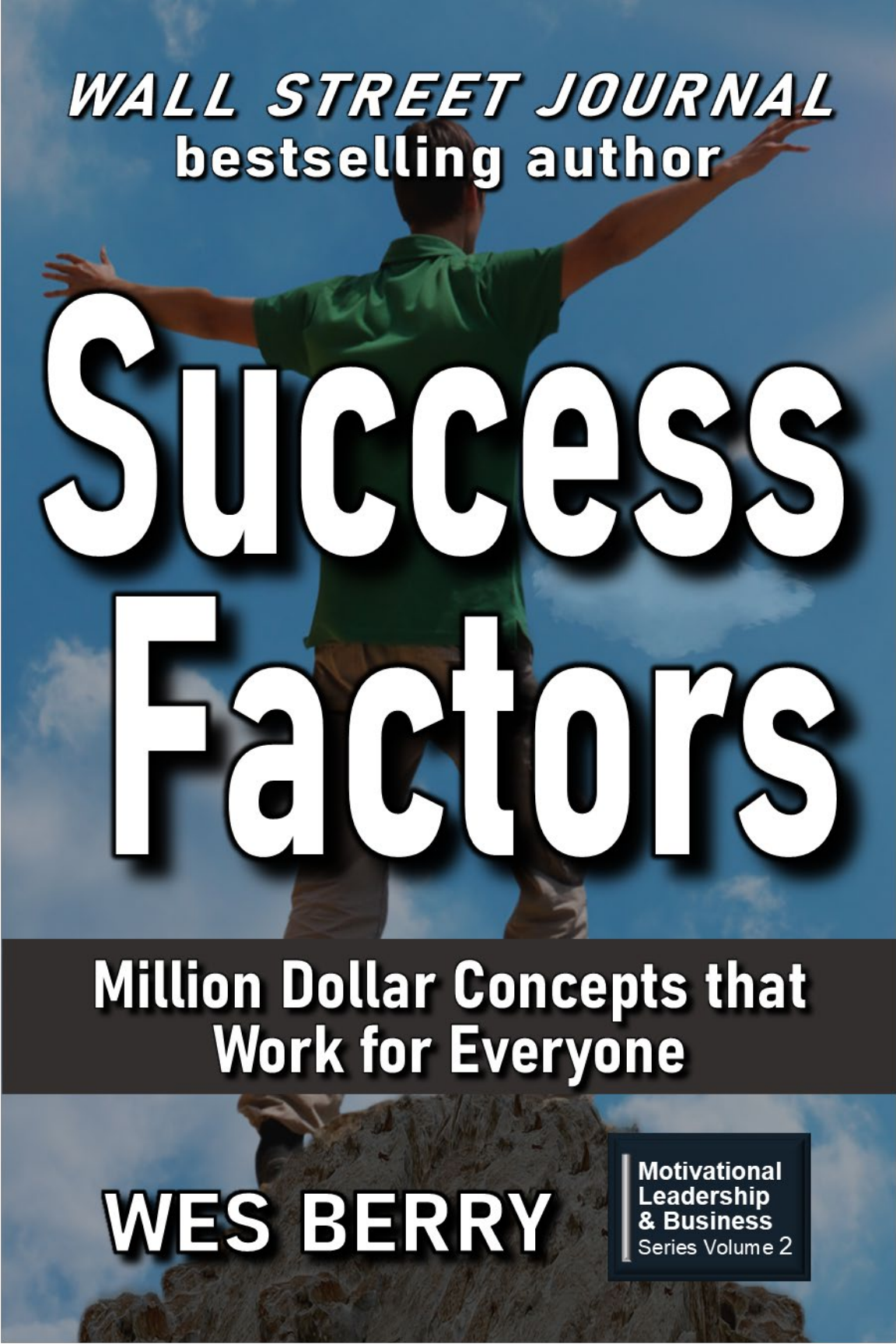
WALL STREET JOURNAL
bestselling author
Success Factors
Million Dollar Concepts that Work for Everyone
WES BERRY
Motivational Leadership & Business
Series Volume 2

SUCCESS FACTORS

Big Things Have Small Beginnings
By Wes Berry

Wall Street Journal Bestseller
USA TODAY Bestseller
Barnes & Noble's Top 5 Best Sellers of All Books Worldwide
Amazon #1 Best Selling Author, #1 Hot New Release, and International Best Seller
Business Insider, Books to Help You Build Wealth and Get More Done
New York Book Festival, Winner Best Business Book

"Wes, I love your new book…I love everything about it! Keep up the great work!"
Kevin O'Leary, star of *Shark Tank*

"Big Things Have Small Beginnings is the truest thing I've heard! I'm all about it!"
Bethanne Frankel, CEO of *Skinnygirl*

"Congratulations on winning first place in the Southern California Book Festival for 'Big Things have Small beginnings.' Congratulations, Wes! Keep changing lives!"
Daymond John, CEO of FUBU

“A foundation of ideas with which to succeed in virtually every aspect of life.”
John J. Kelly, *Detroit Free Press*

“Wise and warm counsel from a man who makes small beginnings blossom into success.”
Grady Harp, Amazon Hall of Fame Top 50 Reviewer

“An enlightening and extremely informative book!”
Susan Keefe*, Midwest Book Review*

“If you are in business, or want to be, read this book.”
Mike Ball, Erma Bombeck award-winning columnist

"This book will propel you to the top of your business game!"
Pamela Gossiaux, International Bestselling Author

SUCCESS FACTORS

BY BEST SELLING AUTHOR

WES BERRY

Copyright © 2022 by Green Dragon Services LLC

All rights reserved.
This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the publisher except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

ISBN: 979-8-9852891-0-7 (paperback)
ISBN: 979-8-9852891-1-4 (ebook)
ISBN: 979-8-9852891-2-1 (hardcover)
ISBN: 979-8-9852891-3-8 (audio)

Visit the author's website at
WesBerryGroup.com
for more information.

Printed in the United States of America

Table of Contents

Forward…….....11

1. The Positive Side of Golf: *Motivation*……..15
2. Ice Cream Therapy: *Mindset*……..41
3. Icons of Success: *Leadership*……61
4. The Ritz Experience: *Growth and Scalability*……..84
5. Ty Cobb, Babe Ruth, and So On: *Teamwork*…… ...103
6. The Right Stuff: *Integrity*……129
7. The Two Steves: *Core Competencies*……149
8. Moneyball: *Change*……181
9. Get On Board: *Inclusion*…… ..205

References…… ...230

About the Author…… 240

Forward

Success looks different to everybody. For me, when I was younger, success meant helping my family keep our small florist shop up and running so we could pay the bills and put food on the table. It meant having a happy and successful marriage, and some day, maybe kids. And it meant security. But in the 1970s the city of Detroit was suffering from social injustices and economic decline, and our florist shop struggled. When I was just 17 years old I ended up taking a bullet to the head (and miraculously survived unscathed!) during a robbery. And my marriage ended in divorce.

I could have given up then. But I had people counting on me, and it wasn't in my nature to quit. I love to read, and as an avid history buff, I have read many books about great leaders and what made them tick. Growing up, my bedroom was filled with books about generals, kings, warriors, inventors, and of course, business leaders. They inspired me. Many of them started small, many of them failed several times, but eventually, they became a success. Why?

Because they learned the factors for success, and they didn't give up. Ambition is a powerful sword, especially when it's wielded by a person of integrity.

I eventually turned our small, family florist shop in Detroit into a $750-million international business. I met and married the

love of my life, and we have four wonderful sons. And I wrote a book that has become a *Wall Street Journal* and *USA TODAY* bestseller. All of this isn't because I am any better than you are, or because I had the capital to do things the easy way. It's because I had strong mentors, was willing to work hard, and was passionate about my goals.

Success is within reach for us all. I have a passion for helping others, and I love to share my own strategies in the workshops I teach, in speaking engagements., and as a CEO coach. These nine "Success Factors" are derived from my keynote speeches, and I wrote this book to give you the tools that have helped me over the years. Tools I learned from mentors, from reading, and from life experiences. My hope is that this book will be the blueprint for you, too, to be successful.

You may have picked this book up to improve on your already successful business. Or you may be struggling right now, trying to create a team atmosphere among employees, increase sales to save your company, or strengthen critical personal or work relationships. Do you feel like you're failing? This book is filled with failures. Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, and Steve Jobs all failed at some of their attempts. And baseball legend Reggie Jackson holds the record for the most career strikeouts by a batter

It is most important to forgive yourself when you make a mistake, and you *will* make mistakes. Failure and success are both part of the same experience. In fact, if you're not willing to

experience failure, you will be unable to find sustained success. Failure is part of success. But so is passion. You must experience both to succeed. Keep going or get up and start over. I know that you can do it.

Herein this book lies the recipes for fantastic accomplishments, and yet your future success will always be governed by your passion. To know and understand is not enough—it is the ability to execute that will deliver success.

I share with you the lessons I've learned on motivation, mindset, leadership, growth, integrity, and more. I show you what it looks like to succeed in each of these areas, and how to strengthen and develop skills that will propel you forward in both business and life. You should also know that I have enjoyed more than my share of success and failure; I urge you not to be afraid of either.

The road to greatness is littered with attractive parking spots and other distractions. However, with discipline and by embracing these "Success Factors," you'll be able to navigate your way. I wish you all the best.

Wes

Chapter 1

THE POSITIVE SIDE OF GOLF

Motivation

Lee Trevino, one of the all-time great golfers, used to say, "Pressure is playing for ten dollars when you don't have a dime in your pocket." Of course, Trevino, who won more than his fair share of golf tournaments, didn't have to worry much about coming up short. But still, that sense of desperation and having everything to lose can be a compelling motivator. I'm a pretty poor golfer, and yet I am out there playing all the time. I even live on a golf course. It's that one shot that I get right that brings me back. Bobby Jones once said, "Golf is the closest game to the game we call life. You get bad breaks from good shots; you get good breaks from bad shots—but you have to play the ball where it lies." If it were all success, I don't think I would be motivated at all. Motivation is perhaps the single most important thing in business and in life in general. Without motivation, success is impossible.

You hear a lot these days about focus, drive, and inspiration. "You've got to keep your focus on the big things," someone may tell you, or "He's got the drive to bring this thing home." And

inspiration is a really common goal. After all, people want to be in situations that inspire them, or they want to inspire other people. How many times have you heard a sports star described as driven or inspired by his parents or his love of the game?

When it comes down to it, though, these words are all different ways of describing one very important concept: motivation.

When someone describes a person as having "the drive to succeed," they mean that they have motivation. When you hear someone talk about their son on the football team, saying, "He's got to stay focused on the big game," they really mean that he has to stay motivated. And when we talk about being inspired by a friend, a family member, or even a celebrity, we're really saying that we're motivated by them to take action.

But what does that really mean? Is motivation just about getting up and doing something? Well . . . kind of. But it's more than just answering a call to action. It's better to think of motivation as a mindset for success that helps you to build a pattern of achievement. Getting up and doing something once is an action; getting up, again and again, is motivation.

Motivation is more than just answering a call to action.

So What Is Motivation Exactly?

Stephen King is one of America's most prolific authors,

having written 62 novels, five non-fiction books, and more than 200 short stories, along with total book sales of more than 350 million copies. He's won numerous book awards, as well as a National Medal of Arts from the U.S. National Endowment for the Arts. Add to that the countless film and television adaptations of his work, and you can see that King is clearly one of the most prominent authors of our time.

But when he started out, success didn't necessarily look like it was in the cards for King. Growing up in Maine, money was always very tight, and King learned to make do when presented with hardships. King found solace in writing, imitating the horror stories he loved to read as a young man. He wrote relentlessly, churning out page after page, even though he found very few avenues to have his stories published.

While King sold his first story in 1967 at age 20, it paid very little, and he was forced to make ends meet by working menial jobs, including working for an industrial laundry service. Even with a new wife and financial struggles, King continued to write, oftentimes scratching out words whenever he could get a few minutes of downtime in the steamy, overheated laundry room. Eventually, in 1973, King sold his first novel, Carrie, and that started the long trend of success he's enjoyed ever since.

Whatever your personal feelings may be about King's work, it's impossible to ignore his motivation. No matter what challenges or personal costs that he faced, he felt so driven, so motivated to

become a writer that he pushed himself to the brink. What's even more incredible is that after he found success, King continued to work doggedly, refusing to rest on his laurels, determined to achieve the greatness he knew he was capable of.

While it seems easy to agree that King is an excellent example of someone who is motivated to succeed, it still leaves us with a basic question: what is motivation exactly? No matter how clearly you can identify the outcomes of motivation, it doesn't necessarily tell you what motivation actually entails.

According to *Psychology Today*, motivation is "the desire to act in service of a goal." Sounds simple, right? But there's more: "Motivation is one of the driving forces behind human behavior. It fuels competition and sparks social connection . . . Motivation encompasses the desire to continue striving toward meaning, purpose, and a life worth living." [1]

All right! Now, we're getting somewhere!

Let's look at the first part of that definition, which essentially says that motivation is your desire to take some action towards achieving a goal. This is the simplest, most straightforward way of defining motivation, and it's hard to find any fault with it.

The most important part, though, is the concept of a goal. Motivated people don't do things just to feel like they're not standing still. Instead, truly motivated individuals have a goal in mind, and their actions are taken to advance their progress towards that goal. Whether it's trying to get a promotion or looking to

become the next Stephen King, the goal is the thing that drives the individual.

Extrinsic vs. Intrinsic Motivation

I'd like you to take a moment and picture some of the goals that motivate you. They can be anything from raising your children to earning more money at work. I'd like you to take about three or four minutes and write down as many of these goals as come to mind.

Got it? Great!

While there are an endless number of goals that can motivate you, the resulting motivation can generally be divided into two categories: extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation. While these two types of motivation are quite different, there's nothing that says that one is necessarily better than the other—it just depends on what motivates you best.

Extrinsic Motivation: As you might have guessed from the name, extrinsic motivation drives work that is done for an external reason. In other words, extrinsically motivated individuals are driven to act by the expectation of a reward. [2]

The word "reward" can make extrinsic motivation sound selfish. Should I feel comfortable being motivated by the fact that I'm getting something in return? The short answer is yes, you should feel okay about that!

Consider one of the most basic examples of extrinsic

motivation—working for a paycheck. Many of us may not like our jobs, but we're motivated to get up and go every day by the fact that we get a paycheck, which allows us to eat, pay rent, and hopefully put something away for the future.

There are lots of examples of extrinsic motivation around us every day. Look at sports, where athletes compete toward a championship. Or consider the businessmen who compete against each other to make the Forbes list of billionaires. These external motivations can be psychological, as well. Perhaps you do something nice to earn praise or you focus on doing something just right so you don't get into trouble for doing it wrong.

While there's nothing inherently wrong with extrinsic motivation, it's also important to be aware of the limitations of this model. While some people are continually energized by external goals, others may find that over time, these goals can become less effective and may even backfire if they don't make sufficient progress.

Intrinsic Motivation: In contrast to external goals, intrinsic motivation is derived entirely from within. To put it simply, when you operate based on intrinsic motivation, you act because you enjoy what you're doing for its own sake.

Let's look back at Stephen King for a second. If he had been writing solely to make money, then he could have quit at any point before Carrie was published. But because King drew so much enjoyment and so much satisfaction from the process of telling a

story, he continued to do it even when it might have made more immediate financial sense to find a more lucrative career.

Of course, not all intrinsic motivation has to be so epic. Take exercise. For extrinsically motivated people, they may exercise because they want to look better or to lose weight. For those who are internally motivated, however, they may exercise for the sheer enjoyment of challenging themselves and meeting their goals. They'll probably end up losing weight and looking good, too, but that's just a side effect of the main show—their enjoyment.

For many people, intrinsic motivation is a much more effective driver of action. Unlike extrinsic goals, which are limited by the rewards you can receive, intrinsic motivation is measured solely by your own level of enjoyment. While that can wax and wane, just like any other aspect of life, it's entirely internally determined, which means that you are the sole arbiter of your motivation.

So what about that list I asked you to make? Take a look at it and see if you can identify which of your goals are extrinsic and which are intrinsic. Remember, there's no judgment here, so don't feel embarrassed if you're all one or the other. More likely, you have a mix of the two. This list can help you to better understand the kind of motivation that drives you and can guide you to further developing your ability to motivate yourself.

What Affects Motivation?

While dividing motivation into two broad categories is helpful in getting a better, general understanding of the concept, we can also start to look at some of the factors that can affect how your motivation plays out in real time.

From your external environment to your self-esteem, there are a number of things that can affect your motivation, either helping you to focus more clearly or making it more difficult to pursue your goals. Because we're all individual people motivated for different things, these factors can have very different impacts from one person to the next. Still, it's important to recognize some of the ways that your motivation might be affected by your environment.

Competition

Even if you're Team LeBron, you can't deny that Michael Jordan was one of the greatest basketball players to ever step on the court. I had the good fortune to attend several games during his magical years with the Chicago Bulls. Jordan wasn't just a peak athlete—he was a cultural phenomenon. With his athletic ability and game management skills, he led the Bulls to six NBA Championship titles, while earning five NBA MVP awards—tied with Bill Russell (and just one behind Kareem Abdul-Jabbar).

With all of that talent, would you believe me if I told you that Jordan didn't make his high school basketball team his sophomore year? When Jordan went to check for his name on the

varsity list, it wasn't there. He did, however, see the name of his friend and fellow sophomore, Leroy Smith. Jordan was told he was just too short (5'11") to play on the varsity squad.

It takes a lot of balls to golf the way I do.

Crushed, Jordan went home and wept. But the next day, Jordan made a promise to himself. He was going to work his way onto that team, no matter what. He played his heart out on the JV squad, then devoted himself to training as hard as possible. The next year, in the best shape of his life (and four inches taller), Jordan made the varsity squad, earning a scholarship at North Carolina and embarking on his journey to change the game of basketball forever.

Competition has long been used as a motivational tool—and not just in sports. Just as coaches like to pit players against each other to try and get the best performance out of their team, sometimes managers encourage their employees or teams to compete against one another. This can come from making the most sales, processing the greatest volume of data, or achieving the best customer satisfaction rate.

But does competition actually improve performance? Is competition an effective tool to motivate people to perform their best or to achieve their goals? The data is actually unclear. According to Dr. Kou Murayama of the University of Reading, while the data suggests that competition has no impact on performance, our own experiences of competing may show that's

not entirely true. [3]

So, what's the deal? As it turns out, Dr. Murayama identified two different kinds of goals that competition inspires in people: performance-approach goals, where you focus on outperforming other competitors, and performance-avoidance goals, where you focus on trying to avoid doing worse than other people. Because these goals are opposites (and because competition tends to inspire both of these goals at the same time), they tend to cancel each other out.

Of course, that's not the case for everyone. Jordan is a prime example of this. Throughout his career, he would invent "slights," which he would use to motivate his performance. He would imagine another player saying something derogatory or convince himself that he had been disrespected by someone and turn that into motivation to outperform that other player. [4]

Rewards

While we talked about rewards as part of an extrinsic motivational system, it's worth talking about how rewards impact motivation as a whole. Just as a reminder, for extrinsic motivation, actions are driven by the promise of a reward, whether that's a raise, a special treat, or simply a pat on the back.

Even for intrinsically-motivated people, rewards can have an interesting impact. As I mentioned before, interest in a particular goal can fluctuate over time, and while you may generally be

motivated towards achieving a particular goal, everyone has bad days now and then. While rewards don't provide much in terms of motivation on the good days, it's on the bad days where they can make all the difference.

Let's say your main motivating goal is to be a writer—more specifically, to write a *Wall Street Journal*, best-seller. Every writer you've talked to, every book you've read, has told you that you have to write every day to keep the creative juices flowing and the momentum building. But there will be mornings where you just don't want to write (trust me—I know!).

When that happens, you generally have three options. The first is to take a pass that day and try to come back stronger tomorrow. The second is to try and slog through anyway, hit your word count for the day, then crawl back into bed and hope the next day is better. The third—and for some, the most effective—choice is to promise yourself a reward. Tell yourself that if you hit your goal today, then you'll treat yourself to something special. (I always like ice cream.)

Some people may consider this bribery—and they're right, at least technically. But whatever you want to call it, the most important thing is finding whatever it takes to capture that motivation in the moment, even if you have to promise yourself a sweet treat in order to find it. Strong motivation is a habit, and it takes practice—and sometimes, that might mean a little bribery.

Mindset

Your frame of mind has a lot to do with your motivation level. In fact, it can sometimes have everything to do with it. One of the diagnostic criteria for depression is a lack of motivation. It's a vicious cycle. You're depressed, and you lack the motivation to accomplish anything. Then you feel bad about not accomplishing anything and it deepens the depression, making it harder to get motivated, and so on, and so on. [5]

However, depression isn't the only emotion that can affect your motivation levels. Frustration can also set in and wreak havoc on your motivation. If you're having trouble reaching your goals, or you feel that you aren't making enough progress to justify the level of effort you're expending, it's only natural to feel discouraged. Anger, sadness, and jealousy can all have negative impacts on your motivation levels.

However, the reverse is also usually true. The word you need to remember is positivity. If you can embody a positive mindset, then you'll struggle much less to maintain your motivation. If you can embrace patience and remind yourself that any goal worth accomplishing won't happen overnight, finding motivation becomes much less difficult.

A positive mindset can make all the difference when it comes to your motivation. If you believe that you're making progress and you believe that your goals are achievable, then you're much more likely to stay the course. Even when things are going

wrong or when you make a misstep or a mistake, a positive mindset can help you to transform that error into a lesson, actually bringing you even closer to achieving your goals.

Making Motivation a Part of Your Life

We've talked about what motivation is and hit on some of the different factors that can impact your motivation level. The trick now is to figure out how to develop that motivation, both in yourself and in your organization. In many ways, these two processes overlap, but they also diverge. Let's take a look first at how you can work on developing your personal motivation.

People who wonder if the glass is half full or half empty miss the point. The glass is refillable.

Goals

When you're considering your personal motivation, a great starting point is to set some goals. Let's do another exercise. Start with a clean sheet of paper in a quiet room—turn off your cell phone, your music, the TV, and anything else that might distract you.

For the next three minutes, I want you to just brainstorm a list of goals for yourself. They can be as small or as extravagant as you want. I've had people say their goal was to be an astronaut, and I've had some say that they just want to have a nice sandwich. At this point, all that matters is the generation of ideas.

Done? Great! The next step is to look at your list and make

two smaller lists, about three to five items each. On the first list, choose the most easily accomplished goals that you wrote down, the ones that you'd describe as short-term. The other list should be—surprise!—long-term goals.

This quick exercise isn't meant to be set in stone, but it should hopefully get you thinking about the kinds of goals you're most interested in pursuing. The ideal goals—the best kind for long-term motivation—are the ones that are achievable but require you to stretch yourself just a little bit.

Choosing a worthwhile goal is important. While you'll still get a little jolt of dopamine, the neurotransmitter that signals you've achieved something, ultimately, if you choose something that's not satisfying, you won't have grown. Adding that stretch, that little bit of challenge that makes you reach a little further, is the key to long-lasting motivation and satisfaction.

Personal Responsibility

One of the more common complaints I hear from people who lack motivation is that they can't "trick" themselves into holding themselves responsible. Gee, do ya think? If you start out feeling as though you have to trick yourself into motivation, you've already lost.

Instead of thinking of it as a trick, look at motivation as a mindset. When you hold yourself accountable to yourself, you may know there are no direct consequences to letting yourself down. You

aren't going to dock your pay, and you're not going to fire yourself. But when you adopt a motivated mindset, your goal stays front and center. Even if you fail occasionally, you can keep your focus on the prize at the end.

Build Habits

As I said earlier, motivation is a habit. The more consistently you keep yourself motivated to achieve your goal, the less that you will have to work at it in the future. Just like athletes, who feel miserable when they don't get their daily workout, when you develop motivation as a habit, you'll start to feel uncomfortable when you don't pursue that goal—and that's a good thing.

Habits are hard to break. If being unmotivated has become a habit for you, it's important to be patient as you build your new habit. Just like Rome wasn't built in a day, your new mindset needs time to develop, to push out the old ways of doing things to build a new infrastructure.

Enlisting the Subconscious

Do you ever find yourself forgetting someone's name, only to recall it again hours later—usually in the middle of the night? Or when you buy a new car, do you suddenly start to see that same make, model, and color all over the place? Even when we're sleeping, we're visited by dreams, which can be very realistic or completely off the wall.

All of these things are driven by your subconscious, that powerful force that sits just beneath your active, thinking brain. For something you don't pay a lot of attention to, your subconscious does a lot of work.

Your brain is continuously processing information, working through ideas, finding and discarding solutions to problems you didn't even realize you were working on, until you're standing in the shower, and suddenly, you have a bright gleam of inspiration.

Of course, that's only one of the possible outcomes. Sometimes, your subconscious works on a problem and comes up with a great solution. Other times, it flits from thought to thought, looking for something to occupy its attention—and that's when bad things can happen. The important thing is to get your brain to focus.

For instance, when you forget someone's name, your brain starts to work on the problem. You may even say to yourself, "Oh, I'm sure I know that person's name, but for the life of me, I just can't remember it!" That simple statement is like a set of instructions for your subconscious, and it starts the process of making connections and digging deeper into your memory banks, all in the background of your everyday life, until the penny drops, and like a flash, the name is there.

Your thoughts will become your reality.

Consider your new car, which suddenly seems to pop up everywhere. You never noticed how many red Jeep Wranglers there

were until you started to drive one—and then suddenly, they're everywhere.

But have the number of Jeep Wranglers actually changed? Of course not. The only difference is that your subconscious starts to notice them all the time—not because you told it to see them, but because your subconscious doesn't know what else to do.

In the first case, you've given your subconscious an assignment, a productive problem for it to solve. In the second case, your subconscious was at loose ends. You hadn't given it anything to focus on, so it looked for something to keep itself busy. Perhaps it used your new car as its anchor, assuming that you chose this particular car, so it must be something you enjoy seeing.

While seeing your car all over the place might be fun for a little bit, there's nothing particularly productive about it. It's a space filler, a little bit of harmless trivia. The problem is that the subconscious only has so much bandwidth, and without direction, your subconscious will focus on unimportant matters, crowding out the attention that should be used for the important stuff.

The natural question, then, is how we can direct our subconscious to work on the things that really matter? How can we keep it from running amok? How can we keep our subconscious focused on achieving our goals without getting distracted?

Vision Boards

There are a few techniques that people have found success with. Some people keep a diary, tracking what they did each day, which can allow for productive reflection. Others keep a gratitude journal, tracking all of the things for which they're grateful and building a positive mindset, no matter how gloomy the days may be.

Still others will write a letter to themselves from the future, writing as someone who has already achieved their goals, which can be a very effective exercise in visualization.

One of the most effective, time-tested, and scientifically proven methods, though, is the vision board. Before you look at me and say, "A vision board? Are you for real?" I'd ask you to give me a chance. After all, executives, athletes, and many others use vision boards as a way to train their subconscious, a practice that neuroscientist Tara Swart says is backed by science.

According to Swart, a vision board makes you more likely to recognize opportunities as they appear because it "imprints important things onto your subconscious and filters out unnecessary information."[6] In essence, a vision board cuts out the noise, and instead focuses your subconscious, assigning it to the goals embodied by your vision board.

I often have people ask me about my rules for creating a vision board. The answer that I give every time is that anyone who gives them rules for reaching their goals doesn't actually want them to be achieved. Sure, you can find lists of rules, website after website, and book after book that will promise to tell you how you

can supercharge your vision board if you just follow their simple rules. Don't buy it.

A vision board is nothing more than a way for you to motivate and inspire yourself. That means that a vision board is also a deeply personal thing, and what works for one person may not work for you—or for anyone else, for that matter. No one knows you better than you know yourself, which makes you the ultimate authority on your vision board.

Of course, I can offer a few suggestions for how to set up your vision board and how to make sure that it's a reflection of your current goals. So, let's get started.

The first step is to start with your goals and determine what's most important to you. You can take the list of goals you identified from our earlier exercise, or you can start from scratch—it's all up to you. What's most important, though, is that you figure out what matters most to you.

A vision board isn't about material goods, although that might be part of it. A vision board is really about inspiring values that will lead you to achieving your goals.

Once you've identified your goals, it's time to start on the vision board itself. One common question people ask me is where they should keep their vision board. I've found that the best place for your vision board is somewhere that you're going to see it—a lot.

You don't have to spend a lot of time gazing longingly at

your vision board, lost in a trance. But you do need to see it over and over again, reminding your subconscious about its assignment, reinforcing the message, and helping to clear out all of the noise and all of the distractions. Above your desk is certainly a popular place, but you should feel free to put it anywhere you'll see it frequently, where it will have the opportunity to inspire you the most.

Whenever I make a vision board, I like to start fresh. I'll purchase a new corkboard and a box of thumbtacks, find a stack of magazines, and clear my schedule. The more deliberately you construct your vision board, the more meaning it will have for you, and the more likely it will be to inspire you.

You should do your best to be as specific as possible. Let's say that one of your most important goals is to be able to travel more. Rather than choosing pictures of cruises and mountain climbers, consider the specific places that you'd like to visit and choose images related to that. If you want to visit London, find images of Big Ben or Buckingham Palace. If you want to head to Australia, choose pictures of the Sydney Opera House and the Great Barrier Reef.

Or say you want to make more money. The obvious question is, what would you do with it? Perhaps you want more money so you can buy a really nice car or move into an upscale house. Maybe you'd like to take care of your parents or another family member. Or perhaps you just want the security of having a strong savings account. Your vision board is for your personal motivation. You

should feel free to be honest with yourself, knowing what motivates you best.

Whatever the case may be, you should feel free to look to as many sources as you'd like for your images. Don't feel like everything has to look the same. Magazines are a great source, of course, but you can also print out images you find online. Personal photographs can be an excellent source for images, especially if you're looking to recapture how a particular moment made you feel. Some people even attach small objects, like feathers or notes.

The way that you organize your vision board is really up to you. Some people devote areas of their board to specific goals, while others choose more of a shotgun approach, placing the images on their board however they happen to fall. If your mind works best by following a logical pattern, then by all means, be as logical as you want in your arrangement.

Don't feel like your vision board has to stay the same, either. It can change as often as you like—which may be never, or it may be every few months. Sometimes, you can achieve a goal and use the space to better align with new goals. Other times, your priorities may have shifted, and what was once important may have gone by the wayside. Your board is there to inspire and motivate you—you can do whatever you need to in order to help it reflect your vision.

A Simple Scrap of Paper

Vision boards may not be for everyone, and that's fine. You

know yourself, and if you try a vision board, and after a while, you don't seem to feel a difference, there's no shame in that. There is another very powerful way to direct your subconscious, and it takes nothing more than a pen or pencil and a small piece of paper.

On your small piece of paper (it can be a card, a scrap of notebook paper . . . anything you can write on), write down your single most important goal. Use as few words as possible and really drill down to the core of that goal to get at the heart of what it is you want to achieve.

Once you've done that, take a look at the piece of paper and read the goal to yourself a few times. Once you're satisfied with it, stick that piece of paper into your wallet, and carry it around with you wherever you go. You don't even have to look at the piece of paper; just knowing that it's there in your wallet is enough to keep your subconscious churning.

It seems like such a small, simple thing, this little piece of paper tucked into your wallet. But that piece of paper is more than just a few words. It's a kind of mantra that your subconscious knows is there. It can help to guide your actions even though you may not realize it.

After carrying that piece of paper around for a while, you'll likely start noticing that subtle changes are happening that are bringing you closer to your goal. That's your subconscious at work. Even without looking at that piece of paper, even without taking it out and reading it every day, it will help to guide your subconscious

to work towards your goal. You'll likely start noticing the opportunities that arise that will bring you closer to achieving the goal on that little slip of paper.

Enlisting your subconscious as a partner in achieving your goals is a powerful way to marshal all of your brainpower toward the accomplishment of your task. And the best part is that it's not all that hard to do. All it takes is a little bit of conscious effort, assigning your subconscious the task that you want to have completed.

Instead of spending precious mental bandwidth on noticing Jeep Wranglers, your subconscious will be actively working towards achieving your goals. This kind of progress might be hard to notice at first, but once you see it, you'll be amazed at how much your brain can accomplish with just a little direction.

Motivating Others

Warren Buffett's company, Berkshire Hathaway, is one of the largest, most profitable organizations in the world, and that's in large part thanks to the vision and continued work of Buffett himself. He famously set a number for himself—approximately $2 million—that he needed to hit to feel comfortable for the rest of his life, which he hit around age 27. [7]

Still, at age 90, Buffett remains actively engaged at Berkshire Hathaway, despite the fact that he's a billionaire several times over. What could it be that drives a successful, über-wealthy man to continue to come into the office every day well into his ninth

decade of life? What possible motivation could there be?

Buffett is a perfect example of intrinsic motivation. Yes, he's made money and gained business success, but what he really loves is the work itself. He enjoys working with the market, managing his group of trusted employees, and learning all he can about as many things as he can. It's the work that drives Buffett, pure and simple.

As a manager, Buffett works to transfer this sense of intrinsic motivation to his employees. He does this by allowing them to have significant leeway through his hands-off approach. In his 2012 annual report for Berkshire Hathaway, Buffett writes, "Most of our managers are independently wealthy, and it's therefore up to us to create a climate that encourages them to choose working with Berkshire over golfing or fishing. This leaves us needing to treat them fairly and in the manner that we would wish to be treated if our positions were reversed." [8]

In essence, what Buffett is trying to do for his company is to instill this same sense of intrinsic motivation, for his employees to work because they enjoy the work, and this motivation trickles down from the top through all layers of the organization.

According to the *Ivey Business Journal,* there are four primary rewards that members of an organization want to experience: meaningful purpose, a sense of choice, a feeling of competence, and a sense of progress. [9]

1) Purpose

Everyone wants to feel valued and to feel as though their work means something. Without a sense of purpose, your work can start to feel stale. It's imperative to help your employees to feel a sense of purpose in their work and to know that their work is appreciated.

2) Choice

When workers have a sense of choice about the ways that they accomplish their tasks, it can grant an added sense of satisfaction, rather than making them feel like they are simply being plugged into a system like a replaceable part. While there should always be procedures, providing flexibility for employees can go a long way toward increasing motivation.

3) Competence

Getting the job done is one thing but feeling as though you have mastery over a task is an unbeatable emotion. Whether you emphasize formal employee development or a specific coaching model, helping employees to feel a sense of competence about their performance is a powerful tool.

4) Progress

If a worker remains in the same place, performing the same task for too long, it can quickly become devoid of meaning. Without a sense of progress and growing into the job—or growing out of it—there's a good chance that person will either move on from your organization or become entirely

disengaged. Help to provide markers or signposts for progress, and your employees will respond in kind.

A Final Word on Motivation

Walter Hagen one of the most successful professional golfers of all time, had a very interesting approach to hitting a bad shot. “I never played a perfect 18 holes,” he said, “There is no such thing. I expect to make a few bad shots. Therefore, when I make a bad shot, I don’t worry about it. It’s just one more of those bad shots out of the way.”

It might sound trite, but this approach— the “not every day is a winner” approach—is the right way to think when it comes to keeping yourself motivated. Over time, your motivation will wax and wane, and you’ll have good days and bad days. The trick is to not let the bad days get in the way of the good ones.

Motivation is a habit and a state of mind, and it won’t spontaneously develop overnight. Instead, it takes conscious effort at first. But once you take the time to build the habit, you might be surprised at just how natural it feels to be perpetually motivated.

Chapter 2

ICE CREAM THERAPY
Mindset

Alice asked the Cheshire Cat which way to go. He responded that it depends on where you want to end up. She said she did not know, and the cat said, “Then it doesn’t matter which direction you take!” You need to make a conscious decision to be a positive person. If not, you’ll find yourself following the crowd of negative people. However, negative thoughts attract negative outcomes, and positive thoughts attract positive outcomes. Henry Ford once said, “Whether you think you can, or you think you can't— you're right.” I have found that a positive mindset is fundamental to both happiness and success. You decide who you want to be by choosing which path you will take. And when my mindset slips onto that negative path, you’ll find me remembering a lesson I learned in line at a Dairy Queen.

Allow me to borrow from my earlier writings. In my book *Big Things Have Small Beginnings*, I describe an encounter at a Dairy Queen that helped me realize the impact mindset can have on how you interpret the world around you, and how by simply adjusting your mindset, you can open yourself up to new avenues of success.

As I waited in line to order my ice cream, two adults stood in front of me. One of them was really starting to bug everyone—myself included—asking dull questions to everyone around her. “Is this your first time here?” she asked. “What kind of ice cream do you like? Are you gonna get it with different toppings on it?”

This went on and on, going against the long tradition of standing quietly in line, minding your own business and not bothering other people. I was already pretty annoyed when she started loudly complaining about her ice cream, about how she ordered sprinkles but didn’t get the sprinkles and where were the sprinkles and . . .

Finally, after what seemed like a million years, the other woman received her ice cream, then escorted what turned out to be her 35-year-old daughter to a table, so they could enjoy their ice cream.

That was the first moment I realized that her daughter was mentally disabled, and I mentally slapped myself on the side of the head. I had completely misunderstood the situation. I was so busy judging this woman based on my preconceptions of how you’re supposed to wait in line for ice cream that I had ignored the reality of the situation.

In that moment, I realized just how powerful your mindset can be. For me, my mindset was that I wanted to enjoy my ice cream, my treat to myself on a broiling, Michigan summer day, and I felt like this woman was making it almost impossible. But once I learned

more of the facts, I realized I was being kind of a jerk, all because I hadn't considered the fact that there were other points of view on the same situation.

I had judged this woman to be a failure, someone who hadn't learned the rules of how to behave properly in society. In reality, she was a tremendous success. I can't imagine how much effort and energy it had taken her and her mother to get to the point where her disability was so inconspicuous that I didn't even notice it.

Developing a positive mindset starts with understanding that the world is full of different viewpoints. When you open yourself to hearing other perspectives, it can have a huge impact on how you look at the world. You gain a deeper sense of how other people function, what their values are, and how they pursue their goals, and that can give you a better perspective on how you work.

Developing a positive mindset starts with understanding that the world is full of different viewpoints.

You don't have just one viewpoint, either. Depending on the time of day, who you're around, and if you've just had a big meal or you're getting hangry, you can look at the same person or the same situation in completely different ways.

Think about looking at yourself in the mirror. Some days, you feel like a million bucks, and your reflection looks amazing. Other days, you might be disappointed about something, or maybe

you didn't sleep well, and all you can see are the bags under your eyes, the emerging gray hairs, and—wait, are those wrinkles?!

A positive mindset is a critical part of any successful journey. Along the way, you'll encounter a number of situations, both positive and negative. The trick is to learn how to find the positive side of every situation. It's not quite that simple, of course. When you flip a coin, sometimes you're going to lose. But you can flip the coin again and again, until you get the results that you want. Developing a positive mindset is about learning how to keep flipping that coin.

"But Wes," I hear you saying, "keeping a positive mindset never lasts!" But neither does that fresh out of the shower feeling—that's why we make it a daily habit. A positive mindset isn't something you can will into existence and hope it sticks. It takes daily practice and a commitment to embracing the concept of positivity itself.

Let's take a look at one great example of a positive mindset: Henry Ford.

Some of the Biggest Successes Started as Real Failures

In 1863, Henry Ford was born on a farm. Specifically, it was his father's farm, and while his father did well enough for him and his four siblings, Henry never aspired to life as a farmer. Instead, he showed an aptitude for mechanics, teaching himself to repair

timepieces, run steam engines, and understand the ins and outs of mechanical design.

Ford became an engineer at the Edison Illuminating Company in Detroit in 1891, where he experimented with designing and building gasoline-powered cars. He soon opened his own company, the Detroit Automobile Company, which quickly folded. So, he opened a second company. He went bankrupt twice.
Undeterred, Ford knew automobiles were the future of American transportation. He persisted in following his vision, eventually attracting investors in what would be his most successful venture: the Ford Motor Company.

In 1908, Ford released the iconic Model T, which by the 1920s would be so common that more than half of Americans learned to drive in one. And in 1913, Ford introduced the moving assembly line, dramatically increasing the number of cars he could produce while decreasing the already low price.

Ford didn't invent the automobile. He wasn't the inventor of the assembly line. He did not create the five-day work week, or any of the other ideas he incorporated into his business model. What he did do was have a vision of his business and learn how to effectively communicate that vision to others. Henry Ford was an innovator, yes, but that innovation was due to one thing: his positive mindset. And history is full of successful failures. In fact, I don't know of anyone who never failed.

The fear of failure has prevented more success than actual failure has.

So how do we develop that positive mindset, exactly? Well, it works a little differently for everybody. But the important thing is that it's possible for everyone to change their mindset, to grow into the kind of positivity that makes you more likely to achieve your goals. Here are six learnable techniques you can use to help empower you to adjust your mindset, allowing you to deliver maximum results.

1. **Positive Affirmations**

In 1991, comedian Al Franken appeared on Saturday Night Live as the host of a self-help television show called "Daily Affirmations with Stuart Smalley." Sporting a blue cardigan and a bright yellow button-down shirt, Smalley would become well-known for his catchphrase, a personal affirmation he delivered to himself in a mirror: "I'm good enough, I'm smart enough, and doggone it, people like me!"

While these sketches played Smalley's affirmations for laughs, it turns out that there's actually a lot of evidence that shows starting your day with a personal, positive affirmation can have a very tangible effect. According to psychological studies,[1] self-affirmations can help lower anxiety while also improving performance on a wide range of tasks.

When you take the time to start your day with a positive self-affirmation, you're taking a concrete step toward fighting the negativity and pessimism you might not even realize you feel. Sometimes, those feelings of worthlessness and apathy can build up over time, so slowly that you don't even know they're there. You might just feel miserable one day, and not even know why. A daily affirmation of your worth can go a long way in fighting those feelings.

But what's even more interesting about these affirmations is how they affect how you react to failure. Studies show that people who give themselves positive affirmations tend to be less stressed out about making mistakes. They still care, of course, but they're less likely to feel intense anxiety about the mistake. Instead, they're more likely to be able to move on from the mistake, learning whatever lessons are available and applying them to the future.

Try this: find somewhere you can get a good look at yourself. Whether it's a bathroom mirror or your iPhone selfie camera, take a moment to really look at yourself, without judgement. Oftentimes, we don't actually look at our reflection to see what's there—we're too focused on what's wrong, or what we need to do to "fix" ourselves. Instead, just take a look at yourself, and see what you see.

Then, once you've really looked at your image, say something positive to yourself. Tell yourself how good you feel, how smart you are, or how attractive you look today. Don't worry if

it feels strange or ridiculous—it is. But that's okay, and that's why it stays just between you and your reflection.

Tell yourself that you're going to have a good day, or that you're going to achieve your goal, or even that you'll make it through the day feeling good about yourself. You'll be surprised how much of a difference this kind of personal positivity can have on your entire day.

2. Learn from Your Failures

When it comes to failures, there's no better person to think of than Thomas Edison. What's that? Edison, who was a huge success and gave America the light bulb, record players, and motion pictures? Yet Edison knew plenty about failure. His teachers called him stupid, and he was fired multiple times for failing to perform. And his list of experiments and inventions are littered with thousands and thousands of missteps, mistakes, and failures of every kind.

Don't say that to Edison, though. The way he saw it, there was no such thing as a failure. "I have not failed," he told a reporter, "I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work." For Edison, who was one of the first to apply the scientific method to the process of invention, every failed experiment was really a success: "Results! Why man, I have gotten lots of results! I know several thousand things that won't work!"

Let's face it. You're going to fail, and probably not just once or twice. It's nothing to be ashamed of. Success requires taking risks, and when you take risks, there's always a chance for failure. That's what makes it a risk.

But failure isn't always a bad thing. Much like how Edison says his failures were really discoveries, your mistakes are an opportunity for learning. Any time you fail, you have a choice: you can treat that mistake as just another in a long line of failures, or you can embrace the opportunity to learn from your mistakes.

In fact, according to a study from the University of Arizona, a certain amount of failure isn't just okay—it's ideal. If you succeed all the time, then chances are you aren't taking enough risks or challenging yourself to grow. Too much failure, and you can get discouraged.

Research from cognitive psychology professor Robert Wilson says the sweet spot for failure is 15%.[2] If you can succeed around 85% of the time, you're pushing yourself enough to maximize the returns on your efforts without sliding toward despair. Although in baseball a batter fails much more than he succeeds. Babe Ruth had a lifetime batting average of .342 and Ty Cobb holds the record with .366. So fear not, for failure is just part of success. Winners never quit and Quitters never win.

Recently during an interview, I was asked if I had any regrets. My answer was, "Yes, I regret not failing more often." You see, Reggie Jackson holds the record for the most career strikeouts

by a batter with 2,597. While Sammy Sosa had 2,306 strikeouts and Alex Rodriguez had 2,287, and yet by any measure these guys were great players of the game.

To put it simply, it's good to fail sometimes. But in order to effectively develop the positive mindset that's going to help you succeed, you need to treat those mistakes not as failures, but as chances to learn, to make yourself better. In other words, it's not a failure at all—it's an opportunity.

3. Focus on the Good, Not the Bad

When I was in my early twenties, I married and divorced in a span of just a few years. At the time, my divorce seemed like the worst failure possible, and I sunk into a deep depression. Now I can tell you that my divorce was honestly the best thing that ever happened to me. As a result of that divorce, I eventually met and married my present wife, the finest human being I have ever known. With her, I became the father of my four sons, which I count as both my greatest blessing, and my most prized accomplishment. Sometimes what looks like the worst possible thing can turn into being your greatest blessing.

As a thought experiment, let's think of all the things that might go wrong during your typical day. Maybe you got up, made yourself a lunch, and left it on the counter as you made your way to work. Perhaps traffic is at a standstill on the highway. Or maybe you were planning on enjoying time on your deck this evening, but the

clouds opened up right as you left work, and it doesn't look like it's going to stop any time soon.

As you go through your day, it's basically guaranteed that you're going to go through ups and downs. What marks someone with a positive mindset is how they react to those moments.

> *Worrying is praying for something to happen that you don't want.*

Dr. Sonja Lyubomirsky, in an article for *Psychological Bulletin*, writes that in studies on more than 275,000 people, a positive outlook is most frequently correlated with success.[3] "When people feel happy, they tend to feel confident, optimistic and energetic and others find them likeable and sociable."

Dr. Lyubomirsky is answering a classic chicken or the egg problem: *are people happy because they're successful, or are they successful because they're happy?* If we acknowledge the findings of this study, that it's happiness that drives success, then it opens a pathway for us to make happiness, or positivity, a central focus of our lives.

When bad things happen, you have two choices for how you're going to react. You can wallow in misery, wondering why bad things always happen to you, or you can try and look for the bright side of the situation, the metaphorical silver lining.

Let's take our hypothetical day. You left your lunch at home. You could be mad at yourself and let it ruin your entire day, or you can

embrace the opportunity. You could try a new restaurant near your workplace, or even better, go out with some of your coworkers and build some camaraderie.

Was traffic bad as you drove to work? What a great chance to catch up on a podcast or an audiobook! You could load up a music playlist and jam out to some tunes. Or maybe you can take the opportunity to mentally work through a problem that's been bothering you and try to find a solution.

What about the rain? Maybe you can't go out on the deck, but you can still enjoy your evening at home. You can put on that new movie that just came out on Netflix, or kick back and read a book. Or you could go out somewhere, grab a drink with a friend or a significant other, go see a movie, get some ice cream . . . the choice is yours.

In each of these cases, the problem hasn't changed, and you're still the same person—the only thing that's changed is the framing. And that's one of the keys to developing a positive mindset. You have to learn to frame your reality in a way that allows you to turn a potential setback into something positive.

Of course, it's going to take some practice. You can't just stand up and say, "I'm positive now! All bad things are now good!" It's an ongoing process, and there are a few ways you can maximize your efforts to keep your positive mindset going.

First, listen to your language. Just like I mentioned earlier, it's surprisingly easy to slip into negative thoughts, and once you do,

they can reinforce each other and make it harder to stay positive. But when you listen to yourself, you can start to catch these moments of negativity, and that gives you the chance to reframe it into a positive light. “I’m bad at something” becomes “I can be better at something,” while “That was a wasted effort” turns into “That approach wasn’t as effective as I’d like—I’ll try something different tomorrow.”

Second, it’s important to realize what you can control, and what you can’t. You can’t control a traffic jam. You can’t undo a mistake that’s already been made. And only supervillains can control the weather. Speaking of supervillains, have you ever noticed how much Jeff Bezos looks like Lex Luther?

When you recognize what you have no control over, you’ll start to see that you do control how you react. While it’s important not to give up too much control and let things simply happen around you, when you focus on adjusting your reactions to events in a positive way, you’ll be able to frame those frustrating events as something you can actually deal with, rather than something that just happens to you.

Finally, you should take the time to celebrate your small wins. What does it mean to win? Well, that’s up to you. But if you define a win as something major and life-defining, then I challenge you to broaden your definition. A win can come any time you overcome a challenge, no matter what that challenge is. It could be as big as getting a promotion, or as small as taking a deep breath

instead of yelling at a driver who just cut you off. When you celebrate the wins, you cement that attitude change, ingraining that positive mindset deeper into your brain.

4. Visualize Your Success

Ask just about any event planner, and they'll tell you the secret to their success: visualization. When you're planning events, whether it's a child's birthday party or a 500-guest wedding, it's vital to visualize how your event is going to succeed. By taking the time to mentally proceed through the event step by step, planners are able to anticipate needs, troubleshoot potential problems, and effectively pace the event.

Of course, visualization works in almost every situation, and it's an especially powerful tool for developing a positive mindset. A basketball player shooting free throws, a manufacturing manager ensuring they meet their quota, and a CEO planning out targets for the next year all benefit from taking the time to visualize their success, gaming out all of the moves and the potential pitfalls they might encounter.

I've even crafted business cards with titles I hadn't yet obtained and locations not yet opened and carried them in my wallet until I achieved what those cards symbolized. When you visualize your success, you're trying to see the future. By taking the time to conscientiously, meticulously, and painstakingly see yourself

succeeding, you'll not only avoid making unnecessary mistakes, but you'll also establish a clear vision to pursue.

5. Look for the Humor

Dwight D. Eisenhower was a natural leader. From along the Mexican Border during the Pancho Villa Expedition when he received his first command and was chosen to lead an Infantry's Company, to serving as Supreme Allied Commander in World War II, through his two terms as president, Eisenhower helped shepherd America through some of its most turbulent times. As president, he fully integrated the armed forces, helped establish the Interstate Highway System, and saw the admittance of the final two American states, Alaska and Hawaii.

As a leader, Eisenhower never relied on charisma or intense speeches. Instead, he understood the value of creating motivation without coercion, or as he puts it: "Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it."

An important part of Eisenhower's leadership strategy was to never take himself too seriously. While it was important to remain focused on achieving his agenda, he believed that "a sense of humor is part of the art of leadership, of getting along with people, of getting things done." [4]

Think about that for a moment. Eisenhower, five-star general, leader of the Allied forces in World War II, straitlaced

president for eight years, believed in finding the humor of a situation, and never taking himself too seriously. But it doesn't take much effort to see that he's right.

It's all too easy to take yourself too seriously, and when that happens you increase the pressure on yourself by a hundred times. Every move you make takes on added significance, and each mistake is magnified out of proportion. And this tends to rub off on others around you, too.

That's why it's good to relieve any unnecessary pressure by learning to laugh at yourself and your situation. No matter how badly things are going, no matter what problems you're experiencing, there's almost always a way to look at it from a different angle and find a way to laugh about it.

That's not to say that you shouldn't take things seriously. When you're traveling the road to success, there are constant challenges that will continue to pop up, and you'll need to treat them with the seriousness they deserve. And if and when you meet a challenge you can't overcome directly, you'll need to reassess your approach.

But even these situations can be viewed with a sense of humor, especially after the fact. For instance, think about how good a story this will make in the future, to tell while you're sitting with friends or business acquaintances, swapping war stories and building relationships. Or if you're in the middle of a tense situation,

being able to point out the absurdity of your situation is a great way to break the tension and quickly find a resolution.

One of the best stories I tell is about the time I had a half-million dollars stolen from me. To make a long story short, someone had re-routed our credit card deposits to a bank in Las Vegas. My banker contacted me and wanted to know if I was mad at him. Yet I didn't understand that they thought we were in the process of changing banks since our daily deposits had dropped. Days later I figured out what had happened. The real rub was they got away with a half-million dollars. Fortunately, the processor eventually reimbursed me. What else can you do but laugh about it?

More than anything, learning how to find the humor in yourself and your situation is a critical skill in developing your positive mindset. Laughter is a powerful stress reliever, and it can help build relationships with others, making those bonds stronger through a shared experience. Laughter is infectious, and the more you're able to laugh at yourself, the more likely others around you will find the humor as well.

6. Surround Yourself with Positive People

For the most part, the previous tools for developing a positive mindset have been focused on looking within. However, surrounding yourself with positive people is an important part of building that mindset.

As you probably know, humans are social creatures. We crave being around other people, even if there are times when we feel like we'd rather be alone. And this social drive makes sense. It's what's helped us grow into the dominant species on the planet. Fossil records show that ancient humans helped care for the sick and injured, and this sense of compassion and care is one of the major factors that separates us from other species.

In a study published in BMJ, political scientist James H. Fowler discovered that to a large degree, our happiness is dependent on those around us, up to three degrees removed from us (so, friends of friends of friends).[5] If we surround ourselves with unhappy people, then we're likely to be unhappy. But if we choose to spend our time with happy people, then there's a much higher chance that we'll be happy ourselves. So, you are the sum of those you associate with. If your friends are drunks, you are probably a drunk also. Likewise, if your circle is filled with positive, successful individuals, you've got a pretty good chance of be a positive and successful person too.

You need to put yourself in the same room as those who can lift you up.

Think about that for a second. Who we become is in large part dependent on those we have around us. That's not surprising, right? Most of us want to spend our time around people that we like, and usually that has to do with finding people who are happy—or at least happy to see us. But when

Eeyore comes around and complains about how hard his life is, it's hard not to start feeling down yourself. And if everyone we know smokes cigarettes QED (quod erat demonstrandum), you're probably a smoker too.

Because humans are social creatures, we have a tendency to rub off on one another. Just like laughter, negativity can also be infectious, and if you're not careful it can build up over time, making it harder and harder to maintain a positive mindset. But when you focus on filling your social circle with positive-minded people, their positivity will rub off on you and, hopefully, you can return the favor.

This step, finding and maintaining a positive group of people around you, is probably the most difficult of all of these steps—but it's also the most important. You'll probably encounter negative people in all walks of life, and in some cases, you won't be able to completely break away. Even then, you need to do whatever you can to contain that negativity and keep it from affecting your outlook.

Say, for instance, one of your co-workers can't stop complaining about their job. Day after day, they grumble about their pay, their duties, their boss, and anything else they can think of. You, sitting at the desk next to them, might politely ask them to stop, but if that doesn't work, you'll need to find a way to counteract that negativity.

The best way? Find your own group of positive people, and focus your energy on them. The complainer might be annoying, but

when you focus instead on the positive people in your life, you'll lessen their impact on you. And the stronger your positive mindset, the easier it will be to keep that focus.

Conclusion

Developing a positive mindset isn't always easy, but it's absolutely worth the effort. And the best part is that it gets easier with practice. The more you practice being positive, the less you have to work at it. And once that positive mindset becomes ingrained, it opens you up to brand new avenues to success.

No matter what challenges you face, what obstacles arise in your path, what difficulties bar your way, with the power of a positive mindset, you'll find a way to overcome. It may not be the way you expect, but as long as you approach with an upbeat, optimistic, confident attitude, you'll achieve the results you need.

Chapter 3

ICONS OF SUCCESS

Leadership

The culture of an enterprise is the responsibility of leadership. And without a culture of honesty, the difficult times will overwhelm any hope of success.

In 2006, the Ford Motor Company was in trouble. On the brink of bankruptcy, this iconic American brand was on the ropes. Declining car sales had led to a financial crisis within the company, and the public perception of the quality of Ford automobiles had plummeted.

Something needed to change—but first, they needed to find the right person to guide the company.

After being rebuffed by two other automobile executives, Ford made the bold and unconventional choice to turn to Boeing executive Alan Mulally. While he was new to the automotive industry, he didn't hesitate to begin taking steps to secure the future of his company.

Mulally took out a massive $23.6 billion loan, putting up all of Ford's assets as collateral—including Ford's famous blue oval logo.

While this loan—which allowed Ford to avoid taking a government bailout in 2008—was a major part of the successful rejuvenation of the company, even more important was Mulally's transformation of Ford's corporate culture.

Early on, Mulally attended a weekly business status meeting. According to COO Mark Fields, Mulally noticed something strange from the very beginning. "Ford uses a color code for topics—green for good, yellow for a potential issue, red for a problem—and everything was green." Mulally thought that odd for a company losing billions.

Fields himself had a problem with a new product launch, a liftgate issue with the new Ford Edge that could delay its release. "I said, 'Code it red,' and they said, 'Are you sure you want to do that?'"

When it was Fields' turn, he boldly labeled the Edge release red. "I could feel the chairs move away from the table," Fields said. "I said, 'We have a problem, and I'd love to have help from manufacturing and quality to help resolve it.' Alan turns to me and starts clapping. The next week, everybody's chart looks like a rainbow."

That single moment may have saved the Ford Motor Company from failing completely.

Before Mulally entered the picture, Ford looked like a poster child for a corporate culture of fear. Individuals were afraid to voice problems or concerns, afraid that they would be blamed. They feared they might find themselves no longer considered for promotions, or worse, out of a job. Instead, they kept their concerns to themselves, painting a Bob Ross-style picture full of happy little trees while the reality of the situation was much more dire.

Mulally encouraged a culture of openness, collaboration, and discussion. Rather than whitewashing any potential problems, he insisted that they be brought to everyone's attention as soon as possible. That way, issues could be dealt with quickly, saving the company the headache of having to try to recover from mistakes by preventing them in the first place.

Still, Mulally exercised control over the meetings, making sure that every voice was heard and established a culture of respect. "They don't bring their big books anymore, because I'm not going to grind them with as many questions as I can to humiliate them," says Mulally. He also insists that everyone pays attention, which means no cell phones or side conversations are allowed. "If somebody starts to talk or they don't respect each other, the meeting just stops. They know I've removed vice presidents because they couldn't stop talking because they thought they were so damn important."[1]

Mulally's focus on changing the culture at Ford paid dividends. The quality of their cars increased, and they avoided the

difficulties faced by other American automakers during the Great Recession, thanks in large part to an attitude shift that focused on solving problems rather than pretending that they don't exist.

The Mulally story is an excellent example of the ways that bold leadership can set the tone for an entire company. One person who makes a clear decision about the values of the company and the principles by which it acts, can set in motion a drastic change in how each person in a company thinks and behaves.

Timid souls see the difficulty in every opportunity, while the bold see opportunity in every difficulty.

I can't overstate how important it is for business leaders to constantly be aware of their corporate culture. Everything starts from the top, and the style and tone of collaboration, teamwork, and integrity flows downhill.

Consider two companies. In Company A, the CEO acts unilaterally. They may consult others for their opinions, but just as often, they act on their own, making decisions that have a direct impact on the company's bottom line. They may be successful, but with the rest of the executives cut out of the decision-making process, there's no mechanism for communicating any problems that may be developing. Even if bad news does make it through, the messenger is usually held responsible.

In Company B, however, the CEO emphasizes collaboration with their executives. They consult frequently with their teams,

asking for opinions and encouraging respectful debate. The decision-making process is transparent and inclusive, and each team member feels their views are respected, even if the CEO decides to go in another direction.

Now consider the corporate culture below the executive level. In Company A, the executives are more likely to be disengaged, concerned with protecting their position within the company. As a result, they treat their employees the same way, making spurious decisions and punishing any failures to avoid blame creeping uphill.

Company B, in contrast, will probably have a much more collaborative culture, encouraging each employee to think of themselves as stakeholders. These workers will likely be more engaged, and they tend to consider the interests of the company to be the same as their interests. The idea of punishment is abandoned in favor of encouragement, turning failures into opportunities for future success.

Now, which company would you rather be a part of?

This is especially true when it comes to a culture of honesty. By emphasizing the values and principles that guide your company, you reinforce a sense of honesty throughout your entire organization, from the leadership all the way through the rank and file.

When you model the right behavior and you emphasize the idea of mutual respect, then there's every reason to believe that your team will act with honesty, too.

Burn the Box – Bold and Unconventional

When it comes to bold, new, and unconventional individuals, perhaps no one fits the bill better than Lord Horatio Nelson. Born in 1758, Nelson joined the British Royal Navy as a young man and quickly rose through the ranks, taking command of his own ship at age 20. Nelson made a name for himself as an excellent military leader with a fine strategic mind and bold leadership ability.

But what set Nelson apart from his fellow British military men was his bold and even unconventional behavior. Unlike his contemporaries, Nelson preferred to lead through love rather than intimidation, combining his personal courage and charisma with his commitment to understanding and addressing the needs of his crew and his superiors. Nelson had something of an independent streak, which would bolster him up well throughout his military career.

In one instance, during the Battle of Copenhagen, the British fleet took heavy fire from the Danish Navy, leading Nelson's superior Admiral Sir Hyde Parker to give the signal to retreat. Nelson, who had lost sight in his right eye at Calvi some years before, looked to his lieutenant and said, "You know, Foley . . . I have only one eye. I have a right to be blind sometimes." He put his

spyglass to his ruined eye, looked about, and said, "I declare, I really do not see the signal."[2] Nelson held on, and the Royal Navy was victorious. This is actually the origin of the expression "turning a blind eye." Nelson went on to win a great victory and a few weeks later was dictating terms in Copenhagen.

Compared to his contemporaries, Nelson was a different kind of a leader, an original thinker who refused to be forced into a certain frame by the traditions of the British Royal Navy or society as a whole, for that matter. In 1797, for instance, Nelson began an affair with the married Lady Emma Hamilton.

While taking a lover was not unusual at the time, Nelson went a step further and actually left his wife, whom he did not love, for the woman that he did. Despite the social pressures that looked down on such a deed (divorce was extremely stigmatized and illegal until the 19th century), Nelson felt compelled to follow his heart, no matter what others might say.

Nelson became perhaps the most highly regarded admiral in British history, largely because of his unconventionality. He wasn't afraid to take risks, he adjusted and adapted to setbacks in creative ways, and he led his forces with the kind of empathy that rendered sailors and soldiers willing to sacrifice their lives for the defense of their country. In short, Admiral Nelson was bold and didn't just think outside of the box—he refused to acknowledge that the box even existed.

What Is a Leader?

Like most things in life, in trying to define a leader, there's a simple answer, and there's the more complicated one. On the simplest, most basic level, a leader is someone who . . . well, someone who leads others in the pursuit of a specific goal. That goal can be anything from victory on the battlefield to dominance in the business world, or even getting a group of friends out of an escape room.

While that definition of leadership is fine in a general sense, it leaves out a lot of the details we need to consider in order to think about how leadership actually works—in other words, what makes a leader? Is leadership about taking control of a group? Is it about relentlessly pursuing a goal, whatever the consequences? Or is it pushing your team as hard as possible, attempting to get as much performance as you can?

Don't feel bad for outgrowing friends who had a chance to grow with you.

I'm guessing you all know that I'm going to say no, it isn't any of those things.

Well, not those things specifically, at least. If leadership is about guiding a group of people to achieve a goal, then you can think of bold, unconventional leadership as guiding a group to do what others think is impossible.

We've all known leaders in our lives, good and bad. We've had bosses, parents, coaches, Boy or Girl Scout leaders, religious

leaders, politicians, and so on. We've had the opportunity to observe how these people lead others in pursuit of a goal, and we've seen the successes and the setbacks they've gone through, which some have surely handled better than others. The great leaders to a person are bold and embrace unconventional ways and means; they burn the box.

Managers vs. Leaders

Often, the terms manager and leader get used interchangeably. For the most part, that's not that big a deal. Managers do often take on leadership responsibilities, and leaders will often have to manage people and situations. However, it's worth looking at the difference between the two, especially in learning how to practice unconventional leadership.

Think of a football team, specifically the quarterback. If you watch enough football and listen to the announcers, you've probably heard the term "game manager" more than once.

There are certain quarterbacks who are skilled enough to be on the football field, but they lack the transcendent athletic talent and the visionary abilities of the top-tier players at their position. The main responsibility of this game-manager-style quarterback is not to lose the game. They make smart passes, avoid costly turnovers, and rely mostly on the running game for offense. These teams also usually rely on a stout defense to keep the other team out

of the endzone, rather than on the quarterback, scoring a bunch of points.

On the other hand, you'll also find gunslingers, the guys who'll throw the ball all over the field. These players act boldly by taking chances and usually win much more than they lose. Gunslingers come in with the mindset that they're going to beat you. They're the ones who want the ball at the end of the game, knowing that when they have the ball in their hands, they can score in a matter of seconds.

In many ways, the game manager/gunslinger comparison is a lot like the comparison between a manager and a leader. Good managers know all of their responsibilities, all of the points they have to hit and the boxes they have to check. They're motivated to finish everything by doing it the right way.

Leaders, on the other hand, are more like gunslinging quarterbacks. A true leader, in any situation, is the one who wants the ball in their hands when it counts. They thrive on the challenge of accomplishing the goal no matter what the circumstances, and they're willing to take some calculated risks to get there. They'll almost certainly make mistakes, but instead of crumbling or breaking down, bold leaders respond by learning from those mistakes and coming out even stronger.

There's nothing wrong with being a manager. The world needs people who can get jobs done efficiently. But the world needs bold leaders, too.

The best managers are the ones who can make the transition to the more demanding, more challenging, and ultimately more satisfying role of leadership. As Peter Drucker says, “Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things.”3

If you’re still asking yourself what makes a good leader, then you’re in exactly the right place. There’s no one-size-fits-all solution to leadership, no matter how many how-to guides or self-help books you read. After all, individuality and originality are key in bold, unconventional leadership.

When someone tries to prescribe a single vision of “the ideal leader,” what they’re really trying to do is build a box around you so tall that you can’t see outside of it.

When it comes to unconventional leadership, if you’re trying to think outside the box, you’ve already lost. That means you’re still thinking around the box, even if you’re not inside it. Instead, you need to burn the box. Don’t just step outside of it, don’t merely knock it down. Burning the box frees you from preconceived notions of what it means to be a leader.

In its place, you have the freedom to define leadership for yourself. In this sense, bold unconventional leadership is a mindset, a way of thinking about your goals, how you want to achieve them, and how you’re going to bring your team along with you. What follows are some guidelines to help you develop the right mindset to be a leader in any given situation.

Bold and Unconventional Leadership

There is no recipe to create the perfect leader. Different people have different styles of leadership, and what works in one situation might not work at all in another. Instead, the best way to develop unconventional leadership skills is to invest in the qualities that allow you to bring your team to success. Let's take a look at a few:

Vision

Becoming a head coach wasn't easy for Tony Dungy. After a three-year playing career in Pittsburgh and San Francisco, Dungy became an assistant coach. He spent a total of 17 years coaching defenses. He interviewed four times for a head coaching spot, but it wasn't until the Tampa Bay Buccaneers came knocking in 1996 that he finally got the job he'd wanted for so long.

At that time, Tampa Bay was a failing franchise; their team name was synonymous with failure. The team hadn't made the playoffs since 1982, in which year they finished only 5-4 after a 57-day-long player strike shortened their season. Since then, the team had been mediocre at best. They brought Dungy aboard to try and right the ship.

Dungy took a different approach from most coaches. Football is a game of strategy, of moves and countermoves. For most coaches, that means training players to make quick decisions

based on their analysis of what's happening around them. Some players have to watch the ball, other players the clock. Everything in football happens in fractions of a second.

But Dungy saw things differently. He didn't want his players thinking much at all. Instead, Dungy wanted his Bucs to simply react based on situations and tactics he'd have them practice over and over. The goal was to play faster than the other team—to get in position faster, to make initial reads faster, and to execute faster. This would leave the other team vulnerable to making mistakes as they tried to catch up to the Bucs.

It took more than a full season before it really sank in for fans that the Bucs were actually winning. While Dungy was fired prematurely after the 2001 season, he watched the team he built win the Super Bowl the next year, all while he was instilling the same lessons in the Indianapolis Colts, who won the Super Bowl with him as head coach in 2007.

Dungy's bold and unconventional approach to coaching was what made his success possible in both Tampa Bay and Indianapolis. Thanks to his years of playing and coaching football, he had a deep understanding of the advantage his teams would have by simply thinking less and reacting more. He had the courage and the tenacity to pursue his vision of a successful football team, even when it flew in the face of the traditional coaching styles that players and front offices wanted (because they were familiar).

When it comes to leadership, having a goal is important . . . but not enough. What's more important is vision, which is how you intend to pursue your goal, including the timeline and mile markers.

Having vision as a leader means you're able to picture (in your mind) the necessary strategy to achieve a goal—from the broadest strokes to the finest details. Envisioning any potential setbacks you might encounter and how you might cope with them is key. Leaders with vision know how to establish a set of reasonable deadlines (it's not good to be overly ambitious and set your team up for failure). They also know how to establish signposts to help them measure progress.

A leader's vision empowers them to think strategically and consider each tactic as it relates to the overall goal. This means that some moves may seem counterintuitive. Consider Dungy's team that first year. They lost game after game, but he remained determined to instill the right mindset in his team. He was facing pressure from the media, the fans, and many inside the Tampa Bay organization to change his methods. Dungy knew his tactics were working, and that his strategy would lead to more wins if he was given enough time.

Of course, it helps to have the courage to relentlessly pursue your vision, as well. Naturally, you may experience fear when trying something new. That fear can be good—it can drive you to work hard to limit your chances of failure. But, if you're not careful, it can also hold you back from pursuing your vision.

Paolo Coelho writes in his masterpiece The Alchemist that "the secret of life . . . is to fall seven times and to get up eight times."[4] Fear of failure is the only certain path to failure. If you let fear take control of you, you'll never be able to achieve your vision. Be willing to fail—in fact, embrace the failure. Learn from your mistakes and defeats, and come back stronger and more prepared.

Flexibility

While having a clear, well-defined vision is critical to your success as a leader, don't let that vision become so rigid that it grows breakable, ready to shatter as soon as stress is applied. If your vision doesn't allow for stumbling blocks or hurdles, which are inevitable in every aspect of life, you might be surprised at how quickly everything can fall apart.

Just like a blacksmith has to balance strength with weight and resilience, leaders need to figure out how to pursue their distinct vision and be ready and able to react to setbacks.

This makes flexibility an invaluable quality for leaders. Without it, you won't be able to roll with the punches, and you might lose sight of your vision.

When you respond to a setback with determination instead of despair, you not only improve your chances of getting past it, but you inspire the rest of your team to rise up to the challenge, too.

Flexibility is also a valuable characteristic to have when it comes to managing a team, since a team is made up of diverse

people with a wide array of strengths and weaknesses. The best leaders know how to leverage the strengths of each team member to offset the weaknesses of others without letting those strengths define each person. You'll see why this is important in the next section.

Empathy and Development

As a leader, it's all too easy to become hyper-focused on your vision and forget about the people you need in order to achieve your goal. The best leaders are the ones who balance that pursuit with the needs of their team, including their mental well-being and their professional development. This requires a good sense of empathy and intuition.

Your team is, of course, made of human beings. Like all other humans, they have needs and wants, and they go through good times and bad times. I'm not saying you have to be a therapist. That's the last thing I'd suggest. But you should be responsive to the needs of your team, and notice if someone appears to be struggling. Don't be afraid to ask questions in order to understand why someone's performance is not up to snuff. There's a good chance it's something very solvable.

As a leader, you should be demanding. Ask your team to give their all in pursuit of the overarching goal. Most of the time, people respond well to being challenged and enjoy the satisfaction

of solving a really tough problem. In fact, those challenges go a long way to helping your team members develop the skills that will serve them—and you—in future projects.

It's important to recognize success and hard work and to be generous with praise. According to a 2019 Gallup poll, 52% of people leaving their job said their workplace could have done something to prevent them from leaving.[5]

In other words, for more than half of the people changing jobs, they left only because their organization wasn't responsive to their needs. Often, responsiveness simply means acknowledging the hard work your team is doing. You'd be amazed how far a few kind words can go.

Communication

No matter how strongly you embody your vision, or how deeply you feel appreciation for your team, the whole thing can easily be derailed by poor communication. Whether it's a poorly worded email that causes anxiety among your team, a vague and uninformative press release, or a lackluster speech, bad communication can weaken your message and crush your vision. Worst of all, it may cause your team to lose faith in your ability to lead.

While you should be able to craft clear and concise written communications, the most important area of communication for leaders is public speaking.

Public speaking is about more than just transmitting information—it's about transmitting energy. You can deliver the same words in the same place at the same time, but if your speech is uninspiring, the result will be disappointing.

Consider Steve Jobs, whose Apple keynotes were legendary. He knew that his product announcements weren't just about showing people the new offerings from his company. The real focus of his keynotes was to build momentum for his products, focusing less on the technical capabilities and more on how they would fundamentally transform a customer's life. While the iPhone might have been a success regardless, there's no denying the impact Jobs made during his speeches on iPhone sales.

Now, I'm not saying you have to be Steve Jobs. You just need to learn how to be yourself in front of people and to communicate clearly and effectively, all while inspiring confidence and energy in your listeners. You might consider a public speaking course at a local college, or else participating in Toastmasters International. No matter how you do it, investing in your public speaking skills is an investment in your leadership skills.

Creativity

According to former Zappos CEO Tony Hsieh, creativity is what separates unconventional entrepreneurs from more traditionally oriented businesspeople.

"What I love about being an entrepreneur is that it's really about creativity," he told CNBC. "I think that people . . . love being handed a bunch of different constraints and then try to figure out what to do with it—those are the people that want to be entrepreneurs."[6]

When Hsieh came onboard at Zappos in 2000, the company totaled $1.6 million in sales. In 2009, that total was over $1 billion. What made this possible was Hsieh's creative approach to making online shoe shopping as easy and comfortable as possible, while also focusing on creating a positive work experience.

It was this creativity and openness that led Hsieh to institute a new organizational management structure in 2013. Dubbed "holacracy," Zappos embraced a decentralized structure that had employees "self-manage" so administrators could keep their focus on the company's larger goals. While the company still has a leadership structure to determine goals and implement strategy, by and large Hsieh empowered employees to become stakeholders in the company. This has led to Zappos being frequently listed as one of America's best places to work.

If you want to talk about burning the box, here's a great example. Hsieh took a company that was already very successful and completely changed the corporate structure in a very unique, creative way in order to make his company function better and more efficiently. Refusing to be constrained by corporate tradition, Hsieh

took a risk and turned his company into one of the best workplaces in the country.

When it comes to determining your vision and your strategic approaches, it's in your best interest to embrace creativity. Look for ideas that are so far outside of the box they may be unrecognizable. Of course, just having the idea doesn't mean you need to implement it. But it could lead you to a new, even better idea. One that might pay unexpected dividends.

The best way to train your creativity is to develop a lifelong commitment to learning. Read everything you can, from academic papers to trade magazines. Attend conferences and lectures, watch interviews online, and talk to absolutely everyone. Not only will this help you stay on the cutting edge of your industry and keep up with new technology and emerging trends, but it can also give you the spark you need to develop your own ideas.

Competitiveness

On some level it goes without saying that, if you're in business, you are competitive. Most people who lack drive end up stalled somewhere along the way, usually somewhere in middle management. If you're not competitive, you're not really a leader.

But competitiveness is also a natural byproduct of embracing the five characteristics I just laid out. The difference is that you'll be competing as an unconventional leader. Be like Tony Dungy's

teams were: faster, more responsive, ready to react. Be a lean, mean leading machine.

Keep in mind that you can be too competitive and overdo the "doing it alone" part of leadership. This can limit your success and sometimes means your ego has replaced your vision. When you leave your ego out of the equation, you'll be more willing to accept you're not perfect and that perhaps you could use advice or insight from an outside source.

Leaders Are Human Beings, Too

No matter how much they might deny it, leaders are people, too, and they have strengths and failings like anyone else. I'd like to take just a moment to look at two pieces of advice for leaders on how they should carry themselves.

Humility

There are few things worse than an arrogant leader—especially one who has no reason to be arrogant. Even if you've earned the right to be proud of your achievements, you can quickly do damage to your team's morale by holding yourself superior.

Instead, the best leaders are humble, crediting their team for their successes and shouldering the blame themselves. This can be a challenge, of course, since no one likes to take blame. But this kind of humility is actually a reflection of strength. Only those who are afraid of failure are willing to point the finger at their team.

Those with inner strength and self-assurance are willing to shoulder responsibility.

Integrity

Hold onto your integrity at all costs. I'm serious. No matter how much we'd like to believe that this should go unsaid, the fact is that it's surprisingly easy to let matters of integrity slide. It can be as simple as making a small promise that you aren't able to keep.

While it may seem like an insignificant thing to you, the fact is that people will remember. If you lose your integrity, it can be almost impossible to recover it.

In any relationship, whether at home or at work, your integrity represents the value of your word. If you let that value diminish, major distrust will likely spread among your team. Before you realize it, you'll have lost influence over people and situations. When you maintain your integrity, then no matter what else happens, you can still look at yourself in the mirror and know that you remained true to yourself and your values.

What It Means to Be a Leader

As I said before, there's no one type of "perfect" leader. It's a mindset and a methodology for getting a group of people—each with their own identity and interests—to work together in pursuit of a larger, universal goal. There are infinite paths to be taken

toward achieving that goal, and your job as a leader is to make sure you all work together in following one of those paths.

No matter what, leadership isn't about learning to be someone else. It's about being the best possible version of yourself, a tactic you can then use to pursue your vision alongside your team. When you lead by example, you're providing a model for your team to follow. You set the tone, you set the goal, and you set the strategy. But it's the team that has to execute.

When you're developing your leadership style, it's fine to be inspired by other great leaders of history. But don't be afraid to burn the box, to step outside of the traditional forms of leadership and corporate structure in order to find what's best for you and your vision. You have to decide for yourself what it means to be an unconventional leader. Once you do, you have the means necessary to accomplish the impossible.

Chapter 4

THE RITZ EXPERIENCE

Growth and Scalability

There is a saying in the business world: “If you are not growing, you’re dying.” And you know what? It is absolutely true. Not to sound overdramatic, but the fact is a company that is not growing isn’t just standing still—in business, that’s as good as having one foot in the proverbial grave.

In 1898, hotelier César Ritz and his business partner/chef, Auguste Escoffier, opened a hotel in the Place Vendrôme. Ritz and Escoffier had run other hotels before opening the Ritz, such as London's renowned Savoy Hotel. However, after leaving the Savoy under a cloud, Ritz followed the advice of his favored customers and began what would become the standard for all future luxury hotels.

Any enterprise that exceeds expectations will build a brand that carries the mark of excellence. The Ritz Experience presents innovative ways to provide business growth through exceptional

customer service, like the Ritz's legendary service in Paris. We'll get to more about the Ritz in a few pages.

First and foremost, business—commerce, buying and selling, however you want to put it—is a competition. A battle, so to speak. Businesses are constantly competing with one another for customers, sales, and for dominance in the marketplace. It doesn't bode well for your company to stand still in the middle of the "battlefield," does it?

In business, competition is always fierce, and it never gets any easier—not that we'd want it to! In fact, lack of competition can be an even bigger problem. According to the *Harvard Business Review*, historically, a decrease in competition has led to increased market concentration, with the biggest firms receiving 32% of all revenue in 2012 compared to 26% just 15 years earlier. Meanwhile, new firms are emerging at a much lower rate, which further decreases competition. [1]

Competition is what makes business the great game it is. If you're not willing to play, you'll lose market share and money, and over time you will get pushed out entirely.

The other reason lack of growth is bad for business is stagnation. When your business succeeds, it's because you've hit on a formula for success. You've found a product or service people want that you can provide for a profit, and you've put it together in a way that makes it extremely attractive to your customers.

But, as the saying goes, nothing lasts (i.e., stays the same) forever. Market circumstances change, and consumer desires and needs shift over time. This means that what works today may not work tomorrow, and if you fail to grow your business and adapt to changes in consumer sentiment and behavior, your business will ultimately fail.

When it comes to your business, constant growth is one of the key factors in your company's success and ensures your organization will last for the long haul. And when it comes to growth, customers are king.

In order to grow your business, you need to be adaptable—and a little psychic. Okay, you don't actually need to be psychic, but you do need to be perceptive, insightful, and in tune with the marketplace, especially when it comes to your customers. When you focus on providing your customers with exceptional customer service that exceeds even their highest expectations, your brand becomes a symbol of excellence, and that symbol can drive your growth by itself.

Growth is an important idea for businesses and even individuals looking to achieve great things. But in order to achieve growth, you need to understand exactly what that looks like for you and for your organization, then develop and execute a strategic plan to reach new heights. If the great game is about competition, then you're going to need a really good game plan.

Growth vs. Scalability

It's not uncommon to hear someone new in business use the terms growth and scalability interchangeably, which is essentially the same as describing all rectangles as squares. Sure, they have some similar characteristics, but their differences are significant. It's worthwhile to take a few moments and look at the difference between growth and scalability.

Growth

For the most part, a business's growth has to do with the size of the business. This can be measured in a number of ways, including revenue, profits, market share, and/or other metrics. For many companies, comparing annual revenue is a solid indication of how fast a business is growing and paints a pretty faithful picture of how the company is performing relative to the marketplace.

Of course, even a company with hundreds of millions of dollars in annual revenues will fail quickly if costs eat too much into profits. This is the flip side of growth. In order for a business to grow, it must invest resources into the company to increase sales, which thereby increases the revenue stream. In other words, you've got to spend money to make money.

Think, for instance, about a sports agency. Say that agency has ten clients, and they want to double that number to boost revenues. In order to do so, they'll ultimately need to add more staff to handle the higher volume. While the company may achieve their

revenue goals, it will come at the cost of the added staffing, which includes salaries, bonuses, and other associated costs.

Scalability

Just like all squares are rectangles but not all rectangles are squares, scalability is a particular type of growth that differs from a traditional linear model. Instead, in scalable growth, companies reach significant revenue growth without investing significant costs. Unlike linear growth, scalability means you can raise your revenues exponentially without adding to your financial burden, rendering almost all that growth profit.

Sounds too good to be true, right? But thanks to the tech industry, scalability has been achieved by a number of companies, especially in the software industry. If you sell a license for a particular piece of software, the number of employees you need doesn't change whether you sell 100 or 100,000 units. The only difference is how much revenue you rake in.

You'll still have expenses, of course. You'll need to develop software, perform testing, invest in advertising and distribution, and probably have a lawyer or two on hand just in case. But again, those costs don't change based on your sales. Consider Google, who in 2017 had more than a billion active users while putting only seven different products into service, including Gmail, Maps, Search, and Android. [2]

The trick, of course, is finding situations where scalability is possible. While software companies generally don't need to produce a physical inventory, other manufactured products do. Many services are also limited by physical realities—there's really no way to scale a cleaning or plumbing business, for instance.

Growth and Customer Service

Regardless of whether your company is pursuing linear or scalable growth, it's important to remember that your customer should be at the center of everything. On the most basic level, your customers are your source of revenue, whether they're individuals, government entities, or other businesses. Without your customers, you simply cannot survive.

But looking at the customer and only seeing dollar signs is a pretty cynical way to do business, and it won't do you any favors in the long run. A much better, more sustainable way to see your customers is to view them as partners in a long-term relationship.

If you view your customers as means of a transaction, the relationship ends as soon as the transaction is completed. But if you look at your customer and see a long-term relationship, each transaction becomes an opportunity to build trust and familiarity, and to reinforce the high quality of your brand in your customer's mind. When you build these relationships, you not only make a customer for life (or at least a customer with a sense of loyalty), but

your reputation spreads out further and your business grows organically.

Now, how do you build that type of long-term relationship with a customer? We can all learn a lesson on this topic from the Ritz hotel in Paris.

The Ritz was dedicated to providing their guests the finest possible experience. Ritz himself insisted on bathrooms in every suite (an extravagance at the time), and he demanded that rooms be held to a stringent standard of hygiene. With fine dining provided by Escoffier and his staff, Ritz made sure every guest felt pampered and wonderstruck by the opulent atmosphere of this glittering gem of a hotel, which eventually inspired the word "ritzy."

The hotel played host to a wealth of famous people, including heads of state, diplomats, stars of stage and screen, and well-known authors like Marcel Proust, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Ernest Hemingway, who once said, "When I dream of afterlife in heaven, the action always takes place in the Paris Ritz." [3] Coco Chanel lived in the Ritz for more than 30 years.

The key to the success of the Ritz was its unmatched customer service. It's one thing to give the customer what they want. True genius lies in giving them what they want even when they don't know what it is!

Successful enterprises are in the business of delivering smiles, and the way to do that is to under promise and overdeliver. When it comes to delivering on a promise, the only thing set in stone

is the result (i.e., the promise itself). The way to affect how your customer receives any given promise you make is by setting the right expectations. When you establish a level of expectation in your customer's mind, the goal shouldn't be just to meet it, but to exceed it.

The goal is to establish your brand's identity as one of excellence. By exceeding customer expectations, you show your customers that you're not just as good as your word—you're even better.

Of course, this can be a double-edged sword, so it's important that you don't wildly undersell your abilities. If you under promise in the extreme, you run the risk of appearing out of touch with your company and your processes. Worse, customers may catch on that you're deliberately setting expectations too low.

In sum, never ever promise more than you can give, but don't sell yourself too short, either.

Growing Your Business

So now that we've established customer service as the key to business growth, the next thing to do is talk about how to use that to your advantage.

Market Penetration

The most straightforward way to grow your business is to expand your market share. If you have a product or a service that

you believe in, then it's almost a no-brainer to focus your efforts on getting that product or service out to more people, which increases your total revenue.

There are a few different ways you can increase your market share. One simple way is to lower prices, making your product more attractive. Yes, this lowers your per-unit revenue, but the volume should well make up the difference. You could also use direct marketing to better target your intended audience, such as through emails, flyers, coupons, websites, and TV and magazine advertisements. While these all cost money, they can bring a bigger return by engaging new audiences.

Market Development

Another option for growing your business is to expand your products into new markets. For most companies, this usually means entering into a new geographical area, whether that's a new part of town or a new part of the world.

But market development doesn't always have to be geographical. You can segment your customers in any number of ways, including by gender, age, economic status, and even profession. It's also worth considering how you reach those markets, which might involve focusing more on internet sales as a way to supplement your brick-and-mortar sales.

Take Michael Dubin and Mark Levine, founders of Dollar Shave Club, for example. Dubin was an improv comedian who

stumbled into the shaving business thanks to an impromptu conversation at a party. Dissatisfied with the cost and difficulty of shopping for razors, Dubin knew providing a cheaper option to consumers was likely to be popular. What he didn't know was just how popular it would be.

Dubin and Levine targeted men specifically and focused on the online marketplace, undercutting the market dominance of Gillette. Dubin knew his audience, and he created a viral advertisement that not only highlighted the low cost and convenience of his product/service but appealed to the comic tastes of the internet generation, telling them "Our blades are f***ing great!" in his video, which has been viewed 27.4 million times.

Dubin and Levine saw an available marketplace, and they claimed it as their own. But it should be pointed out that their success is also attributable to their focus on those buying their goods and services. Once they established a solid base, they offered a number of other products while maintaining a foundation of excellent customer service in order to sustain their brand. Dollar Shave Club sold to Unilever for $1 billion dollars after only five years in business, cutting Gilette's market share from 70% to less than 50%. [4]

Product Development

Instead of trying to bring existing products to new markets, you can also work to grow your business by introducing new products into an existing market. With product development, you can leverage your brand by widening product selection and giving your customers more options. Not only does this increase your presence within the market, but it also puts the squeeze on your competitors, making it more likely that customers will choose you over your competition.

I don't care how much something costs, only how much it makes.

But what exactly are these new products? One common choice is brand extension, which you can see frequently in the snack food industry. Consider Lays, which offers a wide range of chips and chip flavors to meet a highly varied customer palate. The company also makes frequent limited-run offerings, which are often drawn from customer flavor suggestions. The result is a huge increase in brand loyalty, and a year-on-year sales increase of 12%.[5]

Diversification

In terms of business growth, diversification comes with the highest risks and, as you might expect, the highest rewards. Simply put, diversification involves bringing a new product into a new market. If you think that sounds like basically starting a new business, well

. . . you're not totally wrong. The only difference is that you can use your existing infrastructure to create and market your new product.

Apple is an excellent example of a company that successfully diversified their offerings to grow their business exponentially. Originally a computer company, Apple saw an opening in the cell phone market and leveraged their technical expertise (and Steve Jobs' marketing brilliance) to convince Americans that they needed the iPhone. The success of iPads may be even more impressive, since Apple essentially invented a market for tablets.

While diversification carries risks, once it's successfully implemented, these products can actually reduce a company's exposure. The more products you rely on to generate revenue, the less dire things become when sales dip. This gives you a cushion (both with time and money) during down periods so you can decide how to best fix the situation.

Customers First!

I've been talking a lot about products and markets, and they're both important, especially when you're trying to grow your company. But it's just as important not to lose sight of the fact that the customer is central to both of these things. No matter how much you love your product, it won't matter if the customers don't love it too. When you break down markets, it becomes clear that those markets are made up of individuals.

The better a customer's experience—the more value they think they're getting—the more likely they are to return again and again. This is just as true for an HVAC contractor as it is for a snack food manufacturer. Delivering for your customers is the only way to ensure your business continues to grow.

Building a Growth Strategy

While the previous section was all about different ways you can work to grow your business, the trick now is to decide how you're going to actualize that growth. In other words, you know what you're going to do, now you just have to do it.

It sounds like one of those "easier said than done" scenarios. But planning and executing your company's growth strategy is actually pretty straightforward. While each step takes a good amount of work and some serious attention to detail, if you're willing to put in the effort, you'll be well-equipped to help your business compete for growth.

Set Clear Goals

Just like with any plan, the first step should always be to set your goals. Without clarity on where you want to go, there's no possible way you can map the right course. Of course, making sure you set the right goals is the most important part of the process.

What is the right goal? Well, that depends on your company. For the most part, companies tend to focus on ways to increase their

revenue, and you can use any combination of the methods we talked about in the previous section to do that. The important part is to pay attention to where your company is in the business cycle.

If your company is relatively new, for instance, you can focus on building up your customer base and making sure people know who you are and what you can offer. Your efforts will likely focus more on acquisition of a market share, unlike a more well-established company that may be ready to look at brand extensions and diversification.

No matter what your goal is, just make sure it's something that's measurable. You can't measure feelings. You need quantifiable data that you can compare so you have a picture of where you've been, where you are, and where you're headed.

Establish Well-Defined Timelines

You've probably read report after report about the annual growth of multiple entities, from businesses to governments. While year-to-year data is helpful for looking at the big picture, when it comes to setting growth goals, a year is far too long. Instead, your goals should be measured over much shorter periods, such as every quarter, if not every month.

Why such short timelines? It's because growth should focus on right now. It's good to have big, overarching goals, but the real work happens when you break those big goals down into smaller,

more usable portions. When you take care of the short term, the long term has a tendency to take care of itself.

The other benefit is that shorter periods allow for more control over corrections. If a strategy isn't working, you'll have clearer data much faster, which will allow you the time to change your strategy before you've sunk too many resources into it.

Do Your Market Research

Market research seems so simple, but because of cost, time, and other resources, it often falls by the wayside. Instead, companies tend to rely on either tried-and-true (and often tired) methods or else a gut feeling about how the market is going.

If you need convincing, just look at the work Howard Moskowitz did for Prego in the early 1980s. Before his market research, the only spaghetti sauce you'd find on the shelves was plain, thin spaghetti sauce by Ragú. Despite winning taste test after taste test, Prego continued to fall further behind Ragú, and they needed help.

Moskowitz had the Prego team create 45 different recipes. He took these recipes to focus groups all across the country and had taste testers rate each version. The results were surprising. There wasn't a single "winner" among the recipes. Instead, his tests revealed that most people had one of three general preferences: Plain, spicy, and extra chunky.

This was a revelation, especially since no company was currently selling chunky spaghetti sauce. Prego immediately went to work providing products for this underserved 30% of the market, and over the next 10 years they increased their revenue by $600 million in chunky sauce alone. 6

Of course, not every market research project is going to add $600 million to your company's revenue. But skipping out on research means you might be misallocating your resources while potentially missing out on significant areas of revenue.

Pay Attention to the Forecast

Depending on what you consider leisure activity, you either find forecasting models the most interesting or the most boring part of the growth process. For those who like to spend their time swimming in statistics, numbers, formulas, graphs, and equation after equation, then models are for you. If you're not so mathematically inclined . . . well, you still need models, unfortunately.

There are a number of different ways to model your business' sales forecasts, as well as a nearly endless number of people willing to help you build those models. No matter what direction you decide to go in, these models provide you with a valuable resource for planning your business's growth.

With forecast models, you can measure your growth over time and determine whether you need to cut costs even further to

maintain profitability. They can also help you communicate your vision to others inside and outside of your company, whereby you can increase buy-in from employees and help secure outside financing to further invest in your company.

Choose Your Tactics and Go

For most of us in the great game, strategy is how business comes alive. Everything up to this point has been about preparation, and it's all very important if you're going to develop a plan that has a chance of succeeding. But once all of the preparatory work is in place, then the fun work begins.

The tactics you use to pursue your growth goal will depend on a number of factors, including your spot in the business life cycle, your particular industry, and external market forces that might affect your bottom line.

Your success will confuse those who think they know you.

But once you choose your approach, be sure to trust yourself enough to fully embrace your strategy. It's both exciting and frightening to put your work out in the world.

Also, make sure to give yourself a chance to get real data before you make any snap corrections. It's a fine balance: you don't want to let a bad strategy go too long, but you can easily overcorrect and keep yourself from achieving your goal.

Personal Growth

We've spent a lot of time talking about business growth. But the process of growing your business relates to personal growth, too. You should be sure you're not neglecting yourself. Just like focusing on short-term growth goals helps you achieve your overall goals, paying attention to your own development as a person can only help you in other aspects of your life, as well.

When you're looking at your own personal growth, you should start with a solid, concrete goal. Set milestones so you can measure your progress. Ideally, these milestones correspond with personal deadlines, whether they're set by yourself or by an instructor or mentor. Not only does this help you hold yourself accountable, but it gives you a fixed point to work towards.

You might be saying to yourself, "Sure, the first two points were easy enough, but market research? Come on, how does that relate!" While focusing on your own growth can be a very personal process, you can increase the efficiency of your efforts by considering your skill set in the context of the outside world. What skills are you missing? Which skills would be most useful for you to develop to make your work easier? Knowing this information can supercharge your personal development.

Finally, once you decide on your strategy, pursue it! Having an idea is the easiest thing in the world; it's putting it into practice that's the challenge. And you owe that to yourself.

One Last Word

When it comes to business growth and even personal growth, the most important thing is to never stand still. That may sound obvious, but it's easy to grow complacent.

If you were to stand on the side of the highway, you could only watch the cars fly by—you couldn't get anywhere unless you were at least keeping up with the traffic (in your own car, of course). But to reach your destination, to achieve your goal of business or personal growth, you also need to be able to see the whole road (which you certainly can't do from the side) and be willing to take some risks to get ahead.

Chapter 5

TY COBB, BABE RUTH, AND SO ON

Teamwork

In the 1987 movie *The Untouchables*, there's a scene where notorious gangster Al Capone, played by the legendary Robert De Niro, has gathered several of his associates together for a private banquet. With everyone seated around a large round table, Capone begins a speech comparing business to baseball.

Capone, who was a semi-pro ballplayer before turning to a life of crime, emphasized the importance of teamwork over the individual. "Sunny day, stands are full of fans, and what does the player have to say? I'm going out there for myself," says Capone. "But I get nowhere unless the team wins." [1]

Of course, Capone undercuts his point a little bit when he brutally bludgeons one of his associates. Still, his theme of teamwork and his message that the group is more valuable than the individual endures. Whether you're the head of an organized crime syndicate or running a multinational corporation, team building is a big part of success.

I'm not suggesting that we all go out and become crime lords. What I am saying is that it's important to embrace the power of teamwork in order to reach your goals. When your team can align the skills and abilities of each individual toward a single goal, you'll find that you can not only reach new heights but that the path there will be much easier to travel, with many hands lightening everyone's workload.

For most of us who play the great game, we get into the work because we're confident in our ability to succeed. There are some days when we feel like Superman, completely invincible, ready to outrun speeding bullets and leap tall buildings in a single bound. Even on days when you don't feel you're at your best, you at least feel capable of getting the job done.

But you just can't do everything by yourself. Sure, it might seem easier to simply take care of things on your own, without spending the time describing to someone else what task needs to be done. But deep down, we all know that we need help. Doing everything yourself isn't sustainable, and you'll quickly find yourself burning out, unable to keep up with the growing demands of your business as more and more work piles up.

Building a team takes that stress off of your shoulders by spreading the workload across several individuals, many of whom have knowledge, skills, and perspectives that can add a lot of value to the final product. And that's where the value really lies. By gathering the many individual talents of your team into one

cohesive group, you can accomplish so much more than you could on your own.

Consider the collective community action of an Amish barn-raising. Whenever the need arises, such as after a fire or when starting a new farm, the community bands together to erect a barn, often in a single day. With modern construction methods, this process would take weeks, if not months. If a single person attempted to build or rebuild a barn? You get the point.

The long tradition of teamwork and sacrifice for the greater good allows Amish communities to build beautiful, structurally sound barns. Yes, there's a great deal of planning and organization that takes place before the first stone is laid, but the actual execution of the barn-raising itself is a wonder to behold. 2

When it comes to teamwork, it should be your goal to not only succeed but to reach a level of success that others find unbelievable. With effective team building and a good understanding of how to get the most out of your collaborations, that should be no problem at all.

Defining Teamwork

Coming up with a definition for teamwork seems simple enough. At its most basic level, teamwork is working with someone. This can be as collaborative as sharing information and processes throughout a project, or it can be as limited as coming together at the end of a project to compare results.

But to get the most out of teamwork, we need a better definition—one that really captures the added strength that a team provides. It's best to think of teamwork as the action of a group of people working together to achieve a shared goal.

Choose those close to you wisely, for your life will be a reflection of those choices.

This idea of a shared goal is really important—and I mean important. When you have a group of people working together without a strong sense of what the end result is supposed to be, individuals are actually less likely to work effectively. These unfocused groups have a tendency to become competitive in an unproductive way, as individuals pursue their own agendas without necessarily considering the well-being of the team and the status of the goal achievement.

Instead, having a common goal becomes a rallying point for the team, which helps channel each person's contribution in the most productive way possible. Even more important, it can help your team develop positive synergy, meaning the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts.

Synergy

Michael Jordan is widely considered to be one of the best basketball players of all time—maybe even the best athlete ever. Over the course of his career, he won six NBA championships, five

NBA MVP awards, was a 14-time All-Star, and was voted to the All-NBA First Team ten times. All of this he accomplished even while taking two years off in the middle of his career to pursue a professional baseball career.

Whatever individual honors Jordan received, he would be the first to tell you that championships are what create a legacy. In order to win those championships, Jordan had to be part of a team, and his Chicago Bulls teammates answered the call. Horace Grant, Tony Kukoc, Ron Harper, and Dennis Rodman all contributed to a team that could score at will and played strong defense all over the court.

Then, of course, there's Scottie Pippen, Jordan's fellow Hall of Famer. He was the perfect foil to Jordan's greatness, adding an additional scoring threat while blocking shots and pulling down rebounds. Jordan and Pippen clicked, and while each of them was a great player in his own right, they created an unstoppable force when working together.

Synergy is the state in which teammates bring out the best in each other, creating a final product that's far greater than the sum of all of their separate parts. Think of synergy like cooking a gourmet dish—you can start with the best ingredients in the world, but it's the right combination that transforms food into cuisine.

Finding synergy through teamwork is a lot like cooking. Each team member is a different ingredient, and building the best team means mixing those people together in a way that highlights

the strengths of each individual. As a leader, you have to help select those ingredients and be able to control the variables to ensure they come together as an entrée, adjusting the heat, adding seasoning, and making last-second additions to unlock the full flavor of the dish.

Each member of the team should be encouraged to grow, to make personal discoveries about themselves and their abilities, and to learn new skills to better contribute to the team. And through a common goal, whether it's an NBA Championship or an increase in sales numbers, your team should feel a shared sense of accomplishment for each and every achievement you reach.

The 6 Keys to Effective Teamwork

No matter what kind of team you're working with, there are some common factors that appear in all successful teams. Each of these keys on its own helps increase the efficiency and effectiveness of your team, but striving to encompass all six of these keys will ensure your team finds a level of synergy that will raise your game to the next level.

1. Communication

By far, the most important aspect of successful teamwork is open and effective communication. Communication is the ability to transmit ideas from one person to another. If you don't have the ability to clearly communicate your ideas to others, you create an

impenetrable roadblock, and the detours around that roadblock can be long and confusing. You may lose people along the way. This is true in just about every aspect of life, isn't it?

How many problems could we avoid if we were just better communicators? Politics might be easier, debates would be more productive, and I wouldn't get in trouble with my wife because I forgot to pick up milk at the store.

But as important as communication is for the rest of your life, it's absolutely essential for your team-related efforts. According to a report in Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), 400 companies with over 100,000 employees claimed that they lost an average of $62.4 million every year due to poor communications with employees. 3

Can you believe that? $62.4 million gone, just because companies didn't figure out how to optimize communication with and among their employees.

Well, I can absolutely believe it, without any doubt or hesitation.

Developing clear lines of communication is how teams come to understand each other. It's how they inform one another of their progress and their problems. It's how they contribute ideas or offer constructive suggestions for how something might be improved. In short, everything a team does stems from communication.

There are a number of ways to improve your team's communication skills. It helps to make sure you're using a shared

vocabulary, whether it's jargon from within your industry or regular non-specialized language. Maybe you'll need to go over some key terms with your team in order to prevent crossed wires and other misunderstandings.

Another option is to decide which forms of communication work best for your team. Some teams function well during in-person meetings, while others prefer phone calls or email threads. You can determine which medium works best for your current needs and put emphasis on those forms that help your team succeed.

Finally, the best way to encourage communication is to be honest with your team. When something goes wrong, or if you find your team is making unsatisfactory progress toward a deadline, don't be afraid to let them know. It's critical that you take ownership of the issue and don't deflect. Most teams will respect that honesty and take ownership of their own mistakes moving forward.

2. Share a Common Goal

As I mentioned before, having a common goal is a key part of any team effort—in fact, it's a significant part of how we define teamwork. That's why it's worth taking a moment to dig a bit deeper into the idea of a shared goal.

Setting a goal is both the easiest and hardest part of managing a team. It's easy because you can essentially set the bar anywhere you want, whether you want an easily achieved goal to

build confidence or a stretch goal to inspire your team to reach their full potential.

But that's also what makes setting goals difficult. Yes, the world is your oyster when it comes to setting goals, but setting the wrong goal can have long-lasting consequences on your team morale and your business as a whole. If you aim too low, your team may meet the goal, but the end result might not be enough to keep your company competitive. Too high, and you could discourage your team, leaving them frustrated and with feelings of inadequacy.

That's why any goals you set shouldn't be carved into stone. Hey, things happen. A team member gets sick or takes a position with another company. The market takes an unexpected twist. Maybe you get good news and receive an unexpected windfall. In the great game, we know that unexpected things happen, and how you react to them is a lot of what business is about.

One way to ensure your goals stay in tune with the performance of your team is to establish milestones or benchmarks. In other words, checkmarks you can hit as you cross certain thresholds. These milestones hinge entirely on what your goal is. You might set marks for total sales, new subscribers, business growth . . . virtually any metric you use to measure your business can be used to set milestones.

When you hit (or miss) milestones, it's a great time to reevaluate your team's goal. You can look at why your plan either succeeded or failed and adjust your tactics to fine-tune your

approach. You can also reset your goals, raising or lowering the target to best suit the performance of your team. No matter what, make your team a part of this goal-setting process, and they'll become full stake-holding participants in the teamwork process.

3. Know Your Role

Believe it or not, you can learn a lot about teamwork from a rock band. Formed in 1962, the Rolling Stones have been rocking around the world for nearly 60 years, an incredible span of time for any group of musicians—let alone rock stars. The Beatles, perhaps the most famous band of all time, were only active for eight years, which is only 13% of the career of the Stones.

What's the secret to the Rolling Stones' continued success after all these years? They still tour the world, playing music for packed stadiums and arenas, with fans from ages nine to 90. How do they pull it all off?

While my old music teacher would love for me to tell you it's practice, in reality, it's something even more important: each band member knows their role in the group. I don't just mean their instruments, of course. What I mean is each person has a particular function within the band, and because everyone knows and accepts their role, they function as a very cohesive unit.

Now, practice is important, of course, and the band gets together for intensive rehearsals a full two months before going on tour. But during these rehearsals, the band also practices their roles.

Lead singer Mick Jagger is described as the CEO, planning the trajectory of the band's shows, while guitarist Keith Richards is the spiritual engine onstage. Of course, this leads to conflicts; luckily, guitarist Ronnie Wood acts as the peacekeeper, helping negotiate truces at contentious moments. Drummer Charlie Watts, like most drummers, is the steady pillar of the band, keeping everything moving forward. [4]

What does the experience of the Rolling Stones tell us about teamwork? It's important to know your role as part of a team. Each team member has particular strengths, whether it's hard skills like math, engineering, or statistics or soft skills like leadership or problem-solving.

When each team member's role in the overall project is made clear, it's easier to avoid potential conflicts that might arise. There's an old saying that too many cooks spoil the broth. Each cook has his or her own idea of what the broth should taste like and adds their own touch without asking the other cooks. What you get is a mishmash of flavors that tastes good to no one.

It's the same with teamwork. If roles aren't made clear, you could end up with four different people thinking they're in charge, leaving numerous tasks unfinished. Moreover, it leads to conflicts between the supposed leaders, who might be trying to take the group in totally different directions.

When every member of the team knows, understands, and undertakes their particular role and can communicate that clearly to

each other, you'll avoid many of these messy struggles. They may still happen, of course—human nature will almost always see to that. But with a clear structure, you can quickly settle these disputes and keep your team headed forward.

A quick warning, however: while knowing your role in a team is important, some team members may take that idea to extremes. These are the team members who might tell a colleague to "stay in their lane," implying that the colleague doesn't know what they're talking about.

While the team member may have a point, expressing it this way can quickly poison the atmosphere of the team. This attitude can quickly shut down discussion, create ill will between team members, and make it all but impossible to be productive.

When this happens, it's best to take both team members aside individually, discuss the issue with them, and make sure everyone understands not only their role, but also how to treat each other appropriately.

4. Accountability

While it's all well and good to make sure every team member knows their role within the group, it doesn't matter if no one holds them accountable. In an ideal world, each person would hold themselves responsible for accomplishing their tasks at a high level, taking pride in their work, knowing that others are depending on them to produce their best work.

But I think we all know, in our heart of hearts, that this isn't always the case. In fact, I'm willing to bet that every one of us has let ourselves down at least once in the past. Maybe you procrastinated too long on a project, thinking you had enough time to play 18 holes and still meet your deadline, leaving you scrambling. Or perhaps you just forgot about an important task, only remembering during a staff meeting while everyone stares at you expectantly.

Mistakes like this happen, and that's okay. The problem is when it becomes habitual. Human nature being what it is, it's only natural for some of us to try and figure out what we can get away with. If you cut one corner here, what's the harm in trying to cut one over there, too. Eventually, if no one stops you, you run out of corners.

Accountability is a key factor in making sure you work well together as a team. Collaborative work builds on itself, and like a pyramid without a stable base, when a team member doesn't follow through on their particular role, the entire thing can topple over.

Accountability is about answering to yourself and to your team. My father once gave me some great advice: don't ask anyone to do something you wouldn't do yourself. If you can't hold yourself accountable for getting your work done, then how can you possibly ask someone to hold themselves to a higher standard? Personal responsibility inspires group accountability—and the opposite holds true, too.

5. Creativity

In order for your team to reach its full potential, you have to encourage a creative environment. Now, I'm not suggesting that everyone should sit around writing poetry or painting landscapes. But at every opportunity, you should be encouraging team members to look for unusual or counterintuitive solutions to problems. Don't just think outside of the box—burn the box.

In April of 1970, the three astronauts of Apollo 13 were on a mission to land on the moon when an oxygen tank on the side of their craft exploded. Over the next several days, the crew scrambled to stay alive, improvising solutions to problems as they arose.

Of course, the astronauts weren't alone. Mission control in Houston was full of staffers trying to solve the problems faced by the crew, including one big one: how to get them home safely. Mission control developed a flight path that would use the gravity of the moon to slingshot them back to the Earth, while devising plans for the crew to conserve energy, fuel, and water.

One of the more challenging problems they faced was carbon dioxide. The crew had been forced to retreat to the lunar landing module, or LM, but because there were three men instead of two, they soon ran out of carbon dioxide filters. While they still had plenty of filters in the command module (CM), these filters didn't fit in the LM, meaning the astronauts were slowly drowning in excess carbon dioxide.

Down on the ground, NASA technicians improvised a makeshift solution, using only the equipment the astronauts had on board, including plastic bags, pieces of cardboard, and a towel. Communicating the procedure verbally to the Apollo 13 astronauts, the crew was able to fashion a workable carbon dioxide scrubber, and a few days later, they splashed safely into the Pacific Ocean. [5]

During a time of high stress, with the lives of three men on the line, these engineers rose to the challenge. They were encouraged to find creative ways to solve their problems.

While your team likely isn't facing such life-and-death scenarios, you can still take home the lesson of creativity. When you encourage your team to look for creative solutions, you'll find new ways of doing things, and that can give you a distinct advantage.

I want you to try something for me. It's a little artsy, but just bear with me. Grab a pen or pencil and a piece of paper. Then I want you to draw a picture of yourself—without taking your pen or pencil from the paper.

It's not important how gifted an artist you are, since we're not after creating a museum-quality drawing. Whether you're a budding Picasso or you draw like a third grader, what matters is that you try. How do you solve the problem of drawing separate features without lifting your pen from the page? What happens when you have to connect your eyes, mouth, ears, and head with a single line?

There is no right or wrong solution, just different approaches to the problem. I've seen people backtrack over lines, leaving heavily marked paths where their pencil has been run over and over. I've seen people create simple, evocative drawings that merely suggest a face, while others go entirely overboard, shading the entire picture and leaving the face in relief.

Once you're done, take a look at your picture. How did your approach pan out? How else might you have approached the problem? Are there solutions that you didn't consider in the moment because you felt pressed for time?

In our world, problems arise all the time, and what defines us is our response. Those problems are going to impose restrictions on us, constraining what steps we can take, and we need to be creative enough to maneuver our way through those restrictions to find possible solutions.

The other thing? Don't impose any extra restrictions on yourself. Did you feel rushed in your drawing? If so, why? My only restriction was to not lift your pen or pencil. Did you impose a time limit on yourself, even unconsciously?

There's an unspoken side to creativity as well, and that's being aware of what you can and can't do. If you either consciously or unconsciously impose restrictions on your creativity, you could be impeding the creative process itself, making life more difficult for your teammates—and yourself.

In a sense, another term for this kind of creativity is openness. Be open to suggestions, new approaches, and mid-course adjustments, especially when those changes open a window to an otherwise unseen path.

6. Support from All Sides

Throughout all of these keys, the one unspoken factor is trust. Your team needs to feel supported from all directions. Without this sense of support, it's difficult to get your team to fully buy into the common goal and the strategies being used to pursue it.

This is especially true when it comes to creativity and risk-taking. If a team member doesn't feel they can trust the other members of the team, especially the leadership, they're much less likely to be willing to make suggestions or try new methods. Instead, they're usually more inclined to behave in ways that protect their position, and it's difficult to bring them back into the group.

One of the best ways to help your team feel supported is simply to listen to them. The next time you're in a group setting, I want you to try this. Ask your team how they feel things are progressing, and encourage them to voice their opinions about progress, methodology, and so on. Then, don't say another word.

Okay, if your team is a little hesitant, you can prompt people to speak. But try to talk as little as possible. Instead, actively listen to each person as they speak, showing a genuine interest in what

they're saying. Try not to take notes; just look them in the eye, nodding or smiling, and make sure each person feels heard.

For many leaders, this is the hardest thing in the world. But I promise you, your team will appreciate it. This exercise can create a habit of openness, and you may not have to speak much at all. In the best cases, the teams start to lead themselves, and the synergy will continue to build.

An Example of Teamwork

It isn't hard to see examples of teamwork all around you. Sports teams rely on teamwork to succeed, and those that don't work well together usually lose night after night. Families use teamwork to ensure that everyone gets fed, that chores get done, and that there's still time for recreation. Even sanitation workers use teamwork, calling out to the driver to let them know they're ready to move to the next house.

However, perhaps nothing better shows the importance of teamwork than the theatre. Consider the 2015 Broadway smash hit, Hamilton. The show's writer and original star, Lin-Manuel Miranda, has rightly been hailed as a creative genius, blending hip hop and musical theatre into a seamless creation that highlights America's diversity while bringing generations together to celebrate U.S. history.

But while Miranda gets the lion's share of the credit, putting on a Broadway show—or any show, for that matter—takes a huge

team, putting in a ton of unseen effort behind the scenes. While audiences get to enjoy a two-hour show, it's easy to overlook the thousands of man-hours that go into making something like Hamilton possible.

It all starts with a common goal. Miranda wrote the script after reading a biography of Alexander Hamilton written by historian Ron Chernow. However, until he brought together a group willing to produce the show, it was nothing more than a script. Once Miranda surrounded himself with other creators, the script transformed into the show, and bringing it to Broadway would be the common goal shared by every team member.

Think of all the people that contribute to a show coming together. You have the actors, of course, from the big-name stars to the members of the chorus, and each cast member adds a vital piece to the performance.

But the cast is just the start. You have set builders, scene painters, costume creators, prop masters, lighting electricians, and sound engineers, creating the physical space for the performers and adding the visual and sound effects necessary to complete the stage picture.

All of these tasks are overseen by designers, who put together their visions, create drawings and schematics, and guide their teams to making that vision a reality.

Then there's the directing team. Headed by the primary director, Hamilton's team includes a choreographer, a music

director, stage managers, and production coordinators. All of these people work together to make sure each part of the process is coming together, with the director at the top to guide the overall production to match their vision.

Then there are all the people on the other side of the building. This includes producers raising money, PR people who oversee publicity, and human resources people making sure there are enough staff members.

By the time it's all said and done, you can easily have more than a hundred people working on a single production, taking care of every possible aspect of the show. But the key factor is that everyone knows their role. They understand what is expected of them, and they go about their job knowing that the production won't happen if they don't get their work done.

While each team member is accountable to someone, they also hold themselves accountable. Like most artists, theatre employees hold themselves to a high standard, particularly on Broadway, which is considered to be the standard of American theatre. They hold themselves accountable not just to the theatre, but to their own personal standards of artistic quality. Not only does it reflect well on the production, but it reflects well on them, too.

Of course, the key to making this all come together is good communication. The production team is a hierarchy, with each staff member knowing their place. The director and producer make decisions, then pass them down the chain until they reach the people responsible for implementing it. Communication is collaborative, and rarely are decisions made without hearing input or without regard for what it means to the show and to the staff.

Mortar unites bricks into one structure; find the mortar that will give you *structure.*

As you might expect, this can also require a lot of creativity. If a sound engineer wants to put a speaker somewhere on the set, the sound and set teams work together to find an answer that works for everyone. This usually involves finding a creative solution, like installing the speaker under the stage, or creating a box that will hide the speaker without affecting the sound.

Finally, the team is supportive of one another. Putting on a Broadway show is already stressful, and with tight deadlines that never seem to allow enough time to get the job done, tensions can sometimes run high. But the best leaders are those who can sense the temperature of the room, and when things feel a little too tight, they can find ways to release that pressure by letting each team member know their contributions are important and valued.

Not all shows are as successful as *Hamilton*, which has already grossed over $1 billion.[6] There have been some legendary flops, too, and most shows have trouble breaking even.

This isn't always because a production couldn't work together as a team. There can be issues with audience interest, bad reviews, and other problems that can be impossible to predict.

Still, these productions require huge teams to work together towards the singular goal of getting a production up and running on Broadway, even when the productions end up losing money. Just like in baseball, even making it to the big leagues is an accomplishment.

How to Build Your Team

The two important things to remember about building teams are that it takes time, and it's never finished. Making a successful team means building communication and trust among all members, and that trust can only develop over time. You may have some groups that seem to hit it off almost immediately, but even these groups need time to jell as a workforce.

You can help this process along by starting at the very beginning, with the onboarding process. When you hire a new person, you should try and immerse them in a team-based culture. Ideally, this onboarding will extend over several weeks, giving both your new hire and your existing team time to adapt to each other.

When it comes to ways to build your teamwork skills, there are a number of different methods available. Let me start with one to avoid: the trust fall.

Trust falls have been around for years, and while they can make a group feel more united, the risks far outweigh the benefits. Some teammates miss the arms of their co-workers, while others are too heavy, and nothing breaks trust faster than a failed trust fall. These failures can also lead to injuries—which can lead to lawsuits. Besides, at this point, trust falls are an old-fashioned, played-out bonding activity that's lost a lot of its luster.

So what to do instead? Social activities are a great choice. Have your team gather for bowling, a meal, a bar trip, whatever—anything to get them together outside of the office, where they can develop closer relationships. These tighter bonds will help collaboration in the office, making your team stronger. You might also consider a board game night or even hosting your own game show.

Other, more formal ways to build your team include role switching and cross-training. In role switching, you simply have two employees trade jobs for a short period. This allows them to get a better sense of what the other person does and what goes into their work.

Cross-training, on the other hand, involves training employees for multiple roles. This is especially useful for teams where members might find themselves working on a separate

project for a period of time. This way, you'll have multiple people available to fill each role, making sure you stay productive.

Don't forget that team building is a never-ending process. You won't wake up one day and say, "Hey, it really feels like this team is a finished product!" Instead, you'll need to constantly manage your team, adapting to personalities and shifting circumstances, all in service of keeping your team functioning at its best.

Ready, Set, Go!

In America, we tend to focus a lot on the individual. It's understandable, of course, with our long history of rugged individualism, which stretches back to our nation's founding. As Americans entered the West, they established homesteads, often enduring hardships that are difficult for us to imagine these days . . . cold temperatures, shortages of food and manufactured goods, and long stretches cut off from the rest of the country.

These pioneers stand tall in our history, and even today, we look at these figures as models for overcoming the difficulties they faced and making our current nation a possibility.

Today, we tend to see individuals in this same light. Athletes like Tom Brady and LeBron James, movie stars such as Robert Downey, Jr., and Meryl Streep, and business leaders like Steve Jobs, Jeff Bezos, and Mark Zuckerberg all take center stage, and our eyes focus on them.

But as talented as these people are, they would be nowhere if it wasn't for the team of people around them, providing support and giving them the platforms they stand upon. Brady and LeBron need their teammates, just like Downey and Streep need their co-stars. And Jobs, Bezos, and Zuckerberg all headed large companies that were built with the help of countless contributors, each adding their own strengths to make the business a success.

I want you to try something. We all know how important teams are, but it's easy to forget just how many teams we're a part of at any given moment. For the next three minutes, I want you to sit with a pen and a piece of paper, and write down all of the teams you're a part of.

What kind of teams? Think broadly. You may be on a rec league basketball team or play softball for your company, but that's an easy one. Look a little deeper, into all aspects of your life. What teams are you on at work? What about at home? Do you participate in a church or in a volunteer setting? What about your children—do they have extracurriculars that you're involved in, as well?

After you have your list of teams, I want you to think about how each of the six keys of teamwork applies to each team. You don't have to go into that much detail, but you should be able to see how you fit within each team, knowing your role, how each person is held accountable, and how you support each other on that team.

Remember, teamwork comes in all different forms, and your role can vary widely from team to team. You may be the boss at

work, but you might only be responsible for providing snacks at your daughter's soccer game. You could be a mail room clerk who directs plays with the local community theatre. Anyone who is part of a family knows that your role changes constantly: taskmaster at one moment, then laughing jokester the next.

It's amazing, isn't it, how many teams you're already a part of? For all of our focus on individuals, our lives are dominated by teams, working with others to accomplish things we could never achieve on our own. Humans are social creatures, and it's in our nature to build relationships and establish teams, even if that teamwork stays informal.

"No man is an island, entire of itself," says poet John Donne, "every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main."[7] This is just as true today as it was in the 17th century. No matter how strong our drive to be independent, we rely on teamwork, on collaborating with others, to reach our goals.

Instead of resisting teamwork, embrace it. One person can be strong, but two are stronger, and three even more so. With the right attitude and the willingness to work as part of a whole, you'll find that there's pretty much nothing you can't accomplish. And that's a good feeling.

Chapter 6

THE RIGHT STUFF

Integrity

America's NASA Space Program in the 1960s was of necessity grounded in technical and physical integrity. And that integrity was tested by the events of January 27, 1967. Apollo 1 was running through a launch rehearsal at the NASA complex at Cape Kennedy. The mission was planned to launch on February 21, 1967, and would be the first flight of the Apollo Program, which would eventually land the first men on the Moon. Command Pilot Gus Grissom, Senior Pilot Ed White, and Pilot Roger B. Chaffee were selected to man the mission. These three men were considered the "Best of the Best" after some of the most intensive selection, conditioning, and training that mankind has ever devised. Yet on that day, the integrity of NASA failed.

It was a failure of engineering and of manufacturing, some poorly constructed electrical system resulting in a fire caused by a spark—a catalyst that ignited the high pressure, pure oxygen atmosphere of the cabin. With no means of escape designed into

their space capsule—no emergency evacuation or fire suppression system—it became a death trap. And to top it off, nobody thought pressurized, pure oxygen was a risky idea.

On July 20, 1969, some 30 months after the Apollo 1 fire that took the life of all three of its crew members, a new chapter for mankind was being written. This time it was Apollo 11's turn, and Neil Armstrong, Michael Collins, and Buzz Aldrin traveled 238,900 miles to the Moon. Armstrong and Aldrin landed the lunar module Eagle. Armstrong's first words upon stepping on the surface were, "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." NASA had met the challenge, and in the process they restored their integrity.

It could be argued that without the Apollo 1 fire, NASA might never have made it to the Moon. Integrity is a very precious and perishable thing, and like a great love it requires constant passion.

Jonas Salk, who created the original polio vaccine, was a man of integrity. Today, the creation of a widely-used vaccine like Salk's would be a cash cow for a pharmaceutical company. Their patents would likely generate significant income for many years to come.

However, Salk refused to patent his creation, passing up the opportunity to make millions of dollars. In his view, the vaccine belonged to everyone. When he was asked who owned the rights to

the vaccine, he replied: “Well, the people, I would say. There is no patent. Could you patent the sun?” [1]

Now, I’m not here to make anyone feel ashamed about profiting off their work. Developing new medicines is expensive, time-consuming work, and much of the money these companies make gets poured into research for the next project.

Still, you have to admit that Salk’s decision to not patent his vaccine and to instead give it to the people is remarkable, and it reveals one of the most important character traits that, sadly, isn’t front and center for many businesses and individuals today.

That character trait? Integrity.

What Is Integrity?

Integrity is one of those words where everyone feels like they know what it means, but when they actually have to define it, it can be tough to put it into the right words. You know it has something to do with doing the right thing, something to do with trust, but for some reason, it’s difficult to pin it down exactly.

I think a lot of this is because integrity is an idea. Before we can understand what we mean when we talk about integrity, we have to take a few minutes to unpack everything this dense, important word contains.

The best place to start unpacking is also the simplest: integrity means keeping your promises. When you act with integrity, it means that you’ve given someone your word that you’ll

do something and that you follow through on that promise. Just like the U.S. Postal Service, you always deliver on your word, come rain, or snow or gloom of night.

But delivering on your promise or keeping your word to yourself and others isn't just about a simple act of exchange. No, what it's really about is trust. Having integrity is about creating relationships built on trust, which means that people know they can rely on you to not only follow through on your word, but that you'll go out of your way to make sure you keep your promises, too.

Of course, this trust doesn't just happen on its own. It has to be built over time, with each kept promise building on the last, helping you to establish a reputation for trustworthiness. It's a lifetime process, building trust, and the more people come to rely on you, the higher the stakes are raised.

On the flip side, trust can be broken in a matter of seconds. One missed delivery, one small oversight, even a simple misstatement, can take years to repair. Sometimes, those rifts become permanent.

Not to sound too negative, but this is going to happen to you at some point. It's impossible to be perfect all the time, and sooner or later, there's going to be a slip-up, someone is going to be disappointed, and that trust is going to be shaken. The only way to keep a breach from wrecking your reputation is to continually strive to act with integrity in all aspects of your life.

Your success is never final; for every day it must be won, yet failure is never permanent.

That's a key point. Integrity is action; it's about what you do more than what you say. It's true that talk is cheap. You can promise anything, but it's your ability to follow through that counts. Your word is your bond, but that means nothing if it's not accompanied by actions. But how do you decide which actions are right? How do you determine the right course of action at any given point?

The answer is to establish your own code of values and principles. Values are the deeply embedded ideas that reflect the beliefs and moral attitudes that guide your choices. Principles, on the other hand, are fundamental rules that govern how the world functions. While values tend to evolve over time, or shift as situations change, principles usually remain fixed.

Patience is a good example of a value. It's good to be patient when waiting for investments to pay off, but less so when a critical delivery is several hours late. On the other hand, principles are more universal. Take honesty. If you lie to someone, the only reliable outcome is that you become less trustworthy.

Your guiding values and principles stem from your own belief system, whether you're establishing them for yourself or for your company. You should be willing to consult with other sources, including people, books, articles, and anywhere else you turn to for

guidance. But ultimately, your code is yours and yours alone, and it will ideally become the baseline guiding force in all of your decision-making.

Keanu Reeves is one of the most successful actors in American film history. From his early days as a stoner comedian in *Bill and Ted*, to action stardom in movies like *Speed*, *The Matrix*, and *John Wick*, Reeves is one the most recognized film stars in America. However, Reeves has never let his success—and the money that came with it—go to his head.

Instead, Reeves has stayed true to his own personal values and principles. On multiple occasions, he's taken less money in order to hire the actors he believed would make his movies more successful.

In *The Devil's Advocate*, Reeves insisted they bring Al Pacino on board, cutting millions from his salary in order to make it happen. The same thing happened when he brought Gene Hackman on board for *The Replacements*. He also turned down a lucrative contract for *Speed 2*, believing the sequel would be a pale imitation of the original. [2]

Reeves has also donated a significant portion of his earnings to a number of charities, including several children's hospitals. These donations have helped keep these hospitals running, providing badly needed care to communities. For his part, Reeves prefers to keep these donations quiet—he's more concerned with

making sure people get the help they need than in receiving "credit."

Reeves is a great example of someone living a life of integrity. He's guided by his values and principles, even if it results in him making less money at times. He has established values and principles that provide a clear path forward, allowing him to feel comfortable with his choices.

While every person has to establish their own set of principles and values, there are a number of values that should be important to everyone. For instance, honesty and respect are two of the most important factors in living a life of integrity.

Consider the Golden Rule: do unto others as you would have them do unto you. When you treat people honestly, you inspire others to be honest with you. On the flip side, if you try to deceive others, you're much more likely to be deceived yourself. The same goes with respect. If you want others to respect you, you need to grant them the same courtesy.

Perhaps even more important is fairness. This is especially true as businesses focus more on issues of diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Ensuring that all applicants receive an equal opportunity is a good first step. However, truly embracing diversity and inclusion goes far beyond hiring. Instead, it's about ensuring trust, not only among your workforce, but also within the business community.

Building Integrity

As I said before, integrity isn't something that just happens overnight. You'll never wake up one morning and think to yourself, "Hey, now I have integrity!" No, building integrity is an ongoing, lifelong process, one that you'll need to live every day.

Ideally, integrity will become a habit. Even then, you'll still need to be aware of how your actions reflect your integrity. Here are just a few ways you can build the integrity habit into your life.

Establish Your Values and Principles

You probably know this already by now, but I'll say it again: Knowing your values and principles is really important! Whether you're focusing on your business or yourself, establishing these basic guiding ideas is critical to making the right decisions at any given time. And these values and principles aren't just for you—they make up the core of the identity you present to the world.

Take Amazon, for example. Founder Jeff Bezos started Amazon in 1994 as an online bookstore operating out of his garage—often delivering packages himself. One year after their IPO in 1997, the company started expanding beyond books, and while they wouldn't turn a profit until 2003, they eventually became the retailing behemoth they are today.

A huge part of their success has been focusing on the customer experience. From their one-click checkout system to the

sheer volume of goods, Amazon is focused on making online shopping as easy and customer-friendly as possible.

This is especially clear in their return policy. Shopping online is fundamentally different than going into a brick-and-mortar store, where you can physically inspect a product before you buy it. Amazon understands this, and they make returning items easy—and usually free for their Amazon Prime members.

Amazon allows customers to return almost anything within 30 days of purchase with no restocking fee. You can print and package the return yourself, or you can drop the item off in an Amazon locker or a partner store, like Whole Foods or Kohl's. Your refund is then automatically processed, making the process virtually painless. [3]

Amazon decided early on that the customer experience was central to their company's values, and they trusted the principle that satisfied customers turn into repeat customers. They embedded integrity into their business model—and you only need to look at the company's ledgers to see how well that's paid off.

Make—and Keep—Promises

Keeping your word is central to the idea of integrity, and the only way to prove that you're trustworthy is to demonstrate it. That means that you have to make promises to people, guarantees that you'll meet certain performance metrics, however you decide to

determine them. But what really matters is that you follow through on those promises.

This is where the philosophy of under promising and overdelivering comes into play. When you're making a commitment to someone, it's important not to overextend your ability to deliver. After all, it only takes one broken promise to damage your credibility. On the flip side, you need to be wary of making promises that are too small—don't completely undermine your abilities.

In essence, it's about finding a balance between stretching yourself to reach new heights without overestimating your abilities. Your integrity depends on finding that balance, and as long as you're true to yourself, then you should have no problem making that assessment.

Always Be Honest

If trust is the backbone of integrity, then honesty is the rest of the skeleton. In order for anyone to trust you, they need to believe that you're being honest with them throughout your entire interaction. Even a small fib, one that seems harmless at the time, can come back and cause enormous problems down the road, potentially ruining your credibility.

Honesty starts with your initial promise. As I mentioned earlier, you need to make sure you set realistic but ambitious goals for what you can deliver. Then you need to be able to clearly

communicate that promise to others, being sure that both sides understand exactly what is being promised, including deadlines and timelines.

In the event that something does happen, and you can't meet your commitment, you can preserve your integrity by being honest. Problems are inevitable in all walks of life, and most people will understand if someone makes a mistake.

Instead of trying to cover it up, own your mistake and do whatever it takes to resolve the situation. Sometimes, that honesty can be even more effective in building a relationship of trust.

Stay Mission-Focused

One of the best ways to develop your values and principles into a working format is to use them as part of your mission statement. That statement can then serve as a set of guiderails to help direct your actions.

Setting your company's mission in clear, unambiguous language helps you to establish an identity for your company. When your customers know what you stand for, they know what to expect from your company, not only in terms of products or services, but in how you do business.

If customers know that your business stands for something beyond profit, they're more likely to align themselves with your interests and that can have far-reaching benefits for you.

Surround Yourself with Integrity

There's an old saying: you can tell a lot about a person by the company they keep. When it comes to integrity, this is especially true. You should make every effort to surround yourself with people who hold similar ideals to you, whose values and principles align with those held by you and your company.

The more hands money passes through, the more fingers it can stick to.

Your environment matters, and whether you notice it or not, your behavior is influenced by those you spend time around. The more time you spend around someone who isn't trustworthy, the more tempting it may be to cut corners here and there or to fudge numbers in some accounts.

Instead, cut ties with those whose integrity is lacking, and spend more time with those whose influence will be a positive force in your life.

Integrity and Diversity

There are some people out there who look at workplace diversity initiatives and see nothing but a corporate buzzword. But that couldn't be further from the truth. Diversity is an increasingly important part of modern business, and for good reason. Not only

does increasing workplace diversity improve the sense of fairness and equality within your business, but it has some very clear, measurable benefits to your business, as well.

Consider companies that have created diverse management groups. These companies enjoy a number of advantages over their less diverse counterparts. They're 33% more likely to enjoy above-average profits, are 70% more likely to succeed in new markets, and create 19% more revenue from innovative products and services.[4]

Like integrity, diversity is one of those terms that can be difficult to define. The best way to think of diversity is to look at it in terms of inclusivity. Where business has long been dominated by white male viewpoints, diversity and inclusion (D&I) looks to bring in a much wider variety of backgrounds. That includes people of different races, genders, ages, ethnicities, religions, disabilities, and sexual orientations.

Businesses with strong D&I programs tend to be stronger because of these multiple viewpoints. When you bring in more voices, you're much less likely to find yourself stuck in an echo chamber, hearing the same opinions to the exclusion of other ideas. By broadening your scope, you're more likely to find answers that may not have occurred to you immediately.

This broader scope grants you several advantages. You'll find you have access to a wider number of markets with greater penetration. Your work atmosphere will also improve, as people

from different backgrounds come together to appreciate their shared humanity and commitment to the company.

Best of all, your diversity will become part of your brand, a sign that you're not focused on profit to the exclusion of your commitment to being a force for good.

Building a Diverse Workforce

When businesses begin to consider D&I initiatives, there's a tendency to start to think in terms of raw numbers. Does my workforce have the right percentages of people from different backgrounds? If not, how do I go about getting those numbers right? And if I do, does that mean I "did my job" when it comes to workplace diversity, and I can go on without thinking about D&I anymore?

If we consider diversity as a part of the integrity mindset, then this numbers-first approach isn't going to cut it. Looking at D&I as just a numbers game isn't an honest attempt to create a more diverse, inclusive workforce. Instead, it becomes a kind of virtue signaling, where you're telling people you care about diversity without really being committed to the effort.

While numbers are part of D&I efforts, they can't be the only metric. The main idea of diversity in the workplace is to create a fair and equitable atmosphere, a place where everyone's ideas are welcomed and valued.

Here are some ideas to consider as you strive to build the most inclusive, equitable workplace possible.

Assess Your Workplace

Improving the diversity in your workplace has to start with a frank and honest assessment of your current workplace. This is more than just looking at your roster of employees and looking at how each member of your staff identifies themselves. While this can be a useful metric to include as you look at the makeup of your workforce, it's only a small part of the overall picture—you also have to include your workplace culture.

Many companies today are including the staff members in these assessments, which can provide crucial insight into the underpinnings of your company culture. As a manager, you're unlikely to see into the nitty-gritty of everyday interactions in the same way that your employees do. Having these honest conversations is a critical part of truly understanding how people feel about their experience in the workplace.[5]

As you progress through your assessment, you should start to find areas where you can improve your company's D&I efforts. Once you've identified those areas for improvement, you can work together with your team to set goals for your company, and develop a plan for achieving them. This is just the first step, of course, but setting that plan in motion can help your diversity efforts progress rapidly.

Recruit Broadly

One reason many diversity efforts fail is because companies don't change their approach to finding candidates. They tend to use the same job posting boards, go to the same hiring events, and talk to the same people year after year after year. If you don't change your approach to recruiting, then how on earth can you expect to achieve different results?

That's why it's important to consider alternatives. Spread your job postings out to a greater number of boards, especially those targeted to particular populations. You can also increase your efforts to reach beyond your traditional networks, attending hiring and HR events in more diverse areas and writing your job postings with more inclusive language.

Another option is to add more diversity to your hiring pool, which helps undercut any unconscious bias.

Focus on Retention

Hiring more diverse candidates is one thing—keeping them with your company is another. For far too many companies, the focus on diversity ends as soon as new employees are brought into the company. But that's really just the starting point for diversity in the workplace. Ensuring that the workplace is welcoming to an increasingly diverse team has to be the meat and potatoes of your D&I efforts.

For new employees, these efforts start with onboarding, making sure every new worker feels safe and secure in their new position, and that their opinions and contributions will be welcomed from day one. However, the process really begins even before the hire is made. If your assessment reveals that your office culture isn't as inclusive as it needs to be, then any efforts to include the new employee are doomed to fail.

Make the Workplace Inclusive

So how do you make your workplace more welcoming for employees from different backgrounds? Well, the first step should be adhering to equal employment opportunity (EEO) laws, not simply because it's legally required, but because it's the right thing to do.

However, this is only the first step. You can consider a number of options to make your company more inclusive, including:

- Providing daycare options
- Exploring non-gendered bathrooms
- Offering flexible hours for employees, including remote work
- Providing time off for religious holidays
- Establishing committees for diversity and inclusion

It's also useful to offer opportunities for employees to gather in social situations outside of work. This can help establish a company culture that celebrates the diversity of everyone's background, allowing every employee the chance to learn more about different ways of seeing and experiencing the world. It can help smooth over any differences of opinion and provide the opportunity for future growth.

Consider Diversity Training

On April 12, 2018, two black men were waiting at a Philadelphia Starbucks to meet an acquaintance to discuss a real estate project. Although they hadn't made a purchase, it wasn't uncommon for people to use Starbucks as a meeting place. However, the Starbucks manager called the police, and the two men were shortly arrested, despite not being charged with a crime.

The incident sparked a call for a boycott of the coffee company, as well as anger at the Philadelphia Police Department. While Starbucks CEO Kevin Johnson clearly saw the potential for damage to their brand, he also saw an opportunity to improve his company's commitment to diversity. Starbucks reached an agreement with the two men, and on May 29, 2018, Starbucks closed its 8,000 locations to train their employees about racial bias.

While some may have had doubts about Starbucks' motivation—after all, their brand was in danger—the fact that they willingly closed every single location on the same day to engage in

serious discussions on race and bias is pretty incredible. Johnson himself said it was only the first step, and former attorney general Eric Holder praised the company for doing more than simply dressing some windows. [6]

As the Starbucks example shows, diversity training can be a powerful way to instill a commitment to inclusion and equality that can permeate your workplace long after the training itself is complete.

From spreading techniques to help improve equality within the workplace, to sparking earnest discussions about the challenges that each person experiences both at work and outside the office, these sessions can bring employees together and open their eyes to new perspectives.

However, if you decide to employ diversity training, it's important to do so thoughtfully and to commit to the process entirely. There are a number of outside consultants that provide well-tested training programs, and it's in your best interest to search out a program that will provide your employees with the tools they need.

Conclusion

It's tempting to reduce integrity to "doing the right thing." But the problem, of course, is knowing exactly what "the right thing" is. There's no single, universal answer that applies to every person in every situation. But when you take the time to truly

understand the values and the principles that you believe should guide your actions, then you've got a good shot at getting it right.

There are some values that are intrinsic to the idea of integrity. Honesty. Equality. Fairness. Diversity. Respect. Trust. These are all values that should guide your sense of integrity. No matter who you are or where you're from, when you treat others with integrity, more often than not, they'll return the favor.

Chapter 7

THE TWO STEVES

Core Competencies

When it comes to American success stories, the Steves at Apple probably rank pretty high on your list. Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak started Apple, Inc. in a garage in 1976, selling computer kits to hobbyists for $50 apiece. By 1980, Apple went public, and Jobs and Wozniak became millionaires. Today, 45 years after Apple began, Jobs and Wozniak are considered pioneers of personal computing.

If you find yourself asking how Jobs and Wozniak were able to turn Apple into such a huge success so quickly, you're not alone. People all over the world have been studying these two, trying to unlock the secret of their success. But in reality, it's not all that complicated. They just knew what their strengths were, and they played to them. They understood their core competencies. Leveraging core competencies is about playing to your strengths. The problem is sometimes we fail to recognize our own strengths.

Wozniak was the engineering genius who designed the systems and the programs that moved personal computing from a dream into a reality. Jobs was the visionary, who saw the potential in Wozniak's technical doodads, securing the funding and directing product development with the customer in mind. Wozniak was the man who made home computers possible; Jobs was the man who created a product that we didn't even know we needed.

You can argue over who was smarter, who was more charismatic, or who contributed more to Apple's success. But when it comes down to it, what really matters is that both men understood where they excelled, and they maintained their focus on that particular core competency. Some people can code, some can sell.

What Is Core Competency?

In 1990, strategists C.K. Prahalad and Gary Hamel wrote an article called "The Core Competence of the Corporation" for the *Harvard Business Review*. In this article, the pair wrote that we should stop thinking of businesses as collections of different business units, but rather as a set of core competencies, "the collective learning in the organization, especially how to coordinate diverse productive skills and integrate multiple streams of technologies." [1]

In a nutshell, these two strategists were saying that companies find sustained success by acknowledging the specialized

skills their employees possess that add significant value to their product.

Basically, core competencies boil down to three things:

1. Does it apply over a broad range of industries?
2. Does it make the end product more desirable to the consumer?
3. Is it hard to imitate or replicate?

Since these three definitions are fundamental to understanding core competencies, it's worth taking a moment to think about them a little more. Let's dig into them more deeply.

Does It Apply Over a Broad Range of Industries?

One of the hallmarks of a core competency is that it isn't tied to a highly specific area. Sure, it may be a specialized tool or skill, like high-level accounting or well-developed writing skills, but ideally, these core competencies can be applied to a number of different situations, regardless of the specific industry.

Take accounting, for instance. While the numbers and processes may differ from industry to industry, by and large, the fundamental elements of accounting are the same across all industries, with the specifics of each business adding flavor, rather than changing the entire recipe. The same can be said for writing, research, teamwork, and so on.

In essence, core competencies are skills that are readily transferable from industry to industry, allowing you to apply your skills in a variety of fields after a relatively short period of adjustment.

The key word here is flexible.

Does It Make the End Product More Desirable to the Consumer?

This definition can be a little harder to identify in some ways. Some core competencies are obvious, especially for manufactured goods. Engineering, mathematics, and design skills all provide clear benefits when it comes to manufacturing a TV or developing software.

But do accounting practices make a TV more desirable? What about problem solving? Or communication?

As you probably suspect, the answer is yes—just not in a straightforward, one-to-one way. Yes, engineering a TV can make it sleeker and more powerful and can create a clearer picture. But accounting helps to keep costs low, making the TV more affordable. Problem-solving can help efficiency from design through distribution. And communication lets consumers know why they need this particular TV.

If you cannot measure a thing, it is not something easily managed.

When it comes to core competencies, it's actually pretty rare that you'll find a clear path from your skill to a product. Instead, when you consider a product from all angles, you'll start to see the invisible threads that connect it to all aspects of the business. That will reveal which skills will be most useful in making a product more desirable.

The key word here is useful.

Is It Hard to Imitate or Replicate?

There are some skills that everyone is expected to have a solid grasp on. Everyone is expected to know how to read and write, the basics of how to use a computer, and the ability to communicate with others. These are basic skills, not core competencies.

What makes a core competency special is that it goes beyond basic skills, giving you abilities that are more difficult to find. The more specialized the skill is, the more difficult it is to replicate or replace. In other words, core competencies are the things that separate you from others.

Take coding skills, for example. Someone who has just graduated from college with a computer science degree will probably have a solid grounding in coding. However, the more experience they gain and the more training they receive in specific languages and processes, the more highly developed their coding core competency becomes. They may even begin to develop new processes or use coding languages in new ways.

At high levels, core competencies are virtually irreplaceable skills, either because there aren't enough highly trained individuals around to fill the missing space or because the employee has made the skill their own, adding an individual flair that can't be captured or recreated by someone else.

The key word here is unique.

If you ask yourself, then, if a skill is flexible, useful, and unique, then you've found yourself a core competency

Of course, that's all well and good when we're talking about a company. But what about personal core competencies? Well, they work pretty much the same way, except instead of giving companies a competitive advantage, they help give individuals a professional edge.

Core competencies are an increasingly important part of your professional life—and that's a good thing. Chris Lennon, a senior HR executive, has said that a lot of bad hires come from not understanding the core competencies required for a position: "It can become impossible to find the right person for the job if you don't first identify what the ideal candidate needs to succeed."[2]

Core competencies aren't just opinions. They stem from observable patterns of behavior and performance, and they must be defined from within. For companies, that means identifying areas where they provide services or attributes that separate them from the competition. For you, it's about identifying the areas where you excel.

You can think of it as playing to your strengths: you know what you're awesome at, and you know where you kinda stink. Maybe you're really good at coming up with concepts and knowing how to market ideas, but you don't have the first clue how to handle the technical elements. There's nothing wrong with that, as long as you're honest with yourself about your limitations.

In fact, knowing your limits is actually a strength. As William Shakespeare wrote in Hamlet, "This above all: to thine own self be true, / And it must follow, as the night to the day, / Thou canst not then be false to any man."[3] In other words, when you take the time to really understand who you are, and when you remain true to that person, you'll avoid positioning yourself for failure, and give yourself the opportunity to succeed instead.

"But wait!" I hear you say, "I don't know what my core competencies are! How am I supposed to know what I'm good at? And what if I'm not good at anything? What do I do then?"

Relax! Identifying your core competencies isn't something that happens overnight. You're not going to wake up tomorrow, turn off your alarm clock, look in the mirror, and say, "Hey! I know where my strengths and weaknesses really lie! Let's go!" Getting to know yourself is a longer process, and it involves taking the time and effort to really think about who you are, what you're good at doing, and most importantly, what you enjoy doing.

And don't worry about not being good at anything. I promise, you have a ton of things you excel at—you just haven't

thought about yourself that way before, at least not in any organized way. With a little time and introspection, you'll find you've already got a bunch of core competencies, and you'll be able to prove it.

Plus, you should develop core competencies—both the skills you want to learn and those you already have. Just like with professional athletes, when you don't use a skill, it can start to fade away, and the longer you don't use it, the longer it takes to get it back. That's why it's important to make sure you continue to develop your existing core competencies as you explore new areas of personal development, so you can ensure you're not losing skills you already possess.

If you wish to catch fish, first sharpen your hooks.

When it comes to core competencies, the thing to remember is that it's all about personal growth. When Jobs and Wozniak first started working together, do you think they knew they were going to end up millionaires in only a few years? Well, Steve Jobs probably did.

What made it possible was that both Steves were willing to grow, to develop their skills and look for new ways to put them into practice. You have the chance to identify your own core competencies, then develop and deploy them. It's all about being willing to grow and improve yourself. Trust me, you have it in you!

Identifying Your Core Competencies

In 1958, Steven Spielberg made his first movie. Only twelve-years old, he used his father's video camera to film a train "wreck," using his toy train set. While the movie didn't make Spielberg any money, it did start him on a path to stardom as one of the most famous directors of all time.

But success didn't come overnight. Spielberg watched and made movies all through his teens, wanting only to direct films for the big screen. But he was rejected from USC's film school for bad grades and ended up at California State University, Long Beach.

By 1968, though, Universal Studios gave Spielberg the chance to make his first theatrical film, and he wound up with a contract. For the next several years, Spielberg was stuck directing television shows, and while he was frustrated with his limited opportunities, he continued to develop his directorial vision with each episode.

Although his first theatrical film was *The Sugarland Express*, his breakthrough was 1975's *Jaws*, the first summer blockbuster. From that point on, Spielberg was a household name, and his reputation as one of America's greatest filmmakers only continues to grow.

What Spielberg was lucky enough to discover early in his life wasn't just his vision—his ability to see what he wanted to create in his mind's eye was a huge factor, sure. But what really sets Spielberg apart is his ability to communicate that vision to actors, cinematographers, editors, musicians, and producers. From the very

beginning, Spielberg identified his core competencies and honed them with persistence and practice.

Unfortunately, no matter how many movies we see, most of us aren't Steven Spielberg. Few of us have known since we were twelve what we wanted to do with our lives. But that doesn't mean we haven't been developing our own core competencies since we were kids.

Core competencies aren't just about accumulating technical skills, like coding or engineering. Many competencies are so-called "soft skills," such as communication, teamwork, and professionalism, which—unlike measurable skills like math or language fluency—are more difficult to quantify.

While hard skills are valuable, it's the combination of hard and soft skills that can really make an employee a valuable contributor to the team. When you can combine technical capacity with leadership abilities and a commitment to producing high quality work, you end up with a sum that's greater than its parts.

But first things first. Let's think about identifying your core competencies. While you might be able to come up with a couple ideas while just sitting there and thinking about it for a few minutes, it's going to take more effort than that to really do the job right. So, clear your schedule, get a cup of coffee or tea, and get ready to think hard about who you really are.

Step 1: Brainstorming

Yeah, I know. Is there a project that doesn't start out with brainstorming? But the reason brainstorming is such a common way to start projects is because it works. According to Anne Converse Willkomm at Drexel University, brainstorming is "intended to bring a wide range of ideas to the table, some of which fall to the wayside, while others get pulled and shaped into something concrete . . . What I find most exciting is when a new idea emerges, something no one entered the room with."[4]

When you're brainstorming, the key is to keep judgment off the table. Even when you're brainstorming by yourself, you may be tempted to not write something down because you think it's stupid or not related. But that's the value of brainstorming. We can flush out the bad ideas, get the junk out of the way, and let the gold shine. And you never know—sometimes the junk ideas might lead to something you never would have suspected.

Start with a clear sheet of paper, preferably a new notebook or legal pad. Find a quiet place free from distraction—no phones!—and give yourself enough time to work. If you feel like you're pressed for time, then you might as well put off brainstorming until later, when you won't feel pressured. Grab a pen or pencil, take a deep breath, and start writing.

You're making a list of potential core competencies, and while you're probably coming into this process with some idea of what you're good at, you shouldn't be afraid to write down things you'd like to be good at. Or things you may never get a chance to

practice. Or even things you don't like. Just get words down on paper. It's free association, baby—let the writing flow!

If you're struggling for some potential core competencies, here are some common competencies HR folks like to look for:

- Communication
- Coding
- Spreadsheets
- Teamwork
- Engineering
- Project management
- Personal development
- Responsibility
- Mathematics
- Ambition
- Problem-solving

These are just a very few potential possibilities. You can start with these, or you can just use them to prime your brain to come up with competencies on your own. You should expect to spend at least five minutes on this process, but if you need more time, feel free to continue working. If five minutes feels like too long, then you probably need to keep digging.

Step 2: Evaluation

Now that the brainstorming is over, you should take a few minutes to breathe. Shake out your hands, unclench your jaw, stand up and stretch . . . whatever you do to relax. Take five minutes and step away from the list you just made. It's pretty fresh right now, and you need a little time away from it to be able to fairly evaluate your list of competencies.

Feel relaxed now? Good!

The next step is going through your list and identifying which of the things you wrote down are the strongest core competencies. The total number isn't important. You may find you have a broad range of interests and abilities, or you might be most focused in only a few areas. There's nothing wrong in either case.

The question, then, is how to evaluate your list. What are the factors that you should use to determine how important each competency is? Well, the answer is pretty straightforward. Do you remember that list I mentioned earlier about how companies determine their core competencies? It's basically the same here. This is what you should ask yourself when you're considering each core competency:

1. Does the competency apply across a broad range of industries or applications?
2. Does the competency make me a more relevant or attractive employee? Does it make me stand out in a competitive position?

3. Is the competency something that's unique, uncommon, or requires training and experience?

When you're looking at your list of competencies, really try and think about each one of these factors. For some, you won't have to spend very long—in fact, some of the things you wrote down you can pretty much cross off right away, since they were the junk you were clearing out to make way for the good stuff.

But for the other competencies, really dig down and ask yourself each of these three questions. As you make your way through your list, you can start to cross more and more things off of your list, until you're left with a good set of skills. But there's still one more step.

Step 3: Reflection

When it comes to identifying your core competencies, you have to remember that the focus is on you. You may have a list of several very good skills that an HR manager would kill to have on their staff. And while the goal of the brainstorming process was to come up with skills for you, the resulting list can sometimes stray pretty far from that goal.

That's where reflection comes into play. Once you have your carefully curated list of potential personal core competencies, you should go through each skill and ask yourself how much each skill resonates with you.

What skills do you feel you already possess? What skills would you like to develop further? Are there skills on the list where you have evidence of past success?

Using past evidence can really help this process, especially when it comes to soft skills. Without quantitative data to indicate success or mastery, you need to be able to summon performance reviews, recommendations, customer comments, and other anecdotal evidence to support your claims of competency.

Identifying your core competencies isn't an easy process. And honestly, you don't want it to be. When you're doing this kind of deeper self-examination, easy is the enemy of the good. You should embrace the challenge—the more energy you expend in an earnest effort, the higher the reward will be once you finish the process.

Developing Your Core Competencies

In 1987, a man named Paul O'Neill took the reins of the Aluminum Company of America. Better known as Alcoa, the company had manufactured aluminum products for more than 100 years, becoming the go-to producer of aluminum goods, including soda and beer cans, aluminum foil, and other commodities.

While the company had always produced decent returns for investors, those profits had started to tail off in the face of mismanagement, and Alcoa felt they needed fresh blood to reinvigorate their operations. They decided on Paul O'Neill, who

had previously worked in the United States Office of Management and Budget and as vice-president and president of International Paper.

O'Neill came onboard as chairman and CEO of Alcoa and immediately met resistance from his board. The heart of the problem? O'Neill was singularly focused on improving worker safety. While the board of directors wasn't against improving Alcoa's safety record (which was actually among the leaders in the industry), they were concerned about O'Neill's apparent disinterest in improving the one thing they cared about most: profit.

But while O'Neill was mocked by board members, investors, and the press for his emphasis on safety over profit, he stood firm on his principles, and insisted Alcoa plants become the safest workplaces in America. The end result? By the time O'Neill left Alcoa in 2000, the company's market value increased more than nine times the original value, rising from $3 billion to more than $27 billion.

Author Charles Duhigg suggests that O'Neill was able to create change at Alcoa by focusing on "keystone habits," which "say that success doesn't depend on getting every single thing right, but instead relies on identifying a few key priorities and then fashioning them into powerful levers." In this case, O'Neill used an emphasis on worker safety to disrupt the old order of business and instill a new workplace culture, which led to increases in safety—and profit.[5]

If you read this and thought to yourself, “Hm, that sounds familiar,” then you’re in good company. What Duhigg calls keystone habits sounds an awful lot like how we’ve been describing core competencies.

Like keystone habits, core competencies aren’t about becoming some kind of mega-powered superman. Instead, knowing your competencies allows you to focus on your strengths, and while you’ll still make mistakes, you’ll have a better chance of not only overcoming those mistakes, but incorporating the lessons you learn, and further developing your core competencies.

O’Neill understood that you can’t simply decide to be someone or something different overnight. The only way to enact meaningful change is to break your problem down into smaller portions, then strategically focus your efforts to bring the most efficient returns.

The same is true when it comes to developing your core competencies. You can’t just decide that you possess certain skills without taking the time to develop them. The good news is that you’ve already been developing a bunch of those competencies your entire life. But to really excel, you have to commit to continually honing your abilities.

If that sounds like a lot of work, and . . . well . . . it is. But believe me, it’s totally worth the effort. And the best part is that because you’re working on developing yourself, you have ultimate

control. You decide what competencies you want to develop and how you're going to strategically approach your development.

One key thing to remember is flexibility. No one gets everything right the first time, and no solution works for every person. If you work on a certain approach for a while and don't feel like you're making progress, take a moment to evaluate the effectiveness of your strategy. You might find a few tweaks could make all the difference—or you might decide on an entirely new approach altogether.

What is the best way to develop your core competencies? I've outlined a few strategies for you to try out, but the best advice I can give you is to be self-aware. The person who knows you best is you. Look over the approaches I suggest here, and tailor your approach to your specific skills and personality. Take ownership of your development.

Education

Not everyone is a model student. Some people can't wait for the end of college, believing they'll never have to take a class again and they can just get on with the business of business. Of course, we all know that's not the case—most companies today insist on their employees taking on professional development, and as an employee, you should take full advantage of any development opportunities you encounter.

One of the most effective ways to develop your core competencies is to earn a degree. When I say this, most people think, “Oh, he means an MBA.” Yes, an MBA degree can be helpful to you if you’re looking to move up the business ladder. But it’s also not the only option.

There are a number of other degree programs you can pursue, including PhDs for those in specialized fields. Or you can investigate earning another undergraduate degree in a major that’s closely related to your field.

Of course, not all classes need to be degree-seeking. You should keep an eye out for courses that offer you training in a specific skill, many of which are available at local universities or, now more than ever, online.

Work Opportunities

One of the most important aspects of finding business success is being willing to work hard to achieve your goals. That’s especially true in the workplace, where your effort doesn’t just help produce higher returns, but helps you stand out to managers and other important figures as someone who’s committed to the company’s goals.

But working hard doesn’t mean you can’t be working for yourself. Every project, even every task, offers an opportunity for you to develop your core competencies, especially in areas where you may not be as comfortable. When you take on work projects,

for instance, think about how that project helps contribute to you gaining further mastery over your core competencies.

Taking on new work projects is a great way to build those skills. Not only will you help participate in building the business, but you'll also develop relationships with others who have their own sets of core competencies, and you can learn from each other in surprisingly rewarding ways.

You also shouldn't overlook the value of employee development opportunities. Training classes, online testing, and other forms of development aren't just a bonus, but they actually make up an important part of your employer's commitment to you as an employee. Think of this training as part of your compensation package: development opportunities give you the chance to move forward in the company.

Another valuable tool for personal development is finding a mentor at your workplace. Find someone at your workplace who has more experience, and see if they'd be willing to share that experience with you. Sit them down, buy them a coffee, and pick their brain. Most of the time, people are happy to help out; someone probably did the same thing for them when they were younger, and they appreciate the opportunity to give back.

Networking

For some people, networking comes naturally. For others, it's pure torture. But being able and willing to network with others

in and around your profession is a critical part of building your core competencies (I'd even say networking is a core competency).

Building your personal network is about more than finding a job. It's about establishing yourself within the ecosystem of your profession and building your reputation based on your set of skills. You can find a mentor outside the workplace through networking or even become a mentor to someone else.

Networking can take place just about anywhere. One ideal location is within professional organizations. While most organizations have annual conferences, which is basically a weekend-long networking fest, membership in a professional organization connects you year-round to a vast network of people across the country (and maybe even the globe).

Establish Yourself

Many people think that establishing yourself within your profession only happens once you become a master. That couldn't be further from the truth. How do you think established professionals became masters?

You should take whatever opportunity presents itself to establish your reputation within your field. Write blogs and articles for professional publications, make presentations at conferences, and volunteer to teach others the skills you've acquired.

There's a longstanding tradition in education called Learn One, Do One, Teach One. You learn a skill, practice a skill, then

teach that skill to someone else. When you can effectively teach that skill to another person to the point that they can acquire the skill themselves, then you've come this much closer to mastering that core competency.

Core Competencies in Action

While figuring out your core competencies and learning how to develop them into tools for success are essential, the real value of all of this work is learning how to deploy them. Here, I'm afraid there are no simple steps or straightforward answers.

Success is not as simple as telling you to apply this skill to that situation, and then voila, you've done it. A hundred people with the same skill set could look at the same problem and come up with 200 different solutions—and perhaps none of them work. Or maybe all of them do. So how do you figure out the right way to use your core competencies to your advantage?

The answer, my friends, is creativity. Having a well-rounded, highly developed set of core competencies is one thing, but it takes creativity and vision to turn those competencies into something really remarkable. And I don't just mean creativity from you; the most successful individuals manage to secure buy-in from others, especially those in a position to give you an opportunity that others might refuse you.

Take the case of Gerard van Grinsven, former CEO of Henry Ford West Bloomfield Hospital just outside of Detroit. When van

Grinsven took the job in 2006, he wasn't the typical choice for a hospital CEO. Far from it, in fact, since van Grinsven had absolutely zero experience in the health care industry.

Before joining as the leader of the hospital, van Grinsven had spent more than 20 years in the hotel business, most recently as a vice-president for Ritz-Carlton. During his time there, van Grinsven moved from VP of food and beverage to the Area General Manager in Dearborn, where he caught the attention of the Henry Ford Medical Group (HFMG).

At first glance, it seemed like an odd choice. What could van Grinsven, whose whole career theretofore was focused on the hotel business, possibly bring to the health care field? What experiences, what skills, what points of view could he offer West Bloomfield that made him a better choice than the multitude of others with a background in health care?

These questions were especially pressing since the West Bloomfield hospital would be the first new hospital the HFMG had built since 1915, the year the group was founded. The stakes were high, and their CEO hire was a critical part of making this new hospital a success.

What helped van Grinsven win the position was his confidence in how he could transform the way patients, doctors, and the community view health care. With his hotelier background, van Grinsven may not have known much about medicine and health

care, but he knew an awful lot about customer service—especially high-end, luxury service.

The Ritz-Carlton has long been known for its stylistic opulence and the luxurious service available to its guests. As an executive with the chain, van Grinsven saw first-hand how luxury put guests at ease, and he focused his efforts on making those services as easy and stress-free as possible for those guests.

Now, in his role as hospital CEO, he transferred his core competencies centered on customer service to a new industry, believing that he could transform the hospital experience by emphasizing wellness over sickness.

Before the hospital opened in 2009, van Grinsven worked with the HFMG at all stages of design. Instead of shared patient rooms, the hospital would have only private rooms, which not only reduced the risk of disease transmission but reduced patient stress and encouraged recovery and healing.

He also insisted on the building's striking atrium, which houses more than 2,000 live plants arranged along curved pathways, creating a tranquil, inviting environment. Throughout this atrium are several retail stores selling items intended to help patients, families, and anyone else who comes into the building to improve their healthy lifestyle.

More than services like acupuncture, a patient concierge, cooking classes, and a therapeutic organic greenhouse, the biggest change van Grinsven made was food quality.

Historically, hospital food has been right up there with airline food and TV dinners on the list of foods no one would voluntarily eat. But under van Grinsven, the hospital began cooking made-to-order meals composed of fresh ingredients, with 24-hour room service, meaning that patients could get healthy, fresh, delicious food at any time of the day. In fact, the food is so good, they regularly cater for businesses in the West Bloomfield area.

For van Grinsven, these amenities are not luxury services but are instead wellness services, aimed at helping patients get healthy faster and hopefully remain healthy longer. While he acknowledges that his vastly improved food is partially a marketing device, it's also an earnest way to help improve the health of everyone who eats in the hospital, including patients, families, doctors, nurses, staff members, and others.

Of course, it also took a lot of chutzpah for the HFMG to decide to hire van Grinsven. When he was originally brought on board, reactions were largely negative. In fact, one writer said his menu plans were actively harming the hospital—since hospital food should be terrible.

Luckily, the group gave van Grinsven a chance, and he rewarded them by leading the hospital to be profitable nearly a year ahead of schedule. Even more impressively, the hospital won the 2011 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, recognizing the improvements the hospital was offering the community and its willingness to innovate in the healthcare field.[6,7]

Looking at van Grinsven's core competencies during his time at Ritz-Carlton, it's easy to see why some would have doubted his abilities to transition to a new field. But for him, it was less a transition than it was a way to deploy the same skills from a slightly different angle. His distance from health care became a strength, allowing him to deploy his core competencies in a new and exceptionally effective way.

In short, thanks to the creativity of van Grinsven and the members of the HFMG, they created a new way of thinking about healthcare, one that was radically different not just for its own sake, but because a radical change was what was needed.

Dealing with Doubt

With all this talk about identifying, developing, and nurturing your core competencies, it can be easy to overlook the feeling of self-doubt that can start to creep in during moments of self-reflection. "Do I really have these skills," you might think, "or have I just gotten by because of luck?"

This is imposter syndrome, and it can be a pain in the neck. Self-doubt is a relatively common feeling, especially when you're setting new goals for yourself. It's only natural to ask yourself whether you're really up for the challenge, or if you have the time, the talent, and the dedication to be able to reach those goals. In fact, if you're not a little uncomfortable, you're probably setting your sights too low.

But imposter syndrome takes that self-doubt to a new level. Many people who experience success have trouble accepting that they've earned their achievements based on their abilities. These people often feel a sense of fear or dread, as though they're just waiting for everyone else to find out that they're a fraud and that they don't have the skills or capacity to handle their job at a high level.

First described in 1978, imposter syndrome isn't considered to be a mental illness by the medical community. Instead, it's viewed more as a mindset, one that can create feelings of anxiety and depression in more serious cases.

It can manifest in many ways. Many people describe feeling like they have an invisible person watching over their shoulder, watching their every move. You may begin to feel like any mistake, no matter how small, could bring the whole house of cards tumbling down, leaving you exposed for the imitator that you are.

But no matter how ominous and dreadful this all sounds, there's one important thing to remember: You're okay!

People have been feeling the effects of imposter syndrome for years, and even some of the most significant, impressive people have felt the same way. Take Albert Einstein, whose work in physics changed the entire world. Shortly before his death in 1955, he admitted that he felt the sting of imposter syndrome—although he didn't call it that: "the exaggerated esteem in which my lifework

is held makes me very ill at ease. I feel compelled to think of myself as an involuntary swindler." [8]

Wow, right? If even the famed genius Albert Einstein feels like an imposter, shouldn't we feel a little more comfortable with our own sense of self-doubt? Political leaders, actors, musicians, entrepreneurs, tech titans, you name it. In just about every walk of life, you can find someone who has, at some point or another, felt like they weren't good enough, that they had somehow lucked into a position they didn't deserve, and that it was only a matter of time before everyone figured it out.

Of course, it's easy to say that imposter syndrome is no big deal. It's another thing entirely to have to actually cope with it. How do you find a way past these feelings of self-doubt and accept that you have not only earned everything you've received, but that you have even more value to contribute and deserve even more?

This is another area in which focusing on your core competencies pays off. Overcoming imposter syndrome can actually happen organically as you identify and develop your core competencies. For the most part, imposter syndrome is a product of unfamiliarity. You've reached a level of success and achievement that is new to you, and now you're expected to rise to new heights—but how?

On your way up, it's possible—for many people, it's likely—that you've found success without necessarily identifying the specific skills that make you who you are. You simply make the

best choices that you can based on your mindset and your available skills, and it usually works out in your favor.

But at some point, you have to be able to identify those personal strengths and weaknesses, not only so you can shore up any weak points, but so that you have a firm grasp on what has enabled you to succeed.

Imposter syndrome arises when you don't make that connection between your abilities and your current position. That's what can lead to feelings of insecurity and self-doubt, where you may feel that someone saw something in you that wasn't actually there.

As I said earlier, imposter syndrome is a mindset, and that means it can be changed. Talk to mentors, many of whom have probably felt the same way at some point. Don't focus so much on your mistakes, and remember instead that every failure is a chance to learn. Spend less time reflecting on the past, and spend more time thinking about how you can perform your best in the future.

Most of all, though, you should remember that it was your core competencies, your central set of hard and soft skills, that helped you get to this point in the first place. For the most part, when you get promoted or you experience a new level of personal or professional success, it's because you worked your butt off to get there. You displayed levels of expertise, good judgment, and superior commitment that allowed you to rise to your level of success.

Doubt is only natural. Yes, some people go through life never doubting themselves, but for the most part, being unsure of ourselves is just a part of life. The key to dealing with it is to remember who you are and focus on the core competencies that make up the fundamental parts of your character.

Conclusion

Despite what you might think, core competency isn't just a corporate buzzword. Learning to understand, identify, and develop your core competencies allows you to focus your efforts on your strengths without wasting time trying to be someone you're not. Core competencies aren't about transformation; they're about reinforcement.

You may have noticed that I keep talking about how developing core competencies takes time. It takes time to figure out your strengths and weaknesses. It takes time to come up with plans for how to develop your core competencies. And it takes time to build your core competencies to new levels, enabling you to reach new heights.

Time is a funny thing. It's the one resource you can never get back—once it's gone, you can't recover it. But you also can't hurry time along. Making progress in developing your core competencies requires you to spend time and effort working on them—and no amount of wishing is going to make that time pass any faster.

That means that another key factor in developing your core competencies is patience. You have to have the patience to know that you won't see results immediately, and to have the fortitude to stick with your development plans to persevere even when the going gets tough and you feel like you might be stuck.

Your core competencies are never going to be entirely fixed—and that's a good thing. But it also means you need to have the patience to take the long view and to see your core competencies as part of your life-long professional journey. There will be times when progress comes fast, and there will be times when time seems to drag like a thousand-pound weight. Patience means finding value in both cases.

Of course, having patience doesn't mean you have to like moving slowly. Like I said, you should be flexible too, looking for ways to reduce inefficiency and speed up the development process. If your approach isn't working, don't be afraid to change it. But by the same token, you shouldn't be too quick to abandon your approach, either.

Finally, you should remember that you're not alone in this. Everyone, from CEOs and presidents, to mail clerks and administrative assistants, has goals and aspirations, as well as fears and doubts. And each person has their own set of core competencies, those that have been honed with years of practice and potential skills that are simply waiting to be developed.

There's a lot more that connects us than separates us, and the more we embrace that connection, the better we will be able to serve each other. Networking, mentorship, and other ways of developing your core competencies rely on building relationships, and those relationships can—and often do—extend far beyond the initial interaction. Many times, these people become life-long friends.

Just like with Spielberg, O'Neill, and the Steves, you have several areas where you're already an expert. The trick is to be able to identify those skills and center your attention on how you can best develop those competencies and deploy them to your benefit. Once you do, I think you'll be amazed at what you can accomplish, and what levels of success you can attain.

Chapter 8

Moneyball

Change

In 2003's box office hit Moneyball, general manager Billy Beane (played by Brad Pitt) faced many challenges as he tried to find ways to help the small-market Oakland Athletics, with a payroll around $44 million, compete with the big-market teams, like the New York Yankees and their $125 million payroll.

In order to succeed, Beane knew he had to change the traditional approach to building a baseball team. Unlike traditional baseball wisdom, which judged players by statistics like RBIs and stolen bases, Beane embraced what is known as sabermetrics, or statistical analysis based on in-game performance that goes much deeper.

While sabermetrics first arose in the 1970s, it took someone like Beane to embrace this approach to player evaluation, which gave him a leg up on his better-funded competitors. Beane went against the baseball purists that made up his scouting office, preferring slugging and on-base percentages for selecting players. This led to his preference for Kevin Youkilis, who Beane nicknamed "The Greek God of Walks."

Beane extended his counterintuitive approach to the MLB draft, as well. While most scouts drooled over the performance ceiling of high school players, Beane preferred college players. Not only did they have a better track record in the big leagues, but they also had a larger body of work, making statistical analysis more accurate.

Beane, who is currently VP of baseball operations, never won a championship. However, his unconventional approach to baseball, perhaps the most conventional of sports, started a revolution, one that has been adopted not only by other baseball teams, but by teams in other leagues as well. In fact, his analytics-driven approach now appears frequently throughout the business world, too.

In order to lead, Beane needed to create an environment in which change was not just allowed but was essentially required. And not just once, either—Beane changed his strategy throughout his time as GM, always trying to stay one step ahead of his competitors.

"Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or the present are certain to miss the future." [1]

President John F. Kennedy uttered these words nearly 60 years ago, and they still ring true today. Change is inevitable. Those who resist change and fail to recognize that the future relies on our willingness and ability to enact change, are doomed, stuck in the

past, and relegated to the background as the rest of the world moves on.

When people think of success, they tend to envision the end results: increased profits, sustained growth, and individual accolades, all piled up neatly at the end of the road. They tend to overlook the difficulties that they need to overcome. There is a natural resistance to change, and a real fear of both success and failure. People are naturally afraid of success. They worry that they may no longer be relevant to the continued success and cast aside. Of course, there is also a fear of failed change, in which case the enterprise itself might die, and again are cast aside. It takes a brave soul to embrace change, but because change is inevitable, the only logical approach is to embrace it and be a part of the change; own it, and you make yourself indispensable.

There is a natural resistance to change, and a real fear of both success and failure.

Envisioning the end results is easy. What we tend to miss is the road that got those results there in the first place. It is the twisted, convoluted paths we must travel to achieve success that is the challenge. A lot of that road can be paved with a bit of hard work, and some luck. But without a plan, or even with one that isn't willing to change, we could end up building a route that does not lead to success, driving us into a brick wall instead.

So, what does all of this have to do with change? Change is what allows us to break out of old paths, to abandon the well-worn roads that have become rutted with overuse and the ones that no longer lead to places we want to go. Old roads may be made of dirt or cobblestone, while others take us on circuitous routes that might seem nice, but ultimately take far longer to bring us to our destination.

Ultimately, we need change to find new routes to succeed, to efficiently bring us to new levels of achievement that cannot be reached solely by working hard, by chance, or by old ways of thinking.

What Is Change?

The answer seems obvious, doesn't it? Change is difference. It's doing something different or approaching an established idea in a different way. If you get tired of eating the same burrito for lunch, you can change it up and have a roast beef sandwich instead. If you start slicing all your tee shots, you probably need to change your stance or the way you address the ball.

What about in business? You have a successful product, but you want to increase sales, so you change your product lineup and add a new flavor or feature. Maybe a component of your product has dramatically increased in price, so you change those components out to ones at a lower cost. Or perhaps you notice you're spending extra

money on unnecessary positions, so you change the structure of your organization and make your workforce more efficient.

But I want to go deeper than just a simple answer. Yes, change is difference. But there are different kinds of change, and each one can have a distinct effect.

There are big and small changes, for instance. The small changes, like taking a different route to work or adding macros into your spreadsheets, happen all the time. Big changes—getting married, opening new business locations—are less frequent, but tend to have much more significant impact—and usually require more planning.

You have voluntary and involuntary changes, as well. We usually prefer the voluntary ones, of course, because we can direct those changes. But sometimes, change is foisted upon us, and we have to react quickly to try and mitigate the fallout. Laws may change and affect the way that you do business. An important supplier may go bankrupt, forcing you to adjust on the fly.

That brings us to positive and negative changes. In the language of innovation, change is always seen as a good thing, and for the most part, they're right. If you don't change, you're bound to get left behind. But the important part is making sure the change is for the better. If you make the wrong choice, then you can seriously damage your business.

Managing Digital Change

All of this is especially true in our highly digitized world, where change comes at you fast and frequently. The digital revolution has been going on for more than 50 years, but as technology continues to advance, the changes that it carries with it accumulate by a magnitude.

The speed of technical transformation continues to increase, and companies themselves are moving faster, collecting and analyzing data at unprecedented speeds. According to Tanguy Catlin at McKinsey, leaders in digital transformation move nearly four times faster than less developed companies, and they do so with nearly twice the analytical power. [2]

Four times as fast? That's hard to imagine, but it's all thanks to some companies adapting better to a digitized workspace. It's astonishing, then, that 21% of North American and European businesses feel like their digital transformations are entirely complete.[3] I can guarantee you that 21% of companies are not digital leaders.

Managing change in a digital world isn't completely different than managing other kinds of change—but it does require a different set of techniques, as well as a different mindset. The sheer speed of technology, as well as the rapid developments that come along with changes in the digital world, mean that you need to develop a mindset that can adapt to those changes quickly, incorporating new ideas into your organization at top speed.

Digital change boils down to agility. In order to stay current, to keep from falling behind and getting passed by other individuals and companies, you need to learn how to develop an agile mindset, allowing you to quickly analyze new developments and determine which changes are beneficial. You also need to know how to incorporate those positive changes without losing too much time.

Take mobile technology. Designing your app or your website to best make use of mobile tech seems like a no-brainer. But you'd be surprised how many companies have no idea how the user experience affects their presence on mobile devices.

According to *Forbes*, more than 60% of mobile users wouldn't come back to a company whose mobile app or website didn't work correctly. Even worse? Forty percent of users would visit a competitor instead. [4]

Talk about high stakes.

Of course, that's all easier said than done. Change is hard, and the bigger the change is, the more difficult it becomes. If you've ever had trouble ordering something different at your favorite restaurant, then you know how hard it is to make really meaningful changes.

Let's take a few minutes, then, to consider some of the roadblocks that tend to get in the way of our efforts to enact change.

Obstacles to Change

The following list doesn't include all of the obstacles you might encounter in your efforts to enact change. And I'll bet you dollars to donuts that you'll rarely encounter each one on its own. But it does help to look at some of the most common obstacles that get in the way of change, so we can better understand how they keep us from effectively embracing change.

Fear

It's been a while since fear was in the mainstream as a motivational tool. These days, popular depictions of people who use fear to motivate their underlings usually cast them as monsters, as comedic, over-the-top tyrants, or as frightening oppressors only looking out for number one.

I'd argue that this is because we've all come to the realization that fear, quite simply, doesn't work. 5

Of course, there's still plenty of fear in the workplace, thanks to misguided managers, many of whom are acting more out of insecurity than anything. But the fact is, fear has a tendency to paralyze rather than motivate, and paralysis is the exact opposite of change.

Fear comes from any number of sources, any of which can get in the way of embracing change. Employees faced with adopting a greater number of digital components may feel their jobs are being threatened, especially when tech initiatives involve AI.

"If I teach the computer how to do my job," the thinking goes, "why would they keep me around afterwards?"

It's a well-founded fear, of course, and it reflects a realistic concern that has to be addressed as part of the process of change. But whether fears are rational or not, they can make it difficult to rationally analyze change.

Instead, fear leads us to focus on short-term solutions, to take control of what is immediately present. We hold on tighter to familiar patterns, habitual ways of doing things, clinging to what we know well in order to ward off the fear that change can inspire. In order to break out of that mindset, people need to feel that their fears are being heard and that there is some effort being made to alleviate them.

Uncertainty

It's helpful to think of uncertainty as a first cousin to fear. In some ways, uncertainty is simply a specific kind of fear, one that accompanies a loss of control. You could say that most change is defined by moving from the known into the unknown and that move always carries with it some degree of risk. That risk can inspire more than a little dread—which is unresolved uncertainty.

One of the biggest triggers for uncertainty is a lack of clarity. Whether that clarity refers to the end goals or the process of change itself, being unsure of where you're going or how you're going to

get there can make even the most solidly grounded person uncomfortable.

I've heard more than one executive talk disparagingly about their resistant employees—usually managers—saying that the employee was having trouble giving up control in their "little domain." To these execs, resistant employees were being troublesome because they were clinging too tightly to something that really didn't matter.

Except it really does matter. From the executive's perspective, that employee's feeling of control over their little fiefdom doesn't mean much. But to that employee, the "little domain" is their entire world, and losing control of it is a serious blow to their identity. Without that role, who are they?

Of course, I'm not saying we should avoid change in order to spare someone's feelings. But it's important to recognize that feelings of uncertainty usually aren't superficial. When they start to affect us, it's because that uncertainty runs deeply into our very identities. It's no wonder that uncertainty can make change difficult.

Lack of Confidence

John Hittler, writing for Forbes, is a big fan of the "what if" question. In his view, "what if" is where change starts. Instead of asking straightforward questions with easily structured answers, like, "How should I get in shape?" he encourages his readers to

reframe the question as a more open-ended "what if" . . . "What if I transformed my body?"

In his view, this reframing can "force us to imagine or create, often calling forth strong emotions."[6] From transforming how you plan your family vacation to declaring your intention to attain a previously impossible goal, Hittler argues that "what ifs" can transform your thinking in powerful ways.

Be decisive. The road to success is paved with flat squirrels who couldn't make a decision!

While I think the author is right that these questions can be powerful avenues to change, I think it's also worth looking at how the "what ifs" can just as easily make change difficult, if not impossible—and it's all because of a lack of confidence.

When you're developing new ideas, asking yourself "what if" questions is a powerful tool for imagining a different future. But for those tasked with enacting change—from management downward—the "what ifs" can quickly take over, becoming the voice for every anxiety they might be feeling.

What if I can't adapt to the new way of doing business? What if I don't have the skills or knowledge I need? What if I can't learn these new skills? What if it all goes wrong?

You can imagine how quickly these questions can spiral. One moment, you're worried about how this is going to change the way you work. The next moment, you may be asking yourself how

you're going to feed your kids if you get squeezed out by AI. It doesn't matter how far-fetched some of these scenarios are; as soon as they hit, they can send you down a rabbit hole of worry.

For the most part, these "what if" questions are a matter of confidence. When change happens, it can make you start to question things, and if you don't have the confidence that you can not only abide by the changes but also use them as an opportunity to improve yourself, then it's easy to let change completely derail you.

Timing

In an ideal world, change only happens when you have the time to fully plan out how that change will occur, giving everyone time to adapt to the ways the changes will affect them. You'll be able to lay out a clear strategy, understanding any potential pitfalls and every opportunity to leverage your advantages to their full benefit. And your team, champions that they are, will be able to totally engage with these changes, having had the time and training to take off the moment you say go.

But the only people who live in an ideal world are fairy tale characters. Instead, we're left with a much messier world, one in which time and circumstances are constantly shifting, and we need to be able to make changes as we go in order to keep up—or anticipate—those shifts.

This is especially true in an increasingly digitized world. Not only does technology advance by explosive leaps and bounds, but the sheer speed at which information comes to us and at which commerce is commenced means that we need to be ready to turn on a dime, either to take advantage of opportunities or to avoid problems as they develop.

Even in the most agile organizations, making quick changes can be stressful. Without time for preparation, employees will probably feel even higher levels of fear and uncertainty, while leaders may not have had time to look for all of the potential outcomes of these rapid shifts. This raises the chances of some unforeseen complication creating a business catastrophe, one that may not be easily fixed.

Ultimately, you are going to have to make some quick decisions. In order to mitigate the risks, there are a few things you should do. It's essential that you establish an agile workplace culture, which we'll get to shortly. More importantly, though, you need to come to an understanding with your workforce over your expectations when it comes to change.

In any workplace, there are going to be times in which pressure builds. This is never truer than when you have to make a change without much lead time. Your employees need to understand that you're making decisions in the best interest of the organization, and they need to trust you.

By the same token, you have to be understanding when difficulties arise. Any change takes time to process, and while there's nothing wrong with pressure, you won't be doing anyone any favors if you impose punishments on those who you feel are taking too long to get it.

In times of confusion and uncertainty, therein lies great opportunity.

Remember, fear isn't a motivator. Instead, recognize that it takes time to assimilate changes. Assimilation tends to move faster in a supportive environment.

Habit

Perhaps the biggest obstacle to change is habit. I'm sure you've heard it before: It's how we've always done it, so why should we change? It goes back to that old chestnut: if it isn't broken, don't fix it.

It can be hard to fight this attitude. We humans tend to be creatures of habit. We have our way of doing things, whether it's how we take our morning coffee or the route we use to drive home. Changing that routine is an act of disruption, and depending on your mood, it can wreck your whole day.

It's the same with asking people to change how they do their work. Any time you make a change at the workplace, there's a chance that some people will resist, based on nothing more than inertia. Your new way may seem more complicated, or it might take them longer.

Disrupting the workflow usually means more work, at least in the short term, and some employees will have a hard time with that.

So how do you deal with those ingrained habits? Again, it comes down to building a culture in which change isn't the exception, but rather an expectation. You need to find a way to bake agility into the everyday mindset of your workforce, so that change is not seen as a hardship, but rather as a way of doing business. If an employee can't adjust to this mindset, then it may be time to move on.

Idea vs. Execution

One of the most common mistakes that organizations make is to treat ideas as changes. Ideas, like talk, are cheap. They're a dime a dozen. Coming up with ideas can be the easiest thing in the world. But without execution, an idea basically lives in your imagination.

Don't get me wrong. Having ideas is a critical part of any business that is looking to innovate. You need creative ideas to avoid being passed by other companies. And while ideas may be easy to come by, good ideas are a little rarer. Still, an idea means nothing without the means and the will to put it into practice. You need the ability to translate those ideas into reality.

That's where your company culture comes in.

The most successful companies tend to be built as agile organizations, able to quickly take in and analyze large volumes of

data. Then, they need to formulate plans based on the outcomes of that analysis. With the right company culture, you can instill a forward-looking attitude that embraces the analytics process with the willingness to make changes based on the results.

Every other step in managing change in your organization starts from this basic understanding that change isn't planning—it's action. In essence, real change is the combination of ideas and execution.

Honesty

Many times, companies treat change as a secret. This can be for many reasons, from corporate security to uncertainty over how the workforce will react. They tiptoe around change, making requests of employees without giving them a sense of the bigger picture.

While many of these concerns are understandable (who wants to help train their potential replacement?), keeping changes secret can only hurt your organization in the long run. Keeping secrets from your workforce can damage the trust between you and your employees, which can be demoralizing, hurting employee engagement. If you don't trust them to act responsibly as part of the company, then why should they commit to you?

On a more practical level, secrecy slows down change. If you're trying to avoid spilling the beans during a transition process,

your workforce has to wait for each individual step. Without knowing what's coming next, it's difficult for them to be efficient.

Instead of keeping changes secret, you should do whatever you can to be open with your workforce from the very beginning. Sure, you can hold some things close to the vest, but bringing your staff onboard early inspires further trust and helps to align goals. You may have some employees who decide to leave rather than change, but that can be a good thing too, since holdouts can drag down the pace of change.

Managing Fear

Honesty with your employees is a big part of managing the fear that's associated with change. Whether big or small, making changes necessarily involves risk, and it's important to acknowledge any fears that employees may feel as a result of those changes. Being open and honest helps people to deal with those fears, and it can bring your team onboard.

While honesty is the best policy, you should also be positive in your discussions. Your attitude goes a long way in modeling behavior for your workforce. You can discuss how things are going to change, but phrase it in a way that emphasizes why these changes are positive.

You can also point out how remaining static is a risk itself. No matter what, make sure your workforce understands that changes are for a good reason—the overall strength of the company.

Increasing Buy-In at All Levels

Most articles about change spend a lot of time focusing on getting the mass of your workforce onboard with your decisions. It's a fair point: if your employees don't buy in en masse, it's unlikely that your changes are going to be successful.

But real change needs to be able to happen from all levels. On the executive level, you need to be plugged into the entire change process, even if you're not familiar with all aspects of the process at the beginning. This is especially common for tech CEOs, who may not have the level of expertise as others in the company. Because there are decisions that need to be made constantly, executives have to be fully engaged in enacting change from beginning to end.

Middle management may be at the most critical level for enacting change. These managers are the conduit for ideas, both up the chain and back down. This means that getting their buy-in is absolutely critical. According to Susan J. Ashford and James R. Detert, these are the people who connect the marketplace to the executives, connecting direct customer and supplier engagement with the executive level. [7]

The problem, though, is that middle management is often stuck in a difficult position, especially in organizations that have a strict top-down approach. When these managers are empowered by their superiors, however, they can be powerful drivers of change

within an organization, both for generating ideas and for building employee buy-in.

Of course, the final piece of the puzzle is your workforce. Getting them to buy into change is critical to keeping your organization running at peak efficiency. The best way to make this process as easy as possible is to ensure that your managerial teams have a good relationship with their teams.

This is especially valuable when managers can identify employees who serve as informal influencers. These employees are usually popular with the rest of the team and are often looked to as models for behavior. Recruiting these individuals as part of your efforts to create an agile company can go a long, long way in allowing you to reach your goals.

Train, Train, Train

Let's take a second and go back to that ideal world we talked about earlier, the one where we have all the time we need to plan for changes. In that world, we would have a roadmap for every new skill that your employees would need to develop, as well as enough time to ensure that everyone had the time to receive the necessary training.

Okay, that's enough dreaming. Here in the real world, there's no road map, and you'll never have enough time to develop new skills in your workforce to make the changes you'll need.

That is, you'll never have enough time if you wait to start training. You can't wait until you have a final plan to start your employee development programs. If you do, you're sure to get passed by other organizations with a larger, broader skill base.

But how do you know which skills are going to be most important? As with many things in this life, there's always a level of uncertainty, and you have to be somewhat comfortable with that. At the same time, there are a number of ways you can decide how you can make employee training work best for you—and your workforce.

First and foremost, you should be looking to keep abreast with your competitors. This means keeping your ear to the ground to know where other companies are directing their efforts. You should also keep an eye out for developing trends in technology, even if they don't seem to be immediately relevant to your industry. You never know—innovation in one field can quickly become standard across many industries.

Another tack is to partner with your employees to see what types of training and development they're most interested in. Not only does this raise employee engagement, but it can also point out areas that you may not have considered. It can even help you to identify employees with the interest and potential for further advancement.

When it comes to training, you need to be creative and proactive. Reskilling and upskilling are buzzwords for a reason.

Building an agile company means relying on an agile workforce, and the more broadly skilled your employees are, the more likely they are to succeed.

Alignment

Clarity, clarity, clarity. When you're embarking on a change, no matter what size, it's critical that you ensure the messaging of that change is coming through crystal clear. That means not just the end results, but the process for change, as well.

Fear and uncertainty are two of the most common obstacles to change, and they both result from a lack of clarity and communication. But when you ensure that organizational changes are transparent and that every person understands what you're trying to accomplish and how you're going about accomplishing it, then alignment has a tendency to take care of itself.

Alignment doesn't necessarily mean blind acceptance. People will continue to ask questions throughout the process of change and that almost always makes the end result stronger. But with a clear, singular goal, it's much easier for everyone to find a way to contribute towards reaching that achievement.

Go All-In

Nothing is more detrimental to establishing a culture of change than failing to commit to the process. When you make a decision to enact a change, it's all too easy to hold something back,

to be conservative on both time and money, in case change turns out to be too risky. That way, you've still got something in reserve, and you haven't put yourself totally on the line.

But I'll tell you this: not going all-in on a decision is the biggest reason changes don't succeed.

Not all poker players are good at the game. I've seen players go all-in on terrible hands and lose their shirts. But I've also seen that same hand win, with players holding great hands throwing in their cards after tossing hundreds into the pot, just because they got scared.

Now, which of those players do you think has more regrets?

I realize that business isn't poker. But as I've said again and again, there is no change without risk, and when you decide to make a change, the worst thing you can do is only go halfway. When you decide to embrace change, you can't do it by half-measures. You either believe you've made the right decision, or you don't. And if you don't, then it's better to go back to the drawing board than take any half-measures.

Look, I'm not saying that you have to throw good money after bad. Sometimes, decisions don't work out how you think they should, and eventually, you'll need to find a new solution. But the surest way for change to fail is to not fully commit to the project. If you're not on board, how can you expect your organization to follow your lead?

Conclusion

Like everything in the great game, there's no such thing as standing still. You're either moving forward or falling behind, and change is an integral part of determining which way you're going. Think of Billy Bean, the GM of the Oakland A's in Moneyball: that kind of commitment to change—not just as an event but as a process—should be the same commitment that drives you and your organization in an increasingly digitized world.

In our digital world, the rates of change are faster than ever. With an agile organization, you'll be better positioned to respond to any challenge, whether it's from outside your company or within it.

Progress and growth are two of the most important words in business—but both of them are synonyms for change.

Chapter 9

GET ON BOARD

Inclusion

It is always easier to embrace something like diversity or inclusion when benefits are clear. To begin with, inclusion is a fairness issue, and having a fair corporate culture is simply the right thing to do. However, different perspectives also mean a greater variety of ideas, which leads to greater innovation. The culture of an enterprise is enhanced, which will help you attract more talented individuals. Improved community and customer relations will add to these benefits. Besides the fact that it is just fair play and simply the right thing to do, it will also contribute to an improved reputation for your business. And all of this will result in a more successful company. Isn't it nice when the doing the right thing is also the best thing to do?

So, what does this really mean for you and your business? The value proposition that diversity brings is beyond calculation. Besides the increase in perspectives and all the qualities that come with that, embracing diversity also excludes those individuals with

narrow minds from being attracted to your organization. This may be even the greatest benefit, as by repelling closed minded individuals, you are actually prequalifying your recruitment standards by avoiding those who would be a hindrance to your mission.

I don't know about you, but it feels like I hear about inclusion all the time these days. I read about it on the internet, I hear about it on the news, and I see it flash time and time again across my social media. On rare occasions, it's coming from some jerk who feels the need to troll everyone for being a "social justice warrior" or some other nonsense, but for the most part, everything you hear about inclusion is positive.

Still, there are a lot of people out there who seem to treat inclusion as just another corporate buzzword, something that people say so they can sound smart and informed without really knowing what it means. But people use buzzwords because they represent important ideas, and inclusion is no exception.

Inclusion in the workplace isn't a new idea, nor is it a controversial one. So why, then, is inclusion still such an important topic? The answer is because we haven't done enough to make it not a pressing issue. Issues of bias continue to plague us, and even when we think we're doing everything right, there are still many areas where we can do much, much better. And as Colleen Slaughter writes for LinkedIn, inclusive leaders are "essential to create thriving organizations where everyone feels valued." [1]

Inclusion comes up again and again because it remains an important issue. That's why it's worth our time to really think about what inclusion means, both for companies and for us as individuals. We should make sure we have a solid, clear definition, including a better understanding of why inclusion remains such a critical issue in our society. Finally, we'll look at some ways we can help improve inclusion in the workplace.

Finding a Definition for Inclusion

For all the attention that inclusion gets, there's also a lot of misunderstandings about what it actually means. All too often, it gets lost among a sea of other admittedly important ideas, including diversity, equality, representation, and more. Instead of each term getting the attention it deserves, there's a tendency to lump all of these ideas together under a single umbrella, and that doesn't do anyone any favors.

It helps to define inclusion by first thinking of its opposite: exclusion. Historically in America, laws and policies have been designed around exclusionary principles: who was invited in and who was left out. While we've made significant strides over the last several years, those exclusions still echo through our workplaces, and they stand in the way of our inclusion efforts. 2

In contrast, inclusion doesn't apply rules for admittance. Instead of using external factors to determine a person's worth, the focus is on what that person can contribute to the organization, from

their skill sets to their points of view. Exclusion sets up barriers to keep people out; inclusion removes barriers to not just let people in, but to welcome them as full members of the organization.

Diversity

The term that most people confuse with inclusion is diversity. It's not done out of any malicious intent—in fact, many companies tend to combine the two efforts under the label "Diversity and Inclusion," or D&I.

This is because diversity and inclusion are really closely related. In the broadest sense, diversity means having a wide range of different voices in the same room. Each person has their own distinct identity, and while that identity may overlap somewhat with others, they have a unique perspective because of their backgrounds.

Now, when I said, "a broad range of different voices," what did you picture in your mind? No matter what you saw, I want to invite you to broaden it even further. Of course, diversity means including people of different races and ethnicities. But these aren't the only ways identities differ in the workplace. Gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, and disability are only some of the many different categories to consider when it comes to diversifying your workforce.

Being aware of all these different backgrounds is important, of course, and a lot of training and effort goes into helping raise

cultural awareness among employees and executives alike. However, being culturally aware isn't the same as being inclusive—it's only a starting point. Yet far too often, diversity training is both the beginning and the end of D&I efforts.

This is at least partially why so many companies have found that their efforts aren't resulting in significant increases in long-term diversification. Frank Dobbin and Alexandra Kalev note that, despite significant increases to diversity training programs, the rates of diversity within their organizations have largely remained unchanged. [3]

Being culturally aware isn't the same as being inclusive—it's only a starting point.

While many companies shout to the hills about their training programs, the net impact is insignificant at best. Why? Because they only focus on getting their diverse hires in the door. After that, they're left on their own. And no matter how much diversity training you do, or how much cultural awareness you raise, you have little to no chance of improving inclusion without the tools to deal with bias.

Conscious and Unconscious Bias

"Bias?" you might be saying to yourself. "I'm not biased! I don't have a biased bone in my body!"

Well, as much as I'd love it if that were true, the fact of the matter is that we're all biased. I'm biased. You're biased. Your family's biased, your pastor's biased, even the little old lady who feeds all the neighborhood cats is biased. It's just a simple fact, baked into our genetics over time.

In general, there are two kinds of biases. The one that's easiest to recognize is conscious bias. This is the form that shows up in blatant racism, sexism, ageism, or ableism. It usually shows up as a feeling of superiority based solely on external personal characteristics, usually with no other reason than because someone either looks or sounds different.

Unconscious bias is much harder to spot, because it's, well, unconscious. No matter how open-minded you think you might be (and in many cases, people are very open-minded), your brain is making decisions below the surface, determining how you feel about a person by making extrapolations based on several factors—many of which are entirely unfair.

Many of these unconscious biases are based on what's called in-group favoritism or in-group bias. As humans, we tend to find ourselves attracted to qualities in other people that we feel we recognize in ourselves, even though these groups aren't based on much more than speculation. This instinct to form exclusive groups starts young, and it can be hard to train ourselves to think differently. [4]

Unconscious bias is a terror for HR departments, since it's difficult to recognize these hiring patterns without looking at the larger picture. Even then, it's hard to see the cause unless you're looking for it. While some companies try to combat this with things like employment tests, these methods are still imperfect.

Overcoming bias in all its forms is a critical part of any company's D&I efforts, not just in hiring but also when it comes to creating a welcoming, open, workplace for everyone. That, in a nutshell, is what inclusion means.

Inclusion

For me, the best way to describe inclusion is as sustained diversity. Diversity efforts don't stop when someone signs an employment agreement. It doesn't stop on their first day. And it certainly doesn't stop as soon as onboarding and training are done. Diversity is a process, and inclusion is how we sustain those diversity efforts on a long-term, ongoing basis.

Let's look at it this way. For all of our work, training, and education efforts, scientists say that bias is in many ways ingrained in our brains at subtle levels that we may not even recognize. We can learn to recognize these biases, but there's no way to completely eliminate them. As Dobbin and Kalev write, "you can't simply 'outlaw' bias because shaming and punishing bias doesn't really address the problem. 5

Instead, inclusion efforts have to revolve around how we deal with bias, rather than trying to solve it outright. You and your organization need to learn skills and techniques to recognize bias and mitigate the impact it has on your workforce.

Listen, you'll never be able to completely eliminate bias, right? And that shouldn't be your project—you're running a business, and while improving your group's D&I efforts is an important part of good corporate stewardship, solving all the world's problems isn't your main project. Your business is your main project—inclusion just makes that project work much, much better.

Another way of thinking about inclusion is to go back to the idea of cultural awareness. A big part of diversity involves being sensitive to the different cultures and identities that make up your workforce, as well as those that are in your hiring pools. From an inclusion standpoint, cultural awareness is the first step—it's essentially identifying the problem of inclusion without necessarily fixing it.

Think of cultural awareness as a mindset, one that accepts and embraces the wide variety of backgrounds your employees bring to your company. Inclusion, then, is a competency, a set of skills that you can use to effectively maneuver within the mindset of cultural awareness.

The cultural competency of inclusion means having the tools to create and maintain a welcoming, open environment; one that not

only accepts people from all walks of life, but also one that relies on multiple voices and perspectives, creating a stronger, more effective, more creative workforce.

Why Inclusion Matters

For most of us, it might seem a little strange to spend time talking about why inclusion is important. I mean, we all know that it's important, so why take the time to go into detail? Well, there are two reasons.

History is made by those who do the impossible.

First, while most of us recognize the value of inclusion, there are those who don't, and we should take any chance we get to show these people why inclusion matters. Second, it helps us to put into words exactly why we should continue to focus our efforts on improving inclusion.

Just "knowing" the value of inclusion isn't enough; in order to really make our D&I efforts effective, we must be crystal clear about the reasoning behind them. When we can explain exactly why we're continuing to pursue better inclusion practices, we can focus our efforts more precisely, while also improving our ability to measure results.

Fairness

First things first: Focusing on inclusion is the right thing to do.

I know, it may seem a little hypocritical of me to talk about being more precise and specific, but then open things up with a general statement about what's right. But when it comes to inclusion, it's worth taking a moment to start out with a simple, declarative statement that should underlie every other argument we make for improving inclusion.

D&I programs aren't about "righting wrongs" from the past. Hopefully, these efforts will help heal some of those wounds, of course, but that's not our main project. Instead, inclusion is about learning how to look at the whole person, rather than a collection of identity markers, like age, sex, race, and so on.

As a rule, I never say that we're looking past any of these things because that isn't inclusion, either. But while I see all of these factors, I incorporate them into getting to know the whole person, with each fact about their identity making up a small part of that identity.

This is especially true when it comes to hiring. When we're looking for new people to bring onboard, it's not uncommon for us to say that we're looking for quality new hires. The problem is that we don't always know what we mean when we say "quality."

We may have some vague ideas about skills, job fit, and personality profiles, but it's easy for those to get overshadowed by

our personal interactions during the interview process. The problem, then, is the troublesome issue of unconscious bias.

Personal interactions are important for getting to know a candidate, but they also introduce the opportunity for in-group biases to appear, usually without us even realizing it. We may start to recognize similarities with ourselves on an unconscious level and that can lead us to prefer certain candidates based mostly on how they resonate with our preferred in-group.

A lot of companies have stepped up their efforts to fight this bias and ensure fairness among all candidates, including adding skills testing to their hiring process. But even these systems can fall short, especially if they're unevenly administered.

The best solution—really, the only solution—is to combine these efforts to limit bias with consistent training in cultural awareness, so you can keep inclusion in the forefront of your mind as you're making hiring decisions. Remember, D&I isn't an endpoint; it's an ongoing process.

Equal Opportunity

Looking at this section heading, you might be asking yourself how equal opportunity and fairness are different. It's a fair question, since the two concepts are very closely linked. The difference is a matter of approach.

Fairness, in most cases, is about treating people in an impartial, unbiased way. Equal opportunity, on the other hand, is

the idea that jobs should be open to everyone, regardless of their identity, and should be distributed according to who could best perform the required tasks.

There are a number of different laws here in the United States that provide prospective employees protection from bias, including age, race, and sex. These laws, most of which are enforced by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), have been used extensively since the 1960s to try and eliminate biases that have kept our workplaces from being truly diverse spaces.

These laws, in addition to affirmative action, have done a great deal to level the playing field when it comes to employment. But the simple truth is that these laws alone aren't nearly enough to foster diversity and inclusion—really, no law ever could.

Why? Because leveling the playing field is only about getting people in the door. Inclusion is so, so much more than that.

Remember, diversity is a mindset, and inclusion is the toolkit that allows us to sustain that diversity throughout every aspect of the workforce. Getting diverse people into the workplace is just the start. It's very difficult to legislate people's hearts and minds.

It can help to think of your organization's D&I efforts as a statement of values, a clear, declarative testimonial of where your group stands on creating a truly inclusive workplace. It isn't moral grandstanding; it's simply you making it very clear where your priorities lie.

Sound Business Sense

While the moral reasons for focusing on inclusion in the workplace should play a big role in your D&I programs, I've also pointed out that fixing society isn't your business's main project. What is your main project? It's business—duh!

But here's the interesting thing. Study after study has shown that improving your company's diversity and inclusivity have a direct, positive impact on the success of your business. According to Boston Consulting Group, companies with more diverse leadership teams increased their revenue due to innovation by 19% over companies with less-diverse management. 6 Meanwhile, a Gartner study states that more inclusive groups outperformed more homogenous teams by nearly 30%. 7

Higher profits and increased productivity? For most businesses, that would be enough by itself to encourage them to expand your D&I programs. But there's more to the relationship between better inclusivity and improvements in your business. There's a whole host of ways your business can benefit from improving your D&I efforts, all of which can have an impact on your company's bottom line.

Broader Experience

I probably don't have to tell you that your business is stronger when you have multiple voices and perspectives. When

you limit the number of viewpoints within your organization, it's easy to develop tunnel vision, limiting your field of view to a narrow band of possibilities.

This has a couple of negative effects that no company wants to see. First, it can make it difficult to see opportunities as they approach. Oftentimes, prospects for new markets or products come from unexpected places and voices, and when you limit the channels for those voices to reach you, those prospects can speed past you.

Second, limited voices hamper your ability to be flexible or agile, an essential quality for companies in this increasingly digitized world. As our need to be open to change continues to grow, we have to be able to rely on multiple voices to give us the insight we need to make choices that make our organizations stronger.

In a more diverse, inclusive workplace, you surround yourself with a much broader range of life experiences, and this gives you an advantage in the marketplace. By embracing these differences and giving your employees the space and the opportunity to share their perspectives, you can gain insights that would otherwise go unheard in a less inclusive environment.

Wider Market Appeal

Just like broadening the different viewpoints in your workplace strengthens your team, these same viewpoints can give

you better access to a wider segment of the market. But how exactly does this work? Let's take a deeper look.

On one level, when you make D&I part of your brand identity, you signal to others your commitment to being a conscientious corporate partner. Consumers tend to respond positively to these efforts. Those who share your position will make it a point to patronize your business—and it costs you nothing!

Internally, a diverse workforce allows you to hear a variety of perspectives from people with access to different insider information pertaining to different markets. Again, with a single perspective, you only see part of the story; a more diverse team allows you to build a more complete picture.

A globe or world map has a strange way of influencing success.

I do want to caution you, though, against something called the cultural monolith. A cultural monolith is treating someone's personal experience as representative of their entire group, which is unfair to both parties. It's imperative that you treat each person's opinion as their own. Cultures are varied and diverse, made up of thousands or millions of individuals with their own preferences and identities. Respect that difference—celebrate it!

A Customer-Centric Culture

One of the phrases that gets thrown around a lot in the business world is the idea of a customer-centric culture. I mean, aren't all businesses customer-centric? How, then, does creating an inclusive workspace create a customer-centric culture?

The answer is that yes, businesses in general are centered around their customers in that they know they need customers to purchase their goods and services. But when it comes to serving these customers in the best, most efficient way possible, inclusion can have a dramatic effect.

Think about my previous point that inclusion can help you increase your market share by gaining access to new markets. The same diversity of perspectives that gives you access to those markets also helps you to serve those customers better.

Not all customers are the same. They have different needs, different desires, and different circumstances, all of which require you to find ways to meet their needs in order to better serve those different markets. With a diverse, inclusive workforce, you're better positioned to understand those differences, which gives you the opportunity to serve those customers better than your competitors.

Better Work Atmosphere

One of the most valuable aspects of focusing on inclusion in your company is that it almost always improves the atmosphere in

your workplace. When you emphasize the celebration of everyone's differences and the value of every person's contribution, you'll almost immediately notice a decrease in the behaviors that can make the workplace miserable—and less productive.

If you don't have a productive, welcoming work environment, it's usually a sign that your inclusion efforts aren't working. An improved work atmosphere underlies all the other benefits that come along with D&I initiatives, mostly because it reflects the sense of acceptance that true inclusion requires.

Five Ways to Improve Inclusion

By now, you're probably asking yourself how you can help improve your team's inclusion efforts. After all, beyond the mountains of evidence showing how inclusion can help your business, building a culture of acceptance in your company is simply the right thing to do.

While there is no road map for creating an inclusive company, that doesn't have to be a bad thing. The problem with maps is that they tend to focus on a single route, making it hard to find different approaches. Because there's no single pathway to inclusion, you have the freedom to make your own choices, determining what works best for your company in your specific situation.

What follows, then, are some suggestions for how you can plan your own pathway to inclusivity. None of these ideas are

prescriptions, and I'm positive that no single suggestion will be the cure for your company's diversity and inclusion problems. Instead, think of each item as a bullet point in your D&I planning, which you can arrange and rearrange and fill in with other strategies to maximize the impact of your inclusion initiatives.

1. Establish a Feeling of Belonging

It's not a surprise that making employees feel like they belong with your company is a key part of improving your inclusion efforts. Heck, that emphasis on creating a shared sense of belonging and camaraderie has been around for ages, although for many years, it had little to do with issues of diversity.

But the same efforts that companies went to years ago to make the workforce feel comfortable and welcomed in the workplace are just as important today—they just need a little tinkering to make them work for your D&I planning and to really emphasize how inclusion impacts your employee's day-to-day lives.

There are a number of ways to create a sense of belonging within your employees. Happy hours are always a great idea, since they give you the opportunity to bring your workforce together in a social situation away from work. Supply some food and some drinks and let people share their stories.

You can also provide more structured events. Guest speakers are a great option, especially speakers from a variety of different

backgrounds. You can also organize events like scavenger hunts or other relaxed office competitions, which have a tendency to bring groups together.

No matter what, the emphasis should always be on making everyone feel accepted and heard. Any conflicts or misunderstandings that may arise during any portion of the day should be treated as teachable moments.

2. Consider Your Leadership Team

No matter how inclusive you make your workplace, true change in your organization starts with leadership. Your employees take their cues from their leaders, and if those leaders don't fully embrace the D&I mission, then there's no chance that your organization will ever become truly inclusive.

The most important step towards diversifying your workplace and making it inclusive is to examine your leadership team. Look at who is in place and what positions they hold. According to CNBC, 85% of all executives in the United States are white, while whites also hold 83% of all senior manager positions.[8] If those numbers surprise you, you're not alone.

Now, I'm not saying that you have to assign slots to your leadership team that can only be filled by this or that specific designation. But if your leadership positions are held almost entirely by people of one particular background, you're likely to find it difficult to enact meaningful change. No matter what your

good intentions may be, your efforts will ring hollow, simply because you don't seem to be following your own directives.

When you increase the diversity of your leadership teams, you're modeling the change that you'd like to see. If your leadership reflects the kind of diversity and inclusion you would like to create in your workplace, you'll find it easier to convince your employees that you're earnest in your desire to make the office a more welcoming and accepting environment.

Of course, the real benefit of diversifying your leadership is that you broaden your perspectives, opening yourself up to more opportunities and in most cases increasing your profitability and innovation quotient. Honestly, it seems like a win-win, doesn't it?

3. Give Employees Access to Resources

There are a number of resources out there that employers can provide for their employees to help build an inclusive environment. These resources can be as simple as a collection of books on how to overcome biases like racism and ageism to full-blown development programs that employees can enroll in to receive training on inclusion practices.

One example of the resources available to workers are employee resource groups, or ERGs. These groups are usually organized by employees. They can provide a forum for employees with common concerns to meet and discuss concerns or issues they

may be experiencing. These concerns can then be communicated to leadership.

ERGs often do more than just represent problems in the office, though. Many perform volunteer work in the community, or organize events outside of work, often for the whole company. Ultimately, these groups provide a safe space for emphasizing the value of inclusion within the entire company.

4. Emphasize and Respect Unique Experiences

In a truly diverse, inclusive workplace, people are going to come from all walks of life, and their experiences are going to diverge, sometimes to an extreme degree. Without a focus on inclusivity, this can be a recipe for disaster.

It's easy to see how these different experiences could lead to employees butting heads. Without a shared sense of understanding, it can be difficult if not impossible, to understand where the other person is coming from.

Ultimately, it all comes down to empathy. Being able to put yourself in someone else's shoes gives you the ability to experience what life might be like for someone else, even if it's only in your imagination.

Science has shown that when we witness someone else's experience, whether visually or through speaking, the empathy we experience is our mirror neurons firing. These neurons react in the same whether we experience something ourselves or simply

witness it. If you've ever winced when you saw someone get a papercut or felt a rush of warmth during a romcom when the main couple gets together, you've felt your mirror neurons firing. 9

However, the power of empathy only comes from practice, and in order to reap the full rewards, you must be willing to try again and again to feel what others are feeling. At times, it can be difficult, but emphasizing empathy as a core value can help you build a strong, lasting, more inclusive workplace.

5. Remember the Little Things (That Aren't So Little)

I always hated the phrase "little things." I think it's mostly because those little things usually turn out to be so important. Anyone can handle the big, obvious things, but it takes dedication, creativity, and focus to handle the details, all the things that must go right in order for those big things to go off without a hitch.

Using the right pronouns, for example, is a simple, easy way to make people feel included. It's such a small thing to include your pronouns at the bottom of your email, but for someone else, it could be transformative. And the best part is that it costs you nothing.

Another simple act is to keep a calendar that highlights diversity, marking not only the major U.S. holidays, but a wide array of holidays from across the globe, both big and small. That way, you can help your workforce celebrate their culture all year round, whether that takes the form of an office-wide announcement

or a small gesture from you to your employee. Both are sure to be appreciated.

It's these not-so-little acts that accumulate over time, and when you encourage everyone to participate in your efforts to encourage and celebrate diversity and inclusion in your workplace, it can bring everyone closer. Big or small, each gesture fosters an attitude of acceptance, and that's something that everyone can get behind.

Inclusion Isn't an Endpoint—It's a Beginning

One of the most challenging aspects of diversity and inclusion is that there's no endpoint. There won't come a day when you'll come into the office, take a deep breath, put your hands on your hips, and say, "It's here. We're officially diverse and inclusive. Good work."

It's hard to measure the success of your inclusion efforts. For the most part, when it works, you won't notice anything at all. You can hold meetings and establish panels, or you could put out surveys or have informal discussions with staff members and managers. At the very least, you should keep track of your staff's diversity.

When it comes to your D&I initiatives, it's important to think broadly in just about every way. Expand your time frame to include both short- and long-term goals. Consider the diversity of your current staff and the ways your new hires could help make

your team even more diverse. Make use of a wide range of strategies to build inclusion in your workplace.

You should also broaden your range of what diversity means. For many people, diversity simply means race and ethnicity. But true diversity is about welcoming people of every gender, sex, age, religion, and sexual orientation. And remember, each person is their own individual—they're not monoliths, representative of an entire identity.

When I was running my companies, much of my success was due to my hiring strategy. I only cared about some very specific characteristics, namely focus, driven workers who could take their own initiative. That strategy propelled me to over $750 million in sales, thanks to the tireless work of my more than 300 employees.

Still, there's always more I could do to continue to build an inclusive workplace. That's the nature of inclusion. As a cultural competency, inclusion is about having the skills you need to sustain diversity over the long haul. Just like with fishing, when you teach a person to be inclusive, they'll carry those skills with them for the rest of their life.

THE END

Enjoy this Excerpt From
Big Things Have Small Beginnings

Read more books in the Motovation, Business & Leadership series. In this excerpt, Wes Berry shares insights from his decades in business, drawing from great leaders throughout history to guide you in learning the same strategies and tactics that made them successful; an understanding that will empower you to achieve success in both business and in life.

Chapter 1—Ambition…
For Better, or Worse?

Let's begin our discussion with "Ambition." Nothing in business will get accomplished without it. You simply can't play in the great game without ambition.

Ambition is an absolute essential. But make no mistake, for better or worse, genuine ambition involves struggle. We set out to achieve something that we believe is really worthwhile. And it is the achievement of that worthwhile goal that brings us a genuine sense of our own worth. We make a difference. We earn our dignity. But let me add that the very struggle itself, even in the absence of the success we set out to achieve, brings much of the same benefit to us. *It makes us people with a purpose.*

Ambition also puts considerable demands on us. It requires a whole lot more of us than just our lofty "ambitions," our dreams in life. It requires a toughness of mind and spirit that only really grows in us once we enter the ring, once we begin to play in the great game. And success is guaranteed to no one.

But if you're not willing to lose, you shouldn't be playing the game.

What is ambition?

For most people the term is a little ambiguous, isn't it? You're sitting at your desk shootin' the breeze over morning coffee with a co-worker, and your department head walks by.

"She's ambitious," you say.

Is it a compliment? Or is it a castigation? The answer to that question depends largely on whether or not you consider yourself to be ambitious, and for what reason—that is, to what end. And be assured that this discussion is not a new one.

Seventeenth-century philosopher, statesman, and jurist Sir Francis Bacon pondered this same point in his essay On Ambition (1612). In his now-archaic English, he writes:

> *So ambitious men, if they find the way open for their rising, and still get forward, they are rather busy than dangerous; but if they be checked in their desires, they become secretly discontent, and look upon men and matters with an evil eye,*

and are best pleased, when things go backward; which is the worst property in a servant of a prince, or state.

Well isn't that clear as a bell? But, in fact, it sure does ring true!

He's saying that when ambitious men are allowed to engage in their passion, they become marvelously busy and industrious. They get stuff done! Contrary to common suspicion, he says, they do not become dangerous. On the contrary, he adds, the danger of ambition usually arises when such men are denied the pursuit of their ambitions, and then become a veritable danger to society, primarily out of the frustration and the consequent bitterness that follows. Rather than steering their formidable energies toward the good of society, they instead channel them toward its damage and destruction. This, of course, is particularly onerous when such frustrated men are servants of a prince, or of a state. Cautiously, Bacon instructs princes to manage ambitious people and channel their activities such that their creativity and ambitions are given breath, if not even wings.

Therefore it is good for princes, if they use ambitious men, to handle it, so as they be still progressive and not retrograde; which, because it cannot be without inconvenience, it is good not to use such natures at all.

In the plain English of today, he's suggesting that, if ambitious—and therefore productive—people cannot have their ambitions nurtured by the activities for which they have been enlisted, then it would be much better never to have enlisted such people at all, so that their frustrated ambition doesn't end up frustrating the success of a venture.

More than a few business writers have drawn parallels between the characteristics required for success in business with those required for success in war. With certain obvious limitations, it makes sense. The challenge, in both war and in business, of pitting oneself against fierce competitors, merely scratches the surface.

Bacon addresses this as well, but points out that an overly ambitious man may crave the accolades of greatness more than the doing of the great thing for the right reasons. He might report success where none existed solely for his own advancement.

An overly ambitious military officer might look forward to chaos. Chaos might well be his opportunity for advancement! He would crave the opportunities that battle presents. He might even wager selfishly with the lives under his command.

And then, if his misguided ambition really grabs a hold of him to where he starts to lose control, being acutely aware of the opportunity that chaos could bring, such a man might go so far as to create the chaos himself, regardless of the wisdom of his battlefield decisions, and particularly regardless of the sacrifice of the lives of

his soldiers. As his opportunity lies in chaos, he could look to create such an environment for his own advantage.

And ambitious people know well the maxim, “The greater the risk, the greater the rewards.” If successful, therefore, making risky wagers might seem the thing to do. Taken to the extreme, advancement by assassination might even be within the character of this type of individual. Hmmm, talk about ambition gone awry, right?

There’s little doubt but that an openly ambitious man in the military is a recipe for disaster. As such, these very ambitions will block the achievements that an ambitious man strives for. Is it any wonder that highly ambitious individuals are almost chronically beset with dissatisfaction? In a military structure, this trait could lead to real complications.

Balance

The trick is to have just the right amount of ambition. The “Goldilocks” zone of ambition is ideal for a military career. Too little ambition and nothing gets done; too much and you are constantly discontent, leading to unwise or dangerous actions that could prove disastrous. Just the right measure of modest ambition, and you’ve got the perfect recipe for a truly effective and trusted officer.

The great Chinese General and war strategist, Sun Tzu, victorious in battle after battle back in the 6th century BC,

elaborated on this quandary with his *The Art of War*, certainly one of the greatest books ever written. Even today, it is studied in virtually all military academies. And now the business world has grown well aware of the application of Sun Tzu's war principles and practices to the current art of business.

As the great general says, "In the midst of chaos, there is also opportunity." And yet, while Sun Tzu recognized the impact of this principle, he also clearly cautioned military leaders to maintain a discerning eye over an overtly ambitious man, one who could abuse a chaotic condition to advance his personal glory rather than for true battlefield success.

I've got to agree with Sun Tzu. It is entirely true that some are simply too ambitious to serve in the military. I'd rather say that some are not meant for a peacetime military; although I would prefer to say that some have an affinity for audacity, a willingness to take surprisingly bold risks. In the words of Fredrick the Great "L'audace, l'audace, toujours l'audace," or, as translated and re-quoted by WWII's outstandingly-successful war leader General George Patton, "Audacity, audacity, always audacity!"

Let's face it. Ambition is a powerful sword, and appreciably so when it's wielded by a person of integrity. When it is associated with a few individuals who are unafraid to openly strive for success, the results can be substantial.

Timing

There is one key factor which may be largely out of your hands: timing. Perhaps it is all about timing—when you are born and when you come of age. If the skills and traits you possess are in need, and your course is set to take the greatest advantage, then you can achieve what you were born to be.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not talking about little things here. If you believe you are meant for greatness, and refuse to let failures distract you, then you can achieve great things. And these great things will advance not only yourself, but those around you. In fact, with an additional touch of good fortune, you may well end up advancing Society or Mankind itself primarily as a result of your intrepid audacity!

When an outlier happens to possess the physical and mental strengths required, and has the audacity to act boldly with his or her ambitions, in the right place at the right time…well…this is the making of a Caesar. And it was owing to the ambition of a Caesar that the greatness of Rome was born.

Julius Caesar

Greatness? You bet. It was none other than Julius Caesar (100-44BC), and his immediate successors Augustus (63BC-14AD) and Tiberius (42BC-37AD), who converted the early Republic of Rome into the mighty Roman Empire, ushering in the Pax Romana (Latin for "Roman Peace"), a period of relative peace and prosperity that lasted throughout the known world of that time for over 200 years.

To date, this is the longest period of widespread general peace the world has ever known.

Look at the words spoken by Shakespeare's Marc Antony (83-30BC), a Roman general and statesman who also played a significant role in the birth of the Empire, words chosen partly to eulogize his admired friend Julius Caesar following Caesar's assassination by another once-close associate, Brutus:

> *The noble Brutus hath told you Caesar was ambitious: If it were so, it was a grievous fault; And grievously hath Caesar answer'd it... Come I to speak at Caesar's funeral. He was my friend, faithful and just to me: But Brutus says he was ambitious; And Brutus is an honorable man.*

Yes, Caesar was ambitious for himself, but also for his friends and for Rome. You might ask how this can be, for ambition is thought of as greed. I tell you ambition, greed, and all the baser forms—thought of as the darker side of human nature—are simply tools. Like a gun. In the hands of a criminal, a gun affects society with pain. But, that same gun in the hand of the hero protects the innocent, and enforces the security that society requires to conduct the gentrification of its citizens.

Caesar's identity was Rome, and so his ambition was for Rome. What greater gift than audacious ambition for the citizens of Rome? And even in death did his efforts continue to work to unify Rome. To be sure, his legacy took about 80 years to usher in the *Pax*

Romana; but many have argued persuasively that it was, in fact, Julius Caesar's death that began the long-term unification of Rome.

Granted, much blood was spilled for Rome to be Rome, and, true, justice and security were reserved mostly to those who were Roman citizens. Still, in the provinces it was better than it had been. The fall of Rome just before 400AD began the onset of the Dark Ages, and the consequent loss of the amazing peace, stability, and protection of its citizenry that were such hallmarks of the Empire. The eventual downfall of the Roman Empire was clearly a great loss to all mankind. And it would be another 500-1,000 years before the Dark Ages would finally come to a close, and the world could again pick itself up and begin to shine a little brighter light on itself.

So was Caesar an ambitious man? I'm sure he was. It's certainly fair to say that Caesar played at the very top of the great game. And all mankind should thank him for his ambition. He had the audacity to be ambitious, and the mindfulness to use these traits to impose his willfulness to unite his countrymen.

Was he perfect? Hardly. But, even with all his faults, and all of Rome's faults and limitations, the ambition and greed of Rome evolved into the audacity to force the peace. Yes, the desire of greed enforced the peace.

How, you might ask, can this be? Simple. Peace was the ambition of Caesar, and it was the ultimate ambition of Rome. Because with security comes prosperity, and the greed of Rome created prosperity. Sure, it was imperfect, as all institutions made by

man inevitably are plagued with imperfections. However, with Rome, life was grander and better than what the world was without it. Rome changed the world from one of relentless tribal barbarism to one of organized, cooperative civilization. The societal revolution it ushered in, made possible by the force of the Pax Romana, brought advancements to the civilization of humankind that are practicably impossible to sketch out in full.

Keep in mind, the goal of every military commander is victory, and with victory there is peace.

So in "*Understanding Ambitious People*," it's important to consider the necessary circumstances of the times in which you deal. But, as we've said, ambition is a powerful force. Therefore, in the absence of the engagement of war, it is clear that soldiers—those ambitious souls biting at the bit for action—must be kept busy, even when little of crucial importance is to be done. In days of old, the Army, in times of peace, would often be put to building roads, bridges, and other such useful tasks. Okay. Not bad. Not war, to be sure. But a pretty useful and practical means to occupy those ambitious soldiers in a constructive pursuit.

Need we look very far to see the effects of our not heeding these principles today?

How about all those dedicated, self-sacrificing—read "ambitious for peace and freedom"—soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan who fought beside our own American troops to secure some measure of peace, tranquility, and future prosperity for their

own families and countrymen following the close of the Iraq war? We overlooked these ambitious men who, in defeat, were left without a means to fulfill their ambitions. These soldiers, trained in the arts of war, were left without a feeling of usefulness. Is it any wonder they became an insurgent force? Is it any wonder that they took out their frustrations using the skills they had acquired? Is it really any wonder they set about inflicting so much disruption to what should have been a lasting peace?

Perhaps the peace could have been maintained, however, if these men could have had their ambition channeled into tasks, albeit challenging, that they themselves could see as moving them in the direction of that lasting peace. Even a fool's errand would have avoided the damage that they inflicted on that troubled land.

If you're worried about your own ambition, pause a minute. Especially if you're worried about risk and about failure…well, then join the group. We all face it. If you're concerned that maybe you just don't have the critical leadership traits to be successful in the great game, maybe you're right—for now. But I'm here to tell you that all of what you need can be learned. It's the learning, the relentless attention to the small beginnings that will make all the difference. And those small things are often incredibly challenging.

Take some encouragement from the words of President Teddy Roosevelt. In his speech at the Sorbonne in Paris (April 23, 1910), he famously proclaimed:

> *It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; . . . who at best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly.*

For Julius Caesar, the moment of decision probably came on January 10, 49BC at the river Rubicon, the boundary line between Gaul and the Roman Republic. By crossing this minor river, everyone knew, Caesar was leading his legions into a civil war in his beloved Rome. He uttered the famous phrase “alea iacta est ("the die has been cast"). And today, the phrase "crossing the Rubicon" has since come to mean passing “the point of no return.” At that moment he knew that he was risking it all on a roll of the dice.

A Word About Risk

So, what drives a person to take such a monumental risk? What type of ambition must a man have to put his very life, and all that he has achieved in that life to date, on the line? For Caesar, it’s pretty clear that his ambition on that fateful day was fueled, at the very least, by his ambition to reform the city he loved. He clearly believed he could govern more wisely than the current government, and history has borne out that wisdom. Did he have personal ambitions for his

own greatness? For his own place in the history of the world? I suppose he did. In fact, I can't imagine that he did not, at least in some way. But where does that come from? I'd say it comes from a mountain of self-knowledge, a ton of self-confidence, and years of challenging oneself to develop the skills necessary to carry out that ambition.

At that point, it might be better said that, given what he saw before him in Rome, and given who he had become himself, it might have been more unthinkable for him to have suppressed that ambition to reform his Rome. As you can see, ambition can require a willingness to roll the dice, especially if you have a notion that those dice just might be loaded in your favor.

There's always a chance you'll fall flat on your face. There's always that chance that you'll embarrass yourself, that you'll end up spending countless hours and every dime you can beg, borrow, or steal to fulfill that relentless ambition of yours. And there's always that chance that it'll bring you to abject failure, to the loss of your former financial stability, maybe even to the tragic loss of your friends, and heaven forbid, even your family. Yes, you could fail.

But here's the rub: If you're not willing to lose, you're not allowed to play in the game.

There is no one alive who has been successful who did not have failures! So, at least to start, you're in pretty good company. BUT, the critical lesson here is that people who were successful *learned from* those same failures. So very often it was those

classrooms of failure that, once their powerful lessons were learned, led to their success. They had learned to play in the great game.

With every opportunity, there is also risk. And with risk, by definition, there is always the possibility of loss. It takes guts to wrap ourselves around that.

But here's the good news. For all practical purposes, there is no risk that is insurmountable. And the immense depth of satisfaction you receive is often equal to the amount of risk you take.

Lets face it. If success was devoid of risk, if success took us down a path of ease and comfort, well then everybody else would be there too!

There's no question that I'm thankful to God for the wonderful blessings I've enjoyed. But when I say that, I'm saying that I'm thankful for stuff that He's given me that I know He's also given to just about everyone else on the planet too. And, as we'll see in our next chapter, He's especially given a whole bunch of great stuff to anyone who's living in this rather amazing capitalist democracy we call the United States of America.

America – the Land of Ambitious People

If you're looking to start and run a business—large or small—there is simply nowhere else on earth that you will have the

same advantages and opportunities as you will in this country of ours.

Let me flesh that out a little bit.

It might be reasonably argued that throughout our history America has been the most "ambitious" country in the world.

I know what you're thinking. Hmmm, that word "ambition." As I mentioned earlier, for some people it puts a lousy taste in their mouth. We've all known people who are so ambitious that they think nothing of stepping on whomever and whatever they need to just so they can get what they want. Some politicians come to mind, right? How about a couple of your favorite dictators? Hitler was a pretty ambitious guy, don't you think? Yeah, and that makes him pretty loathsome, right?

But wait a minute. If ambition in its purest form is "an eager or strong desire to achieve something," (thank you, Daniel Webster!), then maybe we ought to be looking at a few other models of ambition too…you know, just to be fair to the word and maybe round this thing out.

George Washington had a pretty strong ambition to establish the world's very first government by and for its people. And he and his Founding Father compatriots exercised that ambition at the very risk of their respectable fortunes, their personal comfort, and ultimately at the risk of their lives. Abraham Lincoln had an unbelievably strong ambition to unite a divided country even while

eradicating its widespread practice of slavery, upon which half the country's economy heavily rested.

And how about Henry Ford? When you get a chance, take a closer look at the risks that guy took! The obstacles that fell across his path! That was some remarkable ambition, to say the very least.

It's certainly fair to say that astronauts are ambitious too. Like Kirk, they want to "boldly go where no one has gone before." How about doctors? How else could anybody endure that much concentrated education—let alone ridiculously high insurance premiums—without a couple bucketsful of ambition ?

Ambition is like money. It in itself is pretty neutral. It's up to us to use it to do good…or not. But you know what? If you really have a desire to succeed in your business, it is absolutely going to take ambition—that is, the really good kind.

Let's be clear here: your very desire to succeed IS your ambition. Embrace it! Without ambition, your chances of success in business are pretty slim.

As we've seen in this chapter, ambition is what gives us the people who move our world forward. It's behind our Julius Caesars, our Franklin D. Roosevelts, and it's even behind every runner who ever set out one day to finally train for and complete that elusive 26-mile, 385-yard marathon.

And the absence of ambition? Well, we've all known our share of couch potatoes, haven't we?

In conclusion, know this: truly ambitious people would rather taste defeat than never have the chance to wear the laurel wreaths of victory. And the best ambitions are not just for oneself, but for an ideal, something greater than the individual.

References

Chapter 1 - The Positive Side of Golf: *Motivation*

1. "Motivation." Psychology Today. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/motivation

2. Meadows-Fernandez, Rochaun. "What Is Extrinsic Motivation and Is it Effective?" Healthline. https://www.healthline.com/health/extrinsic-motivation

3. Murayama, Kou. "The Science of Motivation." Psychological Science Agenda (June 2018). https://www.apa.org/science/about/psa/2018/06/motivation

4. Zillgitt, Jeff. "The Last Dance: Why Michael Jordan Invented Slights for Motivation." USA TODAY (10 May 2020). https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/nba/2020/05/10/the-last-dance-why-michael-jordan-invented-slights-for-motivation/3103843001/

5. Leahy, Robert L. "How to Build Motivation to Overcome Depression." Psychology Today (19 Apr. 2021). https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/anxiety-files/202104/how-build-motivation-overcome-depression

6. Scipione, Jade. "Top Execs Use This Visualization Trick to Achieve Success—Here's Why It Works, According to a Neuroscientist." CNBC (22 November 2019). https://www.cnbc.com/2019/11/22/visualization-that-helps-executives-succeed-neuroscientist-tara-swart.html

7. "This Is What Motivates Warren Buffett to Keep Working Hard (Even Though He's a Billionaire)." Inc.com. https://www.inc.com/quora/this-is-what-motivates-warren-buffett-to-keep-working-hard-even-though-hes-a-billionaire.html

8. "2012 Annual Report." Berkshire Hathaway. https://www.berkshirehathaway.com/2012ar/2012ar.pdf

9. Thomas, Kenneth. "The Four Intrinsic Rewards that Drive Employee Engagement." *Ivey Business Journal* (Nov/Dec 2009). https://iveybusinessjournal.com/publication/the-four-intrinsic-

Chapter 2 - Ice Cream Therapy: *Mindset*

1. "Self-Affirmation Enhances Performance, Makes Us Receptive to Our Mistakes." Association for Psychological Science. https://www.psychologicalscience.org/news/releases/self-affirmation-enhances-performance-makes-us-receptive-to-our-mistakes.html

2. University of Arizona. "Learning Is Optimized When We Fail 15% of the Time." Science Daily. https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/11/191105113457.htm

3. Sonja Lyubomirsky. "The Benefits of Frequent Positive Affect: Does Happiness Lead to Success?" Psychological Bulletin, Vol. 131, No. 6, 2005. https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/releases/bul-1316803.pdf

4. Samuel Bacharach. "Leadership Without Presumption: Lessons from Eisenhower." Inc. https://www.inc.com/samuel-bacharach/leadership-without-presumption-lessons-from-eisenhower.html

5. James H. Fowler. "Dynamic Spread of Happiness in a Large Social Network: Longitudinal Analysis Over 20 Years in the Framingham Heart Study." BMJ 2008. https://www.bmj.com/content/337/bmj.a2338

Chapter 3 - Icons of Success: *Leadership*

1. Hoffman, Bryce G. American Icon: Alan Mulally and the Fight to Save Ford Motor Company. New York: Crown Business, 2012.

2. McWilliams, Brendan. "Why Nelson Turned a Blind Eye at Copenhagen." Irish Times (2 April 2001). https://www.irishtimes.com/news/why-nelson-turned-a-blind-eye-at-copenhagen-1.297163

3. Drucker, Peter. Qtd. in Stephen Covey, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004.

4. Coelho, Paulo. The Alchemist. Trans. Alan R. Clarke. New York: HarperCollins, 1993.

5. Pendell, Ryan and Harter, Jim. "10 Gallup Reports to Share with Your Leaders in 2019." (4 January 2019). https://www.gallup.com/workplace/245786/gallup-reports-share-leaders-2019.aspx

6. Guzman, Zack. "Zappos CEO Tony Hsieh Reveals 3 Personality Traits Successful Entrepreneurs Have." CNBC (4 October 2016). https://www.cnbc.com/2016/10/04/zappos-ceo-tony-hsieh-reveals-3-personality-traits-successful-entrepreneurs-have.html

Chapter 4 - The Ritz Experience: *Growth and Scalability*

1. Wessel, David. "Is Lack of Competition Strangling the U.S. Economy?" *Harvard Business Review* (March-April 2018). https://hbr.org/2018/03/is-lack-of-competition-strangling-the-u-s-economy#

2. Balakrishnan, Anita. "Here's How Billions of People Use Google Products, in One Chart." CNBC (18 May 2017). https://www.cnbc.com/2017/05/18/google-user-numbers-youtube-android-drive-photos.html

3. Casteran, Claude. "The Day Ernest Hemingway Took the Ritz Bar." Business Insider (22 August 2014). https://www.businessinsider.com/afp-the-day-ernest-hemingway-took-the-ritz-bar-2014-8

4. "Startups Shook Up the Sleepy Razor Market. Here's What's Next." CNBC (26 September 2018). https://www.cnbc.com/2018/09/26/startups-shook-up-the-sleepy-razor-market-whats-next.html

5. "Frito-Lay Lay's Do Us a Flavor—Gold." Chief Marketer (2013). https://www.chiefmarketer.com/pro-awards-winners/best-idea-or-concept-gold

6. Gladwell, Malcolm. "Choice, Happiness, and Spaghetti Sauce." TED (February 2004). https://www.ted.com/talks/malcolm_gladwell_choice_happiness_and_spaghetti_sauce

Chapter 5 - Ty Cobb, Babe Ruth, and So On: *Teamwork*

1. De Palma, Brian, dir. The Untouchables. 1987; Hollywood, CA: Paramount. YouTube (6 October 2011). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QHH9EYZHoVU

2. Hohenadel, Kristin. "Watch the Amish Raise a Barn in Less Than 10 Hours." Slate (9 September 2014). https://slate.com/human-interest/2014/09/watch-an-ohio-amish-community-raise-a-barn-in-less-than-10-hours-video.html

3. Buhler, Patricia M. and Worden, Joel D. "The Cost of Poor Communication." SHRM (2013). https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/behavioral-competencies/communication/pages/the-cost-of-poor-communications.aspx

4. Mackay, Harvey. "The Essentials of Teamwork in the Business World." Star Tribune (20 September 2021). https://www.startribune.com/the-essentials-of-teamwork-in-the-business-world/572457472/

5. "Apollo 13 Infographic: How Did They Make That CO2 Scrubber?" Space Center Houston (10 April 2019). https://spacecenter.org/apollo-13-infographic-how-did-they-make-that-co2-scrubber/

6. Chmielewski, Dawn. "Lin-Manuel Miranda's 'Hamilton' Crashes Broadway's Billion-Dollar Club." Forbes (8 June 2020). https://www.forbes.com/sites/dawnchmielewski/2020/06/08/lin-manuel-mirandas-hamilton-crashes-broadways-billion-dollar-club/?sh=181221b5b3cc

7. Donne, John. "Meditation XVII." From Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions. Cambridge: The University Press, 1923.

Chapter 6 - The Right Stuff: *Integrity*

1. Tan, Siang Yong and Ponstein, Nate. "Jonas Salk (1914-1995): A Vaccine Against Polio." *Singapore Medical Journal* (Jan. 2019), Vol. 60.1. National Center for Biotechnology Information. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6351694/

2. King, Tom. "Action Star Keanu Reeves Wants to Play the Field." *The Wall Street Journal* (7 September 2001). https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB999814023815384990

3. Phillips, Ashley and Bufete, Tercius. "A Complete Guide to Amazon Prime's Return Policy." Business Insider (25 May 2021). https://www.businessinsider.com/amazon-prime-return-policy

5. Jaquith, Andrew. "Everything was green. Mulally thought that was odd for a company losing billions." Markerbench (21

February 2013).
https://www.markerbench.com/blog/2013/02/21/Mulally-leadership/

6. Polonskaia, Alina and Royal, Mark. "How the World's Most Admired Companies Drive D&I." HR Executive (10 December 2019). https://hrexecutive.com/how-the-worlds-most-admired-companies-drive-diversity-and-inclusion/

7. Agovino, Theresa. "Companies Try a New Approach to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: Honest Conversations." Society for Human Resource Management (4 August 2020). https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-news/pages/a-new-approach-to-diversity-equity-and-inclusion.aspx

8. Dingle, Derek T. "Two Years After Landmark Racial Bias Training, Starbucks Advances Civil Rights and Inclusion Agenda." Black Enterprise (29 May 2020). https://www.blackenterprise.com/two-years-after-racial-incident-starbucks-advances-civil-rights-and-inclusion-agenda/

Chapter 7 - The Two Steves: *Core Competencies*

1. Prahalad , C. K. and Hamel, Gary. "The Core Competence of the Corporation." *Harvard Business Review* (May-June, 1990), p. 4.
https://web.archive.org/web/20140714112311/http://km.camt.cmu.ac.th/mskm/952743/Extra%20materials/corecompetence.pdf

2. Lennon, Chris. "Identifying Core Competencies When Hiring." HRZone.
https://www.hrzone.com/community/blogs/birddoghr/identifying-core-competencies-when-hiring

3. Shakespeare, William. Hamlet. I.3.

4. Willkomm, Anne Converse. "Why Brainstorming Is Important & How to Do It." https://drexel.edu/goodwin/professional-studies-blog/overview/2018/November/Why-Is-brainstorming-important/

5. Duhigg, Charles. *The Power of Habit*. p 8. https://safestart.app.box.com/s/xdnx028sblinqnbn4oou

6. Becker's Hospital Review staff. "Should Hospitals Be Like Hotels? A Q&A With Gerard Van Grinsven CEO of Henry Ford West Bloomfield Hospital" https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/strategic-planning/should-hospitals-be-like-hotels-qaa-with-gerard-van-grinsven-ceo-of-henry-ford-west-bloomfield-hospital.html

7. Taylor, Bill. Innovation. "One Hospital's Radical Prescription for Change" https://hbr.org/2010/06/going-radical-one-hospitals-p

8. Holt, Jim. "Time Bandits." The New Yorker (28 February 2005). https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2005/02/28/time-bandits-2

Chapter 8 - Moneyball: *Change*

1. Kennedy, John F. "Address in the Assembly Hall at the Paulskirche in Frankfurt (266)," June 25, 1963, Public Papers of the Presidents: John F. Kennedy, 1963. John F. Kennedy Quotations. https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/life-of-john-f-kennedy/john-f-kennedy-quotations

2. Catlin, Tanguy. "Just How Fast Is the 'Speed of Digital'? Now We Know." McKinsey (10 July 2019). https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/the-strategy-and-corporate-finance-blog/just-how-fast-is-the-speed-of-digital-now-we-know

3. Schadler, Ted. "The Sorry State of Digital Transformation." Forrester (24 April 2018). https://go.forrester.com/blogs/the-sorry-state-of-digital-transformation-in-2018/

4. Sofia, Robert. "Mobile Marketing 101 for Service Businesses." Forbes (9 March 2016). https://www.forbes.com/sites/theyec/2016/03/09/mobile-marketing-101-for-service-businesses/?sh=5328e95257c8

5. "Does Fear Motivate Workers—or Make Things Worse?" Knowledge@Wharton (4 December 2018). https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/fear-motivate-workers-make-things-worse/

6. Hittler, John. "The Genius of Asking 'What If' Questions." Forbes (16 May 2020). https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2018/05/16/the-genius-of-asking-what-if-questions/?sh=19fcab7822ef

7. Ashford, Susan J. and Detert, James R. "Get the Boss to Buy In." *Harvard Business Review* (January-February 2015). https://hbr.org/2015/01/get-the-boss-to-buy-in

Chapter 9 - Get On Board: *Inclusion*

1. Slaughter, Colleen. "Inclusion Isn't Just Another Leadership Buzzword. It's Essential." LinkedIn (16 August 2020). https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/inclusion-isnt-just-another-leadership-buzzword-its-colleen-slaughter

2. Atcheson, Sheree. "To Tackle Inclusion, We Must Be Honest About Exclusion." Forbes (23 October 2020). https://www.forbes.com/sites/shereeatcheson/2020/10/23/to-tackle-inclusion-we-must-be-honest-about-exclusion/?sh=1ecdf7a6bff6

3. Dobbin, Frank and Kalev, Alexandra. “Why Diversity Programs Fail.” *Harvard Business Review* (July-August 2016). https://hbr.org/2016/07/why-diversity-programs-fail

4. Kaufman, Scott Barry. “In-Group Favoritism Is Difficult to Change, Even When the Social Groups Are Meaningless.” Scientific American (7 June 2019). https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/beautiful-minds/in-group-favoritism-is-difficult-to-change-even-when-the-social-groups-are-meaningless/

5. Dobbin and Kalev.

6. Lorenzo, Rocio, Voigt, Nicole, Tsukaka, Miki, Krentz, Matt and Abouzahr, Katie. “How Diverse Leadership Teams Boost Innovation.” BCG (23 January 2018). https://www.bcg.com/en-us/publications/2018/how-diverse-leadership-teams-boost-innovation

7. Kostoulas, John, Lougee, Melanie and Cerrato, Jason. “How HCM Technologies Can Scale Inclusion in the Workplace.” Gartner (22 January 2020). https://www.gartner.com/en/documents/3979855/how-hcm-technologies-can-scale-inclusion-in-the-workplace

8. Stevens, Pippa. “Companies Are Making Bold Promises About Greater Diversity, But There’s a Long Way to Go.” CNBC (11 June 2020). https://www.cnbc.com/2020/06/11/companies-are-making-bold-promises-about-greater-diversity-theres-a-long-way-to-go.html

9. Winerman, Lea. “The Mind’s Mirror.” American Psychological Association (October 2005).. https://www.apa.org/monitor/oct05/mirror

About The Author

Wesley Berry is the host of ***The People's Voice,*** a weekly radio talk show on WDTK Detroit's "The Patriot" 1400AM & 101.5FM Sundays at noon. The show's format features both controversial and unifying topics.

As Wesley himself says it, "As the show's host, I'm being guided by the principle that reasonable people can disagree without being disagreeable. Polite discourse of controversial subjects is fundamental to a civil society, and ***The People's Voice*** is committed to providing a forum where opposing views can be respectfully exchanged." You're always invited to review the past radio episodes at **www.wesberrygroup.com**.

Through the years, he's provided consulting services to over forty businesses, even while simultaneously establishing a retail franchise system that operated thirty units in five States. Additionally, he's served as Headmaster of a State-Licensed Private Vocational School, and as a licensed real estate agent, having participated in over thirty commercial transactions.

As an entrepreneur, Wes demonstrated a strategic style of management by building a multi-million dollar brick-and-mortar business. In 1995, his business expanded to the clicks of the Internet, causing him to adjust and sharpen his marketing skills to

where they soon proved exceptionally well-suited to the new and radically different online arena. He operated under several brands, including Flower Delivery Express, a $60M world-class business servicing millions of customers in over 150 countries. After a 40-year business career, he divested himself of all business interests in 2016 and retired.

Wes has collaborated on designing sets for both ABC and CBS television shows, has appeared as a guest on several talk shows, and has been interviewed countless times by broadcast and print media. His many media appearances include: *NPR, The Wall Street Journal, The London Times, Entrepreneur* and *Time* magazines, Fox News, Neil Cavuto, Geraldo Rivera, and John Stossel, to name a just few.

Major Honors and Awards:

Wes has held memberships in: The Detroit Economic Club, Adcraft Club of Detroit, Rotary International, Optimists International, NAACP, Shriners International, Wabeek Country Club, Detroit Athletic Club, Detroit Gun Club, NRA, and at Kirk in the Hills Presbyterian Church, where he's taught Sunday School, ushered, and served on its Board of Trustees. He has also served on the Boards of an Educational Foundation, Community Youth Assistance, and Henry Ford Hospital.

- Major Honors and Awards:

- 2000 - Rotary International Paul Harris Fellow
- 2003 - Pheasant Ring Autistic Community Ring of Hope Community Service Award
- 2008 - NAACP Oakland County Chapter's Corporate Leadership Award
- 2008 - *Florist Review* magazine's Retail Florist of the Year for Community Involvement
- 2008 - Chamber of Commerce honoree as Business Person of the Year
- 2011 - Inc. magazine's Top 500|5000-ranked Fastest Growing Retailer
- 2012 - Optimist International's Business Person of the Year, Michigan District
- 2014 - Civil rights organization United We Walk's Community Leader Award
- 2016 - Commissioned Honorary Naval Commander (O-5) by Michigan Governor Schneider
- 2018 - Amazon #1 Best Selling Author, #1 Hot New Release, and International Best Seller
- 2019 - Business Insider, Books to Help You Build Wealth and Get More Done
- 2019 - New York Book Festival, Winner Best Business Book
- 2019 - Barnes & Noble's Top 5 Best Sellers of All Books Worldwide

- 2019 - *USA TODAY* Bestselling Author
- 2019 - *Wall Street Journal* Bestselling Author
- 2020 – National Speakers Association

Wes is a Freemason and currently serves as a Trustee of the Michigan Masonic Charitable Foundation. He also volunteers with a community group that provides wheelchair ramps to those in need. He's a graduate of Oakland Technical Center, having completed their Floriculture & Agriscience Program.

A dog lover, Wes enjoys fishing, and is constantly humbled by his golf game. He and his wife Mia have four sons and have been married for thirty years. They reside in West Bloomfield, Michigan.