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INTERVIEW LIKE A LEADER

T*he interview process can be frustrating and unpredictable.* Most companies have too many interviewees for a single position, the process usually takes too long, insufficient (or no) feedback is provided, the interviewers ask trick questions, and they are not trained properly so they ask inappropriate or illegal questions. You will encounter a wide variety of interview approaches throughout your career. Some larger organizations use a bank of predetermined questions designed to target certain areas of your personality, such as “Tell me about a time you failed. What happened and why?” or “Tell me about a time you disagreed with your manager.” Some companies want you to role-play, and others will stress

test you by creating a combative atmosphere to see how you react under pressure. All these variables are outside of your control, but you do have full control over your words and actions.

I once worked at a large company where I was surrounded by some really strong, talented individuals. Every year, we all competed for one or two open job promotions. We referred to it as the “logjam,” meaning we had a lot of strong talent but only a few jobs available. I knew that if I was going to have a legitimate shot against these people, I was going to have to really differentiate myself, so I searched for help.

A friend referred me to a career coach—let’s call him Tom. Tom had a passion for helping people to elevate their brands and take charge of their careers. He was highly sought after and charged a premium for his services. I paid him in cash and we met in my office after work, where he conducted mock interviews with me. I answered his questions standing up, sitting down, with a presentation, without a presentation, with objections, without objections, and so on. We practiced every scenario he could think of.

Tom’s strategy was to get me comfortable with a variety of situations, because you have no control over the way an interview is conducted or the questions asked. In fact, in

some interviews, no questions will be asked; instead you will be given an hour to sell yourself, present a business plan, or simply talk. Not knowing what to expect can leave you feeling unprepared, insecure, and unconfident—not good feelings to have before an interview. What if there was a way to know that you can handle anything that comes your way? What if you had an anecdote and a real-world example prepared for any question asked of you? It would be like having all the answers to a test and would provide some much-needed confidence.

Some people “interview well” because they’ve figured out the formula. Fortunately, you can be one of those people. I have successfully used a proven interview preparation method for years, and it is fairly easy to adopt. Here’s how it works.

***Step 1: Know Your Story and Be Able to
Articulate It In Two Minutes or Less***

If somebody says, “Tell me about yourself,” you should feel very comfortable telling your story. My answer to that question is a two-minute timeline that touches on my track record, my motivations, a couple of personal elements to show my human side, and some commentary about my direction and aspirations and why this is the right role for me at the right company at the right time. I also sprinkle

in a little self-deprecation, which is a very powerful tool if you need to win somebody over in a short period of time. I will say something like, “I feel fortunate just to be in the running. I could have just as easily found myself delivering pizzas.” It seems counterintuitive to downplay your abilities during an interview, but I promise you that telling someone how amazing you are is never well received. People will always hire somebody humble, likable, modest, and coachable over somebody who is arrogant or narcissistic, even if the latter is more qualified.

**Step 2: Prepare Three Mental Buckets that You
Can Tie Interview Questions Back To**

My career coach, Tom, taught me that this is one of the most important things you can do before an interview. A “mental bucket” is a focus area. For a leadership role, your three mental buckets might be Track Record, Leadership, and Business Plan. Most interview questions will fall into one of these categories. A question might not always fit *perfectly*, but with a little finesse, you can tie any question into one of your buckets and have confidence in knowing what you are about to say. For each mental bucket, prepare an anecdote, a real-life example, an opinion, and references. For example, in my Leadership bucket, I have a short story about a great leader I have worked with, and

I have a real-world example of a way in which I have demonstrated similar leadership. I have a strong opinion about what it takes to be a great leader (humility, empathy, growth mindset, bias for action, etc.) and am prepared to discuss my leadership philosophy. In this way, during an interview I can answer any question related to leadership with information “pulled” from my Leadership bucket. If you do nothing else, study your three buckets, memorize your answers, and walk into the interview with confidence!

Step 3: Ask Questions and Listen More Than You Speak

An interview is usually a dialogue, not a one-sided barrage of questions. The people conducting the interview are in positions of power and are in the interviewer role for a reason. They likely have a lot of experience and perhaps have even been in a role like the one you are interviewing for. Ask them about their journey, their stories, and how they got to where they are. Ask them what they like and dislike about the company. Ask them what else you should be doing and what they would do if they were in your shoes. Asking questions in an interview serves two purposes. First, people enjoy talking about themselves, and second, it shows that you don’t have all the answers and are willing to listen, learn, and solicit input from others, which are all attributes of great leaders.

Step 4: Have an Opinion and Have a Plan

Demonstrating that you have put thought and time into solving real issues associated with the role you are seeking is a critical and often overlooked part of any interview. Although you might not be asked for a plan, you should prepare one and have it professionally printed and bound. Ideally, for in-person interviews, send it to the interviewer the night before. If you really want to go the extra mile, deliver a hard copy via an overnight shipping service and include a handwritten note.

Your plan should be concise, it should leverage your three mental buckets as primary talking points, and, most importantly, it should be tailored to the specific role you are interviewing for. If you are seeking a people leadership role, you should have an opinion about the team, the people, and the specific issues they are facing. Admit that you don't have all the answers and that you will need to listen and learn before taking any action.

Keep in mind that you are being hired to perform a specific task, but ultimately you are being hired to make the lives of those above you easier. Having a plan shows you have taken an important step toward owning the team and all of its issues, problems, and challenges. When I'm interviewing leadership candidates who will report to me, I am

not looking for someone who is going to dump more work on my plate—quite the opposite. I need someone who can take things off my plate, somebody who can act autonomously and make decisions appropriately without constant supervision or permission. A plan demonstrates that you are that type of candidate.

Your plan doesn't need to be perfect; in fact, it shouldn't be. But you should interview as if you are getting the job, and you need a plan to do the job. Waiting until you have the job to formulate a plan is akin to changing the tires on a moving car.

Part of your plan should include how you will be spending time in the first thirty days, sixty days, and ninety days (often called a 30-60-90). For the most part, your first thirty days should be spent in observation mode, meeting with the team, rolling up your sleeves, dismissing or confirming preconceived notions, and spending time in the field. Politicians call this time a “listening tour,” but in reality, you are using this time to solidify your opinions and tighten up your plan. The first thirty days is a critical time as a new leader to set the tone, set clear expectations, and establish what type of leadership people can expect from you.

People often fall into the trap of trying to immediately be liked by the team and becoming everyone's best friend.

There is a secret to setting the appropriate tone in the first thirty days, and it's not natural or comfortable for most people: Come out of the gate strong. You can always soften up later, but starting weak and toughening up later is impossible. Think about the advice given to people headed to prison: "Come out swinging and show them you aren't to be messed with." If you show up crying your first night, you are going to have a rough time serving the rest of your sentence.

The first sixty days should be spent providing feedback, addressing problem areas, and course correcting. If you see a problem, fix the problem. You were hired for a reason and you need to trust your gut. The first sixty days is the perfect time to let people know what you observed in the first thirty days, why it's a problem, and how you are going to help them resolve it.

The first ninety days is when you take action. By now people know what to expect from you and are aware of areas that need improvement. You can't allow problems to fester; they will only get worse. Beyond ninety days, you can rate your own performance, assign yourself a grade, share it with your team, ask for their feedback, and let them know what you are working on to better serve as their leader moving forward.

Step 5: Close Them!

This is such a simple step but so many people forget. Like we always tell our sales reps, ask for the business! Ask your interviewers how they think the interview went. Do they have any concerns? Are they comfortable endorsing you for the position? Is there anything they would like to dig deeper on? Do you have their support?

Step 6: Follow Up

Letter writing and following up is a lost art. You don't have to send a handwritten note, although it's a nice touch, but at the very least you should follow up with an email thanking the interviewers for their time, confirming next steps, and establishing your excitement to move forward in the process. Your follow-up communication should not be a generic form letter. It should reference specific details from your conversation, something like, "I really enjoyed our discussion about accelerating revenue during times of constrained supply chain." If you don't have the interviewers' email addresses, ask the recruiter to send your follow-up letter for you.



Interviews are fluid and inconsistent. Not everything will fit neatly into your three mental buckets, and some questions

are designed to throw you off. When answering questions in a leadership interview, put yourself in the shoes of the shareholders or CEO and think in terms of what is best for the company. For example, a common interview question is “How would you feel if you don’t get the job?” Most people react with a knee-jerk, visceral response. “I would be disappointed! I’ve worked hard for this and I think I’m the right person for the job!” This is not an effective answer. Put yourself in the shoes of the CEO; if you don’t get the job, it means the interviewers have identified somebody they feel is better suited for the role and the company. Here’s a better answer to that question: “Of course, I would be disappointed initially, but I want what is best for the team and the company. If I don’t get this job, that means you have found somebody who is a better fit and that’s a great thing for the company and, ultimately, for me.”

Being a leader means you have to think like a leader at all times. Great leaders think of their teams, their companies, and a larger mission beyond their own selfish desires. I once told an interviewer that if I didn’t get the job, I would be relieved because I knew how much effort it would take to do the job well. If somebody else was better suited for the role and willing to put in the hard work required, that would be a great thing—they should hire that person immediately! I got that job.

Another trap people fall into during interviews is trying to have all the answers. I have stepped on this land mine myself many times. You might encounter a question about a specific issue or project that you have no idea about. Rather than trying to formulate an answer on the spot, say, “I have no idea, but I would figure it out” or “I’m not familiar with that. Please tell me more.” Being vulnerable in an interview setting is a rare and refreshing scene. Great leaders don’t know it all, and they are not expected to, but they should be willing to listen, learn, and solicit help from others.

When you get the job and it has been publicly and officially announced, the first people you should reach out to are the people who didn’t get the job, especially if they are now going to report to you. Let them know you will do what you can to support them on their journeys and get them to where they want to be. Don’t overpromise anything. They didn’t get the job for a reason, which is why you should tell them only that you will do what you can. It’s possible that they will never get into leadership; perhaps it’s not the right path for them. Having somebody on your team who harbors resentment toward you or who could potentially undermine your leadership will become a toxic issue if not addressed early.



There are no silver bullets that will make you a great sales leader, but there are some unspoken and sometimes unconscious secrets shared by the best leaders.

You know that confident, bright, and polished guy who gets up on stage in front of the whole company and effortlessly delivers a speech off the cuff? His secret is preparation.

He actually has crippling anxiety and detests public speaking; he was up all night practicing in front of a mirror and has rehearsed his speech a thousand times before getting near the stage. In fact, that same guy never speaks in front of a group unless he has memorized the first ten words that are going to come out of his mouth. Why? Because after the first ten confidently delivered words, you own the crowd and you are enjoying the moment.

Great leaders don't openly share their critical success factors for the same reason that magicians don't reveal their secrets. In this chapter, I share forty of the most important and impactful leadership secrets that you can implement immediately.

Book editors hate chapters like this. I know because they told me. A densely numbered list that throws off the overall chapter weighting is highly discouraged. However, I decided to keep this list intact rather than cutting it down or trying to unnaturally spread the advice throughout the book. I want to provide you with a single place to refer back to. I also want to provide an answer to the question, "If I only have time to read one chapter, which one should I read?" Here it is, forty secrets:

Secret 1: Always Listen More Than You Speak

You have two ears and one mouth; you should listen twice as much as you speak. There is a difference between listening and hearing. Most people are not great listeners. They might hear what you are saying, but they are thinking about their next meeting or formulating a response as they wait for their turn to talk. Being a generous listener is an attribute shared by great leaders, and it is something that you can practice every day.

The next time somebody talks to you (maybe your spouse or child), stop everything you are doing, look them

in the eye, nod your head, and don't speak. Be totally in the moment with them. When they are finished talking, acknowledge and reinforce what you just heard using their same words, tone, and pace. Ask questions and demonstrate excitement. If this seems unnatural to you, you probably need more listening practice. Don't worry about those moments of awkward silence. People love to talk and will fill those gaps. In a world full of talkers, be a listener.

Secret 2: Speak Plainly

You might think that using large, obscure, hard-to-pronounce words or tech jargon is impressive and showcases your intelligence, but instead you are broadcasting your insecurity and will be perceived as unapproachable. I'm not suggesting that you dumb down your speech. Just use plain language and speak authentically and from the heart, like you would with a close family member or when having a beer with a friend.

Every year, new buzzwords and phrases crop up. A few years ago, everybody was "leaning in" and "leading from the front." People had become "thought leaders" and everything was getting "bifurcated." In a world where everybody is imitating everybody, you can be endearing and trusted simply by using tried and tested plain and simple language.

Secret 3: Be Vulnerable

Tell people your shortcomings. Share your fears and insecurities. Show your human side and don't be afraid to appear weak—everyone is struggling with something. It takes a strong person to admit to having weaknesses. One of the greatest leaders I ever worked with had a habit of telling very personal stories and crying on stage. When I asked him about it, he said it wasn't a calculated move, but he was aware that if he could be vulnerable and authentic to the point of shedding actual tears, the entire group would feel comfortable doing the same. A team of authentic, vulnerable, humble people with shared struggles is a key element of a cohesive, high-functioning team.

Secret 4: Communicate Concisely

If you do nothing else, always search for opportunities to communicate complicated issues in a simple and concise manner. Think about one of the most complicated issues you have ever faced in the workplace. Now, explain that issue to your five-year-old nephew in four sentences or less—it's not easy, but it's possible.

Great leaders can articulate strong and difficult messages using only a few words. We all have only 24 hours in a day; long emails won't get read, long speeches won't be

absorbed, and action items will get lost. Find ways to reduce words and get straight to the point in all your communication. An ideal state of communication between leader and team exists when few to no words are required because you are operating under a high level of mutual trust and unified dedication toward achieving coauthored objectives.

Secret 5: Act Like You Don't Care

Remember that feeling we talked about earlier when your spouse called to tell you about winning the lottery? How your body language changed and nothing else seemed important? Capture that feeling and embrace it. People are generally stressed, anxious, and nervous all day. They are drawn to people who appear relaxed and carefree.

A less fun example than winning the lottery is confronting mortality. I once learned about the loss of a friend right before walking into a meeting. Suddenly, the meeting felt insignificant. My mind was elsewhere, and I really didn't care how the meeting went.

Sometimes the "I don't care" attitude comes from thinking you have no chance at winning and nothing to lose. I remember landing a big deal with a global manufacturer of plastic food wrap. I honestly didn't expect to win the deal because our price was higher and the customer didn't need all the features that our solution offered, but he ended

up buying from me anyway. I asked the CIO why, and he said he loved that I “didn’t seem to care if I got the deal or not.” My competitor was apparently very pushy, and the customer felt like the other rep’s next meal depended on this one sale. He figured if the rep was so desperate for the sale, then that must mean nobody is buying his product, so there must be an issue with it. Ultimately, I really *did* care, but I always tried to conceal that from my customer and, later in my leadership career, from my teams. There is a difference between passion and desperation.

The most eye-opening experience I had with “not caring” happened when I was working for a very large, multinational tech company. My senior vice president (let’s call him Geoff) was in town from headquarters in California to spend time with the New York–based teams. Geoff seemed like a nice guy, but he was generally considered unapproachable. He had an intimidating air and was always in a rush. During his previous visits to New York, he was preoccupied with a group of eager executives fighting for a few minutes of his time, so I never spoke with him directly.

But this day was different. After almost a decade with the organization, I had accepted a new role at a different company and I was about to give my two weeks’ notice. I was sitting in a conference room responding to emails when Geoff stopped in. He asked if he could join me as he

needed to catch up on some work in a quiet place (without a gaggle of fawning executives). He asked how everything was going, and I told him everything was great. In fact, I told him I had never felt better. I was exercising more, I had cut alcohol out of my diet, I was sleeping better, and I was spending more quality time with my son.

Geoff looked up from his laptop and smiled. I could tell he wasn't expecting such a lengthy response. He said, "Man, I struggle with social drinking myself. There are so many events and dinners. How do you handle not drinking at those?" What followed was a normal, fun, relaxed interaction with a guy whom I barely spoke with in the past. To an outsider, we probably looked like old friends catching up and sharing a laugh. I was relaxed and authentic because I honestly didn't care what he thought. I was leaving the company, and I had nothing to lose. I felt comfortable, and I could tell my relaxed and confident nature put Geoff at ease as well.

People want to be around people who make them comfortable. I once worked with a marketing coordinator named Nathalie. If I was invited to an event, I always hoped Nathalie would be there. She was easy to talk to, introduced me to new people, and was generally fun to be around. If you struggle with acting like you don't care (because you really *do* care), try to be someone's Nathalie.

Put people at ease, try to relax, and don't take anything too seriously. A great leader once told me, "Twenty years from now, when we bump into each other on the beach, we won't remember all the business stuff, just the fun we had and the friends we made along the way."

Secret 6: Watch Your Grammar

Written communication is a critical component of successful leadership. Nothing will discredit you faster than a misused *their*, *there*, or *they're*. If you struggle in this department, hire an English tutor before it's *too* late.

***Secret 7: Be Disciplined and Do What
You Say You Are Going To Do***

It sounds easy but so many leaders make commitments with no follow-through. If you tell people they won awards, actually send them the trophies. If you tell folks you will attend a dinner meeting, be there. Set an example by consistently doing what you say you are going to do.

***Secret 8: Identify Your Moral Compass and
a Concrete Set of Non-Negotiables***

Too many leaders are willing to bend rules or violate ethics to drive results. That might pay off in the short term, but it only tarnishes your reputation in the long run. Never deviate

from your moral code, even if it could cost you your job. All you have is your name and reputation. Communicate your moral code with your team and get commitment and buy-in that it will be adhered to. Better yet, ask your team for their input and coauthor a new team code of ethics. Coauthored plans are more likely to be embraced because people feel a sense of ownership.

Secret 9: Be Visible

You need to be out with your team, meeting customers, spending time in the field, and showing up. It's such a simple thing to do, but so many people take the easy path of hiding behind a laptop. You've probably heard idioms about showing up: belly up to the bar, sit in the chow hall, and—one of my favorites—you can't hunt from the lodge.

Being visible goes beyond just showing up in person. Find creative ways to promote your brand and extend your voice, things like creating a video message with a personal touch that gets distributed to your entire team. You can't physically be everywhere, but thanks to social media platforms and video tools, you can touch a lot of people at once. If you aren't in people's faces, you aren't on people's minds.

Secret 10: Share Your Trust

I once worked for a leader who was robotically professional. His words were carefully chosen, and he always held the corporate line. He could be described as a “cookie-cutter” corporate executive. It was only after about a year of working together that I saw a different side of him. We were in a conference room alone, watching somebody present on video. He muted our video system, looked at me, and said, “That guy sucks!” His comment was so out of character, I felt that he must really trust me to share his honest and unfiltered opinion, to show me an authentic side that most people don’t get to see. He was a chameleon; he knew what to say and how to behave in different situations. He was just as comfortable on stage delivering a polished message as he was in a conference room with me sharing his disdain for the presenter. We went on to have a very strong working relationship built on a solid foundation of mutual trust.

In another instance, an executive leader told me in confidence that there was about to be a major organizational announcement. She wanted me to hear it directly from her first, before it became public. She provided insights into how the decisions were made and shared some of her personal thoughts on the matter. I felt like she was inviting me to peek behind the curtain and giving me a seat at the table.

Secret 11: Enlist a Mentor

It's hard to reach the summit of Everest without the support of sherpas and oxygen; the higher you climb, the more help you need. The same is true about leadership: you can't do this alone. Every great leader I've ever met has a mentor. A mentor is somebody who can guide you, provide you with tough feedback, and help you identify blind spots that might be hindering progress on your leadership journey. A mentor can help you evaluate a situation with a fresh set of eyes and an outside perspective. The time you spend with your mentor should not create any additional work for the mentor. You should come prepared with questions, issues you are dealing with, and topics of focus. Mentors will drop you pretty quickly if you are waiting for them to create an agenda or come up with topics for discussion. Also, mentor sessions should have an end date. Nobody wants to sign up as a perpetual mentor with no end in sight. I suggest starting with a monthly cadence for six months with a mutual option to renew—or not—in month seven.

Secret 12: Promote Yourself

Too often I see leaders doing great things in a vacuum because they don't want to self-aggrandize, brag about their accomplishments, or upstage their team members.

Being a great leader doesn't mean you should surrender all of your work and allow others to take credit. Broadcast the accomplishments of others, but also be proud of your own accomplishments. If you are doing great work and nobody knows about it, you are really doing a disservice to your peers and company by not sharing best practices. You can appropriately promote yourself in a variety of ways; it's okay to take credit for your work. Share a best practice with a larger audience outside of your team, host an all-hands meeting, and ask others to provide their endorsements.

Secret 13: Choose and Memorize a Mantra

A good mantra provides you with direction in challenging times. When I feel overwhelmed and all else fails, I go back to my mantra of ARC: Accountability, Recognition, and Consistency. I know that if I focus on only these three areas and nothing else, my team will be better off, and I will regain a sense of control.

Secret 14: Employ a Battle Cry

Kevin was one of the best sales leaders I ever worked for. He ended every email with three letters, EFD. Everybody at the company knew what it meant because he also ended every call and every presentation with the same letters.

More importantly, it was a phrase that unified because it was an internal code; you had to be part of his team to get it (which is why I won't share its meaning here). EFD was Kevin's battle cry. Just like General Custer commanding his men to "Charge!" at the Battle of Little Big Horn, when Kevin raised his fist in the air and screamed "EFD!", we all enthusiastically followed him into battle.

Secret 15: Be a Model Citizen

Look at the highest-ranking officers in your company. They probably don't drink too much at work events, they probably don't spout divisive political stances, and they probably don't tell off-color jokes or use foul language (except as an authenticity tool for sharing trust, as discussed in Secret 10). These people got to where they are for a reason, and it's a good idea to emulate their conduct.

Secret 16: Be Authentic

We all have a work version of ourselves that we present to coworkers so they see us in the best possible light, but we also all have a grittier home version of ourselves that is more relaxed and "real."

Bringing elements of your home version to work will be appreciated by your team. People can tell when you are not being authentic. It takes a great leader to speak authentically

and genuinely to the team. Authenticity breeds trust, and trust is a key element to gaining followership.

Secret 17: Focus On the Vital Few

Focusing on doing a few things well is better than doing many things poorly. Imagine you were just elected Mayor of New York City. You might have run a campaign with an ambitious agenda, but you can't solve every problem the city faces during your short term in office, so you need to dedicate your time, energy, and resources to doing a few things and doing them well. Perhaps your first year in office you will assemble a task force to address the issue of homelessness. Perhaps the second year you will focus on infrastructure and repairing subway lines.

You need to choose what is important, clearly articulate your priorities, and help remove any distractions or noise that will deviate you from your vital few. As a sales leader, you are like an airplane pilot: you have only so many dials that you can tweak to get your plane to cruising altitude. Choose your dials wisely. If you choose the wrong one, pivot fast and move on or the plane could crash.

Choosing to focus on doing one thing effectively still requires a hundred other things. Let's say you decide you want to focus only on upgrading low-performing sales reps. To do so effectively, you need enablement, inspection,

field time, shadowing, mentoring, performance management, bench building, coaching, hiring, legal engagement, human resources support, recognition, and much more. Obviously, doing that “one thing” well requires a lot of focus and dedication.

Secret 18: Smile

It sounds simple, yet deliberately choosing to be upbeat and smiling is a game changer. It’s important that you set the weather for your team. Put another way, one of the functions you serve as a leader is to be the thermostat, not the thermometer, for your team. Think about air travel. When you experience turbulence on a flight, you look to the flight attendants for reassurance; if they are smiling and confident, you will be too. For some people, smiling comes naturally. But if you don’t feel like smiling, think of something that makes you happy: kids, family, vacation, or even that martini you will have at the bar in a few hours.

Secret 19: Remember Dates and Details

Knowing the name of your employees’ spouses or kids, the breeds of their dogs, or their favorite basketball teams goes a long way in showing them that you care and that they are important. Gestures like sending a brief birthday or anniversary note to a team member is what separates great

leaders from remarkable leaders. Some leaders focus only on this category and are ineffective in all other areas. You know that guy who sends you a message on your birthday every year and asks about your kids by name? You can't pinpoint exactly what he does and how he adds value to your organization, but he sticks around because he's likable and seems to care. Unfortunately, that guy is ineffective, both as an employee and as a leader. Remembering dates and details is important but does not stand on its own.

Secret 20: Manage Up

It's become trite corporate jargon, but all great leaders "manage up" extremely well. Managing up describes the way you interact with those higher up in your organization, doing whatever you can to help them do their jobs. The opposite, of course, is managing down, or interacting with subordinates. You can't effectively manage down until you have mastered managing up.

In simple terms, if you are managing up well, your immediate manager feels that you make life easier. Your manager trusts you to make effective decisions aligned with the company's goals, strategy, and vision.

The reward for effectively managing up is empowerment. Once you are empowered, you can shift your focus to your team, managing down and leading. If your team sees

you struggling with or being undermined by your manager, they will lose all faith in your ability to execute and will ultimately go around you. A lot of people operate in a constant state of fear and anxiety, thinking, “I better do this or I could lose my job.” You can’t manage up effectively if you are operating in such a manner.

Imagine you are leading a team of salespeople. You have one rep (let’s call him Bob) who copies you on every email, asks permission before doing anything, seems generally high strung, and constantly looks for validation. Now imagine another rep (let’s call her Kathy) who has a quiet confidence, makes sound decisions, and almost seems slightly irritated when you call her for an update. Kathy runs her own business, she views you as an investor rather than a manager, she is confident in her own abilities, and she doesn’t need your validation. Kathy doesn’t need much from you, but when she does need something, she lets you know.

Kathy is managing up very well because she has earned your respect. You appreciate her strong work ethic and that she takes things off your plate and generally makes your life easier. Bob, on the other hand, seems unsure of himself. You assume he either isn’t doing the right things and is nervous that you will find out, or he doesn’t view himself as a valuable asset who provides a premium service. Of

course, you would rather be like Kathy in your manager's eyes, but most people fall into the Bob category.

When you go to the car wash, usually you will see at least three levels of service available. The basic level might be an exterior wash, the next level up might include a carpet vacuum, and the premium option might include everything offered by the lesser options plus additional services like a tire shine and wax. All options result in your car getting washed, but the premium option is nice to have. Kathy knows she is providing you with a premium service and you are fortunate to have her on your team. Be like Kathy and only offer the premium service to those above you.

Secret 21: Don't Be a Jellyfish

The first time I heard this phrase, I struggled to wrap my head around it, but the concept is simple: own your decisions, stand behind them, and don't blame others. A peer once reached out to me when he was preparing to terminate an employee who had ongoing issues with performance. He wanted advice on talking points, and so I asked him to role-play with me as if I were the employee. He nervously cleared his throat and said, "As you know, our head of sales is looking at everyone's performance and your attainment is not up to the level he expects, and unfortunately he has asked me to let you go." Essentially this manager

was telling his employee, “Sorry, this wasn’t my decision. I’m just the messenger.” He took this approach because the reality of the situation was uncomfortable and difficult to communicate. However, this is a weak tactic, like a jellyfish who drifts with the current. What he really wanted to say was, “I don’t want you on my team. You are not doing what it takes to be successful. We’ve had this conversation multiple times, but your calendar is empty and I don’t believe you have what it takes to make it here.”

Communicating difficult news is not easy, but as a leader you have to own your decisions and communicate them clearly. The language I ultimately suggested my peer use in the conversation was, “As we’ve discussed, your performance has not been up to the level expected nor required to maintain your position at the company. We have tried to turn things around for a while, but we still are not seeing satisfactory results. At this point, I have made the decision to let you go. This decision is my own, it is final, and not open to further discussion.”

This statement seems cold and heartless, but the truth is, the employee had been on notice for over a year and was essentially collecting a paycheck with almost zero effort exerted to turn things around. My peer did not owe his employee an apology—she created the situation herself—but he did owe her crystal clear and decisive

communication. This strong approach left no room for debate or discussion, the employee was not surprised, she understood the decision, and the manager learned an important lesson. Own your decisions, especially the hard ones, and don't be a jellyfish.

Secret 22: Keep a To-Do List

Great leaders are sought-after individuals, which is reflected in their busy calendars; yet somehow, they never let anything fall through the cracks. Most of the great leaders I've spoken with maintain a perpetual to-do list. Imagine you are in the shower and think, "I should reach out to Mike and let him know he's doing a great job. I haven't spoken with him in a while, and I owe him a call." If you don't add *Call Mike and check in* to your to-do list immediately, it will likely be forgotten, overridden by competing thoughts, before you step out of the shower.

The format and mechanism by which you maintain a to-do list is up to you, but choose something readily available and easily edited. I find a smartphone works perfectly for keeping lists, but a journal, notepad, or voice recorder would also do the trick.

I was once in a meeting with a CEO when the conversation meandered and we ended up discussing vacation destinations. He said he would send me the name of a

small village he once visited in Europe. I didn't expect him to actually send me the name of the village; his comment seemed like one of those things that people say, and he probably said a thousand things that day. Later that evening, he sent me an email from the plane with the name of the village and some additional details. That CEO said what he was going to do, wrote it down on his list of open action items, held himself accountable, and took care of the task. No matter how trivial a task might seem, the act of writing it down and crossing it off your list gives you a sense of accomplishment and differentiates you from ninety percent of people who have good intentions but forget about the little things. Keeping a to-do list and getting things done are key traits shared by great leaders.

Secret 23: If You See a Problem, Fix the Problem

Imagine returning from a long week of traveling. You took the red-eye flight home, and you are exhausted. All you want to do is go to bed. That's exactly what most people in this situation will do; go straight to bed. But by going to bed, you're not addressing some problems. Your suitcase isn't unpacked, your dirty clothes from the trip are still squashed in your bag, your blood pressure medicine is buried in a toiletry bag, and your laptop needs charging. What if you were to stay awake an extra thirty minutes to

unpack your suitcase, take a shower, program the coffee maker, plug in your laptop, and throw your clothes in the washing machine? You would probably sleep better knowing everything was taken care of, and you would have more time to ease into the morning the next day.

Problems don't age well. As a leader, you are obligated to act fast and address problems as soon as you see them. Allowing them to fester inevitably makes them worse. You will never hear somebody say, "I wish I had waited longer to address that problem."

Secret 24: Treat Everyone Like Family

Too often, leaders are moving fast and treating people like tools in their tool bag or weapons in their arsenal. It's easy to view a short, casual interaction with an employee as trivial, but that person likely took everything you said to heart in what might be the only conversation the person has with you that week.

As a leader, your words carry weight and have a significant impact on people's morale, demeanor, and engagement. Quickly dismissing or chastising a low-performing employee might be tempting, but that person is probably hungry for coaching, advice, and guidance and definitely does not want to be a low performer. Maybe the low-performing employee is going through a personal struggle or

was dealt an unfair hand by you or your predecessor. Before chastising, imagine this person is your father, mother, sister, or brother. How would you want your family treated? Looking at daily interactions through this lens changes everything. Your people are not objects. They deserve to be treated with empathy and respect. The greatest leader you have ever worked for understands this principle.

Secret 25: Show No Fear

Fear is an unavoidable and essential part of the human experience. Without it, we might nonchalantly walk into a bear's cave and become its dinner. Although *experiencing* fear is unavoidable, *showing* fear is a choice. Would you follow a general into battle who looks terrified? Would you get on an airplane with a scared pilot? Great leaders experience fear but never let you know it in the moment (hence the term “fearless leader”). Part of being a great leader is being genuine and authentic, however, so you often hear great leaders admitting that they were afraid after the fact.

One of my greatest fears was speaking in front of very large groups of people. When I was asked to present on stage the night before a huge, company-wide event, internally I was terrified, but outwardly I smiled and said, “Absolutely! I would love to. Thanks for asking me to do it.” I didn't sleep at all that night and spent hours practicing

my speech and rehearsing my body language. The next morning, I got mic'd up backstage, heard my cue, and stepped out under the blinding lights before a sea of thousands of people. I faced one of my biggest fears with confidence and actually enjoyed the experience. After stepping off the stage, people said things like, "You're so lucky that stuff doesn't bother you. I could never do that!" and "You crushed it! You looked so comfortable up there." I admitted to those people that I was actually terrified and wouldn't have dared attempt it without ample preparation. Once you've looked your biggest fear in the eyes and prevailed, you feel unstoppable. When it comes to fear, the "fake it 'til you make it" adage works perfectly. Act as if you have no fear, and you will become fearless.

Secret 26: Be grateful

It's so easy to fall down a rabbit hole of negativity and forget how fortunate you are. Leaders who carry themselves with gratitude are magnets for positivity. The best leaders I know thank people for their time, their presence, and their hard work. Being grateful for others is contagious and creates a culture of appreciation. People who feel appreciated often do more than is asked or expected of them. Gratitude and appreciation comes in many forms; it can be expressed monetarily, verbally, or through public praise and recognition.

Secret 27: Be Kind

I once found myself having lunch at a restaurant with a sales manager who was rude to the waiter. He scolded the waiter for taking so long with our food, and he was condescending throughout the meal. I'm not sure if he thought I would be impressed by his behavior, but I couldn't have been more disgusted. I would never do business with somebody who acts that way. A kind leader is not a weak leader. Having empathy for people, genuinely caring about their well-being and helping them achieve success without degrading or berating them, actually takes more time, effort, and emotional intelligence than the alternative. Being a kind leader doesn't mean you foster a "soft" culture that lets people skate by with subpar performance. It means you are a good person who knows how to hold people accountable and drive performance by using more advanced motivation techniques. Some of the wealthiest and most successful people I know are also some of the most well-mannered, polite, and humble people I know. I don't think that's a coincidence.

Secret 28: Own It

If not you, then who? Great leaders never need to be asked to lead; they just do it. People debate about whether leaders

are born with the instinct to lead or acquire a sense of obligation through their life experiences, but either way, something inside a leader screams, “If I don’t do this, nobody will. If not me, then who?”

When I was a sales leader in New York City, I had a couple of open spots on my team so I decided to host a mini career fair in our office. I hired a caterer, promoted the event, gathered résumés, and assembled a group of hiring managers to meet with prospective candidates. Dozens of people signed up to attend. I scheduled the event to start at 6 p.m. to allow people enough time to leave their other jobs (if they had other jobs) and get to our office. A late start also gave me some time to make sure the office was presentable and ready to accept guests.

Growing up, when we were expecting company, my family ran around making sure everything was shipshape before guests arrived. I felt the same sense of urgency when inviting people into our office space. I wanted to make a good impression on our prospective employees and ensure that our company was well-represented. It was the end of a long workday and the usual detritus was strewn about the office: discarded coffee cups, crumbs on the floor, misplaced charging cables, etc. I went to the maintenance closet, found a vacuum cleaner, and began cleaning the carpets. I sensed people watching me, so I looked up and

saw shocked faces from a handful of coworkers. They asked in disbelief, “Why are you vacuuming? That’s not your job!” When I have a goal, my job is to remove all obstacles standing in the way of achieving that goal, and so everything is my job. The floor had crumbs on it and needed vacuuming.

Ultimately, the event was a big success. We had a great turnout, met some interesting people, and identified a handful of top candidates. We interviewed our top choices and made offers on the spot. We hired five people at that event, and they went on to have long and successful careers with the company.

Taking initiative and stepping up to a task is not the same as being a lone wolf or doing people’s jobs for them. The fact is, Human Resources would have needed a lot of time to plan a career fair like this; they would need to fly people in, find local vendors, work with marketing on promoting it, have meetings, review with other departments, and so on.

Finding someone to clean the floor would have taken a lot longer than giving it a quick vacuum myself. Sometimes if you want something done quickly, taking the reins and doing it yourself is the best option. That doesn’t mean doing it all alone. I enlisted the help of other local hiring managers, we delegated tasks, and everyone chipped in to make it a successful event.

It's okay to delegate tasks as a leader; you can't do it all. Delegating tasks to free up time for other tasks is not shirking your responsibility. Using your time and the time of others in the most efficient manner is your obligation as a leader. But nothing is beneath you, and you should always be willing to step in and own it!

Listen for the phrase "That's not my job." You will be surprised how many times you hear it thrown around the workplace. Once I recognized that people viewed themselves as having a specific set of siloed tasks from which they shouldn't deviate, I established a new mandate for my team: your job is everything and anything that moves the team closer to our goal.

Great things happen when people remove the artificial limitations of job descriptions from their mindsets. It's empowering to be told, "Your job is anything that contributes to the success of the team and the company." People are more inclined to work together as a cohesive team if they know they are all working toward a common goal. If it's nobody's job, it's everybody's job.

Secret 29: Define a vision

Visualization is one of the most underrated tools in our tool bags. Great leaders have clear visions and are always working toward them. Working toward your vision also

means having a plan to get there. A vision without a plan is a dream. Leading is impossible if you don't know where you are going. Great leaders share their visions, they talk about them often, they solicit feedback, and they encourage input.

Having a vision fosters excitement and unity. I like to literally share my vision with my team by creating a vision board with pictures of what we are trying to achieve. It might sound corny, but I have achieved 100 percent of the visions I've depicted in this way. When you have a clear vision, you are unstoppable. When you are unstoppable, you can achieve anything. Manifesting your wildest dreams is not only possible, but highly likely, when you focus on them, talk about them, think about them, and involve others. The more specific and measurable your vision is, the more likely you are to achieve it.

My first year in college, I was distracted, not studying enough, and my grades began to slip. I decided to get serious about studying and work toward a vision. I printed pictures of a nice house, a nice car, a swimming pool, and a custom suit on a piece of paper. I carried that piece of paper in my wallet for the rest of my college career (Fig. 4). Any time I was tempted to stop studying and go partying, I would remember what I was working toward. I kept that paper in my wallet after I graduated and entered the

workforce. Achieving everything on that paper took me a few years, but I never forgot what I was working toward and went on to achieve everything I had envisioned. I continued to raise the bar and set higher goals, not just tangible and monetary goals, but anything my mind could conjure. This is the underlying architecture of growth: raise the bar, achieve it, set a higher bar, and repeat.



Fig. 4. My actual vision board from college.

Visualization isn't limited to positive outcomes. Visualizing negative outcomes (temporarily) is a great way to mitigate unfortunate scenarios; it helps you identify potential pitfalls and make plans to avoid them. In simpler terms, hope for the best, plan for the worst. In sales, a negative visualization might be "If we don't overachieve against our quota this quarter, the company could miss earning targets, which could drive down the stock price" or "If I don't get this deal at the bank, we could lose credibility across the entire financial services vertical."

When I wrote this book, I visualized positive outcomes, like good reviews and good sales. I also visualized negative outcomes, like bad reviews and poor sales. I visualized potential feedback and wrote hypothetical book reviews. I then used the reviews to edit and revise the book. Here are the reviews I visualized, some positive and some negative:

★★★★★

Loved it! I learned a lot about what it takes to be a successful leader. There are actionable tips and great advice that I can immediately put to use in the real world. I found myself reinvigorated and filled with motivation to get to work! I highly recommend this book and will be giving a copy to everyone on my team!

SHITTY SALES LEADERS



Pretty good. I learned a few things and I was entertained by some of the stories. I saw some similarities to my own journey and I think people who are just getting into leadership would get a lot out of this book.



It was okay. A lot of this stuff is common sense. I picked up a few nuggets that I can use, but for the most part, it's just like all the other leadership books on the market. Good news though—it was a pretty quick read. Banged it out in a few hours.



I do not recommend this book. It was filled with mostly useless information. Save your money and watch some online tutorials if you want to learn about sales leadership.



Awful! This book is a self-absorbed pile of garbage. I didn't learn anything at all, plus it was poorly written, riddled with grammatical errors, and doesn't apply to my industry.

By visualizing a range of potential outcomes, I was able to tweak the book and directly address the hypothetical

feedback. The reality is, we can't control the world and we can't please everyone, but we can do our best to focus on what is within our control and plan for a range of potential outcomes.

Secret 30: Build Big Teams Around You

Even the President of the United States needs help. He has advisors, a cabinet, and resources upon whom he can rely. Like most difficult tasks in life, leading can't be done alone. Great sales leaders surround themselves with like-minded, self-motivated people who are all swimming in the same direction and working toward a common goal. Like a football coach who positions players on a field to win a game, great sales leaders position their teams for success by aligning the players' skill sets with the right resources.

Some of the most effective teams I've built in my career were comprised of people from a wide array of backgrounds, skill sets, and functions. It is absolutely appropriate for sales leaders to enlist the help of people outside their organization (marketing, operations, product management, finance, etc.). If anyone declines to join the effort or has a "that's not my job" attitude, keep moving; you don't want those people on your team.

Success begets success, winners want to be around winners, and people are drawn to great leaders. Once a

reputation of achievement is established, the problem is no longer finding people to join your team; the problem becomes the overwhelming number of people who want to hitch their wagons to your success.

Secret 31: Stay Calm

As a leader, your patience and your boundaries will be tested. Issues will bubble up and you will face some very challenging situations and decisions. When children test their parents, both the children and the parents are best served if the parents take a calm and peaceful approach. The same applies to great leaders—much like they show no fear, they also never blow up. Somebody once told me, “It only takes one blowup to drain the whole reservoir.” In the case of leadership, the metaphorical reservoir is filled with goodwill. If you remain levelheaded and measured before responding, people will view you as a sensible, thoughtful leader whom they can rely on during the most challenging times.

If you feel yourself losing your cool, think about ducks. A duck glides smoothly across the surface of the water, but if you could see what was happening below the calm surface, you would see two duck feet feverishly paddling. Always stay calm on the surface, even if your inner duck feet are racing.

Staying calm in written communication is also important because it serves as a permanent record of your demeanor and tone. Always proofread written communications at least three times before sending. My chief legal counsel at a previous job once said, “Don’t put anything in writing unless you would be comfortable seeing it displayed on a large screen in front of a jury in size seventy-two font.”

Knee-jerk responses or strongly worded emails might feel good to send, but they are never a good idea. My rule of thumb when sending emails is “if in doubt, throw it out.” If you are second-guessing an email, then you already know in your gut that it’s a bad idea, so don’t send it.

Great leaders always take the high road and never resort to yelling, intimidation, or name calling. Calm heads always prevail, and calm leaders achieve great things.

Secret 32: Give Back

If you are fortunate enough to find yourself in a position of leadership, you have an obligation to set an example and give something back. Giving back comes in many forms, and it’s a very personal decision. You could join the board of a local nonprofit organization, donate your time to a local food pantry, walk dogs at an animal shelter, or contribute to any other cause that is near and dear to you. Including your team and peers in your philanthropic

endeavors increases your overall impact and introduces others to the gift of giving.

Giving back also means reaching back down the corporate ladder and mentoring people who might not have had the same opportunities you've encountered. Think of all of the mistakes you've made and lessons you've learned on the way to leadership. You could shorten others' ramps to success and give people chances you never had. Reach out to schools to ask if their career or guidance departments are looking for guest speakers. Volunteer to review résumés or conduct mock interviews for people trying to get their lives on track. If you aren't sure where to start or how to give back, just reflect on the early days of your career. What do you wish somebody had done for you? Whatever that thing is, do it!

Secret 33: Respect the Calendar

Time is our most precious resource. As a leader, you have the ability to manage people's calendars, and that is a responsibility you should not take lightly. Never ask your team to spend time doing anything you wouldn't do. Find ways to shorten meetings, use fewer words, and cut back on small talk. When people take time off for vacation or to be with their families, do not contact them, no matter how important it feels to you in the moment. The employee

you called for a quick question was at her daughter's graduation. She saw you calling and felt obligated to pick up because you're her boss. Her moment of pride and joy was interrupted, not only by you, but by the associated flood of thoughts and feelings she experienced when her mind shifted into work mode. That employee's special family moment was just ambushed by your unwittingly disrespectful phone call, and her memories from that day are forever tarnished by your intrusion.

Vacations are not the only time you should leave people alone; weekends are also sacred. Sending an email to your team on a weekend might seem harmless, but getting a written communication from your boss can ruin a weekend. If I receive an email on a Sunday, I might not feel compelled to respond, but when I hear the notification, I will glance at my email to make sure there's no emergency. Just seeing the correspondence fills my mind with thoughts of work and outstanding items that need my attention. I become aggravated with the sender's lack of respect for my time, and in turn, I lose respect for the sender.

Secret 34: Think Big

Set audacious goals, create a vision, build a plan to get there, and manifest it into reality with your team. The bigger you think, the more you will achieve. To think big,

you must remove all mental constraints and artificial limitations. For example, if you have a \$100 million revenue quota this year, put a plan together to reach \$300 million in revenue. Even if you miss by \$100 million, you still will have achieved 200 percent of your quota.

Secret 35: Work On the Business, Not In the Business

One of the traps most new leaders fall into is reverting back to what they know and do best—rolling up their sleeves and getting directly involved in the business. Running the deals, setting strategy, and having your arms around the business feels good, but that’s not the place for a leader. Leaders can’t scale if they are too involved in the day-to-day operations. Your job is to work on the business. Ensure the right players are on the field at the right time with the right tools and game plan to win. Your job is to coach your players, not play the game for them.

Secret 36: Make Clear Decisions From a Distance

Leaders often find themselves in the position of mediator or arbiter. Conflicts arise within the team and bubble up to you for input, resolution, and judgment. The closer to an issue a person is, the more emotion involved, so your team needs your help as an objective third party. They are too close to the conflict to think rationally or objectively. Your

job as a leader is to keep your emotions out of these situations and make clear decisions based on facts. You will never make everyone happy—it's impossible—but consistently doing the right thing based on a set of well-defined and advertised principles makes conflict resolution and decision-making an easy part of the leadership role.

Secret 37: Give and Solicit Feedback

Feedback is a gift that can change the trajectory of someone's career. Nobody wants to keep doing things that are setting them back. As a leader, your responsibility is to help people discover their blind spots by having candid conversations and providing them with constructive feedback. At the beginning of each fiscal year, I host an all-hands meeting where I lay out initiatives, review our plan for success, and set expectations. At the end of the meeting, I share areas where I think I can improve, and I invite everyone interested in participating in a customized, private feedback exercise to reach out to me. Receiving feedback can be ego-shattering, and most people don't want to hear it, but I usually get a handful of people who ask to participate in the feedback exercise. I start by asking them for the names of fifteen people they work with on a regular basis. I send the following email to ten of the people:

SHITTY SALES LEADERS

Hi, Joe. I am working with Priscilla on a career development and brand awareness exercise. You have been selected as someone who works with Priscilla and could provide valuable feedback.

Please take a moment to provide honest and direct answers to the three questions below. This feedback will be collected and shared with Priscilla anonymously (your name will not be mentioned) as part of Priscilla's ongoing career and brand development.

Please reply with the following three data points as they relate to your interactions with Priscilla.

1. What is one word you would use to describe Priscilla?
2. Please complete the following sentence: Priscilla is great, but _____.
3. Please share any other observations, comments, or feedback for Priscilla.

Thank you,
Adam

Once I receive all the responses, I compile the feedback, anonymize it, and review it with the people seeking feedback. We talk about the common themes, trends, and

points made, and then we decide if we agree or disagree. I then ask them to place themselves on a talent quadrant (Fig. 5). The x-axis rates their perceived brand from poor (far left) to exceptional (far right), and the y-axis rates their job performance from poor (bottom) to exceptional (top). In simple terms, a very unsuccessful sales rep who acts like a jerk would fall squarely in the D quadrant.

Once we agree on their quadrant placement, we discuss plans to elevate their brand and address the feedback. Somebody that is viewed as too serious, for example, might want to host a fun team trivia game or a happy hour to show a lighter side. Somebody who is viewed as selfish might want to share a best practice with the team.

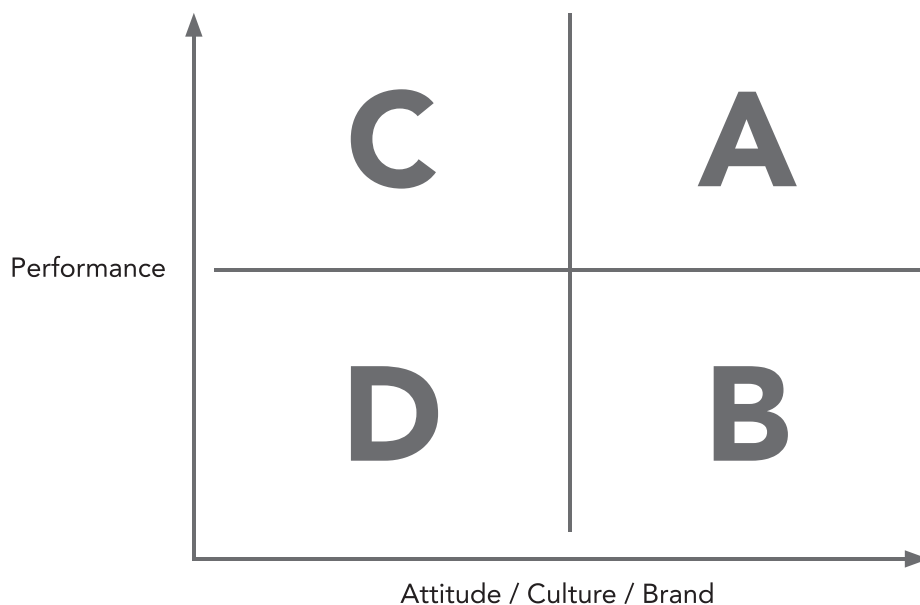


Fig. 5. Talent quadrant.

As leaders, we tend to spend too much time with people in the A quadrant because A players are the most fun to be with. They are successful, active, and doing all the right things. However, we should instead focus on helping others get into the A quadrant. Focus the bulk of your time on getting B and C players into the A quadrant through coaching, feedback, and development. Generally, the D players with a poor attitude and poor performance are not coachable and should be replaced and upgraded.

Just as you offer feedback to your team, you should solicit feedback for yourself and share your shortcomings with your team. Tell them you are a work in progress, come up with a scorecard, rate yourself, tell the team where you think you can improve, and ask if they agree. Admitting that you are far from perfect and need help just like everyone else is a powerfully humble statement.

Secret 38: Set Goals That Are Time Bound and Measurable

Most people set vague goals. In January, ask friends if they made New Year's resolutions. You will hear answers like "I want to get healthy." The problem is that "getting healthy" is a vague goal; it has no time limit or success criteria, and the definition of *healthy* is subject to opinion. A better goal would be "I want to lose ten pounds in the next two

months.” This goal is bound by time (two months) and can be measured (ten pounds).

In business, people set goals all the time and often fall into the same trap. “I want to grow my business 20 percent this year.” Technically, that is a goal, but it is also an outcome. Growing your business 20 percent would be the outcome of achieving other goals and milestones along the way. A better way to set a 20-percent growth goal would be, “I want to grow my business 20 percent within the next twelve months by realizing 30 percent of our annual bookings in the first quarter, increasing our win rate by 10 percent, and achieving a sales rep participation rate of 75 percent by the end of the first half.”

Goals don’t materialize without a plan. Every goal you set as a leader must be accompanied by a plan to get there, including tactics and strategy. Your entire team needs to understand the mission and the plan so they can align their individual actions and goals to yours. While external factors might force you to change the way you get to your goal, the mission should not change.

Secret 39: Inspect What You Expect

If you expect your team members to meet with three new clients a week, have you told them that? Are you checking their activity? Are you looking at their calendars? Are

you coaching them on getting new meetings? Are your cross-functional teams helping? What resources are being leveraged? How are the meetings going? Are three meetings a week a realistic target? Just hoping that something is happening without inspecting it is like trying to land a plane with your eyes closed and hoping everything will be okay. Hope is not a strategy, and you can't expect what you don't inspect. Your team needs to understand what "good" looks like, and they should never be surprised to hear that they are not meeting your expectations.

Secret 40: Family First

Family always comes before work. As a leader, the quickest way to alienate and lose great people is by forcing them to choose between their family and their career. You never know what goes on in people's homes and the challenges they face outside of work. We ask a lot from our people; we need to respect the boundary between their work and home lives.

A salesperson's spouse often makes significant sacrifices. The job of a sales rep usually requires odd hours, late nights, extensive travel, and lots of time away from family. At the end of each quarter, I take the top sales rep and his or her spouse out for a dinner at a restaurant of their choosing. At these appreciation dinners, I focus on the spouse, not

the rep. I thank them for enabling their partner's success by making sacrifices at home, just like my mother made sacrifices to enable my father's career. I recognize the rep's achievements and speak in glowing terms about their accomplishments. I order the wine (the good stuff that's hard to pronounce), and I give them a night to remember. The notes I get after those dinners are some of my favorites. Not only do the sales reps feel appreciated, but their spouses are so grateful to be involved and touched that somebody took the time to acknowledge the sacrifices they have made behind the scenes.

Most of us work to support our families. They are the reason we get up, get out, and get uncomfortable every day. Family always comes first.

