ACTIONABLE!
Leadership

Develop your Inspirational Ability, Motivate Teams, and Achieve Extraordinary Results

by

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Introduction

Hello and welcome! Thank you for downloading this eBook. It's my hope that you will find great value in reading about these simple yet powerful leadership practices. More importantly, it's my sincere wish that you will use this resource to help you reach your full leadership potential! Why is this important to me? **In short, the world needs more leaders**. More people that look to solve problems rather than complain about them. More people who will demonstrate strong character and a servant's heart. More people who can both manage their own needs and empathize with the needs of others. More people who can truly inspire committed action and help fill our lives with deep purpose. We all have these abilities. Many of us simply need to discover them within ourselves.

This eBook is designed to help you along that road to self-discovery. In deliberately concise chapters (2-4 pages each) for the time-starved individual, it captures core insights from my twenty plus years of coaching and training leaders. While it's mainly focused on what may be considered the fundamentals of leadership, the eBook can be a resource to leaders at all levels. After all, just because a leader attains a more significant title, does not mean that the leadership fundamentals no longer apply. In fact, it only means that follower's expectations for embodying these fundamentals will increase! Even the most seasoned leaders among us should benefit from revisiting these practices and identifying areas for continued growth.

The format of the eBook is derived from The Leader Growth Group's (LGG) Leader Development Process of 1) exposing leaders to new information, 2) providing space for reflection, and 3) encouraging leaders to take action and learn from new experiences. The last step is critical, as it is only through action that we can enable embodied learning. For each leadership practice presented, I am offering tangible ways to improve your leadership ability. Yet, it will only be through your commitment to taking new actions as a leader that any development will occur. And no one can make you a better leader but you!

That's not to say that finding the right support for your development is not important. This eBook is purposely designed to complement **LGG's "ACTIONABLE! Leadership" workshop**. To learn more about how LGG can support you or your organization's growth with this highly experiential and engaging workshop, contact me directly at dspungin@leadergrowthgroup.com.

Great luck on your leadership journey!

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What is ACTIONABLE! Leadership?

This eBook is grounded in a simple premise. It's hard to be seen as a leader if you can't deliver results. Undeniably, leaders make things happen. Big things happen. They see opportunity where others cannot. They show initiative where others have none. They muster follower support and get diverse groups of people moving in the same direction. When you stop to think about all that a leader must do to achieve these results, it might seem almost superhuman! So, just how do they do it then...is there some sort of secret? The answer lies in one word—inspiration.

> *A leader is someone who gets <u>results</u> by <u>inspiring</u> others through action and example.*

The modern manager can no longer rely on formal authority alone to achieve results. To be successful today, one must be able to <u>inspire</u> others to action! The word inspiration might evoke majestic or even magical imagery. Some argue that the ability to inspire others cannot be learned; either you are born with it or you are not. Yet, research shows that about only 30% of one's leadership capacity is inherited, while a full 70% can be learned. Therefore, anyone can increase his or her inspirational leadership abilities. All it takes to become more effective is choosing to practice certain behaviors in your life. This eBook is designed to help take some of the guesswork out of which leadership practices best contribute to one's inspirational leadership capacity.

The Eight Fundamental Practices

While there are many behavioral practices that contribute to a leader's ability to inspire others, I believe the following eight practices have the most impact. Do these well, and you are well on your way to inspiring those you lead.

Leading Self	*Leading Others*
1. **Credibility**	5. **Accountability**
2. **Decisiveness**	6. **Coaching**
3. **Composure**	7. **Trust**
4. **Resilience**	8. **Selfless-Service**

It is important to emphasize that anyone can demonstrate these inspirational practices and, thus, increase their capacity for leadership.

> *Power, title, position, or authority do not make you a leader.*
>
> *Leadership is a choice and anyone can choose to lead.*

How often are you practicing these leadership behaviors that best inspire others? Let's find out!

Credibility
Establishing a Foundation for Success

Everyone's leadership journey begins with establishing personal credibility. If you successfully establish a high degree of credibility, then your voice will carry weight with others. People will naturally want to listen to your ideas, follow your direction, and collaborate with you in achieving mutually shared goals. If you lack credibility as a leader, then influencing others to achieve results will be problematic, if not impossible.

Think of your credibility like you are building a camping tent. When in a survival situation, establishing shelter takes precedence over all other needs. One can go three days without water, but will die in just a few short hours if left outside in the harsh elements. Similarly, the first step in becoming a leader is to establish your credibility. Each pole in the tent plays an important role in keeping the tent upright.
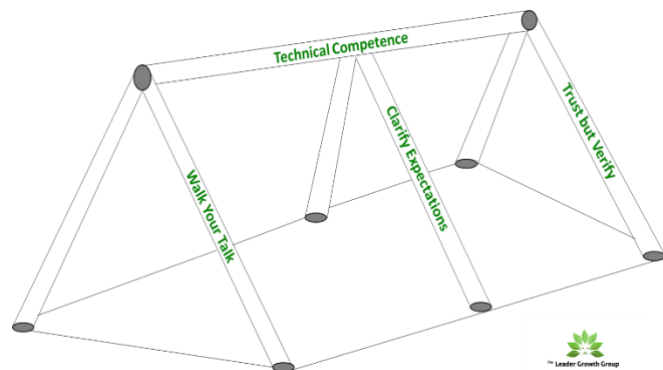
If a single pole is missing, the tent falls over. Likewise, if leaders fail to demonstrate each pole in their tent consistently, their credibility will crumble. Yet, if leaders practice each pole of the tent regularly, they will have a strong shelter of credibility from which to survive the challenges of leadership.

So what actions can a leader take to increase and maintain his or her credibility? First, demonstrating technical competence is the long pole in our tent of credibility. Competence is the price of admission for leadership as one must know their trade and the roles and responsibilities of those they lead. You don't have to know everything about everyone's job, but you must have a general level of expertise that earns the respect of your followers. So, let's assume that you are already demonstrating a high degree of technical competence, as most managers are. What else can one do to create even higher levels of credibility?

1. **Walk Your Talk** – Call it what you like; walking your talk, practice what you preach, put your money where your mouth is, or simply doing what you say you are going to do. They are all different ways of stating a fundamental leadership truth—a leader's credibility is a function of how well he or she follows through on his or her promises. It seems so easy, yet, life often gets in the way. With so many stakeholders to please, leaders can easily get in the habit of overcommitting themselves. Then, when they fail to deliver on a commitment, they lose credibility. It is the small commitments that we need to be particularly mindful of. The well-intentioned, "I'll call you back in 15 minutes," to a client or "Let's chat about your professional goals next week" to a

subordinate that can get us in trouble. When we fail to deliver on these small promises, we also increase the likelihood to miss on our bigger commitments. That's because we are practicing a lack of credibility and it becomes easier over time to shift our personal standards. So how do we build the habits that lend us greater credibility? Leaders practice managing the expectations of others, and then they over-deliver on those expectations. First, work with your stakeholders to agree upon realistic commitments, even if they are not initially satisfied with your proposed conditions for success. Then, work extra hard to exceed those expectations. For example, if a client wants to talk immediately but you are in a meeting, promise to call them back in less than 15 minutes. They may not be happy, but then manage your time so as to call them back in just 5 minutes. You have now exceeded their standard and have protected, if not enhanced, your credibility.

2. **Clarify Expectations** - Not fully understanding a leader's expectations is one of the most frustrating things a follower can experience. It is likely that you have felt firsthand how demotivating this can be. You work your tail off on a project and proudly present your efforts to the boss, only to have him say "this is not what I wanted!" Credible leaders never leave the definition of success a mystery. They clearly explain, upfront and directly, their expectations of followers. The key to doing this well is to communicate expectations by explaining your <u>intent</u> as a leader. A well communicated intent purposefully avoids telling followers "how" something is to be done. Followers can then demonstrate initiative and create the conditions for success by exercising their own creativity. So what then does a well communicated intent include? It is made up of three focused components: task, purpose, and endstate.

> **Task** – This is explaining the "what" you want followers to do. Most managers are good at this already so we won't spend much time on it.
>
> **Purpose** – This is the "why" we need to do it. Frequently as managers, we fail to explain this to our followers. People need to understand the bigger rationale for his or her hard work. It's motivating to have a deeper purpose than simply doing a task because my manager said it was important; especially if that purpose connects to a shared goal or team objective. More importantly, things change, and if I know why I am doing a task, I can begin to exercise leadership on my own and make decisions in my manager's absence that will yield success.
>
> **Endstate** – This is when we explain "what right looks like in the end." The leader should try to "paint a picture" in the mind's eye of his or her followers as to exactly what he or she expects. The more vivid the image, the better. Often when we do this process, powerful questions will emerge that help enable new levels of clarity for both the leader and followers alike. A great technique to ensure you haven't missed anything as a leader is to ask for a "back-brief." This

allows the follower to explain what they heard the leader's expectations to be. Often through verbalizing what they think they heard back to the leader, miscommunications can be identified and prevented before they become an issue.

3. **Trust but Verify** - After you communicate expectations, follow up does need to happen. This doesn't mean that you hover over people's shoulders while they perform their tasks and then inspect their work. No one appreciates micro-management! Instead, leaders provide the proper resources, get out of the way, and trust that great work will happen in their absence. Yet, it doesn't end there. Leaders verify that expectations and standards have been met. First, it's a general courtesy to those that are doing the work. If I work hard to meet a leader's expectations, I expect that my leader will care enough to check-in on my progress. Second, if I do a great job, it is important to me that the leader recognize my work. Finally, if I have missed expectations, I deserve to know that as well. Verification is a very important part of establishing and maintaining credibility as it validates your leadership priorities and personal values.

Now that we have identified a few tangible ways leaders can increase their credibility, it's time to pinpoint where you might focus your own development. Take a moment on the following page to self-assess your credibility as a leader and reflect on what tangible actions will best serve your personal growth needs.

CREDIBILITY SELF-RATING EXERCISE

How well do you "walk your talk" and meet your commitments to others?

1---------------2---------------3---------------4---------------5---------------6---------------7

Breaking commitments is my norm   I manage expectations and over-deliver

How well do you communicate expectations to followers?

1---------------2---------------3---------------4---------------5---------------6---------------7

My people know what I want   I always communicate intent

Do you follow up and verify that your expectations are being met?

1---------------2---------------3---------------4---------------5---------------6---------------7

Not often, I'm just too busy   Always! Follow-up is a priority

CREDIBILITY REFLECTION EXERCISE

Looking at how you rated yourself in these three components of credibility, where do you need the most improvement?

_____
_____
_____

Reflect on why it is important to you to increase your credibility? What are your motivations?

_____
_____
_____

Where in your life will increasing your credibility best serve you? With your direct reports? With your supervisor? With your peers? How about with your spouse or kids?

_____
_____
_____

Decisiveness
Deciding through Doing

Your reputation as a leader is intimately linked with your decision-making ability. Yet, in our often fast-paced and volatile world, making good decisions has become more complex and harder than ever. Whereas in the past, good decision makers were expected to draw upon their vast experience to deliver a sound course of action, it is now often impossible to ask the same of a modern leader. The world moves too fast and leaders can't possibly have all the answers. So how then could we make a "good decision" given this phenomena? Well, the most important part of modern decision-making is speed. Rapidly making sense out of the vast amounts of data that we are now privy to in modern society is a valuable skill that all leaders should work to hone. Still, the most important aspect of this sense-making ability is translating it into relevant action, and this only happens through making swift and calculated decisions.
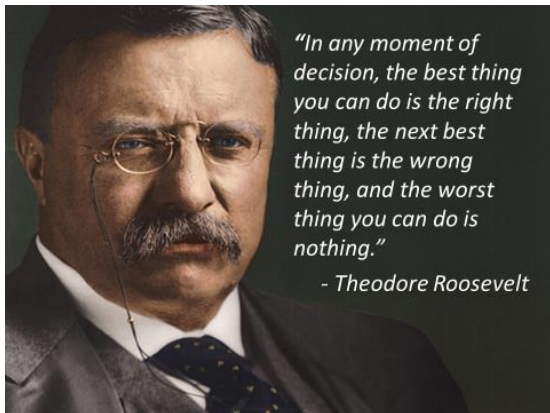
"In any moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing."

- Theodore Roosevelt

Why does being a decisive leader inspire others and deliver better results? Because individuals and organizations learn from making decisions, even bad ones. By being decisive, leaders allow themselves to get clear, immediate feedback from their actions. As a result, they are able to learn, and then change course if necessary to achieve the results they are seeking. Contrast this with the indecisive competitors, who while congratulating themselves for not making any bad decisions, are likely still mired in analysis and have not taken any action that enabled valuable feedback. The saying goes that "speed kills," yet, its intention is to remind one to slow down. I say "speed kills," so speed up your decision-making and start killing your competition!

> ***Decide → Act → Learn → Adjust = Results***

Google is a company that embraces this philosophy masterfully with its cultural philosophy of "design and iterate." As one of the world's greatest learning organizations, they are not afraid to make decisions that will expose areas for improvement. They consistently are first to market with fresh, yet, imperfect products, because they know that consumer feedback enables the best re-design possible in the shortest amount of time. So why don't more companies and/or leaders embrace decisiveness in their operational decision-making?

Through my consulting work, I've noticed a few consistent patterns with leaders that hold them back from embracing a decisive mindset. These are strong, innate tendencies that all humans seem to share at some level, and they are all grounded in fear. I've come to call these the "**Four Desires that Degrade Decisiveness**."

1. **A desire to be <u>correct</u>** – Who likes to be wrong? No one I know. When we make bad decisions, it negatively impacts our ego and self-esteem as we feel incompetent or inadequate. This is a really lousy feeling and a strong motivator to avoid making decisions until we are certain they are correct. Yet, we all know that completely avoiding mistakes is simply unavoidable. The best leaders embrace their vulnerability, and choose purposeful action over protecting their ego.

2. **A desire to <u>please</u> everyone** - When we make decisions that impact others, we want everyone to get on board with them. Yet, the best leaders know this may never happen as disappointing others is simply part of leadership. Leaders avoid wasting time on lobbying for 100% agreement and instead work to maintain trust with opponents. At some point a leader must say, "I have to make a decision here and we are going with this. I appreciate your input and now I need your support. If we need to adjust as we go, I assure you I will make that call accordingly."

3. **A desire to <u>procrastinate</u>** – Why do we all procrastinate? It feels good! That's right! Making a decision is hard and there are often losses in doing so. Having our options open feels good. Thinking our boss will have that answer we need tomorrow takes us off the hook, and that feels good. Yet, delaying decisions is just delaying outcomes and learning. Leaders seek not to be comfortable, but to drive results.

4. **A desire to <u>hide</u>** – Sometimes decisions have real consequences. Perhaps jobs are on the line, or maybe significant financial risks are at stake. The pressures of making these decisions can cause one to want to hide from responsibility. However, do not let a fear of responsibility impact your ability to be decisive – the most successful decisions happen because individuals had <u>the courage</u> to make them to begin with. One of the most powerful ways to show leadership is to demonstrate courageous decisiveness when others are unwilling to step up to the challenge.

Improving your own decisiveness begins with an honest assessment on which desires show up for you as a leader. Take a moment on the following page to self-asses your decision-making tendencies and reflect on what tangible actions will best serve your personal growth needs.

DECISIVENESS SELF-RATING EXERCISE

What is your personal threshold for making a "wrong" decision?

1---------------2---------------3---------------4---------------5---------------6---------------7

I don't take unnecessary risks   There are no perfect decisions

How important to you is making everyone happy when making a decision?

1---------------2---------------3---------------4---------------5---------------6---------------7

Maintaining harmony is important to me   I have no trouble "ruffling feathers"

How often do you procrastinate in your decision-making as a leader?

1---------------2---------------3---------------4---------------5---------------6---------------7

I really like to think things through   I can easily commit to a decision

Are you comfortable with making decisions when the stakes are high?

1---------------2---------------3---------------4---------------5---------------6---------------7

I would rather someone else make the call   I thrive in shouldering responsibility

DECISIVENESS REFLECTION EXERCISE

Which desire is most impacting your ability to practice greater decisiveness?

_____
_____
_____

Given the above insight, how might you practice overcoming this desire?
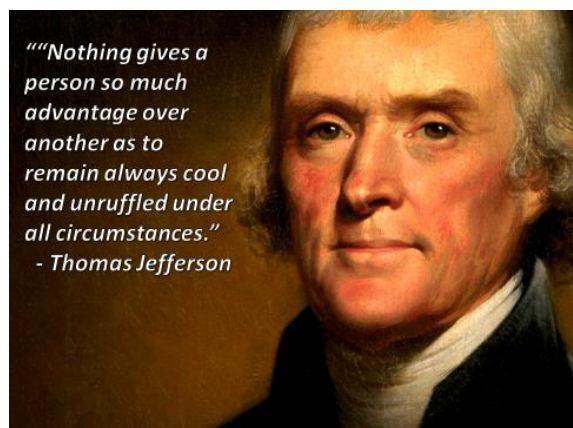
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Composure

Maintaining Presence under Pressure

Composure is a behavior that people respond to instantly. Put any group under pressure and you will be able to assess most people's level of composure in a few short minutes. Sometimes people will mentally "check out" and wait for others to handle the challenging situation for them. Other times they will "freak out" and have an overly emotional reaction. Regardless of the response, any indication of losing one's composure directly impacts one's ability to influence others. Conversely, individuals displaying a high degree of composure under pressure are naturally attractive. We seem drawn to follow those that project a calm, cool, self-assuredness. Given this phenomena, and that leadership is about inspiring others through our action and example, it makes sense that a leader should work to hone their composure. I am not talking about developing arrogant, egotistical, or narcissistic behavior that suggests "nothing rattles me!" Instead, I am talking about establishing a powerful presence that, regardless of the pressure leaders find themselves under, they inspire optimism and high-performance from self and others.

Think about your own experiences. Have you ever worked for a leader who frequently lost his or her composure? Ever work for a "screamer" before? Did you trust him or her? Likely not. As a result, you probably second guessed his or her decision and looked for leadership from others. The opposite is likely true if you've worked for a leader who exhibited a composed presence. She probably made you feel safe. She didn't get rattled by challenging situations. She remained "cool under pressure" and, hence, you respected her judgement. By providing level-headed direction, she created trust. Composed persons will face challenges head on because they are not inhibited by paralyzing emotion like fear. When we "feel" this strength within them, it becomes contagious, and we start to believe we can achieve success also. Composed leaders breed confidence in others.

Many believe composure is something that you are either born with or you are not; a personality trait. This is completely false. It is important to understand that composure is not an innate gift that enables an absence of fear in high-pressure situations, but rather the mindful management of that fear. We can have control over how we feel about any given experience. While it may not appear this way sometimes, with increased self-awareness and practice, we can learn to choose our personal beliefs, thus learning to develop greater composure.

""Nothing gives a person so much advantage over another as to remain always cool and unruffled under all circumstances."
    - Thomas Jefferson

Another common misconception is that the only way to develop composure is by experiencing challenging situations. Overcoming challenging "crucible" experiences undoubtedly grows our self-confidence and, hence, increases our likelihood of exhibiting greater composure in future

situations. Life is constantly knocking us off balance and gives us ample opportunity to practice composure in everyday life as well. There's the child at home that won't get his shoes on to leave the house; the unavoidable traffic that makes us late to our meeting; or the co-worker who always knows exactly how to get under our skin. These are examples of common annoyances that can cause us to lose our patience, perspective, and ultimately our presence. Yet, if you consistently practice composure in these routine situations, you will be well prepared to exhibit the calm self-assuredness that inspires others when the next crucible moment presents itself.

So the natural question then is, how do we practice greater composure in our daily lives so that we can prepare ourselves for the challenging moments that we may face? Here are a few best practices to consider:

1. **Don't take it so personally** – Composed leaders know not to take things so personally when situations don't go their way. As the saying goes…Sh*t happens! Circumstances don't always play out logically because our environment is complex and unpredictable. If we take things personally, we will begin to behave defensively. Instead, learn to let go of what is beyond your control. Leaders understand that control is an illusion. Some leaders find that adopting a mantra to remind us of this fundamental truth to be helpful. Timeless sayings like "Que Sera, Sera" and "Everything happens for a reason" can be helpful in regaining perspective and releasing ourselves from blame. The result is often a more composed self that is ready to rationally tackle the problem at hand.

2. **Fake it until you make it** – The pressure is on and you can feel the anxiety permeate the team as the reality of the challenge sets in. All eyes are on you for answers, yet you have no idea what to do next! No worries, countless successful leaders have been in your shoes before. What did they do? They pretended they had a clue. Often what is most needed in these situations is a sense of optimism and reassurance that everything will be ok. You must be the energy that is missing in your team. While you may not have a tangible next step figured out yet, you can provide a confidence that, in working together, the team will figure it out.

3. **Stand taller, breathe deeply, speak more slowly, smile more** – The body and the mind are closely connected. If you change little things about how you hold yourself in physical space, it can literally change the way you think and how you experience the world. For instance, mindfully standing taller with your chest higher and your shoulders back will cause your voice to deepen and your words to have greater gravity. Composed leaders also practice breathing deeply into their belly vs. allowing short, chest high, breaths which promote anxiousness. Composed leaders also mindfully speak a little slower, as they don't have a need to rush to their conclusion or worry about losing their train of thought. Finally, composed leaders smile in the face of adversity, and, in doing so, project their confidence and optimism onto others. Research supports that smiling invites connection and increases a leader's influence.

4. **Crush negative self-talk in the moment** – It's not just you. We all have that voice in our head that talks to us sometimes. Most annoyingly, it shows up most often right at the moment when we are assessing whether or not we can do something challenging. We hear things like "that will never work," or "what were they thinking putting me in charge of this task?" That voice in our head is constantly telling us we are not good enough. Why does this happen? Well, that's your ego talking and it's very protective of you. If we try and fail, our ego bears the brunt of that pain and it tends to not like that very much. So it works hard to keep itself in a comfortable and risk free environment.

   Yet, leaders operate with a growth mindset and recognize that risk and learning through failure are all part of increasing one's confidence and composure. Thus, leaders crush negative self-talk in the moment, before it negatively influences them. A powerful way to do this is by simply asking the question "where did I learn this thinking?" Often, we have learned these self-sabotaging beliefs from someone in our lives or from a negative experience. When we pause to question if that belief is really true, we realize that this is not the case or that we are allowing our past to unfairly dictate our future possibilities. You are not the person you were just yesterday, so imagine how much you've grown in five years. Let go of those old stories and acknowledge your current strengths and abilities.

Now it's time to assess your level of composure as a leader. The following page offers a few questions for you to check-in with yourself and reflect on practices that may lend greater composure over time.

COMPOSURE SELF-RATING EXERCISE

How would rate your current level of composure as a leader?

1---------------2---------------3---------------4---------------5---------------6---------------7

I am rattled easily   I am cool as a cucumber

How often do you take things personally?

1---------------2---------------3---------------4---------------5---------------6---------------7

I am often defensive   Whatever will be, will be

I am optimistic in the face of real adversity?

1---------------2---------------3---------------4---------------5---------------6---------------7

Not really, I tend to panic   Yes! Impossible is nothing

COMPOSURE REFLECTION EXERCISE

Who can you ask for feedback concerning your level of composure as a leader? Who will give you candid responses and help you to identify situations where you lack composure? Who will share stories with you about times that you exuded a composed presence?

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_____
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What could you do for yourself physically that would help to improve your composure (stand taller, speak more slowly, or smile more often)? How would you go about practicing this for one week? What will your goals be and how would you evaluate if you've succeeded?

_____
_____
_____

Recall the last time that you experienced negative self-talk and strong feelings of doubt….now, where did you learn that? What story or person from your past is holding you back. Realize you are no longer the person in the past. You have grown, and commit to letting go of this old story!

_____
_____
_____

Resilience
Prioritizing, Persevering, and Renewing

Resiliency is a hot topic these days. Leaders are "juggling more balls in the air" than ever before and many can't ever seem to catch up with the pace of life. The impact is that balls end up getting dropped, which leads to increased stress and, ultimately, to leader burn-out. Many think that they can avoid this modern reality by simply learning to manage their time more effectively. While I agree that most everyone can learn to manage their time better, to properly address these challenges requires a more holistic approach. We must also look at how leaders are managing their stress and energy levels.
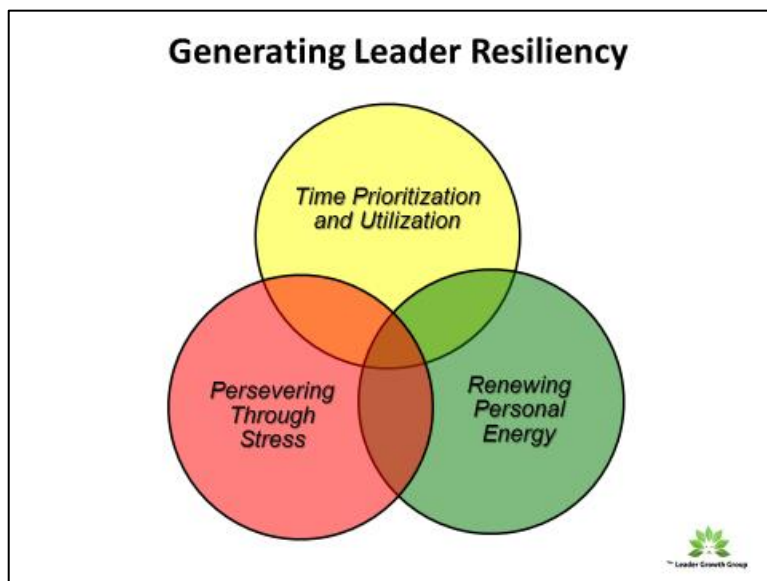
Time, stress and energy are undoubtedly interconnected and, thus, leaders should learn to excel in all three of these domains in order to maximize their personal effectiveness and resiliency against burn-out. Think about your own experiences. Some days you might be dragging a bit and not able to get your entire to-do list accomplished. Despite your well-managed intentions, it just didn't happen today. This in turn might lead you to start thinking about all the things you need to catch up with and as your mind starts racing, your stress levels rise. Later that evening, you lie awake at night trying to figure out what to do next, losing valuable sleep and waking the next day with even less energy than the day before. Sound familiar?

So what are some of the things we can do to reduce this self-perpetuating cycle? While there are many techniques that can help, I would like to highlight what I believe to be the single best thing you can do as a leader to increase your effectiveness in each of these domains.

1. **Manage your <u>time</u> by practicing "worst first."** Everyone has something they dread doing throughout the day. Maybe it's that sales call or perhaps it's knocking out that admin task that seems like such a waste of time. Whatever it is for you, you always save it for the end of the day. By then you're exhausted, so you put it off until tomorrow. Get into the habit of doing it first thing in the morning before you take on any other task for the day. Not only will you manage your time better, but you'll feel less stressed and more energized as you no longer have that monkey hanging on your back.

2. **Manage your <u>stress</u> by finding a physical outlet.** Nothing busts through stress like physical activity. Why is that? Because stress lives within our bodies and it has to go somewhere. Yes, it is true that we are responsible for generating our own stress as it stems from our own thoughts (as opposed to the common perception that others are stressing us out). Yet, short of becoming a Zen master and learning to insert mindful behavior to reduce the body's natural stress response, I have found nothing more effective for limiting stress levels than 30 minutes to an hour of vigorous exercise daily. Leaders hold their boundaries firmly when it comes to making time to exercise. This means they schedule time on their calendar and protect it accordingly.

3. **Manage your <u>energy</u> by maximizing your time off**. Think of your personal energy level as being like a car's fuel tank; you can only go so long before you need to stop and refuel. Yet, not all fuel is created equal; there are various levels of octane to choose from. If you own a high-performing vehicle, choosing the low grade gas may have significant long term impact on your fuel injectors. Eventually, the car will run sluggishly. You also are a high-performing machine. When it's time to refuel, put the right stuff in your system. Tempting as it may be, don't just sit on the couch and catch up on your favorite TV shows. Instead, do the things that bring you the most energy. Maybe you love to travel, or spend time outdoors, or really invest in quality time with your family. Plan your downtime accordingly and you will increase your energy reserves.

Committing to mastering these three skills can greatly increase your personal effectiveness and resiliency as a leader. The key word is commitment. While we all might recognize the benefits of these skills/behaviors, only a handful of us will find the personal discipline to make it our reality. Yet, all new behaviors start with a personal choice. So what new choices will you make? The following page provides you the opportunity to self-assess, reflect, and commit to action.

RESILIENCE SELF-RATING EXERCISE

How would you rate your time-management skills?

1---------------2---------------3---------------4---------------5---------------6---------------7

I rarely achieve my goals   I'm a productivity master

How would you rate your stress-management ability?

1---------------2---------------3---------------4---------------5---------------6---------------7

I can easily get overwhelmed   Stress? What Stress?

Do you have the energy and drive to inspire others on a daily basis?

1---------------2---------------3---------------4---------------5---------------6---------------7

Never, exhaustion defines me   Yes! People feed off my energy

RESILIENCE REFLECTION EXERCISE

Looking at how you rated yourself in these three domains, where do you need the most improvement?

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_____
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What would it take for you to commit to the appropriate technique for increasing your capacity in that domain?

_____
_____
_____

If you say this is a priority for yourself to become a better leader, what must you give up to live up to your new commitments?

_____
_____
_____

Accountability
Owning Your Outcomes

As a leadership development professional, I am always astonished by the number of questions I get on "how can I hold others more accountable for their performance?" This is consistently a hot topic for managers as they seek out the next best practice for driving better performance results. Unfortunately, managers typically don't like what I have to offer them on this subject as my standard response is "I can help, but it will require you to first examine where you may have failed as a leader." To which their reply is something to the effect of, "But that's not what I'm looking for. I want to focus on where others are screwing up and how we can better hold their feet to the fire." No wonder there is an absence of accountability in the organization!

""When you point the finger, you miss the point."
- Bruce D. Schneider

Like it or not, the first rule of leadership is everything is your fault. While for many this may sound just a bit harsh, it's not far from the truth. As a leader, you are responsible for all your team does or fails to do. This is because leaders not only set the purpose and direction for the team, they also manage the culture that dictates execution. Thus, when mistakes happen, regardless if you are the one personally making them, you absolutely had something to do with it! Accountability is then fully owning your responsibilities and consistently communicating this ownership to others. Leaders demonstrate their accountability by assessing performance challenges as opportunities for growth and learning rather than failures to be explained, excused or avoided. In short, when mistakes happen, the leader looks inward vs. blaming outward.

Herein lies the greatest challenge most managers face when seeking greater accountability within their team or organization—can you set your ego aside, be vulnerable with your team members, and work towards tangible solutions rather than playing the blame game? This can be a challenging leadership behavior for anyone to exhibit and is infinitely more difficult when experiencing the stresses of a failure (or potential failure). The key to developing this leadership behavior is threefold: 1) The leader should learn to identify his or her own reactivity and defense mechanisms, 2) The leader should understand how accountable leaders choose to behave, 3) The leader should practice the accountable leadership behavior until it becomes his or her new instinctual response.

Let's take a closer look at these three components of development and how one can leverage them to increase personal accountability.

1. **Recognizing reactivity and defense mechanisms** - Think of the last time you failed at something in which others were depending on you. Perhaps it was a job related performance goal you failed to deliver on. Or maybe it was a failure on the home front in which you missed a spouse's expectation entirely. Whatever the situation, try to take yourself back to that challenging incident. Now search inside for that moment of apprehension when you realized there was no way to save the day; you were simply going to fail. You likely felt embarrassed, disappointed, worried, discouraged, and/or insecure. On a physical level your muscles probably tightened, your heartbeat and respiratory rate increased, and you may have even started to perspire. Mentally, it's likely your mind started racing, alternating between beating yourself up for the mistake and searching for ways to avoid the inevitable consequences. Welcome to survival mode! What you were experiencing is the body's fight-or-flight stress response and most people will do just about anything to avoid this discomfort, often through offering excuses or blaming others. This shows up in organizations in what many have come to label as "The Organizational Blame Game."

Leaders must recognize that this instinctual response to avoid accountability lives in their DNA; one can't avoid it! Rather than attempting to circumvent this natural hardwiring, it is best to bring awareness to it. Leaders see their reactivity, own it, and then prevent it from hijacking their thinking any further. In that moment of pause, leaders then choose to react differently.

2. **The inspirational leader's response** – Exercising personal accountability for mistakes is going against one's self-preservation instincts, which takes both courage and humility. This is very difficult for many to do, which is why accountability is uncommon. So when it does happen, we really take notice and it leaves a lasting impact on us. We may not be happy with a mistake that's been made, yet we recognize accountable behavior as honorable and, thus, respect the leader's exemplary character. This is counterintuitive, so I offer that you pause for a moment to really let this sink in.

> *In choosing to be vulnerable and owning your failures as a leader,*
> *you will earn greater respect from your followers*

The practice of demonstrating personal accountability rather than playing the blame game is even more powerful when the leader assumes responsibility for what are clearly other team member's personal failures. Your subordinates have the same reaction to failure that you do. They feel embarrassed, disappointed, worried, discouraged, and insecure. When you take some of that burden off their shoulders, you lighten their emotional load and free them to work with you towards solutions rather than focusing on problems. This can be very inspirational and produces deep loyalty to the leader.

3. **Making accountability instinctual** - Adopting any new behavior is a challenging undertaking, so start with a single day. Try to go an entire day without offering a single excuse for anything or blaming anyone for your challenges. To be successful, you have to really pay attention to your inner dialogue. Note when things are not going how you would like them to go and how your mind is rationalizing the outcomes. Pay attention to any feelings of embarrassment, disappointment, worry, discouragement, and insecurity. This is when you are most susceptible to offer excuses and/or blame others. When you notice your instincts beginning to kick-in, override them with a single question "How have I personally contributed to this situation?" Pause and reflect. Realize your contribution and own it. When you can complete a full day without offering excuses or blaming others, up the ante to an entire week. If successful, try to go an entire month. If you can go a full month excuse and blame free, you will have implemented a new habit of seeking accountability first. This will serve you well when you next face real adversity.

The following page offers you the opportunity to self-assess your own level of personal accountability. Again, remember that we are all programmed for self-preservation so try to notice any of your own defense posturing that comes up for you as you answer the questions. Be as candid with yourself as possible and find the tangible opportunities for growth!

ACCOUNTABILITY SELF-RATING EXERCISE

Your team just failed at a task and there will likely be consequences…what's your tendency?

1---------------2---------------3---------------4---------------5---------------6---------------7

I seek to protect myself   I avoid blame and focus on the problem

I am able to notice in the moment when I am feeling defensive about something.

1---------------2---------------3---------------4---------------5---------------6---------------7

I don't get defensive!   More often than not

When mistakes happen, I seek to identify how I personally contributed to them as a leader.

1---------------2---------------3---------------4---------------5---------------6---------------7

Usually it's not my fault   I always own my team's failures

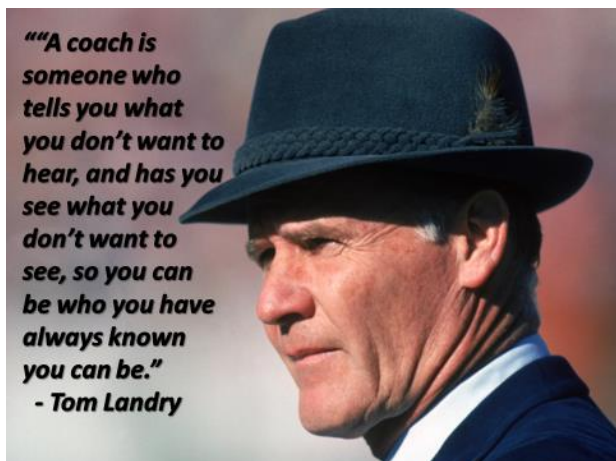## ACCOUNTABILITY REFLECTION EXERCISE

Imagine if everyone in your organization stopped making excuses. What would that look like and sound like? How would people interact with one another?

_____
_____
_____

What might you gain from being more accountable for your team's performance? What are the risks of doing so?

_____
_____
_____

Think of the most accountable person you know. Specifically, what are they saying and doing that has you attributing a high degree of accountability to them?

_____
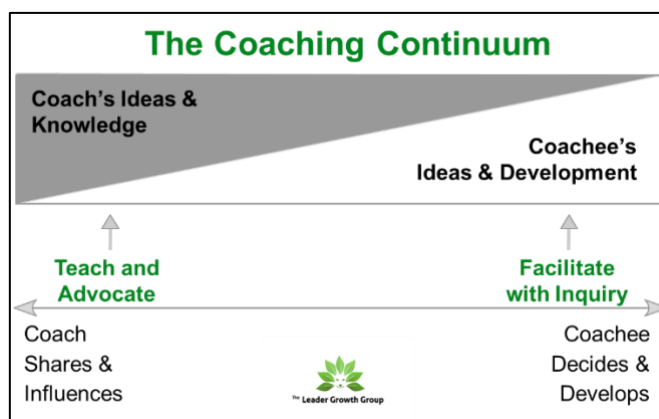_____
_____

Coaching
Moving People towards Their Potential

""A coach is someone who tells you what you don't want to hear, and has you see what you don't want to see, so you can be who you have always known you can be."
- Tom Landry

If you have been in the workforce for more than a day, you know the importance of good coaching. Almost every missed expectation is in some way related to a leader failing to provide proper feedback and coaching. This is not too surprising as coaching is a challenging skillset to learn and can take a lifetime to master. Thus, the best leaders begin to practice coaching early in their careers and work hard to model what great coaching "looks like" for their team members to emulate. In doing so, they promote a culture of coaching within their team where people offer and receive feedback with grace, communicate their needs and expectations, and inspire continuous learning.

There are a few key ingredients to demonstrating good coaching as a leader. First, coaching begins with practicing curiosity and a leader will benefit from adopting a coaching style that values inquiry more so than advocacy. This is unnatural for most managers who like to speak from their experience and advocate solutions based on their personal expertise. Yet, if leaders place a premium on listening before speaking, then they will build trust with their coachees and help them to develop their own solutions to challenges. Perhaps this highlights the greatest difference between management and leadership. Managers seek to control outcomes by problem solving and offering solutions to their people. A leader realizes his or her ultimate goal is to create more leaders. Thus, he or she ask questions that inspire and challenge. Leaders seek to build capacity in the coachee and lessen dependency on the coach's expertise.

The Coaching Continuum

Coach's Ideas & Knowledge

Coachee's Ideas & Development

Teach and Advocate

Facilitate with Inquiry

Coach Shares & Influences

Coachee Decides & Develops

The Leader Growth Group

Indeed, if a leader must do one thing exceptionally well to be effective, it's coach! Yet, because this is such a huge topic of discussion, we cannot possibly cover all that I would like to share with you in a few short pages. Thus, I am going to focus on one of the most difficult coaching conversations that managers seem to get wrong more often than they get right; delivering constructive feedback. Oh the agony we feel when preparing for this coaching conversation! Do

we <u>directly</u> deliver the feedback and simply hope that they take it well? Or perhaps we should <u>indirectly</u> address the feedback, which will likely lower their defensiveness? No wait! Of course. We'll go with the "feedback sandwich" and deliver a compliment, followed by the criticism, and finally another compliment to keep their spirits high and save the relationship! While it must be noted that everyone likes to receive feedback differently, I believe there is a universal approach that can set you up for success. One that reduces anxiety for the feedback giver, lowers defensiveness in the receiver, and ultimately inspires change. I call this framework: **The Five Pillars of Constructive Feedback**.

1. **Create the right mindset** – Why is it so unpleasant when we have to give constructive feedback to others? All that anxiety we often experience has to do with our own ego and how we might be perceived. Will they think I am a nitpicking idiot? Will they think I am just a clueless leader who isn't seeing the whole story? Or maybe, I'll be seen as the a'hole manager who is a demanding tyrant! Remember that providing constructive feedback to another has nothing to do with you, and it's not about "fixing" the other person. Constructive feedback is a <u>service</u> and you are engaging in a conversation to help the other person reach his or her potential. If your mindset is to "fix," everything you voice will communicate judgement and trigger defensiveness. Yet, if your mindset is to "serve," that will also show up throughout the conversation and create trust. Nothing opens persons (coachees) quicker to your feedback than when they sense you genuinely care about them. To help promote this mindset when delivering constructive feedback, remember without humility, expect futility.

2. **Ask permission** – "May I give you some feedback?" It's a simple question, but how often do we jump straight to the assumption that the other person is both ready and willing to hear us out. After all, you are there to "serve" them and you care about their performance. Why wouldn't they want to listen to what you have to say? Yet, maybe the other person is not in the right frame of mind. Perhaps they are having a really bad day and no matter what you say to them, they will see your feedback as an attack. If you ask the question upfront, you are giving them power and they must choose to give it back to you. In that seemingly insignificant exchange, you have already established a mutual respect that will make the feedback recipient more receptive to you.

3. **Remember SBI** – This is a tried and true process that works like magic when done right. SBI stands for Situation/Behavior/Impact, and I find it incredibly useful in helping me to remember what's important in these difficult conversations.

    (S) ituation – This is when you anchor feedback in time, place, and circumstances and it helps the receiver understand the context of your feedback. For example, "remember yesterday afternoon in the staff call, about halfway through the meeting, Bill asked me for my thoughts on our financial outlook."

(B) ehavior – This is when you are specific to the behavior or non-performance you would like to see changed (again, so the other person may meet their full potential). Think of it like replaying a movie for the other person. For example, "As I began to communicate the importance of adhering to the monthly budget, I noticed you rolled your eyes slightly and then began to check your phone."

(I) mpact – This is the key to your success. If you just focus on their behavior, expect defensiveness to ensue. Yet, if you speak to the impact on you or the team, you are creating space for a more empathetic conversation. Most people care about whether or not they are disappointing others. If you speak to how the behavior made you <u>feel</u>, you move the other person out of their head and into their heart. For example "This embarrassed me, as I feel it made us look disjointed in front of the team. Others picked up on the tension and I felt as if I was scrambling to regain credibility with them."

4. **Get curious and create spaciousness** – Now is the point in the conversation where you might transition from advocacy to inquiry and facilitation. You have delivered your feedback, now give them a voice! How did they view the situation? How might have you contributed to their reaction? Are their deeper concerns that need to be addressed? Know that this is a tender moment for many, and you can possibly expect some level of defensiveness to ensue. Give them space to be heard and acknowledge their point of view. This doesn't mean you have to agree with them, only that you empathize with their feelings, while respecting their point of view. Note that a common diversionary technique is to broaden the conversation to where their performance is no longer the focal point. Your job as a leader is to keep the heat on them in a respectful and supportive manner.

5. **Coach towards the desired performance** – It is important that you work with your coachee to determine a clear path to success together. However, don't give them all the answers. It is important they discover on their own how they can improve as well. You might ask, "how do you believe we could avoid this challenge in the future?" Then after hearing them out, you might offer, "If you have an opposing opinion in the future, I honestly want to hear it rather than have you feel like challenging me will offend me. My expectation is that we have a united front when engaging with the larger team in these meetings, and if we have differences, we should hash them out in private beforehand. Is that an unreasonable expectation or can we both agree on this moving forward?"

The following page offers the opportunity to self-assess your competency in coaching, particularly in giving constructive feedback to others to help increase their performance.

COACHING SELF-RATING EXERCISE

How comfortable are you giving constructive feedback to others?

1---------------2---------------3---------------4---------------5---------------6---------------7

I avoid it all costs   It's too easy for me

When you deliver constructive criticism, how well is it usually received?

1---------------2---------------3---------------4---------------5---------------6---------------7

Challenges often persist   People value my feedback and change as a result

COACHING REFLECTION EXERCISE

How do you personally like to receive constructive feedback from others?

_____
_____
_____

When receiving constructive feedback, what are the hot buttons that may cause you to get defensive?

_____
_____
_____

Of the five pillars discussed above, which ones do you need to work on to make your constructive feedback more effective?

_____
_____
_____

Where are opportunities to improve in your organization? Is there someone who could do better and needs your feedback? How can you shape that conversation so that you really reach them and show that you truly care?

_____
_____
_____

Trust
Building a Winning Team Chemistry

The foundation of every great team is the ability to trust one another. We know this already from our own personal and professional experiences. Think of the best team you have ever been a part of. You likely trusted these teammates like they were your family members and would jump at the opportunity to work with them again. Now think of the worst team you have been a part of. You probably had trouble communicating with each other, were misaligned in your priorities and values, and/or just plain didn't care for each other. At the heart of this dysfunction was likely an inability to trust one another. What were the key differences between these two teams and what were the conditions that enabled trust to either occur or falter? More importantly, what role did leadership play in creating those conditions? There have been many books written on trust and team-building and they are all trying to answer the important question, "How do you get a team to develop a winning chemistry together?" While I don't think there is any one magic formula for answering this question, I do believe there are some tangible actions that a leader can take to improve the likelihood that trust, and ultimately chemistry, will develop among team members.

1. **Hire character and competence** – It goes without saying that selection of quality individuals plays an important part in determining if your team will trust in one another. Yet, of all the individual qualities a person might bring to a team, these are the greatest trust enablers. First, competence is the baseline price of admission for joining a team. If you can't do your job well, you simply won't be trusted. So leaders need to bring in people with the right skillsets to

"Leadership is a potent combination of strategy and character. But if you must be without one, be without the strategy."
- General Norman Schwarzkopf

perform their tasks and/or judge them to be capable enough to learn their jobs quickly. When assessing others anticipated competence levels, remember that past behavior is the greatest predictor of future behavior. So be sure to do your due diligence! Next, the importance of character cannot be underestimated in selecting the right team members. It takes just one bad apple to spoil the bunch and if issues of integrity or honesty emerge within your team, debilitating trust issues can spread throughout. Thus, if you have to hire one quality over any other, choose character. If you inventory the greatest leadership failures in recent memory, they almost always are a failure of character. In the U.S. alone, we can look at Bernie Madoff, Bill Clinton, Mark Hurd, or Joe Paterno as prime examples. All were clearly competent in their leadership positions and very successful before they exhibited character flaws that brought their
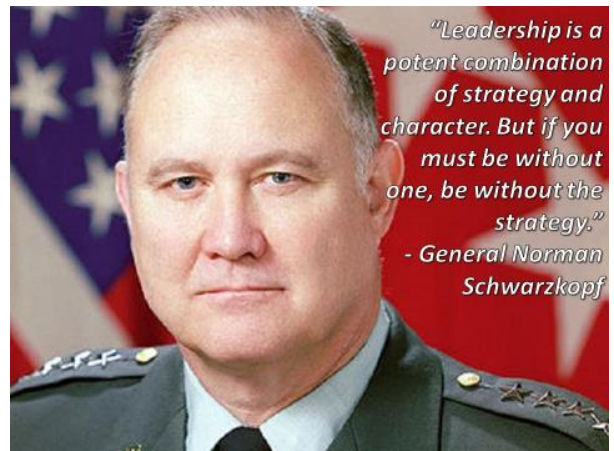
organizations down with them. Bring in people that know their values, exercise self-control, and are willing to choose the harder right—every time, all the time.

2. **Stop posturing, start being vulnerable** - A <u>work group</u> starts the process of becoming a <u>team</u> when people begin to express a genuine willingness to be vulnerable with one another. Up until this moment, everyone is typically "racking and stacking" each other, assessing each other's skills, attributes, and influence on the group. Essentially, they are evaluating whether they want to really commit to the group. They are asking themselves, "Is it worthwhile to sacrifice my own self-interests for the good of this group?" People are also wondering where they personally fit into the group and are, often unconsciously, seeking to increase their status and position within the group hierarchy. This dance of "positioning," encouragers defensive "posturing," in which team members refuse to show any semblance of vulnerability with one another. This is unfortunate because without vulnerability, there can be no trust.

> *"The best way to find out if you can trust somebody is to trust them"*
> *- Ernest Hemingway*

A leader can expedite this feeling out process by being the example that is needed for the team. For example, a leader might share something personal from his or her life or a story of a failure and what learning occurred from it. Or if a leader has unintentionally wronged another team member (perhaps interrupting them multiple times), he or she might genuinely apologize for his or her behavior in front of the group. When team members start to believe that it's safe for them to admit their weaknesses, something miraculous happens…they both ask for and are offered help. Now the group is exploring how they can mutually support one another and, in doing so, learning to trust the team.

3. **Clearly define roles and responsibilities** – As a basketball player and fan, I love how the game simplistically illustrates the importance of roles and responsibilities in developing a great team. The best teams never have five guys who are all well-rounded players. Instead, they have a three point specialist, a rebounder, a shot blocker, and a ball handler (amongst other roles). Outside of these technical skills, some players may also be responsible for things like challenging teammates who are not pulling their weight, or being a cheerleader from the bench and keeping the emotions high. Each of these players is exceptionally competent in his or her role, and everyone clearly understands how his or her responsibilities contribute to the vision of winning. While team members usually instinctively fall into roles through playing the game with one another, it is the coach (or leader) who validates those roles through his or her decision-making. The same goes for any organization. People are hired to do specific tasks, yet it's the leader's job to identify organizational boundaries and clearly indicate who is responsible for what.

4. **Set high expectations** – If you really want to create trust and team chemistry, stop focusing exclusively on building the team; instead, challenge it. Nothing speeds the team development process faster than providing a crucible challenge. Choose an audacious goal that might seem far out of reach, yet, significantly worthwhile if attained. Great leaders are masters of visioning such challenges. They are also savvy at creating team member buy-in for the sacrifices that must be endured to accomplish them. As the team moves towards challenge together, the stress will expose vulnerabilities, cause conflict, and flush out roles and responsibilities. Those that are not a good fit will likely move on elsewhere, and this may be an unfortunate consequence. Yet, in the end, you will have done your job as a leader. By setting high expectations, you bring together a team that is committed to one another and, therefore, more trusting of one another.

5. **Embrace healthy conflict** – As mentioned in the previous paragraph, conflict among team members will emerge with the increased stress of striving for a worthwhile goal. Traditional thinking will tell you that it's a leader's job to manage that conflict between team members and ensure it doesn't escalate, which usually has a chilling effect on the rest of the group. It's very easy to fall into this trap of ensuring harmony as it is socially engrained in us from an early age. Yet, if leaders provide us with protection and re-establish order in these moments, they are exercising their authority not leadership! Instead, good leaders recognize that conflict is a necessary part of getting the group's needs met. More importantly, leaders understand the ramifications of repressing conflict and promoting a false harmony—resentment and crippling dysfunction. Leaders instead create a trustful space for diverse perspectives to speak their mind and enable healthy debate to occur.

Improving your team's level of trust begins with an honest assessment on where you currently stand with one another. Take a moment on the following page to self-assess your trust level and reflect on what tangible leadership actions will best serve the team.

TRUST SELF-RATING EXERCISE

How comfortable is your team in acknowledging their weaknesses and vulnerabilities?

1---------------2---------------3---------------4---------------5---------------6---------------7

We avoid it at all costs   It's no problem at all

How well does your team engage in healthy conflict with one another?

1---------------2---------------3---------------4---------------5---------------6---------------7

We avoid conflict like the plague   We respectfully debate ideas and issues

How well do your team members understand their roles and responsibilities?

1---------------2---------------3---------------4---------------5---------------6---------------7

We are woefully confused   This is explicitly talked about and agreed upon

TRUST REFLECTION EXERCISE

Where are organizational boundaries in your organization making roles and responsibilities ambiguous? What leadership can you provide here to clarify the situation?

_____
_____
_____

What is the crucible challenge that your team needs to truly build deep trust and chemistry?

_____
_____
_____

How can you deliver this vision in a way that creates team member buy-in?

_____
_____
_____

Selfless-Service
Putting the Needs of Others Before Your Own

Perhaps more than any other practice discussed in this book, nothing inspires others like Servant Leadership. Yet oddly, when training Servant Leadership in an organization, I typically get quite a bit of resistance at first. Managers usually don't like to think of themselves as "servants" to their followers. They worked hard to get to a position of title and authority and now they are proud to have a team that they are "in charge of." Why then should they act as a servant? Aren't followers supposed to pay their dues and serve their manager to move up the hierarchy? The answer to this questions is, yes. Followers are supposed to attend to their manager's needs, and this is exactly why acting as a servant leader can be so inspiring.

> *Your people don't work for you, you work for your people.*

Adopting this mindset is the foundation of practicing selfless-service and embracing a servant's heart. It begins with the belief that your people don't work for you, you work for your people. The irony being that when you adopt this mentality and demonstrate servant leadership, people will bend over backwards to work for you and make you successful. Why is this so? It has to do with defying our cultural expectations and norms. We don't expect people in power to really care about our needs; they have much bigger concerns. We don't expect management to truly listen to us; too many times they have demonstrated otherwise. It is not normal for a boss to go out of his or her way to train, coach, and mentor us when they are already overtaxed and ridiculously busy. So when followers experience such behavior, they feel valued, appreciated, and cared for. This inspires deep loyalty and commitment to the leader. Followers then want to exceed the leader's expectations and not let them down. They seek to serve the leader back out of mutual respect and admiration, which is a far more powerful motivator than title or position.

Philosophically, being a servant leader makes a lot of sense, yet how can a manager make this practical and tangible for everyday use in the workplace? Well, it's not exactly rocket science! In fact, it's the little things that we often take for granted that make the biggest difference. Regardless of the industry or organization, there are some universal human needs that a leader should be mindful of. Serve these needs well as a leader, and watch your influence begin to exponentially increase.

Serving Others Before Self

Follower Need	Leader Action
Need to be seen	Unplug and be present
Need to be heard	Listen deeply for emotions
Need for recognition	Praise graciously and often
Need for personal growth	Challenge and support
Need for connection	Create space to build the team
Need to know what's going on	Proactively share information

1. **The need to be seen** – Little is more demoralizing to a team than managers who hide in their office or are rarely seen by their followers during the workday. Their rationale is often that they're burdened with answering countless phone calls/emails and are "busy running the business." While managers undoubtedly have these responsibilities, it's imperative they make time to check-in with followers on a daily basis. Leadership is a people activity and if you don't know your people, dysfunction is inevitable. So unplug several times a day and make a deliberate attempt to connect with people. This is especially important when times are challenging. Be seen where followers are struggling to meet your expectations. Simply showing up and demonstrating your support through your presence communicates that their work is valuable and appreciated.

2. **The need to be heard** – Little invites organizational dysfunction faster than not allowing individuals to freely speak their mind. People have a fundamental need to be heard and it is a leader's job to provide both time and space for those voices to emerge. As such, a leader must understand how power, politics, and social demographics all work to suppress some voices more than others. This can be extra challenging as authority and privilege often blinds a manager to those that go unheard. Leaders should make it a daily habit to walk the organization and ask a simple question, "what's your biggest challenge right now?" Then listen to the underlying message that comes back. If you are a senior manager talking to a frontline employee, the answer is usually something like "all is great!" So you may need to ask again and express your sincerity for wanting meaningful feedback. Then simply wait. Silence is a powerful way to invite what needs to be said in a conversation. Also, resist the urge to interrupt and provide comments. Let followers get it all out and encourage a candid response. Then, repeat back to them what you just heard. Just because they expressed their truth doesn't mean you heard it correctly! Ask them to validate if you are hearing them properly. Sometimes you may not be able to do anything about what's been expressed and that is ok. The act of clearly hearing a follower's needs paves the way for greater trust and is an essential first step in providing Servant Leadership.

3. **The need for recognition** – What's the most powerful motivation tool a manager has at his or her disposal? Is it offering more money? How about more vacation or benefits? While these perks can provide a short-term boost in morale and productivity, nothing inspires long-term trust and motivation like simply recognizing the efforts of team members in a meaningful way. Furthermore, this costs nothing and is all within the leader's control. Why then do we not do it more often? Some of it has to do with the pace at which today's leaders operate. They simply miss the small things that are contributing to success. Some of it may have to do with our expectations as managers and the belief that people are just doing their job, and that's not worthy of recognition. While there are many possible reasons, Servant Leaders set themselves apart by training their minds to see the world differently. They are always on the lookout for other's

contributions and never waste an opportunity to recognize them. This might show up as a simple "I wanted to take a brief moment to <u>thank you</u> for your efforts yesterday" or perhaps, "have I ever told you how <u>grateful</u> I am that you are a part of this team?" It is even better when these acts of recognition are done in front of others. Not only are you rewarding the performance, you are creating a sense of team and teaching others what you would like to see from them as well.

4. **The need for personal growth** – We all have an innate desire to grow as individuals and get better at our jobs. Over time, most people seek promotion or additional responsibility. The assumption in most organizations is that it's on the individual to grow on his or her own initiative. Those that really want it, will rise to the top! Servant Leaders make it their personal responsibility to find ways to coach, train, and mentor others on a consistent basis. They know that everyone comes into this world with unique gifts and they seek to understand how undiscovered talents can be leveraged. A Servant Leader always looks beyond surface level attributes and instead wonders how an individual might contribute in ways that they haven't considered yet. They then help others to see this potential in themselves by offering two opposing energies that promote growth—challenge and support. Challenge is the energy of pushing people outside their comfort zone and into a space of risky opportunity. If there is no chance of failure and/or subsequent consequences, the leader has not challenged appropriately. Support is the energy of encouragement and helping people through the learning process. This can range from a hands off approach of simply reaffirming the leader's belief in the individual's ability and getting out of the way, to a more "do as I do" approach where the leader walks them through step-by-step. Part of the art of leadership is knowing the right mix of challenge and support that will best meet the individual's personal need for growth.

5. **The need for connection** – Another deep-seated desire that we all hold within us is to be a part of something bigger than ourselves. This may seem at odds with the highly individualized and WIIFM (what's in it for me) society we live in today, but the Servant Leader is not fooled by these superficial yearnings. Anyone who has been a part of a real team knows the feeling of working together towards a mutually desirable goal and achieving it. The satisfaction is unlike anything you might have done on your own. It is more complete and adds meaning to one's life. The Servant Leader taps into these powerful emotions and provides the vision and space necessary for team cohesion to coalesce. What exactly do they do to build a team? While there are many actions leaders can take to strengthen a team (several are noted in the previous chapter), I believe there are two specific actions that drive <u>connection</u> like no other. First, the leader must consistently communicate a shared vision that reminds people why they are sacrificing together. People have a strong need to "see" where they are headed and a leader must provide that light, particularly when the darkness of inevitable trial sets in.

Next, a leader needs to create the opportunities for people to connect. In an office setting, this means company BBQ's, Holiday parties, beer calls, off-sites, or whatever else will allow for people to drop their work persona and get to know their colleague's true self. This seemingly insignificant action cannot be underestimated. Cohesion often develops outside of work and a good leader never misses an opportunity to bring the team together.

Now that we have identified a few tangible ways a leader can increase their ability to serve others, it's time to identify where you have growth opportunities in this critical leader practice. Take a moment on the following page to self-assess how well you are serving your team as a leader and reflect on what actions will best serve your development plan.

SELFLESS-SERVICE SELF-RATING EXERCISE

Serving my followers is important to me.

1--------------2---------------3---------------4---------------5---------------6---------------7

Not at all   It's my highest priority

I make myself seen in the workplace and never go more than a few days without checking-in.

1--------------2---------------3---------------4---------------5---------------6---------------7

They call me "The Ghost"   I know everyone's spouses/kids names

I am an excellent listener, and encourage everyone to give me candid feedback.

1--------------2---------------3---------------4---------------5---------------6---------------7

I listen when I need to   I ensure no voice goes unheard

I do a good job of recognizing other's actions and express my gratitude and appreciation.

1--------------2---------------3---------------4---------------5---------------6---------------7

It's hard for me to do this well   I praise others often

I am adept at providing sufficient challenge and support for follower growth to occur.

1--------------2---------------3---------------4---------------5---------------6---------------7

I need some work here   I excel at this skill

I provide time and space for team cohesion to occur.

1--------------2---------------3---------------4---------------5---------------6---------------7

We are here to work, not party   My team is my identity

SELFLESS-SERVICE REFLECTION EXERCISE

What follower need is needing the most attention on your team (the need to be seen, heard, recognized, challenged, or connected)?

_____
_____
_____

Identify two Servant Leadership actions you can practice routinely with the people you work with to improve trust, comradery, and morale.

_____
_____
_____

Making an Action Plan

Thank you for reading this eBook! I hope you discovered some new ideas that might support your growth and development as a leader. Now it's time to commit to action and that starts with creating a realistic plan that you can commit to. Take a moment to record your biggest lessons and which of the eight fundamental leadership practices are most resonating with you. Then set an intention for yourself. What actions will make you a stronger leader?

Step 1 – Narrow Your Focus

Each of the practices discussed in this course represent a leadership fundamental that will be helpful to you as a leader. In general, which practices do you plan to implement more effectively? (Ex. credibility, servant leadership, accountability, etc.) Pick the three most important practices for your development.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Step 2 – Commit to Action

In the first column, list the actions you plan to take in applying what you have learned from a course. In the second column, indicate how you will measure your successes. The more specific your objectives and measures, the more likely you are to fulfill them.

As a result of what I learned in this eBook I am going to…	I will know I am succeeding in this objective when…
Next Week	
Within One Month	
Within Three Months	

Step 3 – 90 Day Follow-Up

1. How well did you accomplish your objectives?
2. What in your work environment enabled you to achieve your objectives?
3. What in your work environment stalled you from achieving your objectives?
4. What ongoing goals will you now strive to achieve?

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About the Author

David Spungin is a Corporate Trainer, Speaker, and Executive Coach focused on transforming managers into high performing leaders. He holds a degree in Leadership Development from the United States Military Academy at West Point, a Master of Science in Organization Development from American University, and has completed advanced leadership studies at Harvard University. A U.S. Army combat veteran with corporate leadership experience, he now consults to primarily Fortune 500 companies. He is recognized for his ability to quickly assess an organization's culture, develop creative learning designs, and facilitate highly engaging training events. David holds expertise in the MBTI, DiSC, EQ-i $^{2.0}$ and PMAI behavioral assessments, as well as in non-verbal (somatic) communication. Additionally, he is an International Coaching Federation (ICF) certified coach.

Specialties

- Customized and Experiential Leadership Training that Delivers Results
- Leadership Coaching for Managers, Directors, & Executives
- Dynamic Speaking Engagements that Inspire & Motivate Teams
- Distance/Blended Leader Development Training Solutions & Customized Webinars
- Non-Verbal Communication & Developing Executive Presence
- Building Team Cohesiveness & Effectiveness
- Organizational Culture Assessment & Transformation Initiatives
- Generating Greater Emotional Intelligence
- Fostering Employee Retention & Engagement

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