and myself at the bottom.

THE HEART OF LEADERSHIP IS BASED ON SERVING OTHERS, NOT OURSELVES.

That was forty-five years ago. My thinking about leadership and my approach to it has continued to be shaped by other people in this area. Robert Greenleaf has been an influence. In 1970 he wrote an essay called "The Servant as Leader," which he later expanded into the book *Servant Leadership*. Greenleaf wrote:

> 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. . . . The care taken by the servant-first [leader is] 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?[1]

Others books, such as *Leadership Is an Art* by Max De Pree, the former chairman of Herman Miller, and *The Soul of the Firm* by C. William Pollard, chairman emeritus of ServiceMaster, also assisted me on my journey to becoming a servant leader. But the book that made the greatest impression on me was Eugene Habecker's *The Other Side of Leadership*. It convinced me that adding value to others needed to be at the core of my leadership. I've had the privilege of knowing Eugene for more than thirty years. The words in his book are a description of his life. He said, "The true leader serves. Serves people. Serves their best interests, and in so doing will not always be popular, may not impress. But because true leaders are motivated by loving concern rather than a desire for personal glory, they are willing to pay the price."[2]

THE TRUE LEADER SERVES. SERVES PEOPLE. SERVES THEIR BEST INTERESTS.

EUGENE HABECKER

Inspired by Eugene's life and his book, I made two decisions: first, I would place the concerns of others above my own, and second, I would love people unconditionally. The first was a matter of the will. The second was a change in attitude. And because I'm a person of faith, I adopted the following words from the Bible and took them to heart as the desire of my life:

> Tell those rich in this world's wealth to quit being so full of themselves and so obsessed with money, which is here today and gone tomorrow. Tell them to go after God, who piles on all the riches we could ever

> manage—to do good, to be rich in helping others, to be extravagantly generous. If they do that, they'll build a treasury that will last, gaining life that is truly life.[3]

As I strive to live this way, I've adopted some guidelines that I try to practice daily to become a better servant leader:

- ***I Don't Rely on My Position or Title:*** I'm grateful for the accomplishments I've made, but I don't rely on them to help me lead. I work to earn respect every day by delivering on what I promise and by serving others.
- ***I Choose to Believe in People and Their Potential:*** I care about people because it's the right thing to do. But there are also practical reasons for believing in people. I've found that the more I believe in people's potential and the more I serve them, the more their potential increases. That creates a win for everyone.
- ***I Try to See Things from the Perspective of Others:*** It's possible to lead and serve others well only when you know their minds and hearts. I intentionally connect with people and try to see from their point of view to serve them better.
- ***I Work to Create an Environment of Encouragement:*** Few things are better than being on a team of people who desire to serve one another. When leaders are willing to serve people, and encourage others to serve, a spirit of cooperation emerges where it's "one for all and all for one." That makes the environment positive and develops a sense of loyalty among team members.
- ***I Measure My Success by How Much Value I Add to Others:*** When you decide to serve others as a leader, the team's success becomes your success. I remember when I experienced that change in thinking. It felt as though my world immediately expanded. It is true: one is too small a number to achieve greatness. Few things surpass helping your team to win together.

I'm still not where I would like to be when it comes to serving people, but I'm continually striving to get better at it.

CONSIDER

Where are you when it comes to those guidelines? Mark each of the following statements with a yes or no.

YES	NO	
☐	☐	I don't rely on my position or title to garner respect.
☐	☐	I choose to believe in people and their potential.
☐	☐	I try to see things from the perspective of others.
☐	☐	I work to create an environment of encouragement.
☐	☐	I measure my success by how much value I add to others.

For any statement to which you responded no, how must you change to improve in that area?

[Your Response Here]

The Power of Serving Others

My desire to serve people comes out of my faith, but you don't need faith to want to serve others. The attitude, priority, and practice of serving others make good business sense and are accessible to anyone. Organizational consultant S. Chris Edmonds defines servant leadership as "a person's dedication to helping others be their best selves at home, work, and in their community. Anyone can serve—and lead—from any position or role in a family, workplace, or community."[4]

If you look at the words of many highly admired leaders, you can see the theme of serving others in their attitudes toward leadership. Here are a few examples:

- ***George Washington:*** "Every post is honorable in which a man can serve his country."
- ***Benjamin Franklin:*** "No one is useless in this world who lightens the burden of it for someone else."
- ***Mahatma Gandhi:*** "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."
- ***Albert Schweitzer:*** "I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I do know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve."
- ***Martin Luther King Jr.:*** "Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve."
- ***Nelson Mandela:*** "I stand here before you not as a prophet, but as a humble servant of you, the people."

All these people have one thing in common; they were transformational in their own lives, and the lives they touched were beautifully changed. Their values transferred to others. Their works of service not only helped others but became models for others to emulate. As the saying goes, they were concerned with teaching people how to fish, not just giving them a fish. They wanted to encourage autonomy among the people and create prosperity for future generations through lasting change, not cultivate people's dependence based on their service to their leader.

Questions to Help You Serve People Better

It is my great desire for you to develop into a leader who serves others every day. To help you do that, I want to offer you some questions you can ask yourself that will help you.

1. The Adding-Value Question: "What can I do for people to help them succeed?"

Helen Keller observed, "Alone we can do so little. Together we can do so much." Because servant leaders define others' success as their success, they focus on helping others succeed. One of the best ways to do that is by adding value to people.

As I write these words, there are four calls on my schedule that I will make later today. Two are calls to people I am mentoring. I anticipate that they will be asking me to give them guidance on leadership issues. I will do my very best to help them navigate their challenges effectively.

The other two calls are with leaders of two companies for whom I will soon be speaking. These pre-calls have been planned so that I can discover how I can best serve my hosts when I speak to their people. I do calls like these before every speaking engagement and ask a lot of questions, such as:

- Do you have a theme for the conference?
- What are your expectations of me?
- What things do you want me to say that will help you the most?
- Beyond speaking, is there anything else I can do for you?

Why do I go to all this trouble? My role is simple: to speak and serve. I've observed too many speakers who have only a few canned speeches that they use with every audience, no matter what that audience may need or want. My desire is to serve my host and my audience. I'll develop a speech to fit their specific agenda because I know it's not about me. The question I'm asking at the end of my time with them is, "Did I help you?" I agree with the perspective of Tom Peters, who said, "Organizations exist to serve. Period. Leaders live to serve. Period."

CONSIDER

In what way can you best serve and add value to the members of your team?

[Your Response Here]

Organizations exist to serve.
Period. Leaders live to serve. Period.

Tom Peters

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2. The Everyday Question: "What do people need from me daily that they may not want to ask for?"

The best servant leaders anticipate what their people need from them. They are proactive in helping the people they lead. Too many leaders have the attitude, "If they need something, let them ask. My door is always open." Here's a thought: instead of leaving the door open, go out of the door to where your people are and *look for* what they need. Then give it to them *before* they even ask. You can't assume that others have the same desires and expectations you do.

Serving others begins with attitude and then becomes action. If you ask yourself what others need and act on your findings every day, serving others will soon become a habit.

CONSIDER

What can you do today and every day to follow through on offering your best service and value addition to the members of your team?

[Your Response Here]

3. The Improvement Question: "What can I work on that will help me serve people better?"

To bring out the best in others, I first have to bring out the best in me. I cannot give what I do not have. Neither can you. And here's the good news: your self-respect will be strengthened as you become better. The wins you experience on the outside with your team will be the result of the victories you first experience on the inside. Each step of improvement will allow you to feel good about yourself and your journey.

As a servant leader, when you improve yourself in areas that are important to the people you lead, not only do you get better, but you make the person you serve better. That compounds your and their effectiveness. And it has a high return both personally and organizationally.

CONSIDER

What is your single greatest obstacle to becoming a better servant leader? What can you begin doing today to overcome it?

[Your Response Here]

4. The Evaluation Question: "How will I know that I am serving people well?"

One of the lessons I teach in *The Leadership Handbook* is this: to see how the leader is doing, look at the people. Often the answer to how well the leader is doing is clear to outside observers. But how do the leaders themselves discover the answer? How do they know whether they are serving their people well?

CONSIDER

If you had to grade yourself on a report card on how well you're serving your people, how would you score yourself on a scale of one (poorly) to ten (fantastically)?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

If you scored yourself highly, ask someone objective to score you, and then compare the scores. Were you accurate? If you scored yourself low, how can you improve?

[Your Response Here]

5. The Blind Spot Question: "What is it like for the people who work with me?"

This question is my favorite because it has helped me the most. We all have blind spots, things we don't see about ourselves. I don't always see myself as others see me, and I don't always see things as others do. I'm certain those things are also true for you.

If you have leadership responsibilities, your blind spots are compounded. Because leaders have power and authority, the people around them are often intimidated and think they cannot be open and honest with them. And the higher you are in leadership, the more difficult it is to get a true read on what's happening around you. People often tell leaders what they want to hear, not what they need to hear. So that means as a leader, you have personal blind spots *plus* you don't always receive honest feedback from the people who know your faults.

How can this challenge be overcome? As a leader, I make two assumptions. First, I assume I have blind spots that hurt me. Second, I recognize that others could be intimidated and may not always be willing to help me with them. Therefore, I ask this question, "What is it like to be on the other side of the table from me?"

The answers I discover are not always comfortable, but if I maintain a good attitude, they can help me to be self-correcting. Here are some examples of what I know about myself:

- I always think things can be done more quickly than they actually can.
- I don't appreciate the struggles most people deal with.
- I too often assume people instantly understand my vision and will line up with it.
- I'm impatient. (That's short and to the point.)
- I believe everyone is capable of doing what I do if they are willing to put in the effort.
- I move on from difficulties quickly and expect others to do the same at my speed.

I could go on and on, but I don't want to bore you. You get the idea.

ASSIGNMENT

If you could see your own blind spots, they wouldn't *be* blind spots. For that reason, you need to ask people to help you identify them. Make individual appointments with someone you work for, several people you work with, and all the people who report directly to you. Warn them that you want to learn from them about your blind spots. When you meet, start by asking the person to tell you your most impacting blind spot. Ask him or her to give you as much explanation and detail as you need to understand it. *Take notes, but do not defend yourself!* Collect the information below. (Use additional paper for notes as needed.)

[Your Response Here]

What patterns or themes do you see? What can you do to grow and reduce or eliminate these blind spots?

[Your Response Here]

6. The Respect Question: "How can I gain value while adding value to others by serving?"

Many years ago, I read *Bringing Out the Best in People* by Alan Loy McGinnis. It was a book that I would read and reread because I found the message so impacting. The statement that made the greatest lasting impression on me was "There is no more noble occupation in the world than to assist another human being, to help someone else succeed."[5]

THERE IS NO MORE NOBLE OCCUPATION IN THE WORLD THAN TO ASSIST ANOTHER HUMAN BEING, TO HELP SOMEONE ELSE SUCCEED.

ALAN LOY MCGINNIS

Marianne Williamson was right when she said, "Success means we go to sleep at night knowing that our talents and abilities were used in a way that served others." I now find great value in adding value to others.

Serving others purifies our motives. Doing things well for the right reason gives great value to us. So every time I add value, I gain value. As Dieter F. Uchtdorf said, "As we lose ourselves in the service of others, we discover our own lives and our own happiness."

CONSIDER

What are your motives for leading? And what do those motives say about you?

[Your Response Here]

7. THE GIFTEDNESS QUESTION: "WHAT DO I DO BEST THAT ALLOWS ME TO SERVE PEOPLE BEST?"

As leaders, we serve others best in the areas where we are most gifted. As I look

back on my life, I can see that the best leaders I had used their gifts to bring out the best in me. That started with my father. Not only did he use his gift of encouragement to inspire me and give me confidence, he also used his relational connections to introduce me to influential leaders and equip me for leadership.

Another person who helped me was my mentor Tom Phillippe. When I was in my early thirties, and had an opportunity to make a career transition, Tom, who was a fantastic businessman, took over my little fledgling business to keep it from dying until I once again had enough time to take it back. Tom and my father are just two of many leaders who have used their best gifts to serve me.

I've tried to do the same for others. My greatest gifts are in speaking, writing, and mentoring. Not only does my speaking serve the people I teach, but it also helps my companies by connecting me to other leaders and organizations. And I've made it a regular practice to mentor up-and-coming leaders. An hour or two with a high-potential leader a couple of times a year can help them answer critical leadership questions and assist them in navigating issues where I have some experience.

CONSIDER

Think about what you do best that will allow you to serve others best. Use these questions to help you:

What are my strengths? How can I use them to serve others?

[Your Response Here]

What is my background? How can I use it to serve others?

[Your Response Here]

What are my experiences? How can I use them to serve others?

[Your Response Here]

What are my opportunities? How can I use them to serve others?

[Your Response Here]

What do I love? How can I use it to serve others?

[Your Response Here]

Where am I growing? How can I use that to serve others?

[Your Response Here]

8. The Example Question: "How can I serve people in a way that will inspire them to serve others?"

As a leader, I am always very conscious of the example I set for everyone I lead and serve. And that often prompts me to be more open and vulnerable than I otherwise might be. Why you lead and the way you lead are important. They define you, your leadership, and ultimately your contribution. By humbling yourself and "stepping down" from your position, and by making service to others a core part of your leadership values, you, ironically, raise your game, because you help and empower others. Perhaps that's why Chinese philosopher Lao-Tzu wrote, "The highest type of ruler is one of whose existence the people are barely aware. . . . The Sage is self-effacing and scanty of words. When his task is accomplished and things have been completed, all the people say, 'We ourselves have achieved it.' "[6]

Servant leadership develops from the inside out. People can sense your attitude toward them. They can tell if you look down on them or want to raise them up. They know if you want to help them or hinder them in order to help yourself. They sense whether you are a ladder climber or a ladder builder. That's why serving others has to begin in your heart.

We can genuinely care about people and want to help them be their best. We can want others to succeed *at least* as much as we want to succeed ourselves. We just have to work at developing a servant's heart. As you do that, be sure to

follow through with the *actions* of a servant. If you wake up every morning thinking about how you can help the members of your team succeed—personally, professionally, developmentally, relationally, and so forth—you will find ways to help them.

SERVICE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

If you are part of a group going through this workbook, use the following questions to engage in group discussion. Keep in mind that the goals of good discussion are changing yourself and taking positive action.

1. What do you find most challenging about serving others? Why?

[Your Response Here]

2. What is the single best way you can serve your team in your current leadership role? How does it benefit them?

[Your Response Here]

3. Some actions you can take to serve your team are welcomed by them, while other actions may be resisted or resented. How do you handle the difficult situations that you know are good for the team but that team members don’t accept easily?

[Your Response Here]

4. Have your motivations for leading others changed over the course of your career? If so, explain the changes. If not, explain why. Do you consider your answer to be a positive or negative reflection on you as a leader?

[Your Response Here]

5. What was your single greatest takeaway from this lesson? Why?

[Your Response Here]

6. Based on what you've learned in this lesson, how do you need to change? What concrete, measurable step can you take this week to grow in the area of serving others?

[Your Response Here]

NOTES

[Your Response Here]

LESSON EIGHT

THE INDISPENSABLE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP: VISION

Vision is the indispensable quality of leadership. Without it, a team's energy ebbs, people begin to miss deadlines, team members' personal agendas begin to dominate, production falls, and eventually team members scatter. With it, the team's energy surges, people meet their deadlines, personal agendas fade into the background, production increases, and the people working together become a thriving team.

As my friend Andy Stanley said, "Vision gives significance to the otherwise meaningless details of our lives. . . . Too many times the routines of life begin to feel like shoveling dirt. But take those same routines, those same responsibilities, and view them through the lens of vision and everything looks different. Vision brings your world into focus. Vision brings order to chaos. A clear vision enables you to see everything differently."[1]

Clear vision does wonders for a team, but it also does wonders for a leader. Among its greatest benefits are direction and passion. For leaders, vision sets direction for their lives. It's like having a road map. It prioritizes both action and values, helping leaders remain focused. And it creates passion. It lights a fire within leaders that can spread to others. Perhaps that's why Helen Keller, when asked what would be worse than being born blind, answered, "To have sight without vision."

Vision Statements

All leaders have one thing in common. They see more and before others. What makes that indispensable is that it allows their followers to begin expanding their vision and acting on it more quickly. If the leader doesn't see the vision, the people never will.

Why is vision so important for a leader? Why must you be able to see what others can't? There are many reasons:

1. What You Can See Determines What You Can Be

I have often wondered about whether the vision makes the leader or if the leader makes the vision. After years of thinking about this and observing leaders, I believe the vision comes first. I have known many leaders who lost the vision and, accordingly, lost their power to lead.

People do what people see. That is the greatest motivational principle in the world. In other words, people depend on the leader for visual stimulation and direction. And when it comes to vision, I believe there are four kinds of people that leaders encounter:

1. People who never see it—they are wanderers.
2. People who see it but never pursue it on their own—they are followers.
3. People who see it and pursue it—they are achievers.
4. People who see it, pursue it, and help others see and pursue it—they are leaders.

CONSIDER

Which of the above statements best describes you? If your answer was not #4, then what stands in the way of your becoming that kind of person?

[Your Response Here]

The vast majority of people fall into the first two categories. They do not pursue a dream on their own. And those who are willing to follow don't go after the dream directly; they follow leaders who possess a dream and who have the ability to communicate it effectively. That's why it's so important for a leader to nurture a dream or vision and take responsibility for it. Only when that happens can the vision grow and the leader attract a following. Couple a vision with a leader willing to implement that dream, and a movement begins.

2. You See Only What You Are Prepared to See

German statesman Konrad Adenauer said, "We all live under the same sky but we don't all have the same horizon." Everyone has the potential to possess vision, but not everyone does. And that's a function of their perspective.

We all live under the same sky but we don't all have the same horizon.

Konrad Adenauer

In *A Savior for All Seasons*, William Barker relates the story of a bishop from the East Coast who paid a visit to a small, Midwestern religious college around the beginning of the twentieth century. He stayed at the home of the college president, who also served as the college's professor of physics and chemistry. After dinner, the bishop mentioned that he thought just about everything in nature had been discovered and all inventions had been conceived.

The college president politely disagreed and said he felt there would be many more discoveries. When the bishop challenged the president to name just one such invention, the president replied he was certain that within fifty years men would be able to fly.

"Nonsense!" replied the bishop. "Only angels are intended to fly."

The bishop's name was Milton Wright, and he had two boys at home—Orville and Wilbur—who would prove to have greater vision than their father.[2] The father and his sons both lived under the same sky, but they didn't all have the same horizon.

If we want to possess a vision for our leadership, we need to prepare for it. We need to anticipate it. When we possess positive anticipation and are excited about what's ahead, we're highly motivated and we prepare diligently. When we do this consistently, our sense of anticipation becomes the catalyst for inspiration.

CONSIDER

How open are you to new ideas and innovation? On a scale of one (completely closed) to ten (completely open), how would you rate yourself?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What can you do to become more open to a greater vision?

[Your Response Here]

3. What You See Is What You Get

The third thing you need to know about vision, in addition to knowing that what you see determines what you can be and what you see is what you are prepared to see, is that what you receive is largely based on what you perceive. Leaders understand that they have to believe it to see it, while most people go through life saying, "I have to see it to believe it."

Good leaders set their eyes to the horizon and their hearts on the people. They know that a lot depends on their vision. That's why my friend, Pastor Rick Warren, echoing the advice of one of his professors, advises that if you want to know the temperature of your organization, you should put a thermometer in the leader's mouth.[3] Leaders can't take their people farther than they can see. That's why their vision needs to be clear.

IF YOU WANT TO KNOW THE TEMPERATURE OF YOUR

ORGANIZATION, YOU SHOULD PUT A THERMOMETER IN THE LEADER'S MOUTH.

RICK WARREN

How to Increase Your "More and Before"

Author Napoleon Hill said, "Cherish your visions and dreams as they are the children of your soul: the blueprints of your ultimate achievements."[4] Good leaders see more and before others, and they work to increase that capacity on an ongoing basis. That may seem like a challenge. Many people believe that either you have it or you don't. I disagree with that. I believe everyone has the capacity to improve in this area. Here's how:

1. Know There Is More "More and Before" Out There

My life has been one of continual vision expansion. Adding value to people was the birth of my vision. Today that vision has taken many forms and has expanded far beyond my initial hopes and dreams. Two qualities help keep me focused on ways to increase my "more and before:" creativity and flexibility. Harnessing creativity helps me to believe there is always an answer. That mind-set enables me to see things before others do because I expect to. Flexibility reminds me that there is always more than one answer. That mind-set enables me to see more than others see. These two concepts greatly influence how I see the future. They allow me to think with abundance and not scarcity. They convince me that there are no hopeless situations, only people who think hopelessly.

CONSIDER

Describe how being more creative and more flexible could expand your vision as a leader. How would that improve your leadership and help your team?

[Your Response Here]

I encourage you to embrace those two qualities. And never allow someone else to determine your vision. If they do, chances are they will make it too small.

2. Develop a Process for Finding More "More and Before"

The Law of Design in *The 15 Invaluable Laws of Growth* says, "To maximize growth, develop strategies."[5] That concept works as well for vision as it does for personal growth. Because strategies are nothing more than systems for obtaining specific results, they are like freeways. They can help you quickly get to where you want to go.

In lesson 6, I wrote about the process Paul Martinelli uses to put attitude into action: Test Fail Learn Improve Reenter. That could also be an effective process to increase the "more and before" in your vision. But every leader needs to develop one of his own.

CONSIDER

What process will you use to expand your vision?

[Your Response Here]

3. Spend Time with People Who Inspire You to See "More and Before"

Author Jim Collins taught me about a concept that he called "who luck," the idea that the people you know make a huge difference in your life. I believe who luck is the most important luck of all. I can look back on my life and verify what a difference it makes.

I can point to time after time in my life when I was around people who expanded my vision and made me want to be more than I was. I intentionally seek out people and experiences that would stretch my leadership gifts and enlarge my vision. And here's what I've discovered:

- When I'm with the right people and in the right places, I don't spend time; I invest it. This is where I get my greatest ROI.
- Who luck is 90 percent intentional and 10 percent accidental. You can't just *hope* to meet people who will stretch you. Hope is not a strategy.
- It is impossible to be around bigger people and not become bigger

yourself. These kinds of experiences can change your life.

- The best way to meet the right people is by asking the right question: "Who do you know that I should know?"
- Preparation beforehand and reflection afterward maximize these experiences.
- Including members of my team is the best way for us to grow together. Whenever possible, take people with you.
- The second meeting with the right person is the most important meeting. It indicates that both of you see the value of meeting again, and that perhaps it is the beginning of an ongoing relationship.

Are you actively searching for people who can enlarge you and your vision?

CONSIDER

Who can you enlist to inspire you and expand your vision? Make a list, and then plan to spend time with them.

[Your Response Here]

If this hasn't been one of your top priorities, it needs to be from now on.

4. Ask Questions That Will Help You Increase Your "More and Before"

When we find our vision, we find our way. However, there is another discovery that is equally important—the people who will join us on the journey to fulfill that vision. Questions allow us to get to know people when we meet them and whether we should take that trip together. Questions also open the door for the exchange of great ideas, which will help to shape and inform your vision.

Leading by assumption usually ends up being a leadership nightmare. The right questions kill wrong assumptions. The more successful the person you meet, the better your questions need to be. And the better the answers you will receive.

CONSIDER

What questions will you ask the people who can inspire you to expand your vision? Write them here:

[Your Response Here]

5. Intentionally Grow Every Day to Increase Your Capacity for "More and Before"

Steve Jobs said, "If you are working on something exciting that you really care about, you don't have to be pushed. The vision pulls you." He's right. I still feel the pull of personal growth, and it is taking me forward as a leader.

If you are working on something exciting that you really care about, you don't have to be pushed. The vision pulls you.

Steve Jobs

Personal Ownership of the Vision

In my book *Put Your Dreams to the Test*, one of the questions I ask has to do with ownership: Is my dream really my dream? Why? Because you cannot achieve a dream that you do not own.[6] Take a look at the differences you will experience based on whether or not you own your dream:

When Someone Else Owns Your Dream	When You Own Your Dream
It will not have the right fit.	It will feel good on you.
It will be a weight on your shoulders.	It will provide wings to your spirit.
It will drain your energy.	It will fire you up.
It will put you to sleep.	It will keep you up at night.
It will take you out of your strength zone.	It will take you out of your comfort zone.
It will be fulfilling to others.	It will be fulfilling to you.
It will require others to make you do it.	It will feel like you were made for it.

You will never achieve a dream or vision unless you own it. Furthermore, as a leader, you will not be able to get others to buy into a vision that you do not own.

Through the years, one of the most common questions I've been asked at leadership conferences is "How do I get a vision for my organization?" When I hear this question, I feel for the leader who asks it, because I know it means the person has been placed in a leadership position yet lacks this indispensable quality of leadership. Until the vision question is answered, the person will be a leader in name only. I hope that you already possess a vision of your own for your team, department, or organization. However, if you don't, I want to help you. Although I cannot give you a vision, I can share the process of seeking one for yourself and those around you. And I can help you think through the process of implementing it.

Look Within You: "What Do You Feel?"

You cannot borrow somebody else's vision. It must come from inside you. What

brings it out is passion. What fires you up? What is so important to you that it keeps you up at night, makes your blood boil, or gives you great joy? Those are vision clues.

When seeking vision, why is it important to start on the inside? There are three main reasons. First, there will be pressure from outside of you that could dilute the vision or distract you from it. You may receive a vision for free, but the journey to fulfill that vision never is. Every day someone or something will stand in the way of where your vision wants to take you. The obstacles and opposition are constant. They can wear you down. The result? Often, vision "leaks." When it does, the strength within you is what you must draw upon to sustain you.

Second, a vision birthed within you rings true and has authenticity when it is shared with others. Former president of Notre Dame University Theodore Hesburgh said, "A vision must be articulated clearly and forcefully on every occasion. You can't blow an uncertain trumpet." An "uncertain trumpet" is usually the result of a leader trying to cast someone else's vision without deep conviction.

And finally, only a vision that comes from within possesses the "weight" needed to do something significant. Visions without weight are easily dismissed and discarded. Easy come, easy go. A vision with weight does not feel optional; it is essential. It carries opportunities but also consequences if ignored by the leader. Weighty visions are ever present for leaders who possess them. And the weight of that vision can become like their North Star. It guides them. It gives them credibility. It gives them gravitas. And it gives them joy in the journey. A vision without weight is often a delusion. A weight without a vision often leads to depression.

CONSIDER

What fires you up? What keeps you up at night? What gets your blood boiling? What positive action gives you joy? From what do you derive deep satisfaction? Any and all of these are clues to the potential vision within you. Write your answers here:

[Your Response Here]

Psychiatrist Carl Jung said, “Your vision will become clear only when you look into your heart. Who looks outside, dreams. Who looks inside, awakens.” Look inside yourself, pay attention to how you feel, and begin to awaken to your dream, your vision as a leader.

YOUR VISION WILL BECOME CLEAR ONLY WHEN YOU LOOK INTO YOUR HEART. WHO LOOKS OUTSIDE, DREAMS. WHO LOOKS INSIDE, AWAKENS.

CARL JUNG

LOOK BEHIND YOU: “WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?”

Every significant vision possessed by leaders is built upon their past—the lessons they’ve learned, the pain they’ve experienced, the significant observations they’ve made.

CONSIDER

What experiences from your past inform your vision? What have your successes—and especially your failures—taught you about life and leadership? Record them here:

[Your Response Here]

These things need to be part of your vision as a leader.

LOOK AROUND YOU: “WHAT IS HAPPENING TO OTHERS?”

Once the vision is birthed within you, you must pay attention to the people you want to help you implement it. Why? The Law of Buy-In in *The 21 Irrefutable*

Laws of Leadership states, “People buy into the leader, then the vision.” If you don’t get people’s buy-in, the vision will not go anywhere.

Good leaders watch the people to know how and when to present the vision. They listen to the people, learn from the people, and then discern how to lead the people. They pay attention to timing because, as the Law of Timing says, “When to lead is as important as what to do and where to go.”[7]

A good idea can become great when the people are ready. Leaders who are impatient with people and try to force an idea before it’s accepted will be frustrated in their efforts to see their vision become reality. The evidence of leadership strength lies not in forcefully streaking ahead but in adapting your stride to the slower pace of others while not forfeiting your leadership. As leaders, if we run too far ahead, we lose our power to influence people.

CONSIDER

How will you know when the people you lead will be ready to accept, embrace, and implement a vision you give them?

[Your Response Here]

Look Above You: “What does God expect of you?”

Before I move on to the next and final place to look to define and create personal ownership of your dream, I want to tell you how God comes into play in my life. I do this because I am a person of faith, and to be true to myself and how vision works in my life, I must include God. If this offends you, please just skip this section and go to the next point.

I believe God’s gift to me is my potential. My gift back to God is what I do with that potential. I believe great leaders sense a higher calling, one that lifts them above the crowd. It compels them to try to achieve something meaningful, something significant for others. To people of faith, that calling is God ordained.

What a terrible waste of life it would be to climb the ladder of success only to find when you reached the top that it was leaning against the wrong building. That’s why I ask God to direct me. It’s why my definition of success is:

- Knowing God and His desires for me.
- Growing to my maximum potential.
- Sowing seeds that benefit others.

If you desire God's help with your vision and calling, simply ask him to help you. I've even encouraged my atheist friends to do this.

CONSIDER

If desired, set aside time to simply talk to God about what's on your mind, and then quietly wait to try to discern what he might be telling you about your life, vision, and leadership.

[Your Response Here]

LOOK AHEAD OF YOU: "WHAT IS THE BIG PICTURE?"

If you've paid attention to what you feel, what you've learned, what's happening to others, and what God expects of you, then you're ready to look at the big picture. This is the last thought for the making of a vision.

WRITE IT OUT

Based on everything you've worked on in this lesson, attempt to articulate the current vision for your leadership:

[Your Response Here]

Few leaders had a more audacious vision than Christopher Columbus. I love the way Columbus challenged prevailing wisdom through his bold actions. When he set sail westward into the Atlantic Ocean, the flag of Spain under

which he traveled bore the motto *Ne Plus Ultra*, meaning "Nothing Farther." Traditionally those words described Spain's Straits of Gibraltar, also known as the Pillars of Hercules. But after Columbus's journeys and his discovery of the New World, Charles V of Spain changed the nation's motto to *Plus Ultra*, meaning "Farther Beyond" or "Something More." The entire nation—and in fact the entire Western world—changed and mobilized its resources, because people's vision of the world changed.

Apple cofounder Steve Jobs said, "The only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it."[8] As a leader, when you discover your vision, it becomes your fire, your inspiration, and your guide. If you haven't found it yet, don't give up. Keep looking. You'll know it when you find it. And when you do, nurture it, embrace it, own it, and paint a compelling picture of it to others. Because vision is the indispensable quality of leadership. Without it, you will never develop the leader within you to the fullest.

VISION

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

If you are part of a group going through this workbook, use the following questions to engage in group discussion. Keep in mind that the goals of good discussion are changing yourself and taking positive action.

1. Can you describe a time when you created a vision for your team or department and successfully implemented it? If so, what made it successful? What challenges did you overcome? What did you learn?

[Your Response Here]

2. Which do you naturally prefer:

- Creating the Vision,
- Developing the Strategy for the Vision, or
- Taking a Role in the Implementation of the Vision?

Explain your answer.

[Your Response Here]

3. What is the role of a leader who does not create the overall vision but must support it? How should he or she go about fulfilling that role?

[Your Response Here]

4. How important is it for a leader farther down in the organization to create a vision for his or her own team or department? How can a leader make sure it is compatible with the overall vision?

[Your Response Here]

5. What was your single greatest takeaway from this lesson? Why?

[Your Response Here]

6. Based on what you've learned in this lesson, how do you need to change? What concrete, measurable step can you take this week to grow in the area of vision?

[Your Response Here]

NOTES

[Your Response Here]

LESSON NINE

THE PRICE TAG OF LEADERSHIP:

SELF-DISCIPLINE

President Harry S. Truman said, “In reading the lives of great men, I have found that the first victory they won was over themselves. . . . Self-discipline with all of them came first.” That is true not just of great achievers but also of effective leaders. Good leaders practice self-control before they try to engage others. Self-discipline comes before leadership success. It is the price tag of leadership.

When I was in college, I studied Greek and Hebrew. One of the words for self-control in Greek is *egkráteia*. I think this word gives great insight into what someone needs to lead effectively. The word means to get a grip on oneself.[1] It describes people who are willing to get a grip on their lives and take control of areas that will bring them success or failure. That’s critical because I need to get a grip on me first before I try to get a handle on leading others.

As leaders, our greatest challenge in leadership is leading ourselves first. We can’t expect to take others farther than we have gone ourselves. We must travel within before we can travel without. Many highly gifted leaders have stopped far short of their potential because they were not willing to pay this price. They tried to take the fast track to leadership only to find that shortcuts never pay off in the long run.

AS LEADERS, OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE IN LEADERSHIP IS LEADING OURSELVES FIRST.

Self-Discipline Makes Leadership's Uphill Climb Possible

There is a truth you need to recognize, not just for leadership but for everything in life. For the last year or so I have been teaching it extensively to people wherever I go. Ready? Here it is. *Everything worthwhile is uphill.*

You may be saying, "Now that you've pointed it out, I can see that. Good. Okay. Let's move on. What's next?" But I want you to stop for a minute and think about this. *Everything* worthwhile is uphill. The word *everything* is inclusive. It's all-encompassing. Pair that with *worthwhile*—the things that are desirable, appropriate, good for you, attractive, beneficial. So when you think about that, it's very significant. Anything and everything you desire in life, everything you would like to strive for, is *uphill*, meaning the pursuit of it is challenging, grueling, exhausting, strenuous, and difficult.

The implications are simple: there are no such things as accidental achievements. No person who has climbed the mountain of success ever said, "I have no idea how I got to the top of this mountain. I just woke up one day, and here I was." No leader who ever led people to do something significant did it without great effort. Any climb uphill must be deliberate, consistent, and willful. It is very intentional.

The statement "Everything worthwhile is uphill" not only describes life but explains the reason self-discipline is so essential for a successful life. And that's why I want to focus this lesson on explaining some truths about self-discipline, because if you embrace them and act on them, you will be empowered to live an exciting uphill journey, and you will be able to pay the price tag of leadership. So let's get started.

Everything worthwhile is uphill.

---

1. Self-Discipline Enables You to Go Uphill

If I were to ask you, "Do you want to improve your life?" of course your answer

would be yes. The question isn't *if* you want it to happen. The question is *how* do you make it happen? The answer is by living each day with intentionality. That requires becoming self-disciplined.

Self-discipline moves you from good intentions to good actions. It is what separates words and ideas from actual results. One of the greatest gaps in life is between sounding good and doing good. We are ultimately measured by what we do and how our actions shape the world around us. Without results, all the best intentions in the world are just a way of at best entertaining ourselves, at worst deluding ourselves. Self-discipline paves the road to results.

SELF-DISCIPLINE MOVES YOU FROM GOOD INTENTIONS TO GOOD ACTIONS.

Do you know people who are always getting ready to get ready? Do you know people who start but never finish? I do too. They need to heed the advice of poet Edgar A. Guest, who wrote a poem called "Keep Going." It says:

When things go wrong, as they sometimes will,
And the road you're trudging seems all up hill,
When the funds are low and the debts are high,
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,
When care is pressing you down a bit,
Rest, if you must—but don't you quit.

Life is queer with its twists and turns,
As every one of us sometimes learns,
And many a failure turns about
When he might have won had he stuck it out.
Don't give up though the pace seems slow—
You may succeed with another blow.

Success is failure turned inside out—
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt,
And you never can tell how close you are,

It may be near when it seems far;
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit—
It's when things seem worst that you mustn't quit.[2]

My friend Jim Whittaker has climbed the great mountains of the world. One day at lunch he shared with me that his greatest accomplishment as a mountain climber was the number of people he had taken to the top with him. And he then gave me some climbing advice that I want to pass on to you. He said, "You never conquer the mountain. You only conquer yourself." That is the most important leadership journey each of us must make.

CONSIDER

Which self-discipline "mountain" consistently gives you the most difficulty? What have you found that helps you to conquer it? How are you consistently following that practice now?

[Your Response Here]

2. Self-Discipline Makes the Difference Between Temporary Success and Sustained Success

I want to add something important to my statement that everything worthwhile is uphill. Three words: *all the way*. Why is that significant? Anyone can climb for a short time. Nearly everyone does—at least once. But can you sustain it? Can you climb every day, day after day, year after year? I don't ask that to discourage you. I ask it because I want you to understand what it will take for you to reach your potential as a person and as a leader. That's why I say that the price tag of leadership is self-discipline.

Brian Tracy wrote about a chance encounter he had with legendary success author Kop Kopmeyer. When Tracy asked him which was the most important of the thousands of success principles he'd discovered, Kopmeyer answered, "The most important success principle of all was stated by Thomas Huxley many years ago. He said, 'Do what you should do, when you should do it, whether you

feel like it or not.' " Kopmeyer went on to say, "There are 999 other success principles that I have found in my reading and experience, but without self-discipline, none of them work."[3]

DO WHAT YOU SHOULD DO, WHEN YOU SHOULD DO IT, WHETHER YOU FEEL LIKE IT OR NOT.

THOMAS HUXLEY

My friend Kevin Myers, pastor of 12Stone Church, says it this way: "Everyone is looking for a quick fix, but what they really need is fitness. People who seek fixes stop doing what's right as soon as the pressure they feel is relieved. People who pursue fitness do what they should no matter what the circumstances are."

Every day we face the decision of whether we are going to pay the price tag of leadership. I like the way Rory Vaden looked at this issue in his book *Take the Stairs*. He called it the Pain Paradox. Are we going to do what's easy and *feels* good in the short term? Or are we going to do what's difficult and actually *is* good in the long term? Vadan said we ask ourselves:

> "Should I go ahead and buy that item or just save my money for a rainy day?"
> "Should I have that extravagant dessert or call it quits for the night?"
> "Should I put in the extra effort here or just get by with the minimum amount required?"[4]

These questions, Vaden said, reveal the Pain Paradox of decision making, which says:

> The short-term easy leads to the long-term difficult, while the short-term difficult leads to the long-term easy. The great paradox is that what we thought was the easy way, what looks like the easy way, what seems like the easy way very often leads us to creating a life that couldn't be more

> opposite of easy. And inversely the things that we thought were most difficult, the challenges that appear to be the toughest, and the requirements that seem most rigorous are the very activities that lead us to the life of easy that we all want.[5]

THE SHORT-TERM EASY LEADS TO THE LONG-TERM DIFFICULT, WHILE THE SHORT-TERM DIFFICULT LEADS TO THE LONG-TERM EASY.

RORY VADEN

Vaden said the battle we fight is between our emotions, which typically have more power in the moment, and logic, which takes a longer view of life.

CONSIDER

How good are you at embracing short-term difficulties for the sake of long-term successes? Rate yourself on a scale of one (poor) to ten (fantastic).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What is the reason for your rating? What can you do to improve?

[Your Response Here]

ASSIGNMENT

Make a list a list of long-term benefits you desire in your life. Then think about the short-term discipline that will lead to each one and write it alongside the benefit.

SHORT-TERM DISCIPLINE	LONG-TERM BENEFIT
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

3. Self-Discipline Makes Habit Your Servant Instead of Your Master

Every person has uphill hopes and aspirations. We all have uphill dreams. But we also have a problem. Every one of us also has downhill habits. And those are often what keep us from making the self-disciplined climb to higher ground. Why? Because habits have power over us. Take a look at this insightful piece written by Dennis P. Kimbro that I came across several years ago:

I am your constant companion.
I am your greatest helper or your heaviest burden.
I will push you onward or drag you down to failure.
I am completely at your command.
Half the things you do,
You might just as well turn over to me,
And I will be able to do them quickly and correctly.
I am easily managed—
You must merely be firm with me.
Show me exactly how you want something done,
And after a few lessons
I will do it automatically.
I am the servant of all great people.
And alas, of all failures as well.

Those who are great,
I have made great.
Those who are failures,
I have made failures.
I am not a machine,
Though I work with all the precision of a machine,
Plus, the intelligence of a human.
You may run me for profit, or run me for ruin.
It makes no difference to me.
Take me, train me, be firm with me,
And I will place the world at your feet.
Be easy with me, and I will destroy you.
Who am I?
I am a habit.[6]

The habits we have make us or break us. We choose which.

Every leader faces two challenges: First, how can I turn my downhill habits into uphill habits? Second, how can I help the people I lead to change their downhill habits into uphill ones? So the question is, how can we turn downhill habits into uphill habits that serve us instead of enslave us?

The first step in changing your habits is to change your thinking. If you can help others change their thinking, then you can help them change their habits too. What we think determines who we are. Who we are determines what we do. Bad thinking results in bad habits. Good thinking results in good habits. If I could do one thing for people, I would help them think in such a way that their choices would result in uphill habits.

Let me explain how this often plays out. If I have a problem or a challenge, and I think there is no positive solution, how will I respond? I'll probably procrastinate. Or I might start making excuses for why I won't take action. But excuses are exit signs that take us off the road of progress.

If my thinking is negative, I develop the habits of procrastination and excuse making. But if my thinking is positive, I take responsibility and I take action. My thinking determines my habits.

At the core of how we think is our overall attitude toward life. Many people think life should be easy. That thinking causes them to expect everything to come to them without effort. They watch and wait, hoping success will come and

find them. It won't. We can settle and assume that everything will come to us. Or we can take control of our lives and make things happen. If we don't take control of our lives, someone else will. And they may not want what we want for our lives.

Dan Cathy, chairman and CEO of Chick-fil-A, recently shared with me that the rate of internal change must be faster than the rate of external change. That's the right way to think of it. Keep growing and changing on the inside, starting with your thinking, because self-discipline in the area of thinking will help you change from downhill habits to uphill hopes. The old wisdom is true: For as he thinks within himself, so he is.[7]

CONSIDER

In the previous assignment, you described some of the long-term benefits you desired in your life and identified the corresponding short-term disciplines required to achieve them. Now spend time figuring out how to turn those disciplines into regular habits based on changes to your thinking. What habits will you develop to gain those disciplines?

[Your Response Here]

SELF-DISCIPLINE IN THE AREA OF THINKING WILL HELP YOU CHANGE FROM DOWNHILL HABITS TO UPHILL HOPES.

4. SELF-DISCIPLINE IS DEVELOPED—NOT GIVEN

One of my favorite golf courses is at the Highlands Country Club in Highlands, North Carolina. It is the golf course that Bobby Jones played on for many years. In fact, he opened the fairways by hitting the first ball off the tee there in 1928.

Bobby Jones was a golf prodigy who went on to become a legend. He began

playing in 1907 at age five. By age twelve, he was scoring below par, an accomplishment most golfers don't achieve in a lifetime of playing the game. At fourteen he qualified for the U.S. Amateur Championship. But Jones didn't win that event. His problem can be best described by the nickname he acquired: "club thrower." Jones often lost his temper—and his ability to play well. And his temper was the thing that kept him from his true golf potential, not anything related to his skill. Poor self-discipline had the potential to be his downfall.

An old golfer whom Jones called Grandpa Bart had given up the game because of arthritis, but he still worked part-time in the pro shop. One day he told Jones, "Bobby, you are good enough to win that tournament, but you'll never win until you can control that temper of yours. You miss a shot—you get upset—and then you lose."

Jones listened to the older man's advice and began working to discipline his emotions. At age twenty-one, Jones blossomed and went on to be one of the greatest golfers in history. He retired after winning the grand slam of golf. He was only twenty-eight. Grandpa Bart's comment said it all: "Bobby was fourteen when he mastered the game of golf, but he was twenty-one when he mastered himself."

Lack of discipline is the lid on many people's potential. That's the bad news. However, there's also good news: self-discipline is not something you have to be born with. It is something you can develop. It's earned, not given. In other words, if the lack of self-discipline has been a lid for you, as it was for Bobby Jones, you can remove that lid. It is within your power.

The first step to developing self-discipline is awareness. You need to see where you're falling short. Jones was fortunate that someone was willing to speak into his life and point out his problem. Not all of us are so lucky. We may need to seek out people who know us and are willing to tell us the truth.

I want to give you three tips to help you develop self-discipline if this has been a difficult area for you.

Self-Disciplined People Avoid Temptation

Recently, during a time I was working hard to lose weight, my friend Traci Morrow, who was coaching me, said, "John, the success of your diet is determined at the grocery store. Don't bring home food that is not good for you. Leave it on the shelves of the store, not on the shelves in your kitchen."

People who develop self-discipline and positive habits don't put themselves

in the line of fire. If they want to lose weight, they don't keep junk food in their desk drawers. If they're trying to stop spending money, they don't go hang out at the mall. They *intentionally* avoid temptation.

CONSIDER

What temptation do you most need to avoid in order to improve your life? What preventative action can you take to keep out of harm's way?

[Your Response Here]

Self-Disciplined People Know When to Expend Their Energy

It is impossible to be at 100 percent all day, every day. And it's not necessary. Knowing when to be at 100 percent is essential to self-discipline. Why? Because you only have a certain amount of energy. You need to choose when to use it.

Every day I look at my calendar and ask myself, "When do I need to be at my best?" After identifying those times, I then monitor my energy and effort to get the most out of myself during those crucial moments. I apply the energy required for me to practice self-discipline at those times when I need it the most.

Gary Keller, founder of Keller Williams Realty, said, "Make sure every day you . . . know what matters most."[8] That's great advice. Think ahead and match up your energy to the things that matter most.

CONSIDER

What regular responsibility requires high energy from you? What adjustments can you make to the way you live to conserve your energy for what's most important?

[Your Response Here]

MAKE SURE EVERY DAY YOU . . . KNOW WHAT MATTERS MOST.

GARY KELLER

Self-Disciplined People Understand and Practice the Principle of Pay Now, Play Later

There are two types of people in the area of discipline. One type puts off what needs to be done and plays now, preferring to avoid doing what he or she must. The other type pays now by doing the necessary, even if it's unpleasant, and is willing to defer fun and play later. The thing you need to know is that everybody pays. Whatever you put off until later always compounds. If you put off playing, you get to play more later. If you put off paying, you have to pay more later. There is no cheating in life.

Intuitively, you know this is true. If you pay into your retirement funds and invest early in life, you have more money available to you in your older years. If you spend it all while you're young, you won't be able to play in your old age. If you pay by eating right and exercising throughout your early life, your health will be better as you grow old. If you neglect those things, you'll pay for it as you age. It's your choice.

CONSIDER

What area of your life have you been neglecting? How do you need to be paying now so that you can benefit later?

[Your Response Here]

Recently I shared with a group of students, "If you only do what you want to do, you will never get to do what you really want to do." Self-discipline is developed by saying yes when we want to say no and saying no when we want to say yes. There are two types of pain in life: the pain of self-discipline, which

is eased by doing the right thing, and the pain of regret, which aches until we die.

5. Self-Discipline Is Most Easily Developed in Areas of Strength and Passion

German playwright Carl Zuckmayer said, “One half of life is luck; the other half is discipline, and that’s the important half. For without discipline you wouldn’t know what to do with luck.” Where do you find the discipline that leads to success? By doing the *right* thing every day. That right thing usually involves your strengths and your passion. What you love and what you’re good at usually point you to your right thing.

Self-discipline always needs fuel. The strongest fuel comes from inspiration and motivation, which are usually connected with your strengths. What you do well usually inspires you and others. And motivation is a by-product of your passion. If you love to do something, you’re almost always motivated to do it.

If you are focusing on developing your self-discipline in the areas of your strengths and passion, the race of life feels easier to run, and you run it faster. If you are trying to develop discipline in areas where you are not gifted or passionate, the race feels long and arduous. Discipline fueled by your strengths and passion is easier to convert into positive habits too. And even though you may not be great at anything you do for the first time, if the task is connected to your giftedness or passion, you will learn to do it well quickly and with a higher degree of skill.

For years I have spent most of my time developing self-discipline in the areas of my strengths because they complement my purpose. When I’m working within my *why*, my reason for being on this planet, I am able to remain motivated long after the first rush of enthusiasm and excited energy wears off. I guess you could call it *why power*. It can carry you forward when willpower is not enough.

CONSIDER

If the time, energy, and resources of your life are focused on areas not related to your strengths or passion, I want to encourage you to rethink what you’re doing. Answer these questions:

Do I need to quit something I don't do well to do something I do well? If so, what do I need to quit, and what do I need to start?

[Your Response Here]

Do I need to quit something I'm not passionate about to do something that fills me with passion? If so, what do I need to quit, and what do I need to start?

[Your Response Here]

Do I need to quit something that doesn't make a difference to do something that does? If so, what do I need to quit, and what do I need to start?

[Your Response Here]

Do I need to quit something that's not my dream to do something that is? If so, what do I need to quit, and what do I need to start?

[Your Response Here]

If you change what you do, will it always be pleasant or easy? No. But everyone should say no to the good so they can say yes to the best.

6. Self-Discipline and Respect Are Connected

Few things build self-respect the way self-discipline does. Author and speaker Brian Tracy said, "Disciplining yourself to do what you know is right and important, although difficult, is the high road to pride, self-esteem, and personal satisfaction."

Respect is the fruit of the disciplined life, both self-respect and the respect of others. When talking about developing relationships with others, I've often said

that respect is earned on difficult ground. But we also earn self-respect on difficult ground. Self-discipline is its own reward.

CONSIDER

Take a look at the difference between discipline-driven people and emotion-driven people. Check the phrase on each line that better describes you:

DISCIPLINE-DRIVEN PEOPLE	EMOTION-DRIVEN PEOPLE
☐ Do right, then feel good	☐ Feel good, then do right
☐ Are commitment-driven	☐ Are convenience-driven
☐ Make principle-based decisions	☐ Make popular-based decisions
☐ Action controls attitude	☐ Attitude controls action
☐ Believe it, then see it	☐ See it, then believe it
☐ Create momentum	☐ Wait for momentum
☐ Ask, “What are my responsibilities?”	☐ Ask, “What are my rights?”
☐ Continue when problems arise	☐ Quit when problems arise
☐ Are steady	☐ Are moody
☐ Can be leaders	☐ Will be followers

If you checked one or more of the emotion-driven boxes, try to discern why. What emotions are pushing you away from discipline?

[Your Response Here]

7. Self-Discipline Makes Consistency Possible, and Consistency Compounds

Consistency is not a sexy word. Why? Consistency doesn’t prove itself quickly, and it isn’t rewarded immediately. In today’s culture, people are more captivated

by charisma, genius, excitement, creativity, and innovation. But I can tell you after fifty years of striving for consistency, the dividends can be extraordinary. Here are just a few of the things consistency can do for you:

Consistency Establishes Your Reputation

Anybody can be good once in a while. Only the self-disciplined are consistently good. And that consistency makes people notice you—and expect you to deliver.

Consistency Is a Prerequisite to Excellence

Anytime you try something for the first time, you won't be any good at it. That's just the way it is. So why try anything new? Because we all have to start somewhere. The first step is to master the basics. But then what? You don't just jump to excellence. The road to get there is consistency. Improvement is possible only through consistent practice.

Consistency Provides Security to Others

As leaders, one of the things we can provide to the people we lead is a sense of stability. Perhaps the highest compliment we can ever receive as leaders are the words, "I can depend on you." When people see your consistency and know they can rely on you, it gives them a sense of security.

Consistency Reinforces Your Vision and Values

Effective leadership is highly visual. Why? People do what people see. Leaders are models of behavior for those they lead. When team members see their leader doing something, they often follow in their footsteps—for good or ill. The leader cuts corners; they cut corners. The leader shows up late; they show up late. The leader performs only when he or she feels like it; they perform only when they feel like it. However, when the leader pays the price, shows up early, keeps promises, and delivers the goods *consistently*, then most of the people on the team strive to do likewise.

Consistency Compounds

Successful people do daily what unsuccessful people do only occasionally. The bookends of success are beginning well and ending well. What is between those bookends? Consistency. If you want to become the leader you have the *potential* to be, you need to pay the price of self-discipline.

CONSIDER

How consistent are you? Rate yourself on a scale of one (never) to ten (always).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What level of consistency do you think is acceptable for leaders? Do you meet that standard? If so, how? If not, what must you do to meet it?

[Your Response Here]

SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE DO DAILY WHAT UNSUCCESSFUL PEOPLE DO ONLY OCCASIONALLY.

One last word about self-discipline before we move on to the last lesson: most of the good leaders I know have a strong desire to help others. They want to invest in their team members, they want to grow their organizations, and they want to lead others to do something significant. You probably feel those desires too. You may have a strong pull to make a difference in this world. If so, there's something you need to know. Leaders are responsible to help themselves and make themselves better before they try to help others.

If you've ever flown on an airplane, you've heard the safety instructions from the flight attendants. What do they say? Put the oxygen mask on yourself before you put it on your child or someone who may need your assistance. Why? Because it is impossible to help others effectively until you have first helped yourself. Self-discipline is what enables you to do that. If there's one thing to fight for as a leader, this is it, because it unlocks the door to so many other abilities: character, priorities, influence, and serving people. If you win the battles within, all the other victories become within reach.

SELF-DISCIPLINE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

If you are part of a group going through this workbook, use the following questions to engage in group discussion. Keep in mind that the goals of good discussion are changing yourself and taking positive action.

1. What is your natural attitude toward life? Do you expect everything in life to be difficult and uphill, and then become pleasantly surprised when something is easier than expected? Or do you expect everything to go smoothly and then get frustrated when something has more problems than expected? How does this impact your self-discipline? Does it strengthen it or weaken it?

[Your Response Here]

2. What self-discipline “mountain” is consistently most challenging to you? Why? What successes have you had in this area? What failures?

[Your Response Here]

3. What positive habits of discipline do you currently practice? How did you develop them?

[Your Response Here]

4. If you could win one new self-discipline, what would it be? And how would it benefit you? What obstacles currently stand in your way? What might you do to overcome them?

[Your Response Here]

5. What was your single greatest takeaway from this lesson? Why?

[Your Response Here]

6. Based on what you've learned in this lesson, how do you need to change? What concrete, measurable step can you take this week to grow in the area of self-discipline?

[Your Response Here]

NOTES

[Your Response Here]

LESSON TEN

THE EXPANSION OF LEADERSHIP:

PERSONAL GROWTH

On my fortieth birthday I wrote a lesson titled “I’m 40 and Counting.” It was a reflective lesson where I examined my life, assessed how I had done some things poorly and some well, and taught the ten things I believed all people should try to get under their belts by age forty. Writing the lesson was so fulfilling and the response was so positive that when I turned fifty, I did a lesson called “I’m 50 and Reflecting: The Most Important Lessons I’ve Learned in My Life.” When I turned sixty . . . You can see where this is going! I’ll just cut to the chase. I’ve written two other lessons: “I’m 60 and Compounding” and “I’m 70 and Transforming.” If I live to be eighty, you know what I’ll be doing for my birthday.

Those lessons have been markers in my life. Looking back over the decades, I think I have a better handle on what really matters. I’m certain of fewer things now at seventy than I was at forty, but I’m more certain of those few things than I’ve ever been in my life. One of those things—and it’s been my biggest takeaway from writing those lessons—is that growth matters. My capacity to grow has determined my capacity to lead. Today I lead differently and more effectively than I did at forty. And it’s not just because I’ve been leading longer. It’s been because I’ve made personal growth a priority all these years.

Growth Matters

Your capacity to grow will determine your capacity to lead. Growth matters. If you try to lead out of what you learned long in the past, and you're not growing in the present, the clock is ticking on your time as a leader. Development, expansion, and the future of your leadership depend on your dedication to personal growth. Here's why I say this:

1. Growth Is the Only Guarantee That Tomorrow Will Get Better

The passing of time guarantees that we will get older, but it doesn't guarantee we will get better. I know I'm getting older, but I'm not giving in to my age. I want my future to get better. That requires continual personal growth.

There are many good reasons to pursue personal growth. It opens doors. It makes us better. It helps us achieve our career goals. Over time, it creates momentum in our lives. That in turn encourages us to grow even more. We start to place a greater emphasis on growing than on arriving, and that makes it easier for us to learn from our failure. But all of those things pale against the most important reason to pursue growth, because this reason has the greatest power to change our lives in every way. Personal growth increases hope. It teaches us that tomorrow can be better than today. Here's how.

Personal growth increases hope. It teaches us that tomorrow can be better than today.

A Growth Mind-Set Is the Seed of Hope

Think about the world of nature. A sapling becomes a mighty oak by growing slowly over time. An infant grows into a child, who eventually becomes an adult. Hope is the same way. It looks forward. When we have hope, we can imagine a better future. And hope isn't just wishing for things that might be. It's the firm belief in things that will be. It's looking past your present circumstances

with the belief that you have a positive future.

Planting the seed of growth is not complicated. It's as simple as a change in mind-set. When we decide to believe that growth is possible and we commit to pursuing it, hope begins to rise within us. The change in focus is only the first step, but it can be the beginning of a long and rewarding journey.

CONSIDER

How willing are you to commit yourself to growth? On a scale of one (I will not spend any strategic time on personal growth) to ten (I am willing to dedicate extraordinary amounts of time, energy, and resources to personal growth), rate your level of commitment:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What does your answer say about you?.

[Your Response Here]

A Growth Habit Strengthens Hope

Choosing to grow is important, but that decision is not enough to create change on its own. We need to acknowledge that growth is a gradual process and make that process part of our daily practice. That means we need to establish the *habit* of growing on a consistent basis.

When you practice the discipline of growing a little every day, you are doing your part to strengthen the hope inside of you. With each small step you take, you make progress toward improving yourself and your world. It's like humorist Garrison Keillor once said, "There's only so much you can do, but you must do that much—even if you don't know how much that is." When you grow, you are putting your future into motion. And with every step toward the future, hope is reinforced and strengthened. That process becomes sustainable when you make growth a habit.

CONSIDER

What do you think your level of commitment will yield? How are you willing to change the way you live day to day in order to improve?

[Your Response Here]

Growth Sustained over Time Realizes Hope

Growth over time helps us to live out our hope. When we take small steps of growth every day, over time, we see progress. If you string together enough days of consistent growth, you begin to change as a person. You become better, stronger, more skilled, or all of the above. And when you change yourself, you can change your circumstances. This begins a positive cycle of your growth strengthening your hope, and your hope strengthening your growth. When you do this week after week, month after month, year after year, you gradually move from hope imagined to hope realized.

CONSIDER

How do you *hope* to grow? In what ways would you like to be better tomorrow than you are today? How would you like your life to improve?

[Your Response Here]

2. Growth Means Change

We see star athletes or talented musicians at the top of their game, and we don't understand the sacrifice and hard work it took for them to get there. Only the person who had the dream and took the journey truly knows what it required. The cost of change is often the great separator between those who grow and those who do not, between those who grow into their dreams and those who dream but remain where they are.

My friend Gerald Brooks often says, “Every level of growth calls for a new level of change.” It also calls for more from you. I’ve discovered that the price of change usually comes sooner than you think, it’s higher than you imagined it would be, and it must be paid more often than you expected. In fact, to continue growing is to continue paying the price of that growth.

EVERY LEVEL OF GROWTH CALLS FOR A NEW LEVEL OF CHANGE.

GERALD BROOKS

Life begins at the end of our comfort zone. To grow, we must embrace change and learn to become comfortable being uncomfortable. The comfort zone is characterized by doing the same things in the same ways with the same people at the same time and getting the same results. People remain in their comfort zones yet ask why their lives don’t get any better. That’s crazy. Doing the same thing every day will not help you succeed. Growth always requires change.

I love the way author Gail Sheehy expressed this idea:

> If we don’t change, we don’t grow. If we don’t grow, we are not really living. Growth demands a temporary surrender of security. It may mean a giving up of familiar but limiting patterns, safe but unrewarding work, values no longer believed in, relationships that have lost their meaning. As Dostoyevsky put it, “taking a new step, uttering a new word, is what people fear most.” The real fear should be the opposite course.[1]

The growth journey from here to there is often lonely because you have to be willing to be wrong and you have to be willing to change. Growth comes as the result of dropping bad habits, changing wrong priorities, and embracing new ways of thinking. The people who do not grow get stuck because they are unwilling to leave what they have known and practiced in order to do something better. They are not willing to risk being wrong so they can discover what is right. Ironically, they cling to the right, but their lives turn out wrong.

If you want to grow as a person and as a leader, you must be willing to

surrender feeling right so that you can find what actually is right. Doing this doesn't require you to be brilliant, talented, or lucky. It just means you have to be willing to change and be uncomfortable.

CONSIDER

How do you deal with change? How willing have you been in the past to deal with personal discomfort? What must you do to be more willing to deal with it in the future?

[Your Response Here]

3. Growth Is the Great Separator Between Those Who Succeed and Those Who Don't

If you have a desire to be successful, you cannot allow yourself to settle for being average. Why? Have you ever gotten *excited* about eating at an average restaurant? Have you ever gushed to others about an average vacation? Do you find deep fulfillment in an average relationship? Do you heartily recommend an average movie to friends? Of course not. Average is never good enough. You must strive for excellence.

Recently I came across a piece by telecommunications executive team leader David Lewis that describes what it means to be average:

> "Average" is what failures claim to be when their friends ask them why they are not more successful.
> "Average" is the top of the bottom, the best of the worst, the bottom of the top, the worst of the top. Which of these are you?
> "Average" means being run-of-the-mill, mediocre, insignificant, an also-ran, a non-entity.
> Being "average" is the lazy person's cop-out; it's lacking guts to take a stand in life; it's living by default.
> Being "average" is to take up space for no purpose; to take a train through life but never to pay the fare; to return no interest for God's

investment in you.

Being "average" is to pass one's life away with time, rather than to pass one's time away with life; it's to kill time, rather than working it to death.

To be "average" is to be forgotten once you pass from this life. The successful are remembered for their contributions; the failures are remembered because they tried; but the "average," the silent majority, are just forgotten.

To be "average" is to commit the greatest crime one can against oneself, humanity, and one's God. The saddest epitaph is this: "Here lies Mr. and Mrs. Average—here lie the remains of what might have been, except for their belief that they were "average."[2]

Are these thoughts a little harsh? Maybe. But if they stir you up and inspire you to get out of your comfort zone, then they have achieved a noble purpose. It's okay to be content with what you have, but it's never okay to be so content with who you are that you stop growing.

CONSIDER

In what areas of your life have you settled for being average? Which of them are negatively impacting your leadership? What must you do to change?

[Your Response Here]

Growth's highest reward is not what we get from it but what we become because of it. I made personal growth my goal the day I learned that growth was not automatic, that we don't grow just by living. The beginning of my growth journey was marked by many goals. However, as I matured and changed because of growth, I became less enamored with goals and more passionate about growth. The result? Today I am consistently growth conscious.

CONSIDER

Take a look at the differences between being goal-conscious and growth-conscious. Check the boxes that better describe you:

GOAL CONSCIOUS	GROWTH CONSCIOUS
☐ Focus is on a destination	☐ Focus is on the journey
☐ Motivates people	☐ Matures people
☐ Makes goals seasonal	☐ Makes growth lifelong
☐ Challenges people	☐ Changes people
☐ Stop when the goal is reached	☐ Keep growing when the goal is reached
☐ Asks: How long will this take?	☐ Asks: How far can I go?

GROWTH'S HIGHEST REWARD IS NOT WHAT WE GET FROM IT BUT WHAT WE BECOME BECAUSE OF IT.

I hope you are getting the picture of what growth can do for you. I hope the desire to grow is starting to burn brightly within you. The Law of Diminishing Intent says that the longer you wait to do something you should do now, the greater the odds that you will never do it.[3] If you haven't already begun the journey, start climbing today. Come join me as we move forward for the mountaintop and make the slow but steady climb far beyond average.

THE LAW OF DIMINISHING INTENT SAYS THAT THE LONGER YOU WAIT TO DO SOMETHING YOU SHOULD DO NOW, THE GREATER THE ODDS THAT YOU WILL NEVER DO IT.

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4. For Growth to Be Maximized, It Must Be Strategic

The biggest and most important project you will ever take on is your own life. Unfortunately, most people plan their vacations better than they plan their lives. But as author and speaker Jim Rohn said, "If you don't design your own life plan, chances are you'll fall into someone else's plan. And guess what they may have planned for you? Not much!" For that reason, you need to be intentional and strategic.

Michael Gerber, author of *The E-Myth*, said, "Systems permit ordinary people to achieve extraordinary results." Strategies are nothing more than systems for obtaining specific results. I think of systems as being like freeways. They get me where I want to go quickly and efficiently. In the span of a few years, I went from "What is a growth plan?" to "I have a plan, here's how it works, and here's what it's doing for me." That's the power of having strategic systems.

As you develop your strategies for personal growth, make sure they include these four elements:

The Big Picture—Where Do I Need to Focus My Growth?

My growth plan in the beginning could be summed up in one word: grow. That's not very specific, but that's where I started. The good news is that as I grew, so did my awareness of the picture for my leadership. Questions began to surface in my mind. In what areas should I try to grow? What resources do I need? Where can I get them? How much time should I spend on each area of growth? What mentors should I pursue? What experiences do I need to help me grow? Each question expanded my growth picture. The more I have grown, the greater my picture of growth has become.

Early on I learned that activity is not necessarily accomplishment. I needed to focus. I began to prioritize what I did and when I did it. For example, I'm a morning person. That's my best time for thinking and doing, so I began putting my most important growth projects in the early morning. My best time was given to my most important growth priorities.

I also started to refine what I did to grow and how I did it. I began to focus on three main areas:

- ***My strengths—the areas of giftedness that set me apart from average.*** Growing in my strengths enables me to reach the top 10 percent of people with a certain skill set. Almost all success is a result of being in

the top 10 percent of a certain area. If you are in the top 20 percent, others will notice and admire you. If you're in the top 10 percent, people will seek you out and follow you.

- ***My choices—the areas of weakness that need to change for my overall improvement.*** Making the right choices is the fastest way to grow because you are in control of your choices. Improvement in this area adds value to your strengths.
- ***My faith—my relationship with God that influences my relationships with others.*** My faith is foundational to everything I am and everything I do. Growth in this area enhances my life and the lives of those I influence.

CONSIDER

What constitutes your big picture? Begin to paint it by answering these questions:

Where do you want to go?

[Your Response Here]

What are the strengths you can develop?

[Your Response Here]

What choices can you make in foundational areas that will improve you?

[Your Response Here]

What core values do you need to include in your growth process?

[Your Response Here]

If you can answer these questions now, they will help you be more strategic in your personal growth. However, you may be like I was when I first got started—I didn't know what I didn't know. I had to start the growth process to begin seeing the big picture. If that describes you, then start where you are, allow the big picture to unfold, and make adjustments to your growth priorities as the picture becomes clearer.

Consistency—How Can I Grow Daily?

For years I have taught that the secret of a person's success is determined by what he or she does daily. I recently heard former first lady Laura Bush say, "All we have is now." Wow! That's simple but profound. There will never be another now. Taking care of today and every day will ensure that someday your *now* will turn into *wow*.

CONSIDER

Look at your answers to the big picture questions. What must you do to ensure that you're learning and growing every day in each of those areas? Create your list with the goal of making growth something you do *every* day, not *some*day.

What must you do daily to take you where you want to go?

[Your Response Here]

What must you do daily to develop your strengths?

[Your Response Here]

What must you do daily to make choices that will help you improve?

[Your Response Here]

What must you do daily to make advances in the areas of your core values?

[Your Response Here]

Application—Can I Act on It?

Knowledge doesn't make a person better. Application does. Anything that doesn't get put into action remains theoretical. But the goal of personal growth is to become better—to become better as a person, a parent, a spouse, an employee, an employer, or a leader. We can experience change and still be passive. But to experience growth, we must be active.

CONSIDER

Go back and review the daily actions you just wrote. Make sure that each one you wrote includes a specific *action* you will take.

Measurement—How Can I Measure and Affect My Growth?

What gets measured gets done. How will you know what progress you're making until you find some way to track your growth? I have to say, it's important to do, but it's also difficult. It requires evaluation and reflection.

I've found that it's easier to track progress periodically rather than to try to gauge it daily, because trying to assess your own growth that frequently is like trying to detect if children are growing. When you see your own children every day, you can't tell they've grown. But if you didn't see them for three months or a year, the changes would stand out.

I do my major growth measurement at the end of every year. As I spend time reflecting and going back through my calendar for the year, I ask myself two questions: "Who stretched me?" and "What stretched me?"

As I think about the first question, I list the names of people who were catalysts for growth in my life. I try to figure out how I can spend more time with them in the coming year. I also write down the names of people who take my time but there's no value for either of us in the relationship. I figure out how to spend less time with them.

As I think about the second question, I try to determine which ideas, experiences, events, stories, resources, and thoughts enlarged me. I use my

answers to evaluate past experiences, target future ones, and start planning key growth experiences for the coming year. In my early years of growth, everyone and everything stretched me. As I've grown and experienced more, I've had to become more intentional and selective about how I spend my growth time. But the intention is always the same. I want to be *stretched*.

Once you've grown, you will be forever impacted. And if you can see your progress, you'll never want to stop growing. A butterfly cannot go back to being a caterpillar. After forty-five years of intentional growing, I cannot go back. I have no desire to. Neither will you.

CONSIDER

How will you measure your growth? Monthly? Quarterly? Annually? Write the dates when you will review your progress for the next year here. Then put them on your calendar.

[Your Response Here]

5. Growth Is Joy

When I was in my thirties, one of my mentors told me, "Growth is happiness." That statement really stuck with me, and for many years I repeated it. But my perspective on that has changed, and today my appreciation for growth has deepened. For me, growth is more than just happiness. It's joy.

Why do I say that? First, growth has filled my life. It's made me bigger on the inside than I am on the outside. Most people at my age are worn down by work. Instead, because I've been filling my well with thoughts, ideas, experiences, and changes that have grown me for more than fifty years, I don't feel worn out. I feel as if I've just warmed up.

Second, I'm living my mission and passion, which is to add value to leaders who multiply value to others. I get to live my passion every day, and my growth is targeted to help me fulfill my mission better.

Author Napoleon Hill said, "It's not what you are going to do, but it's what you are doing right now that counts." Every day for forty-five years, I've

focused my “right now” on my mission. It’s the most rewarding thing I can do. It gives me great joy.

IT’S NOT WHAT YOU ARE GOING TO DO, BUT IT’S WHAT YOU ARE DOING RIGHT NOW THAT COUNTS.

NAPOLEON HILL

I want that for you too. I want you to find the joy of growth and apply that growth to your purpose. I want you to make a difference. And I want you to do it by developing the leader within you so that you can reach your potential, not only as a leader but in every area of your life.

Growing into your leadership potential will take great time and effort. You will need to be highly intentional. You will have to work for it. You will have to spend your time and money to achieve it. Growth will not come to you. You must pursue it. Effective leadership doesn’t happen on its own. You must go after it. But the journey is as important as the destination. Each step of your journey leads to new discoveries as well as the knowledge that there’s more to learn.

CONSIDER

How might you be able to make a difference as a leader? If you were to grow to your complete leadership potential, harness your passion, and pursue your best opportunities, what could you accomplish as a leader? Dream big!

[Your Response Here]

Too many people want to know the end of the story before they are willing to

take the first step. And that limits them. They've heard, "There is nothing new under the sun,"[4] so they stay home. They don't pursue growth. They wait for the discoveries of life to come to them, and they are always disappointed.

The real joy of the journey is that each step we take begins to unfold new discoveries. It is only after we've learned new things that we can look back and realize what we didn't know—and how much more there is to learn. And our new knowledge and discoveries become the motivation for us to continue the journey. Before long, we begin to realize that the destination isn't what we desire; rather, it is the growth we experience along the way. And we discover that there is no finish line.

Where will your growth journey take you? I don't know. I've gone farther and done much more than I ever dreamed of while growing up in the small town of Circleville, Ohio. Back then I couldn't have imagined where I am now.

So take the road that's open before you. Take a step. Make personal growth your daily habit. First, let the road take you where it leads. As you grow, begin to make choices at each juncture. Over time, you will become more proactive, more directive, more intentional in where it leads you. But always remain open and teachable. Keep allowing yourself to be surprised every day. Grow into the person you have the potential to be. You'll never regret it.

PERSONAL GROWTH

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

If you are part of a group going through this workbook, use the following questions to engage in group discussion. Keep in mind that the goals of good discussion are changing yourself and taking positive action.

1. Are you naturally more curious and growth oriented or active and goal conscious? How has that helped you professionally? How has it hindered you?

[Your Response Here]

2. How often do you do things that take you out of your comfort zone? What

was the last activity that did that to you? How did it make you feel? What did you learn about yourself?

[Your Response Here]

3. If you've experienced a professional plateau or obstacle in the past that you've not been able to overcome, how might personal growth help you to resolve the issue? How would you need to grow? What would that require, and how long would it take?

[Your Response Here]

4. What was your answer about what you could accomplish in your lifetime as a leader? What might be standing between you and that big dream?

[Your Response Here]

5. What was your single greatest takeaway from this lesson? Why?

[Your Response Here]

6. Based on what you've learned in this lesson, how do you need to change? What concrete, measurable step can you take this week to grow in the area of personal growth?

[Your Response Here]

NOTES

[Your Response Here]

WHAT'S NEXT?

The process of developing the leader within you is a lifelong journey. If you have taken the time to read this workbook and do all the assignments, I have no doubt that you have begun to see changes in your leadership ability. Your influence with others has grown. Your priorities are clearer and you act on them more decisively. You've won character battles. You've been able to initiate change and solve problems with greater ability. Your attitude is helping you to believe in people and serve them better. You have a vision for your leadership and more self-discipline to follow through with it. And you're learning more every day.

But this is only the beginning. The journey you have ahead of you can be an exciting one. I want to encourage you to keep expanding and growing your leadership skills. Keep working on the ten core areas I discuss in this workbook. Listen to podcasts. Read leadership books from other authors. I also want to recommend *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* to you. It will give you specific leadership principles to live by.

I don't think it's possible for anyone to ever get to a place where he or she has learned everything there is to know about leadership. I'm seventy years old, I've spent almost fifty years studying leadership and practicing what I've learned, and I'm still growing. I feel that I'm like cellist Pablo Casals, who at eighty-one was asked why he still practiced for hours every day. His answer: "Because I think I am making progress."[1]

Adopt Casals's attitude and continue developing the leader within you. It will be one of the best things you ever do for yourself.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John C. Maxwell is a #1 *New York Times* bestselling author, coach, and speaker who has sold more than thirty million books in fifty languages. He has been identified as the #1 leader in business by the American Management Association and the most influential leadership expert in the world by *Business Insider* and *Inc*. magazines. He is the founder of the John Maxwell Company, the John Maxwell Team, EQUIP, and the John Maxwell Leadership Foundation, organizations that have trained millions of leaders from every country of the world. The recipient of the Mother Teresa Prize for Global Peace and Leadership from the Luminary Leadership Network, Dr. Maxwell speaks each year to *Fortune* 500 companies, presidents of nations, and many of the world's top business leaders. He can be followed at Twitter.com/JohnCMaxwell. For more information about him, visit JohnMaxwell.com.

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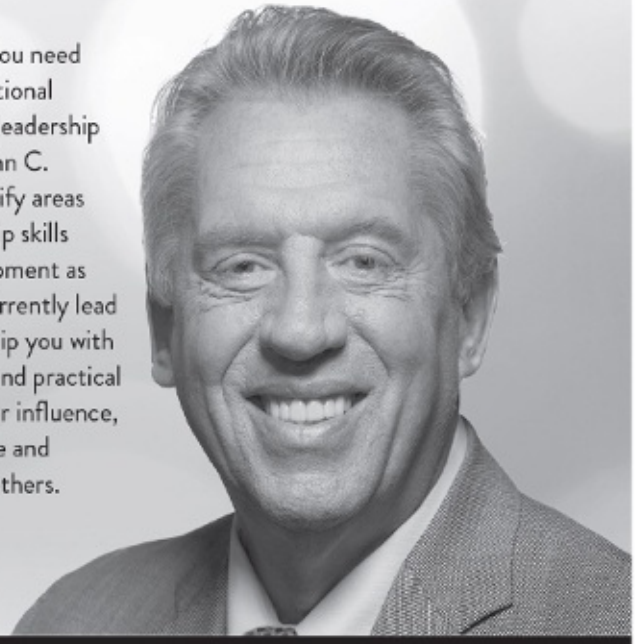
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What’s Next?

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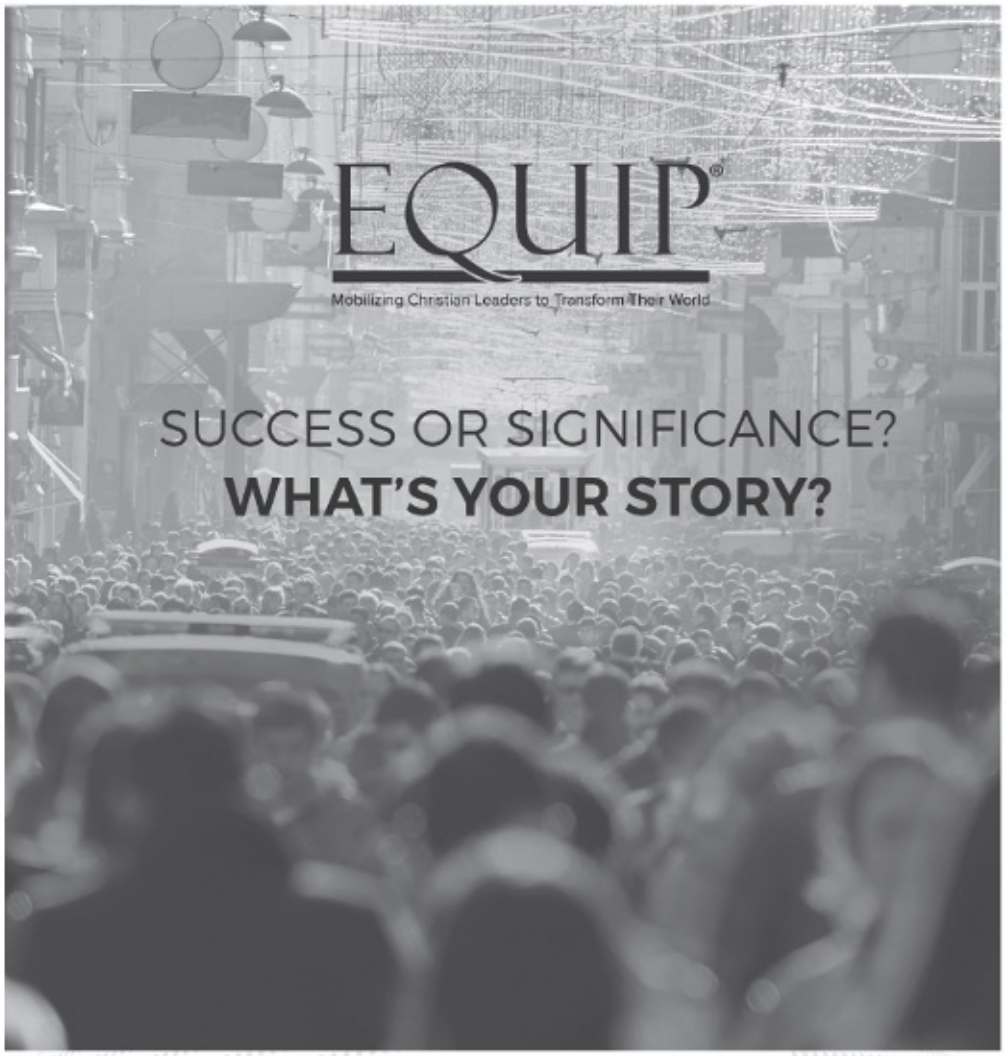
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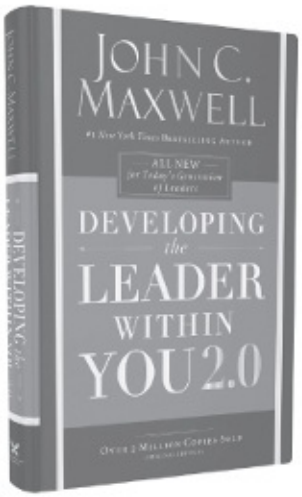


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