Introduction

Framing the Conversation

"I throw up every day on my train ride to work."

"I only view one of my five supervisors as a great manager."

"My supervisor's coaching helped me do my job better; it also made a big difference in how I relate to my teenagers."

"My business would be so much better if I could clone myself, rather than have to keep firing the people I get."

"I lose sleep just thinking about going to board meetings."

These five remarks are real; they were shared with me. They are illustrative of the many comments that inspire me to partner

with leaders as they strive to shore up their underdeveloped *people* skills. Though it's common for leaders to be blinded to their growth needs, it comes at a cost. This inattention can have unintended and harmful effects on those who report to them and on the organization. Meanwhile, these leaders remain obliviously mired in a state of underachievement.

All but one of the opening remarks are less than desirable, and neither of those four scenarios has to be the case at work, on teams, or in volunteer groups. Leaders can be better, and those in their charge can thrive when that happens.

The Emergence of the Book

What if Gallup is right?

This question has nagged me over the last several years. When I'd take breaks from writing or question *why* I'm writing this book with so many others available, Gallup's disconcerting data kept returning me to this undertaking. It's critical because Gallup and others suggest leaders are leaving a lasting, and often devastating, effect on a lot of people in their wakes.

I began writing *The Everyday Leader* in 2017, chronicling decades of leading others and consulting—efforts directed towards facilitating individual growth and mindset change. I wanted to understand which factors contributed to that growth

and which leader practices appeared as recurring themes that inclined leaders to falter. Gallup's 2015 *State of the American Manager* report and their 2017 study on the American workplace cemented my resolve to publish *The Everyday Leader*. **These Gallup reports maintain that only 10% of the workforce have the talent to manage people.** I thought: **What if Gallup is right?** Do the calculation. If they're correct, a full 90% of the people in the workplace should *not* be supervising workmates.

After reviewing their findings, the challenge became clearer yet more manageable. The authors explained that though only 10% of the workforce are well-suited to supervise others, only 10% of the workforce *need* to occupy these roles. The problem is that those who are in the manager roles are typically not the 10% with the attributes for those best suited for those roles.

> **Research indicates those who should lead others aren't in the roles, and those who shouldn't, are.**

Are most of us in these *people-leader* positions fomenting distress (to greater or lesser degrees) for those who have no choice but to report to us? I resolved to examine how those given the leadership mantle can do better for the people who have little choice but to follow us.

It's apparent, based on Gallup's findings, that the way forward is two-fold: 1) better identify and expand the ranks of those well-suited for leading teams of people, and 2) strengthen the

competencies of those already in these leader roles. *The Everyday Leader* supports these two imperatives.

The skillset for attracting, retaining, developing and inspiring *people for high performance* is neither common nor innate. To develop the attributes for effectiveness *requires* leaders spend more time looking *inward* at our own need to grow, and less *outward* seeking who or what to blame when falling short.

This book is singularly focused on supporting leaders in getting the best from the PEOPLE they directly supervise and lead. Whether paid or unpaid, in business or community, leaders are affecting people every day and everywhere. I'm confident that each *people leader* will glean at least a few ideas and tools from the book to build their skills to inspire people to do their best work in service to their organization's goals.

Leaders thrive when they develop or at least brush up on their *people* skills.

Who Am I to Write This Book?

For 40 years, I've worked as a leader and with leaders, in large and small nonprofits, with entrepreneurs, and community organizations. *The Everyday Leader* draws from that store of experiences and documents what's most notable and beneficial for growth-oriented leaders.

I've been a strategic partner to new leaders, tenured leaders, emerging leaders, multi-cultural leaders, teen leaders, and leaders who are more suited to being stellar individual contributors (i.e., *supervising no one*). I've also held positions endowed with no positional authority. These required me to be increasingly more effective with people—whether leading mentoring groups or leading strategy, diversity and community development learning cohorts. There were situations where, despite many efforts, I was unable to bring the disparate personalities together to get anything done. I learned from these as well.

I've studied assessment models as one approach to help direct reports and clients observe and leverage their styles and strengths, then explore growth opportunities. According to DISC®, I'm behaviorally a combination of the Influence and Dominant styles; Myers-Briggs says I'm ENTJ (Extraversion, iNtuitive, Thinking, Judging); StrengthsFinder repeatedly shows my top five strengths as Strategic, Achiever, Learner, Connectedness, and Input.

As a *Learner*, I've continued to sharpen my people development competencies. For decades I've been drawn to such themes as social and emotional intelligence, strengths-based leadership, optimizing the performance environment (and aligning culture), coaching and feedback, systems thinking, facilitating team development, and strategic leadership. Two *people* development-related graduate degrees

along with certifications in coaching, facilitation, and evaluation hopefully lend credibility to the book's content.

I've amassed lots of notes, developed tools, plans, processes, and learning interventions. I've also tracked action plans and progress of direct reports and clients to observe how growth happens and what stifles it.

From the perspective of both leading and being led (supervised), I posed questions to nonprofit CEOs, C-suite executives, entrepreneurs, young supervisors, and HR professionals. These human voices and stories are dispersed throughout *The Everyday Leader*. Sixty-seven people were gracious enough to respond to my queries. While not intended as a broad-scale study, distilling their responses helped clarify and align themes I've heard from clients and through research.

Finally, I labored over the book as my contribution to supporting individuals in realizing the best in themselves and others while getting work done that improves lives and society.

Leaders achieve desired results <u>long-term</u> when they recognize and develop the potential of those entrusted to them.

My Leadership Learning Path

Since my early 20s, I've been fascinated with the stories people have disclosed to me. I leaned into those that revealed the varied paths individuals took to become the person I was experiencing in the present moment. My intrigue with these narratives that shaped and transformed the thinking of all kinds of individuals is likely one reason my husband says... "People love to tell you their stuff." And, mostly, I've been genuinely interested.

It was during my early 20s that my leadership assignments began. I launched into leading with little prior training in what it meant to lead others. I was chosen to lead and mostly relied on people's confidence in me, my goal-oriented nature, and my desire to do something that mattered in the world. We'd get to the goal for sure, though often not with everyone's confidence and a feeling of competence intact.

That first major leadership role, which lasted 20 years, allowed me to succeed, fail, grow...repeat. The work as a young church outreach leader fueled my desire to spend my energies making a difference in society. Fortunately, those with greater authority than I had immersed me and other young trainees in study around human development and group dynamics as prerequisites for putting us fully in charge.

One of my first and enduring awakenings that shifted the way I looked at people-leadership happened when a member of the

church group I was leading said: "Lindiwe, the problem with you working with our group is that you act like everybody is you; everybody is not you. You do some things very well, and seemingly without effort, but they are not natural or that easy for others." At first I received this as a compliment, then understood there was a deeper truth being communicated.

That truth has impacted me ever since; I'm thankful I received this feedback early on my leadership journey. What I was asking of others was what I asked of myself, meaning others' talents and unique ways of seeing the world were mostly un-engaged because I was looking for *my model* of what should be. This new awareness freed me to proceed making effort to shift my approach by concentrating on the distinctive qualities each person possesses and how to put them to good use.

I spent the subsequent two decades of work between independent consulting and nonprofit executive leadership. For a time, I relished the work as an independent consultant because I did not have to supervise anybody! I could work at my own pace and with my own standards of quality without prodding anyone to get with *my program*. I could select subcontractors, let them go after a project closed, or re-engage them if they were a great *fit* for me.

Another of my pivotal junctures was when, as a nonprofit leader, I recognized my need to learn to both hire *and* develop people to execute complex work. In other words, I discovered

my individual greatness was not enough and could lead to only small-scale difference-making.

Secondly, I learned, after hiring wrong and firing wrong, to slow down and think more deeply about: *What does it mean to lead an effective team, department or organization? What is different about leading oneself and leading others? What could I learn from other perspectives and ways of working? How do I bring inexperienced or less experienced people to realize more of their potential? How long should it take for someone to perform well?*

This inflection point redirected much of my efforts towards developing and inspiring *more* people to increase competence and confidence. This guiding belief emerged for me: *The best use of my resources and talents is to help build other leaders* who in turn can lead others to make a positive, meaningful difference with those they impact at work.

Two Generations of People Work

At the close of 2018, my daughter Noni had finished her first decade of work following undergraduate and MBA degrees in HR talent management. During these years, she grew increasingly interested in management practices, employee engagement and relations, performance management and staff satisfaction. Conversations with her, particularly as a next generation professional, further fueled my inclination to direct my efforts almost exclusively to *people leadership* work.

Upon completion of her undergraduate studies, she was accepted into a large retailer's executive development program. The onboarding and leadership learning process concentrated more on the *business of the business* without much practice on the *business of motivating, leading, developing and evaluating people*. She learned about the company's values, strategy, financial targets and staff performance expectations, but not much about *how to* evoke performance. Following a short shadowing period, she was, at age 22, made the manager for 22 people, all but one much older than she was. Like others, she was learning to lead based mostly on trial and error, not specific skill-building in the realm of *people-leadership*.

Her experience as both a middle manager and a supervisee has been a case study of sorts, with periods of success and satisfaction, and times fraught with frustration and challenge. At the time of this writing, she has now reported to five managers over 12 years, two vastly different but good (though later, she reclassified one as not so good because she was nice but expected little and offered little to develop her team members); three she saw as between indifferent to dreadful. This 40% of good or tolerable supervisors is not uncommon.

One of these latter three managers' style was partially responsible for my daughter experiencing a short term, health challenge. Fortunately, she had the financial and emotional support to allow her to leave that job. As a result of this defining

moment, she became more selective about *where* she would work and *who* she'd be reporting to.

During her unplanned work sabbatical, she and I had an amazing experience as work partners, spending a year developing a coaching and consulting business. Supporting the growth of *everyday leaders* became our shared pursuit.

The Everyday Leader: WHAT

This book offers thoughts and actionable steps for becoming highly effective leading people. That's it. When I say effective, I am referring to creating and sustaining an environment in which those being led by you are both highly productive and quite pleased to be working with you and the organization.

What it isn't. This book is not *directly* about business systems, best practices in finance, strategy or marketing, or leading quantum change. The book, however, supports experts in such areas who have people reporting to them. As 21st Century leaders are aware, achieving exceptional business performance requires possessing and deploying skills to grow and inspire the people in our charge. The *human aspect* of work often makes or breaks the leader and the organization.

The Everyday Leader: WHO

Every day we come across leaders at various levels that impact us in small or large ways. You are likely one of them. Think of

the store manager, chief executive, board chair, school department head, supervisor, committee chair, local small business owner, parent association president, church leader, etc.

Interactions with everyday leaders, some who may only momentarily be in charge of us, can change our mood, affect our health, make our day better or worse, even change the trajectory of our careers.

Reading this book will benefit anyone who has responsibility to motivate, develop, manage, and lead people to get stuff done. Supervisors, chiefs of all kinds, emerging leaders, entrepreneurs, directors, managers, chairpersons, parent group leaders, virtual team leaders, and more will find something to help tweak their *people leader* skills.

Everyday Leader: HOW it's structured

The book is organized to support you in getting to the *people* actions and strategies that best fit you and your goals as they change over time. There are three sections, organized around Know and Grow themes, described below.

Part One: Know Today's Work Environment for Leading Others. This section offers contextual information about leading people in contemporary times while building the case for continuous learning for leaders at every level. It examines what the experts have to say about the success factors, challenges and impacts that tie directly to the leader's

efficacy in maximizing the talents of those entrusted to them. This section also takes a look at some contemporary competency requirements for leading in an ever-changing environment, knowing that job titles will only take us so far.

There are summaries of concepts and models for leaders to either use as is or adapt to provide an optimal environment for their and their team's success.

Part Two: Know and Grow Yourself. This section is 100% focused on YOU. These five chapters cover such matters as building high-level self-awareness; clarifying what your role needs from you; inventorying your existing and underused inner resources; pinpointing the beliefs, strengths and opportunities that foster or limit your effectiveness; using the *power* and weight of your role wisely; designing your growth plan; developing a synergistic team; and designing a healthy, high-achievement work culture.

The section begins with a special chapter titled: *The Leadership Launch.* If you are beginning a new leadership role, whether it's a first ever leader role or transitioning to a new executive role that requires you to supervise others, you want to start here. Positioning yourself well with people and within the organization or team starting before your first day makes all the difference to what happens during the ensuing few years. Enough said… find chapter 5.

Part Three: Know and Grow Your People. The five chapters in this section address specific areas and strategies for masterfully leading and growing your direct reports. It's framed around Five Keys to Leading Others, which I created over the years. Those keys are *Lead & Align, Connect, Coach, Develop and Perform.* A portion of Chapter 10 addresses communication competence, a soft, powerful skillset that enables the leader's success across all Five Keys.

Practical tools*:* Throughout the book, you will see attention has been paid to practical application, things you can think about and actually try out. There are clear, simple charts and tables, worksheets, reflections, checklists, and more that help readers grasp and apply specific ideas quickly. The Appendix includes five extra worksheets to support your work.

Anticipate the book being one that you reach for repeatedly on your journey—for a process or a reminder.

Suggestion

Read a chapter weekly with your marker and pen in hand. Fold some pages back as you discover at least one nugget to put to use as you lead your people to their best work.

Thanks for taking this journey and allowing me to share mine with you. Let's dig in!

Part One

Know the Work Environment for Leading Others

"People do not wake up in the morning and think to themselves, 'I want to go to work and fail miserably today, do a terrible job, make everyone's life around me awful, and I want to come home and feel really bad about myself at the end of the day.[1]'"

---

[1] Bichelmeyer, B. A., *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, 12:4, 1999, p. 84

This statement stuck with me since I read it years ago. It helped reframe my approach to leading the few individual direct reports that I found challenging. I believe that 95% of the time, the statement is accurate: *People don't come to work to make you, them and everyone else miserable.*

Those in the workplace performance field often cite this quote as they work to uncover *why* people are succeeding or failing at work. For many of those dreary or dispassionate employees, they arrive day after day to find no magic wand has been waved that suddenly changed their workplace into a supportive and inspiring experience, helmed by a competent people-leader.

Part One looks at the larger work setting in which you will lead. Explore it early in your leadership assignment. Seasoned leaders may need to address the changing leadership trends, as well, and their implications for how to shift their practices today. This section is the foundation for Parts Two and Three.

This section has four chapters:

1. Facing the Leadership Facts

2. Common Leadership Ascension Patterns

3. Leading in the 21st Century, Different from Yesteryears

4. The High-performance Work Environment