

Simple Leadership

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**An uncomplicated guide to
engaging teams and getting things done**



Robert S. Murray

Simple Leadership – Simply Said

An uncomplicated guide to engaging teams and getting things done

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Introduction - Getting ahead of the business revolution

We are living in very interesting times. Since the depression of 2009, the world that we as leaders work in has changed forever – the ‘disruptive business revolution’ is here.

The world is flat and getting flatter by the day, with competitors appearing in places that we previously didn’t even know existed. Western economies continue to limp along thinking that government stimulus money will solve all their problems. (Look how that is working out for certain countries in the E.U.)

Customers have higher than ever expectations and are voting with their wallets. Organizations that do not create outstanding value are having to compete on price more than ever.

On top of all this... We are working with teams that are made up from 3 very different generations – Baby Boomers, Generation ‘X’ and Millennials. All with different expectations and drivers. If that wasn’t enough, team member engagement is at an all-time low with all employees expecting more out their organizations and their leaders.

A growing percentage of employees are doing what it is called; “*quit and stay*.” That is, continuing to work at the organization, however just going through the motions. Once disengaged, employees are saying¹:

- Their performance declined (55%)
- They spent time on non-work related activities (55%)
- They did only what was required to get the job done (49%)
- They complained about the organization to their co-workers (47%)

In a 2013 study, Gallup estimated that a disengaged employee costs and organization approximately \$3,400 for every \$10,000 of salary. Disengaged employees cost the U.S. economy up to \$350 billion a year due to lost productivity. And... Disengagement breeds disengagement. A disengaged employee’s negative attitude has a multiplying effect on peer performance, productivity, creativity, retention and engagement.

I, myself, couldn’t be happier. I am all about being disruptive when it comes to creating a product or service experience that is radically different than that of the competition. If you look closely, you will see that leading businesses understand this concept, and they are reaping the rewards of it.

¹ Source: McLean & Company

Disruption comes in all forms, and you will see that disruptive organizations are constantly pushing the boundaries of innovation, efficiency, quality or customer connections.

However, the disruptions that are most important for us leaders are the revolutionary shifts in thinking and execution. Strategies are now swinging to create cultures and organizations that don't think in terms of "Business-to-Business" or "Consumer to Consumer" anymore. Winning businesses and star leaders, are thinking in terms of "Human-to-Human". People are buying from people not companies.

Being disruptive and revolutionary in your thinking and execution is all about creating every aspect of your culture and business to serve people in ways that they want to be served. That means serving people *when* they want it, *how* they want it, and *where* they want it.

When we are able to unlock the code of what is important to potential and existing customers, we are able to design winning messages, products, services, delivery options, etc. and... emotional connections are formed. In other words, when we as leaders start to think in terms of Human-to-Human (H2H) - or, said another way, Heart-to-Heart - we will see an explosion in success and long-term customer loyalty.

As a leader, we need to understand that B2B is dead, and B2C is dead. Traditional thinking is dead. Complicated strategies will never ever work (I don't think they ever did). Top down, command and control management is totally last century.

Here is the payoff for you as a leader in any organization. According to the Gallup 2013 study referenced above, teams with high levels of engagement experience:

- 22% higher profitability
- 21% higher productivity
- 10% higher customer engagement
- 37% lower absenteeism
- 65% lower turnover (And turnover can be costed out at approximately 2X an employees salary due to the cost of lost knowledge transfer, productivity, recruiting, assessing, hiring, on boarding, development)
- 48% few safety incidents

Here's the tough message that some of you won't like to hear... Business Schools with leading MBA programs don't get it. They don't teach for the H2H world we are now in. You are going to have to figure this new way of doing business by yourself. And, you need to figure it out real fast or you will be left behind. Practical Intelligence - the kind of revolutionary thinking that drives disruptive, revolutionary thinking - should be part of every business school's curriculum. H2H is here. Embrace it. Lead it.

This book is intended to be a fast read for your busy life. It is a follow on to my first two books ([It's Already Inside and Unlocked](#)). With this in mind, I invite you all to read my book once, read it again, and keep it on your shelf for reference. As I will lead you through a journey that will help you to unlock the remarkable leader that is within. The leader that is needed to win in the disruptive business revolution.

After you have finished reading, you can continue to get more out of this book and the ongoing nurturing of your leadership career by:

1. Teaching - Be a mentor to young leaders. Be a teacher to your team.
2. Dropping in on my website at www.robert-murray.com for weekly leadership blogs, *Leadership Minutes* videos, monthly newsletters and opportunities to engage with me, and get your questions answered.
3. Practice - Make mistakes. Learn. Grow. Be brilliant.

Part 1 – Your Mindset

What does it take for you to *Unlock* the Strong, Positive, and Influential Leader that is *Already Inside*?

“Continuous effort – not strength or intelligence – is the key to unlocking our potential.”

Winston Churchill

Chapter 1 - Understand the WHAT and the WHO

This first chapter of my book will teach you the kind of mindset that you need to develop so that you will be ready to become the world-class leader you are. It will show you that there is a new business revolution going on, and those who understand it fully, will be the one's leading all the rest.

The *real* world of business is changing... revolutionizing. People are now becoming the center of all things "production," "profit," and "success." So to learn how to be successful in this new, modern way of doing business, you need to be able to differentiate the WHAT and the WHO. This way, you, as a world-class-leader-in-the-making, can make sure you're focusing on BOTH. Oh, and you need to know WHY too.

The WHAT is all about data, numbers, and anything else measurable, all things meant to drive the business forward - or, so one-dimensional managers think. The thing about the WHAT is that it is all quantitative data points that only give you a tiny portion of the picture.

The WHO, on the other hand, pays attention to the emotional, cultural and non-tangible elements brought to the table by people: customers, employees, vendors, partners and other stakeholders in the business.

The WHY is all about knowing why customers buy from you. Why, you do the things you do. And... why your team members do what they do so that you can truly understand how best to build the team you need to emotionally connect with your customers.

Why is this important to distinguish? Well customers make all their decisions based on the WHO (relationships and emotions). So do employees, as they are constantly driven by management to pay attention to customer needs (relationships), and they have their own emotional needs too.

Therefore, if managers only focus on the WHAT, they'll get a portion of what's going on, but not the whole picture.

Let me tell you a little leadership secret... World-class, enlightened leaders understand that they must plan for and execute on the WHAT, the WHO and the WHY. That way they get to see the whole picture and their business thrives because of it. Happy employees will deliver satisfied customers, which will in turn deliver favorable results.

In conclusion, if you, as a world-class-leader-in-the-making, choose to focus on only the WHAT or only the WHO, well then you're forfeiting your title already, because real world-class leaders will always strive for the best, and the best means understanding and focusing on ALL of the WHAT, the WHO and the WHY.

Chapter 2 - Get your strategy straight

To set yourself up for leadership success, and set yourself apart from the multiple sources of competition in and around your industry segment, it is imperative that you have a Vision, a Purpose and a Strategy, and you execute on it as well.

If you don't do this, you will fall into the trap of mediocrity with almost every organization on the planet who doesn't have strong leadership and a strong sense of their purpose and strategy.

What are some of the characteristics that can lead you down the path of mediocrity?

- No vision
- No purpose or WHY
- Too many strategies (you should always only have 3 or less)
- Too complicated (biggest reason – executives have to prove how smart they are and justify their big school MBA by creating ridiculously complex plans)
- No focus
- Lack of importance
- No communication
- No governance - if it is true that what gets measured gets done, then why don't executives track the progress of strategic plans?

The key difference that I see between *true leaders* and *managers* of both large and small companies, is the use of middle and junior leaders in the organization that lead the execution of the plan. *True world-class leaders* understand the power of giving these individuals a chance to do their job and speak their opinions on long-term business success, and employee retention. Whereas *managers* don't. I see this all the time from junior and middle leaders in companies who do not get engaged because they do not feel the "love" from their executives. Senior "leaders" fail to see the value in the other leaders when it comes to strategy. This is a big mistake - that now I know, you have read about, you will not make yourself!

Here's the thing... To be the amazing leader you're going to be, you need to get engaged in the strategy. You need to learn how the strategy was developed and why. Ask questions so that you feel you have the answers you need to help your team understand. You need to clearly understand *how* you play a role in the strategy and *what* your responsibility to it is.

If your senior leaders do not help you engage after taking the initiative, you need to ask yourself if maybe you are on a sinking ship and need to take your skills somewhere you can add value.

Chapter 3 - Don't forget about 'Soulful Leadership' in your strategy

The last part to getting the right world-class-leader-mindset is a healthy balance of analytical, data driven management (IQ) with Emotional Quotient (EQ).

I call this 'soulful leadership.'

EI, or more commonly known as Emotional Intelligence, has been studied for years. What is known about it is that what we call Emotional Intelligence and comes from our Limbic Brains – the part of our brains that has only been developed over the last hundred thousand of years or so (known as the amygdala). It is where all of our "Feelings" are centered: intuition, emotions, decision-making and memory sit.

Leaders with a high level of EI consistently over-deliver on their objectives – and it does not matter where in the world they are or what industries they are in. Leaders with low levels of EI consistently under perform on the objectives. Coincidence?

There are two main ingredients to developing an understanding of EI:

1. 'Self-Awareness.' The ability to understand what or how certain situations make you *feel* or *behave*.
2. 'Self-Regulation.' The ability to choose your response to certain situations or control what may seem like a natural response or a response that you would have had in the past.

For example... You are in your car. Traffic is flowing. You are enjoying a cup of coffee. Without warning, another driver changes lanes in front of you and cuts you off. You have to slam on your brakes. You spill your coffee! How does that make you feel (self-awareness)? Can you feel your blood pressure and heart rate increase (fight or flight response)?

What is your natural reaction to the situation? Do you honk your horn? Do you instantly go into "Road Rage" and want revenge on the offending driver (who, by the way, is probably completely oblivious to what just happened)? Or, do you take a deep breath, smile and carry on? This is self-regulation.

The world's best leaders have amazing self-regulation. They do not panic in a crisis. They do not yell and scream or kick garbage cans and they do not throw an office chair through a window (I have actually seen that). They seek first to understand and then choose the best response for the situation.

What does this mean for you? Get to work on your EI!

There's no strategy that will be effective if you don't start by getting a deep understanding about how you feel when you are presented with a variety of situations. Then, you can develop a world-class approach to how you respond to each situation – it's the key to being a world-class leader.

When you develop your EI, along with your IQ, you will grow your XQ (eXperience Quotient), which is the essence of Soulful Leadership and... that is the true measure of a great leader!

Want more on developing strategy? Go to <http://robert-murray.com/contacts/> and ask for our white paper on building winning strategy. It's free!

Part 2 - Your People

Deciding what kinds of people you want to lead - then recruiting, assessing, hiring those people, weeding out the wrong people, and nurturing those people to bring your team to success. Your people are THE ONLY asset in the organization that appreciate in value.

"People, more than things, have to be restored, renewed, revived, reclaimed and redeemed. Never throw out anyone."

Audrey Hepburn

Chapter 4 - Strategize the kind of team you want that will create “Your Story”

The first step to strategizing what kind of team you want to lead, is deciding what kind of story you want for your organization. What stories will your customers tell their friends and family? What stories will your employees tell their friends and family? Your businesses success and profitability depend on the stories that get told. Take the time to develop the story that captivates and engages.

Here’s an example... I have spoken many times around the world about a disastrous experience I had on Lufthansa Airlines over ten years ago. There is even a video of me available on the Internet telling the story. Personally, Lufthansa has lost over \$350,000 in business that they could have potentially got from my international travels because of this experience.

Conversely, British Airways is one of my all-time favorite airlines because of the emotional connection I have with them. Why? What is the STORY that makes me go out of my way to do business with them?

New Years 2010, my daughter, then 19 years old, flew back to Europe to see her school friends and celebrate New Years with them. She had a lot of fun. Apparently too much fun, because when she was returning home, she had to transfer to the last leg of her trip at Heathrow Airport. While she was waiting for her next flight, she fell asleep in a chair at the gate and missed repeated PA announcements calling her to board her flight.

Her flight left without her. Eventually, she woke up and realized she had missed her flight. She found a British Airways team member and emotionally told the woman what happened. My daughter was very upset with herself. The British Airways employee calmed her down and found out that the next flight home does not leave until the next day. So the woman took my daughter home to her house, made her dinner, gave her a bed to sleep in for the night, made her breakfast in the morning, drove her back to the airport and waited with her until she boarded her flight home. WOW!

Whenever I have the chance to fly with British Airways, I do. They have been my choice over a hundred times (over \$250,000 worth of business).

As you begin to build your story, be aware that it’s not only about *what* but also *why*. It should be full of action verbs that describe your values.

It’s so extremely important that your story encompass your values.

And I'm not talking about those values you see in every office boardroom or hallway entrance, saying things like "integrity, respect, communication, excellence, customer, etc.."

Values are more than words on the wall. In fact, the best organizations in the world bring them to life. Just like the British Airways team member in the story above, she brought the values to life. They revere behaviors and actions by team members that are living the values. The values are written in statements that people get so it is easy to live them. Simply putting the word "integrity" on the wall means different things to different people. So here's what I suggest to you: instead of just writing the word "integrity," write a sentence describing what integrity means to you, for example: "you always do the right thing for our team, our customers and our shareholders." By creating and writing your values like this, people understand them much more, and will follow them much easier.

In other words, creating a story for you, and your company is very important, and even more so that your story reflect who you are, what your company means to you, and why you have chosen to do what you are doing.

Chapter 5 - Build that team

Once you have your “story” designed, one that aligns with your values, and demonstrates your *why*, you can then begin to build a team that will be a part of that story.

This is no easy challenge. Even though you may have worked your story a million and one times to get it right, building the right team to fulfill and carry out that story is a whole other ball game. So... Who do we hire? How do we choose?

Hiring has never been more important, especially as we step into a workforce that now includes more than five generations. The subject of recruiting and hiring “new millennial's” is a hot topic, and people are all emerging with different views on how this should be done. However, I have a very strong opinion about who to hire, and how you should go about doing it. It is simply to hire the best candidate. Old, young, tall, short, black, white, educated, not educated – whoever has the best attitude and fits your story. That’s it. That’s all.

When you have the right team members, no matter where they came from, then building your story to achieve a team that is as passionate about work as you is no chore. So how do leaders do this?

This is done in a few different ways:

1. Make sure the team involved in the hiring process is JUST as passionate about finding the candidate that will be the right cultural fit and have the best attitude, as you do.
2. Disregard the “wrong data” – the candidate’s CV (resume) is often the worst indicator of a great fit.
3. Don’t pick the candidate that gave the “perfect answers.” Your questions should stretch and pull the candidate in unpredictable directions. One of my favorite questions is: “Who was your favorite teacher in high school? Why?”
4. Don’t fall into the trap of just reading the questions, and not really listening to the answers. Push the candidate to be real. Push the candidate out of their comfort zone and see how they react. Reading the questions and not really listening. Not probing further. Not digging for more. Not pushing the candidate to be real. Won’t get you who you’re really looking for.

Think about it this way: all **skills** can be taught - **attitude** cannot.

If you want to push your business beyond mediocrity, hire the best people. If you want to win in this new competitive, flat world, hire the best people.

Chapter 6 - Weed out those who aren't fitting your team culture

There is an old saying in leadership. It goes like this: "Hire slow. Fire fast."

One of my past clients, WesJet, a very well-known and incredibly successful airline based in Western Canada, only flew Boeing 737 aircrafts. Each new aircraft cost (at the time) \$41Million U.S. dollars. Each aircraft required approximately 110 new staff members on the team (Pilots, Cabin Crew, Ground staff, Customer Service agents, etc.).

On one occasion, I flew into the head office in Calgary for meetings. Their office just happened to be located at their main operations hangar at the Calgary airport. When I arrived, I noticed that they had three brand new jets sitting on the ground in front of the hangar. So new, that the jets still had the plastic wrappers on the passenger's seats.

I immediately asked the executive in charge of flight operations why the three jets were sitting on the ground and not in the air generating revenue? His reply was simply: "we don't have enough people to staff the jets." Incredulously, I replied: "you receive over 60,000 resumes every year. What do you mean that you do not have enough people?" He replied quite simply: "we don't have the right people."

The best leaders take their time to hire new team members. They want to make sure they have the right candidate. One that won't slow the rest of the team down. One that is not going to become a cancer inside the organization.

Occasionally though, we do hire a candidate that is truly not a fit with the business or the culture. They may have been the best interview ever and their CV was ridiculously qualified. Then, when they are on board, you start to notice little things. Like their personal values do not necessarily align with the organizations (actually not a little thing at all!). You notice the rest of the team is not as bouncy and energetic as they usually are. Other team members may not tell you that the 'New Guy' is sucking the energy out of everyone because you were so excited about the new candidate joining the team, so you have to recognize this yourself.

The U.S. based organization Netflix, has this to say about culture and team members fitting the culture... "A great workplace is stunning colleagues. It is NOT espresso machines, lush benefits, sushi lunches and nice offices." They go further to say that... "Anyone that does not live the values of the organization, does not fit the culture or is not a stunning colleague, they are given a generous severance package immediately."

Netflix views themselves like a team and not a family. Like a pro sports team not a kid's recreational team. They say their leaders hire, develop and cut smartly so that they have stars in every position. Netflix goes further to say "that 'Brilliant Jerks' are too high

of a cost to brilliant teamwork and those brilliant, high IQ, low EQ jerks are immediately given a generous severance package.”

I love it!

As a leader, you have a responsibility to develop great people and help your team members be as Netflix says: “Stunning Colleagues.” However, it is a limited time process. Like the sand in an hourglass, you have to make sure that the team member that is struggling to fit in has what it takes to fit in. They might be a potentially stunning colleague... at another company. And... you are actually doing them a huge favor by pushing them out the door.

Another client of mine is Repeat Diagnostics, a Vancouver based scientific analysis organization that has discovered a very innovative technology for analyzing blood born diseases. They say: “when a cell renews itself, it splits in two. The genes from the cell split as well and each strand becomes part of the new cell. When genes don’t match up properly, cancer develops.”

Remember, a weed in the garden will rapidly multiply and take over the entire garden choking out the good plants.

When you know you have given the team member that is not a fit, the opportunity to live the values, fit into the culture and the rest of the team, and they *still* don’t fit... then fire fast. The rest of your team can only go as fast as the slowest team member.

Chapter 7 - Nurture your team to GREATNESS

So now you've strategized about the team you want. You've hired the right members for your team. You've weeded out those that are not the right fit. It's time to nurture your team to greatness.

Quite simply, as a leader, the biggest thing (after hiring), is bring purpose and meaning to each and every employee. When your team members have a purpose, they will move mountains. When their jobs have meaning, they will create magic through a passion for teamwork, innovative solutions, quality work, lower costs and... Brilliant customer care.

Organizations that invest in their team and... Invest in growing their young talent into remarkable leaders will be the clear winners. It is possibly the most valuable time that you can spend on getting your company to greatness.

If you are a leader in a small/medium business or even a Fortune 500 organization, the future success of your company is in your people creating a remarkable market difference - one that sets you apart from the competitors. And that is not going to happen by accident! It's going to come from hard work and nurture on your part.

So how do you do this?

Give them clear goals.

I have never met an employee in my 30 plus years of leadership that wants to come to work each day and do a crappy job. I have met a lot of leaders that do not understand how to create an environment that their people know how to succeed in.

Most every business will develop a corporate vision, mission statement and strategies (usually way too many strategies). Then the 'leaders' of the business may even share what the corporate vision is with their people. However, that is usually where they stop. Employees will then do their very best to interpret the meaning of the vision from a personal point of view and determine (on their own) how they, as individuals, contribute to the success of the vision.

Now imagine you have 300 employees each interpreting what they need to do to make the vision successful! Chaos, confusion and mediocrity will definitely ensue!

Know this: those who know *who* is responsible for *what*, get results.

It seems like common sense, but for some reason, people just aren't getting it. If there's one thing you can get from this section, it's to make sure everyone on your team knows what their role is and what they are responsible for. It is CRITICAL!

Here's how you can do this:

1. Have clear objectives that are understood, and they know how they will be measured.
2. Have a scoreboard of some sort. People love to see what the score is when they watch sports. It is the same on the job. If you have an objective around monthly sales or production, have a scoreboard that shows how the team is tracking to results.
3. Share what others are responsible for and how it all fits together to achieve the overall goal. DO NOT think that people will just naturally know. Take the time to explain it.
4. Provide feedback on how they are doing, what they are excelling at, and where they need to improve.

Emotionally Invest in your team. Employees, like customers, make most of their decisions from the emotional 'right brain.' No surprise here, as employees are people too. Your people may join your organization because of tangible salary and benefit packages, however they will stay for two reasons. One being fear (hostages) of losing their job. They are afraid of losing their job because of the financial hardship that may happen and they do not think they could find another job. Or two, and hopefully this is the real reason, they like their leader, their team, the company they are working with and feel they are making a difference, and they feel there is a future for themselves (volunteers).

The BIG issue we have today as leaders, is that it is harder and harder to keep connected with your employees. The team may even be spread across the country. They may be on the road working with customers. Then to complicate matters, you as the leader, are buried in email, paperwork and meetings. And just when you get a moment to yourself, you are drawn to your desk, trying to catch up.

The hardest thing to do bar none for leaders today is to get up from your desk and walk away. Walk away to be with your team. This is the most important thing you can do as a leader. Simply taking the time to do this, you will see that you are all of sudden leading a team of loyal, engaged volunteers versus a collection of hostages.

Here is my checklist for developing emotional connections with your team and building loyal, engaged volunteers:

1. Be conscious of the amount of time you spend doing non-leadership team activities (email, useless meetings, etc.).

2. Be disciplined about creating time for your team. Schedule time in your calendar if you have to. And... commit to it.
3. Get organized with your emails – schedule a time of day for doing it. An hour in the morning and hour in the afternoon. And stick to it!
4. Start a weekly “Huddle Meeting” on Monday morning in which every team member attends (even if it is via Video Skype). In the huddle, each team member takes a couple of minutes to talk about what happened last week and what they need to get done in the week ahead. Team members can offer suggestions to issues, or assistance. You, as the leader, can check to make sure the team is staying focused on the strategy
5. Have monthly 30-minute review sessions with each team member that reports to you. Use this time to talk about strategy, purpose, values, vision and objectives. Encourage your team member to engage by asking them these three questions:
 - a. “What can I do more of for you?”
 - b. “What can I do less of for you?”
 - c. “What do I need to continue to do for you?”
6. Do quarterly review meetings with each individual - checking in on objectives and performance. Your team craves feedback on their performance and this is a great time to do it. Waiting until the annual performance review time is too late!
7. LBWA – Leadership by walking around. Go for walks and stop at people’s desks. Ask them what is going on. Inquire about pictures they have on their desk or what they did on the weekend. When they reply, ask more questions about the activity versus pretending like you are interested.
8. Communicate! Spend some of that email time of yours drafting up a monthly update on what is going on in the business. Recognize team members for work they did. Talk about wins with customers and what is coming on the horizon.

Make time to team build. Team building is essential for leaders in business. Henry Ford once said: "you learn more about a person in an hour of play than a year of conversation." If you are to connect, I mean really connect with your team, you have to plan in some play time. And do it often.

Building solid relationships with your team is critical for those times when you, the business or a team member is facing adversity. It is during those times that the investment in finding a way for your team to let off some 'steam' will come and pay you back. When a team has bonded through play, they will be there for each other during tough times. They will be there for you too.

Find a way to build fun into your work environment. Find a way to laugh at meetings. You will discover some amazing things about your colleagues. If you build a team that has each other covered for when times are tough. You will have a renewed level of energy, commitment and engagement! You will see remarkable results.

Final words. Be real. Be authentic. Be soulful. If you are not, your team will see right through it and you will be worse off than if you stayed locked up in your office. Oh... and a word of advice... if this is new to you, and your team has rarely, if ever, seen you... go slow. If you all of a sudden charge out of the office and expect that everyone is going to throw rose petals at your feet, you will be very disappointed. Your team will be suspect at first (they might even think you have been on one of those management courses). Stick with it. As you are building the habit of being a leader that leads, your team will respond.

It is more important than ever that leaders take an active role developing their talent. And by active, I mean being personally involved in programs to nurture and grow the very best leaders in the organization. Mentoring, mastermind teams, shadowing projects, case studies and... role modeling. Making it safe for risk taking, mistakes, learning, growth and development. As a leader, if you are not mentoring up and coming leaders, then you are not doing your job, and you are not going to be successful.

Part 3 - Your Commitment

Now that your mind is set and your team is defined, it's time for you to commit to... yourself, your leadership, your team and your business.

How do you do this? By reading, learning, understanding, encompassing, and revisiting the following six points, time and time again.

You will make mistakes. When that happens, dust yourself off, laugh, learn, teach and move on.

"Desire is the key to motivation, but it's determination and commitment to an unrelenting pursuit of your goal - a commitment to excellence - that will enable you to attain the success you seek."

Mario Andretti

Chapter 8 - Keep your promises

Few actions you will take as a leader will set you apart faster than the words, "I promise." Whether to your customers, your team, or any other stakeholders. You will spiral into the depths of mediocrity the moment your brand is associated with being someone who does not keep promises.

Making promises is easy. Your day is filled with problems and challenges. You're encountering endless amounts of people, with endless amounts of needs. The phone keeps ringing. Emails are piling up. It is easy to tell someone that you will take care of it, and then unintentionally forget, or not do it. Then another. And another. Surprisingly though, it seems no one noticed. Another. Another.

Then what happens? You slide into lazy habits of over promising and under delivering. Ouch! Mediocrity has arrived!

Here's the issue... someone always notices. Unfortunately, only about 2% actually follow up with you on your commitments. But believe me, the other 98% are left with a brand image of you that is one of untrustworthy, uncommitted, never delivers, and mediocre. If that person is a customer, they will just take their business elsewhere. If the person is your boss, you will get a surprise at your performance review or worse, fired. And you will never see it coming.

If you can't keep a promise, don't make one. Want to be a leader who is respected? Change your habits and start delivering!!!

How? Here are some easy steps that you can take to strengthen your "get it done and keep your promises" muscle...

1. **Plan.** Get a notebook. When people ask you to do something WRITE IT DOWN. Plan time to get it done. Then stick to the plan. **TIP:** Plan time in your week to work on "Projects" - projects are those issues that pop up that require you to commit to taking action.
2. **Learn to say "No."** Young leaders are the worst offenders at this. They tend to say, "yes" to everything - thinking that if they say otherwise, they won't be thought of highly. Wrong! Know what you are good at. Know what you want to be better at. Everything else is a shiny object and say, "no" to it or, simply explain that you would gladly take that project on however, it will be delivered six weeks from now when you can work it in.
3. **Communicate.** Sometimes, your priorities will be set by some other force (your spouse, your boss, your customers). That happens. Be clear though about what other priorities will not get done as promised. Communicate when a

commitment is going to be late. Be clear as well about when the new delivering date will be. Communicating that you may miss a promised delivery is WAY better than not letting people know. You may take some heat for it however, that will be far better than the lingering effects of damaging your brand by not delivering and not communicating.

Too hard? Then go back to being mediocre with mediocre results, having an unengaged team and unsatisfied customers!

Chapter 9 - Be adaptable

As an effective leader, one needs to be a counselor, a coach, an advocate, a sponsor, a parent, a priest, a teacher... The list goes on and on.

One of the most common failures I see from people *trying* and failing to be leaders is a lack of ability or willingness, to change their leadership for followers with different needs, levels of confidence, competence or maturity levels.

As humans, we are generally more comfortable with one particular leadership style , one that is in line with our personalities.

It is critical though, if we are to create the culture we want , deliver the distinctive excellence we want our customers to receive and, ultimately, have the success we want in our business, that we as leaders are able to develop different leadership styles, for different followers, at different times.

To be a successful world-class leader you need to be capable of morphing into different styles for different followers by using a classic emotional intelligence framework. Do this by:

1. **Awareness** - One of the keys to developing outstanding *Emotional Intelligence* is developing a heightened sense of awareness. Awareness of your behavior, your body language and your actions is critical. Employees are naturally dialed in to how a leader is behaving, what their moods are like, and how they respond to certain situations. When team members are behaving out of character, look for ways to discover *why*.
2. **Regulation** - Learn how to regulate your emotions and choose your response to changing situations.
3. **Motivation** - Find ways to motivate yourself to be the leader that you need to be when you need to be... which can be incredibly hard, especially when you need get outside of your comfort zone.
4. **Empathy** - Learn how to understand what people are going through by being the leader they need at the time they need it. This takes practice, reflection, mistakes, and learning. The one key tool you need though is learning how to **LISTEN**.
5. **Serve** - As a leader, you need to wake up every day and serve the people on your team. Throughout the day, to the end, your job is to serve your people. Teach them respect and appreciation by respecting and appreciating them. In turn, you will inspire a culture of servitude and respect. I don't think I have to tell you how customers will feel when they are served by that kind of culture. Put all of your energy and passion into serving and you will be rewarded - not put on a

pedestal - but rewarded. The pedestal is already overcrowded with the countless others out there that don't get it and will soon find themselves sweeping the streets they thought they once owned.

Whether you are leading a team of one, or a large organization, get good at being a different leader for different followers and different situations. It is a critical piece to the success puzzle.

Chapter 10 - Stay focused

Ever watch a puppy playing with a toy? You can't help but watch with amused wonder as they clumsily run, pounce and toss around whatever it is they are playing with. Then... a butterfly innocently flutters into view and... off the puppy goes in hot pursuit of something new. Within seconds, a squirrel scampers across the puppy's field of view and... off he goes again! The puppy's complete and total lack of focus is so much fun to watch!

Yet, when I have to put on my business leader's hat, a team or individual's lack of focus is not as cute. In fact, it is one of the biggest detractors of greatness that I see in individuals and organizations.

Focus is all about taking a business', or team's vision, and single-mindedly concentrating on executing. It is all about ignoring the butterflies, squirrels and whatever else that happens to come along.

As the leader, you will not get your team to move one single step toward achieving your vision unless the organization or your team understands why it needs to be done.

As far as discipline goes, focus is the single hardest thing for an individual leader to master. If we look at the 3% of people that have mastered greatness in their field, we will discover they all share in common one thing: an unwavering discipline to focus only on what needs to be done to achieve their objectives. Everything else is ignored. The same is found in world-class athletes that have learned to intensely focus on crafting near perfection in their field. If they are the best at golf for example, they do not try to be the best at tennis too.

The late Steve Jobs once said: "That's been one of my mantras - focus and simplicity. Simple can be harder than complex. You have to work hard to get your thinking clean to make it simple. But it's worth it in the end because once you get there, you can move mountains."

Chapter 11 - 100% accountability

One of the biggest issues I see everywhere I go - especially in businesses that are struggling to be better - is accountability or, complete lack thereof.

I am amazed at how many grown adults in leadership positions put a tremendous amount of energy into avoiding taking responsibility for anything in the organization. Some even go so far as to perfect their individual roles as victims . They do this by forming tight groups or "cliques" with other victims, and work the politics of the organizations to "appear" as though they are doing their very best to execute on plans but there are just so many forces of "evil" working against them. What I see is behavior incredibly close to small children figuratively throwing one of their siblings "under the bus" to take the heat for something that was broken or left undone.

Leaders... The number one thing you can do for your career, your team and your organization is to step up and take 100% accountability for your role, your responsibilities and your actions. Period! Yes, it may be painful to your ego to be the one that highlights the fact that you have not delivered however, I have yet to see anyone get fired for doing so. In fact, I have seen more people get promoted for showing that they are accountable.

The number one thing you can do for the individuals you lead is show them you are 100% accountable for your actions, and never blame anything that is your responsibility on anyone else. Your team will take your lead and start taking accountability for their roles and responsibilities too.

Finally, your team will blossom, and you will too as an "Accountable Leader."

I leave you with this thought: "When, as a leader, things are going well, look out the window. When things are not going well, look in the mirror." In other words, give your team all the credit when things are going good and take responsibility for things that are not going according to plan.

Chapter 12 - Communicate often... then, do it again

The biggest weakness that leaders and companies have is almost always a lack of communication.

It shows up in virtually every single *Employee Engagement Survey*. As a Strategy and Turn-around Advisor, I often hear executives tell me they just got the engagement survey results back. I will then say: "Let me guess. The results say team members feel that they are not communicated to, they do not have a clear understanding of the company's objectives and their manager does not recognize them for their contribution?" The executive will always say: "Yes. How did you know?"

Communication is the simplest of all things to do between human beings, and yet somehow the hardest to consistently deliver!

Why?

Some will argue that different cultures, languages, demographics, religion, social stature, etc., all play a role in our inability to communicate. However, as leaders within the same organization, one would think that we could figure out a way to converse, correspond, convey, impart, transmit and connect with each other. However, survey after survey tells us the same thing... we generally suck at communication.

As leaders then, what do we do? Well, the answer is less complex than you think:

1. **The first step is trust.** Trusting the people that you are communicating to. I have talked with an unbelievable amount of executives and leaders that tell me they do not trust their team with details on strategy, direction and generally what is going on in the business. I am not kidding. True statement! If as a leader, one does not trust their people to hear and act on certain messages then... they either have the wrong people, or they are the wrong leader.
2. **The second step is sharing.** Share the vision on a regular basis (not just putting it on the board room wall). Clear, shared strategies, of individual's roles contribute to the achievement of the vision and the success of the company. It is shocking how many people want to do a good job but have no idea what good looks like!
3. **The third step is to communicate often.** Like brushing your teeth, this needs to be done every day, and through multiple channels: face-to-face, email, phone call, social media, video posts, etc. There is no such thing as over communicating!
4. **Different Generations.** We are faced in leadership today with multiple different generations in the workplace that have different needs, expectations and approaches. We need to learn what messages need to be communicated in

what way to best hit the needs of each different generation. There is no 'one way' to share the message.

As a leader, get better at communicating and watch your team engagement and results skyrocket. Then watch your career and success follow closely behind.

Chapter 13 - Don't panic... Ever

One of the hardest leadership skills there is to learn and develop is not to panic.

Staying calm under pressure, and not panicking when something goes wrong is what will distinguish you as a world-class leader. Having the mental fortitude to listen, assess, develop strategy and act when all those around you are running around screaming "the sky is falling!" is a clear distinctive advantage over the majority of managers out there.

When I work with new leaders, all the way up to CEO's, one of the biggest skills we spend a lot of our time on is developing the key XQ (eXperience quotient) skill of *'Keeping Your Head When Everyone Around You is Losing Theirs.'* Essentially, staying calm under pressure or during chaos. It has to be the hardest mental and emotional challenge that leaders are faced with.

During your career as a leader, you will be faced with hundreds of situations that will require you to lead an individual, team or organization through a tough scenario. It is during those uncertain times of crisis, chaos or change that people need direction - a vision of 'what good looks like.' They need to know that they will get through the situation and their lives will get back to normal (it might be a NEW normal but it WILL stabilize). They need a leader that can keep calm and carry them through.

As a leader, start practicing today. When anything comes your way that is different in any way, follow this simple model...

1. Tell yourself: "Do not panic. I've got this."
2. Let your team know that we will get through this. Confidence in leadership is huge in calming and galvanizing people.
3. Assess. Gather information. Listen.
4. Ask yourself: **"What Does Good Look Like?"**
5. Communicate.
6. Execute.
7. Communicate some more.

Every day as a leader you will be faced with a new challenge. That is the way it is. The leader that calmly leads under pressure always wins.

Chapter 14 - Work ON the business, and not IN the business

A common mistake that I see leaders make at all levels is getting involved in every little detail of an organization, department, project or program. In other words, getting so into the details that they are not leading. They are actually working in the business. You have your finger on the pulse of absolutely everything that is going on and most likely, not actually getting anything done. Or even worse... you're getting in the way of those that are supposed to be doing what you are interfering with.

As leaders, our job is to set direction that will enable our people to deliver on a vision that aligns with the purpose and values. Working "on the business" allows us to do exactly that. Keeping yourself out of the weeds of the details enables you to see the bigger picture, and position yourself for corrective action.

When you are working "in the business," you discover you are working ridiculously long hours with a group of people that are not engaged or empowered. Stress and pressure will be crazy. By Friday each week, you will be exhausted and your "to-do" list will be untouched. Your energy will be empty. Sales will be off target. Customers will be unsatisfied. Costs will start to get out-of-control. Productivity will be low. To counteract all these negative trends, you may find yourself working even harder and getting more involved in the small stuff.

You will find yourself telling your loved ones: "This crazy period at work is just temporary. It will get better." Guess what though? It won't get better until you stop sweating the small stuff and start working on the business.

Let your team do their jobs. You need to stand back and lead. Your job is to make sure the vision is clear, the team know their roles and responsibilities, the strategies (or baby steps towards success) are clear and you are keeping an "Air Traffic Controller's" eye on the progress.

Then, focus on catching people doing things right!

Chapter 15 - Remember business is driven by BOTH sides of the brain

Sadly, for most businesses, the day-in-the-life-of is usually all left-brain. Data. Numbers. Analysis. Details, details, details.

However, people make their decisions from their right, or their Limbic Brains. This is the part of our brains where emotions are generated.

Our emotionally-based decision-making mind is most likely responsible for where we live, the kind of car we drive, the mate or partner we choose, the friends we have, the clothes we wear, etc. It is only when we have made a purchase - a car for example - that we come over to our logical, data centered brains and justify our decisions with data to back it up.

So, let's focus on bringing into our teams and organizations the very best fit for the culture we want to build. That is what you should be measuring - the number of brilliant people in our business serving happy customers.

Learn to get in touch with your emotional leadership abilities. It is a must-have part of the new leader's tool kit you are building.

Part 4 - Build

Winning strategies that you can use to unlock the World-Class-Leader inside you

This second section of the book is dedicated simply to... Lists, tips, and hands on advice that you can use when you have a problem you need to solve, when you want a quick reminder, or if you're just a person who likes to grab their advice in short snippets.

"I am building a fire, and every day I train, I add more fuel. At just the right moment, I light the match."

Mia Hamm

Chapter 16 - Nine leadership lessons not taught in the classroom

World-class leaders are always leading. Leading customers to a new product or service, leading a startup team to peak performance, or leading a new business to the market opportunity.

Here are many of the key lessons that I have learned from my own experience, and feedback from great leaders, in both large businesses as well as startups:

1. **Practicing authentic leadership versus fake leadership.** Authenticity requires honesty, self-awareness, and a selfless perspective. Authentic leaders lead through the power of personal influence, rather than coercion. Fakers rely on position, authority, and manipulation – leading to short-term gain and long-term loss.
2. **It all starts with a vision, but you have to execute.** Vision provides direction so your startup won't just flail about. As you communicate your vision to stakeholders, you will strengthen your own belief and get buy-in from the team. But above all, leadership is defined by action. You have to execute to succeed, so trust yourself and start moving forward.
3. **The importance of critical thinking.** Critical thinking is the ability to think clearly, rationally, reflectively, and independently. Critical thinking is not just accumulating information, and should not be confused with being critical of other people. People need to practice critical thinking to be leaders, rather than following conventional wisdom.
4. **Leadership comes with building and nurturing the right team.** Leaders not only have to pick the right team members, but have to continually communicate the vision, tasks required, and provide mentoring and feedback to each member. They can't focus on the product, and assume the team will come along by osmosis.
5. **Pretend to be a customer or client of the business you lead.** Successful leaders practice stepping back, to look at their business the way customers see it for the first time. It obviously helps to ask new customers what they see. Then it takes humility to swallow your pride and your biases, and make improvements regularly.
6. **Coaching and mentoring is key to the leadership role.** A good leader will make sure that each person is getting exactly what he or she needs for their role and their maturity. Depending on the individual, the entrepreneur may look like a dictator, a high school coach, a mentor, or a country club host. People ignored see no leadership.
7. **The importance of listening.** More leaders need to learn to truly listen to the people on their frontline, as well as listen to customers, partners, investors, and vendors. It's hard to listen while you are talking; and many people seem adept at

listening without really hearing anything. The Dali Lama has said: “When we are speaking, we are only repeating what we know. When we are listening, we are learning.”

8. **Time for solutions versus problems.** It’s easy to become so overwhelmed by the day-to-day problems of running a business that you have no time to work on solutions or strategy that will give you greater leverage and long-term success. Ask each member of your team to be the CEO of his own problems, and you will take time for the solutions.
9. **Know when to overreact or under-react.** Real leaders stay in control of their emotions, and use reactions to highlight a point. For example, startup leaders should overreact to values violations, and under-react to the next crisis. Always reflect before you react. You don’t learn that in the classroom.

World-class leadership will never be learned in the classroom. It takes hard work, lots of practice, and lots of mistakes. It takes focus to become both a student and a teacher of leadership. You will soon be amazed by how things start to fall into place, despite what you don’t know. That’s the innate leadership coming out. Enjoy it.

Chapter 17 - Seven strategies to deal with your competitors

I meet a lot of leaders that live in fear of the competition. Almost paralyzed with an unhealthy obsession about what the competition is doing and how it is going to cause customers or employees to leave.

Here's the thing... When you have a clear, compelling and simple strategy, your team or organization will be able to understand it and execute on it. When you have a clear distinctive advantage in the marketplace, your target customers will understand it and purchase from you. They will even spend more money on you, because they will see the value.

Competitors in all likelihood do not have a simple and focused plan. They are probably changing their minds and their strategies as often as their underwear. They probably have a long, hard to remember visions. In fact, I'll bet that most, if not all their employees could not recite their vision.

The way to get ahead of your competition, without even concerning yourself with them, includes that you:

1. **Have a clear and compelling vision and mission, and maintain simple strategies.** Everyone needs direction. They all need to know where they are going and what they are attempting to achieve. Having a clear and compelling vision helps everyone visualize what success will look like.
2. **Make sure your entire business knows the plan and how they play a role in its delivery.** High performing teams all know exactly what their role is and what they are responsible and accountable for. Members of pro-sport teams all know exactly what positions they are playing. They all know that not everyone can score goals, and be the goalkeeper. Each player has a role and they trust completely that their teammates are doing their job. It is the same in business.
3. **Focus on your distinct excellence in the market.** You will never be able to be all things to all people. If your customers buy from you because you have the most innovative offering available, do not try to have the lowest piece too.
4. **Focus on your target customers (not all the potential customers, but your specific target customers).** There are over seven billion people on the planet. Unless you are the only business on earth that is selling air, you will never have every one of those people as a customer. You should have a very defined target customer. You should know every possible detail about that customer. When you have an intimate knowledge of who your customer is, you will be better able

- to communicate to them in language and in a format that will resonate with your target. Let your competition try to be all things to all people.
5. **Never, ever, panic about what the competition is doing. Remember they are probably extremely desperate and are living in fear of you.** 97% of the businesses on the planet are mediocre (at best). They do not have a plan. They cannot execute. They change strategies often. Focus on your plan and what makes you great.
 6. **Celebrate all your wins.** Most high achieving leaders make the same mistake: they fail to recognize achievement in themselves and similarly, do not recognize achievement from their team. Break your plans into baby steps and when each milestone is achieved, celebrate.
 7. **Learn from your losses as they relate to your strategy and your distinctive excellence.** Shit happens. When it does, do not jump off the edge of the building. Dust yourself off, learn, teach and move on. You may even want to celebrate mistakes like you would achievements. That way your people will not live in fear of making mistakes and they will always be pushing the boundaries of innovation, service and... greatness!

Winning in business is easy because your competitors are most often dazed and confused.

Chapter 18 - The five traits of a productive and successful leader

Procrastination. It is the evil stepsister to productivity. It is the difference between the 3% of those that experience greatness and the 97% that bump along in mediocrity.

The world's top leaders all share a few common traits (despite coming from a multitude of differences). **They:**

1. **...are very good communicators.** They make it crystal clear where they want to go and why. They deliver their messages often and in multiple formats (newsletters, emails, text messages, social media, videos, etc...). Remember that being a leader today means that you have four to five different generations of people on your team and each generation consumes information differently. Communication is like brushing your teeth – it has to be every day. Never assume that you are over communicating.
2. **... get up earlier than everybody else.** The most successful people and leaders I have met all have one common trait. They get up earlier than anyone else. People that say they do not function well early in morning are living against their natural biological clock. We are wired to be in bed at 10:00PM and up between 5:00 and 6:00AM.
3. **... are visionaries.** Most people on the planet are visual learners. They need to see things in order to learn. Painting a picture of where you are going and what success looks like is natural to them.
4. **... have purpose.** Like vision, we all need to know 'Why.' The tops leaders in the world all have their own personal reasons for doing what they do, however they have a natural talent to tie that into a greater purpose. We all listen to the radio station 'WIIFM' (What's In It For Me?). As a leader, we need to talk in terms of what you believe so that your people will be able to relate that to their own purpose.
5. **... do not procrastinate. Ever.** The mantra of the 97% mediocre on the planet is: "Why do today what may not need to be done tomorrow?" That is why they are mediocre.

Chapter 19 - Ten steps to becoming a self-leader

How do you lead when you do not have people reporting to you?

Leading one's self is critical to your career, your success and who you are as a brand. Leading one's self is also critical to being an effective leader - one that is able to walk the talk.

I am going to give my Top-Ten list for self-leadership, however... it starts with looking in the mirror and telling the person you see on the other side: *"I am a leader. People trust my abilities, and respect my brand."*

1. **Be authentic!** If you are not being yourself (the person your family and closest friends know and love), then who are you trying to be? It is impossible to carry out different personas. You are where you are and have achieved what you have achieved because of who you are. I remember a time in my early leadership days when I **thought** I had to behave differently to impress people. All that achieved was enabling me to impress people that did not matter. Being you is easier than being someone else. Your stock value as a leader will shoot through the roof when you get this.
2. **Always have a vision.** If you don't know where you are going, then any place will do. Without a clear and compelling vision for where you want to go and what you want to achieve with your life, then someone else will have a plan for you and... You may not like their plan. Having a vision for yourself gives you an incredible sense of direction and empowerment!
3. **Purpose.** Similar to vision, you need to have a clear sense of "why." When we know *why* we want or to do something, it will give us a reason for what we do. Don't be afraid to look deep within yourself to uncover *why* you do the things you do. Even if you discover that it is strongly linked to egotistical desires, you are being honest with yourself and that my friend, links back to number one above.
4. **Self-Leaders are "doers."** Self-leaders have a plan and they get the plan done. I create a "list of 5," every morning - things that I want to get done that day. I then focus intensely on that list and get it done. It is empowering and satisfying when I am able to see progress every day!
5. **Don't Panic.** Life is full of surprises. In fact every day there are obstacles and challenges that will appear unexpectedly. Developing a mindset of keeping your cool (while everyone else around you is losing theirs) will allow you to think more clearly and respond with more confidence and competence. And... Your personal stock value will shoot through the roof!
6. **Listen.** Developing the fine art of communicating by closing your mouth is the absolute hardest thing any person on this planet can master and... Most leaders (especially executives) are the worst of them all. When you are able to develop the discipline to truly listen to what people are saying, you will discover a brand

new world of understanding will unfold in front of you. And, as a side benefit of your newfound ability to listen, you will discover that you are actually viewed as being smarter, more trustworthy and you will be given far more respect.

7. **Take better care of yourself.** Exercise. Eat healthy. Get 7-8 hours of sleep. Stay hydrated. You and your brand as a leader depend on you operating at maximum energy levels. You can only do this when you are managing your energy by taking care of yourself.
8. **Disconnect.** I keep telling anyone that will listen, if you want to operate at your highest level of creativity, get out of the office. Get away from the chaos. Go for a walk. Go have a shower! A friend of mine was recognized for being the *Entrepreneur of the Year* in my part of Canada. In his magazine interview, he said: "If I want to solve a really tough problem, I go and have a bath with a glass of wine." He is a ridiculously successful businessperson and he practices disconnecting on a regular basis.
9. **Give generously your time and money.** Your value as a self-leader will sky rocket, you will feel amazing and other doors will open when you give back to the community you live in. Give your time by volunteering. Give money to causes that you believe in. Mentor young leaders. Coach young athletes. Whatever you do, get out there and make a difference.
10. **Life is short. Do stuff that matters.** If you live your life as healthy as you can, you will on average, have 31,000 days here in this body you are occupying. Those 31,000 days will fly by at an unbelievable speed. Pledge to always, no matter what, do stuff that matters. Never waste a single day of those 31,000. Ever!
11. **Oh! And here is a bonus!** Take responsibility for everything in your life. Don't ask yourself: "Why is this happening to me?" Ask instead: "Why is this happening for me?"

Chapter 20 - Five things true leaders never say

The best leaders on the planet are renowned for being great communicators. They have, despite all their differences (race, gender, religion, education, jobs, etc.), become skilled at getting messages across to other people. Messages about vision, purpose, strategy, direction, and projects are all clearly and compellingly explained so team members can easily follow.

Interestingly though, you will never hear true leaders say things like:

1. **"Try"** - The word "try" is just a convenient excuse for not getting things done. If mediocre managers are not successful at getting something completed, they can always say: "Well, at least I tried." Any wonder why they are mediocre?
2. **"Hope"** - Hope is not a management tool. Using the word 'Hope' in our daily leadership language really means: "There isn't a plan and I am not completely confident I think this will work." People usually follow a manager that relies on 'hope' out of curiosity or fear.
3. **"It's not my fault"** - The worst thing a leader can do is not step up to taking 100% responsibility for something that wrongly happened or did not happen. Not taking responsibility means: "That I cannot be relied upon or trusted."
4. **"Because, that is the way we have always done it"** - When I hear a manager say this, they are really telling me: "Their mind is completely closed to new ideas and ways of thinking. They do not believe that there is potentially a better way."
5. **"That's not fair"** - Three year olds and teenagers say this - not leaders. Life is full of up's and down's. Great leaders groove with the ambiguity that life throws at them. And when life throws us a surprise, great leaders figure out a solution. They don't wallow in self-pity - blaming everything and everybody for their situation.

Chapter 21 - Ten ways to tune up your ability to speak

The world's greatest leaders, alive or dead, despite coming from distinct cultures, backgrounds, economic conditions, religions, social status, genders, and age groups, have one thing in common: the ability to speak; be it in meetings, on the factory floor, in front of the board, on a stage, or in front of a client. They can do so, with conviction and passion, deliver a message or an idea that moves people to do something different. Something people most likely would not do on their own. It is that leader's ability to convey a thought, a vision, or a purpose, that inspires people to go far beyond what their own imaginations thought impossible.

Here are ten quick tips for getting good at public speaking. And, by the way, I consider public speaking any time you have to open your mouth as a business or community leader....

1. **Understand what is in it for the audience.** Your message will never be received unless you structure and deliver your message in a way that resonates with the listener.
2. **Always structure your message so it has a beginning, middle, and an end.** It's critical as a leader to structure your communications, because adult followers need to have a message delivered in a way they can process it to understand how it is important to them.
3. **Tell a Story.** Nothing hooks people like a story they can relate to. Stories help an audience visualize the message more clearly and lock in the value. Steve Jobs of Apple was a master storyteller. Try starting a dialogue at the next meeting by saying, "I would like to tell you a story..."
4. **"Be brief and be seated"** (Winston Churchill). Say what you have to say and sit down. Especially true in a meeting or boardroom.
5. **In a meeting, hook other participants by repeating thoughts and ideas they have had back to them.** Nothing gets people onto your page faster than knowing you have been listening to them.
6. **Get good with your voice.** Think back to the professors you had in college. Their monotone voices put the class in a coma faster than a sleeping pill. Your voice needs to be an integrated package with your body language and the story you have to tell. Your passion will be transmitted through your voice and body language. Watch actors on TV.
7. **Focus more on how you will deliver a message versus fancy PowerPoint slides.** I see countless managers putting all their effort into their slides. PowerPoint "decks" that have line after line of data, groovy graphics, and awe-inspiring transitions, are NOT what the presentation is about... you are!

8. **Learn to read an audience.** If your audience is sleeping, it's not because they are tired. It is because you are boring. Bring some energy to every presentation and that enthusiasm will transfer to your listeners.
9. **Learn to recognize and control your nerves.** The number one secret to controlling your nerves... Breathe! Take a deep breath before you begin. Focus on your breathing. When you feel nervous, think about breathing.
10. **Practice.** In anything, it takes 20 hours to become proficient. It takes 10,000 hours to obtain mastery. Get started toward mastery today by speaking as often as you can.

Chapter 22 - Ten tips to help you pick yourself up

The world is full of challenges and obstacles. And, it is not getting any easier with economic, technological, internal and external trends, the needs of customers, shareholders, employees and family and all the uncertainties that we are faced with everyday.

On top of all this, there are negative influences we have in our day-to-day lives that are usually FULL of advice about what you can and cannot do - usually the latter. It is a wonder we don't all crawl back into bed and curl up into the fetal position!

Here's my checklist for getting myself through those dark times when there seems to be a big black cloud hanging over my head...

1. **Tell yourself that failure is an event not a person.** If you are pushing the boundaries to deliver "Wow!" you will make mistakes and things will sometimes not work. It is just an event. Dust yourself off, learn, teach and move on. Remember, Michael Jordan was cut from his high school basketball team. Oprah was fired from her first television job. And, Walt Disney was fired from an early job because he lacked "imagination."
2. **Tell yourself that NOTHING worthwhile ever came without setbacks and hard work.** There is no secret sauce, magical wand or holy water that make what you want to do easier. Get up earlier and work harder than everyone else.
3. **Get away from the problem.** Go for a walk, a drive, do yoga, meditate, go see a movie, bake some cookies.... Anything. Just don't sit there and worry about things.
4. **Go do some volunteer work at a charity where people truly are in a worse place than you.** As leaders, we have it good. We have food. We have clothes. We have a place to sleep. This always drives me to stop feeling sorry for myself, when I am serving or helping someone less fortunate than myself.
5. **Make a list of all the cool things you have accomplished, completed, achieved, innovated, solved, or overcome.** Once you see how many cool things you have done, you can't help but feel better.
6. **Realize that there is an 'abundance' in life.** Develop an *Abundance Mentality* that starts with telling yourself that there is a tremendous amount out there and you will get your share. Once you get this thought planted in your head, the "universe" as I call it, will provide opportunities.
7. **Get a mentor who is passionate about sharing, teaching and helping other people be the best that they can be.** You may have some blind spots in the way you are doing things. Chances are you cannot see these weaknesses. A coach or mentor can.
8. **Become a mentor who is equally passionate.** A great way to feel and become better at what you want to do is to teach and mentor others.

9. **Make sure that you are...** Eating properly, hydrating properly, getting enough sleep (8 hours a night) and exercising (minimum 4 times per week). This will all help you think more clearly, feel less stressed and operate with more energy.
10. **Hug the people you love.** Remember that you are loved but more importantly, that you get to love other people back!

Part 5 – Maintain

How to build, live, breathe and encompass the lifestyle of a leader

Now you know what it takes to be a world-class leader, you know how to make a world-class team, you know how to lead that team to greatness, and you even have step by step lists to help remind you how to do all of this.

But there is one thing that is missing, and it's important. Maintenance. You wouldn't buy new Ferrari, and never clean it, or never take it to the shop ever again. Same with being a world-class leader. It's all about building, breathing, thinking, living, and encompassing the lifestyle of a leader.

This last section is all about *THAT* – teaching you the leadership lifestyle, so that you can maintain the greatness you achieve.

“Successful people maintain a positive focus in life no matter what is going on around them. They stay focused on their past successes rather than their past failures, and on the next action steps they need to take to get them closer to the fulfillment of their goals rather than all the other distractions that life presents to them.”

Jack Canfield

Chapter 23 - Make the first move NOW

I hear it all the time. People are looking for success, wealth, fame, recognition, respect, honesty, trust, and love. Leaders that are wanting something to change, the team to step up, the culture to be different, customer service to be better... The list goes on.

The curious thing I see though is the same groups that tell me they want all this to happen, are usually waiting for it to change. Very few actually go out and make it happen. I see leaders constantly saying the same thing: "We have a new plan. I am going to wait and see if the team does anything different." I am always thinking: "This is going to be very interesting. Everyone sitting around waiting for the other one to make the first move!"

I always tell people that if you are looking for love, then give it. If you want more recognition, then give it. If you want change to happen, then lead it.

The world is full of spectators. People waiting for things to happen. Waiting for someone else to take charge and show them the way or do the thinking.

The essence of leadership is getting people to do things (willingly) that they would not normally do on their own. And, the best way to get an individual or group to follow in a direction or do something different is through showing them and leading.

You want things to change in your personal life? Then, as Ghandi once said, "Be the change you want to see in the world." You have to be the first one to make the move. You want love? Give love. You want the world to be a better place? Be that change. Want to solve hunger? Start by feeding people.

It's the same for business and leadership. You want your organization or team to treat each other and customers the absolute best? Lead that example. Be the one to make the sacrifices. The very best leaders of the very best businesses in the world put their teams first by making the sacrifice and leading the way. They park their egos and their fancy titles at the door.

The key is, if you want something, lead it, give it, show it, do it, be it - but do it first!

Here's how:

Keep it simple. When you want maintain true leadership status, you need to know your goals. You have now learned so many qualities of being a good leader, so take a moment to reflect, and plan. Grab an index card, black notebook, the palm of your hand, anything. Write down 5 things you want to achieve to better yourself as a leader,

in the next year. Still keeping it simple, what are the five things you are going to do in the next month to work toward your list of 5 goals for the year? What are the 5 things you are going to do this week to work toward your monthly 5? You can even do a "Daily 5."

That's it. The rest is up to you and your level of focus. Remember, having your plan and taking action NOW is the difference between the world's most successful people.

Chapter 24 - Get yourself thinking, breathing, and believing you are a WORLD-CLASS leader

So now that you have a leadership plan, and you've taken action to meet your goals. What will really help keep you on the right path, is building the "lifestyle" part of your plan. The part where you're, breathing, thinking and believing in being a successful world-class leader. There three key parts to making this happen, and it starts with asking yourself "how badly do you want it?"

Breathe like a world-class leader. We all spend time daydreaming about the things that we want to do. What do you do to make it reality though?

If you are like me, the things from your daydream list are long. Some things on your list may be impossible - for example, I will never be six feet tall. Others though, if you truly want them bad enough, and believe you are worthy and capable of them, then they are all yours for the achieving.

Here is the "How Bad Do You Want It" checklist...

1. **Don't try to be all things.** Just as in business, you cannot be all things to all people at once. Your goal list may be incredibly long. Prioritize it down to 3 things. Then prioritize it down to 1. My 'one thing' is **leadership**. It is all I think about. It is what has made me successful. Watch and see, the very best of the best NEVER try to be all things.
2. **Laser Beam Focus.** Only focus on what you want to do. Everything else is a distraction. They say it takes 10,000 hours to become world-class. That's 416 days. 1.14 years. If you want to be world-class at 3 things, it is going to take you 1,250 days of intense focus. Yet you could be world class in one year at one thing. Then, with more focus, you could be the world's greatest at your one thing in a few years.
3. **Enjoy the Journey.** Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, says that when you are sick with the flu or a cold, you should enjoy the feeling of being sick so that when you are healthy, you do not take a moment of that for granted. In your quest for greatness, remember that it will take effort, setbacks, learning, reward and most of all... time. Life is short. Enjoy the journey every step of the way on your personal road to greatness. Live, love and laugh along the way.

Here is the key: How bad do you want it? If you were trapped in a submerged automobile, you would have one thought and one thought only in your mind. Escaping to the surface so you could breathe. That's it. You would not be thinking about what you are doing this weekend or what is on TV this evening. You would only be thinking about escaping and breathing. The quest for your greatness needs to as focused.

Thinking world-class leader. In life and in leadership, things happen unexpectedly. Some say that things happen for a reason (I still haven't figured out all the reasons if that is the case). Whatever it is though that happens, as a leader, you get to choose how you respond. In fact it is your responsibility. And even the word "Responsibility" can be broken down into the "Ability to respond."

When something unexpected happens, you can choose to panic. Or you can choose to do what great leaders do. Assess the situation and ask, "What does good look like?" Then lead.

Believe like a world-class leader. I believe that we make our own luck by knowing exactly what we want. I believe that what we think about, what we plan for and what we prepare for, starts a number of universal forces in motion to deliver for us.

I believe that when we have a plan and we think about that plan regularly, our brain's Reticular Activating system goes to work and opens our conscious minds to the opportunities that have always been right in front of us.

This is the same thing that will happen when you are thinking about a goal or a series of goals and you commit that thinking to paper so it starts to become an organized plan, your unconscious brain will find all the opportunities and situations you need to make it happen.

As a person, you can sit back and watch things happen and then conveniently blame the world for the crappy luck you have or you can make things happen by dreaming, thinking, planning and believing.

Chapter 25 - Be true to your personal brand

One of the most important parts of maintaining a world-class leader lifestyle, is being that world-class leader AT ALL TIMES! There's no choosing to "turn it on" or "turn it off."

Your brand is uniquely yours. You have an essence. An aroma if you will. Your friends, family and colleagues will be able to clearly articulate what your brand represents to them. Just like they would be able to articulate the meaning, the essence and the aroma of a brand that they admire or consume on a regular basis.

Brands like Apple (the number one brand by value in the world at \$185 billion) or Google, MacDonald's, Coke, Microsoft, Nike, etc., are recognizable brands that stand for something when people think about them or talk about them. And... When people get together anywhere in the world they usually get very passionate about their brand preferences. Spirited debates constantly erupt about Apple's iPhone versus Samsung's Galaxy - when, at the end of the day, they are both just smartphones that have relatively similar features, functions and advantages.

The same holds true for you and your brand. Your brand has been built on years of familiarity and behavior. Your values and principles make up part of your brand. The goals and ambitions do too. What you have accomplished. What you say you are going to do and what you actually do. How you behave in certain situations. Your attitude. Your results. What you wear. The service you deliver. Can you be relied upon? The list goes on and on.

You now know the traits of a world-class leader, so start right now, on building, shaping and forming your leadership-based brand.

Then MORE importantly, NEVER EVER go off brand. Stay true to yourself, your values and your brand. Even if you're being asked to make tough decisions. And, like the big brands in the world that represent billions on their balance sheets, always be true to your brand. Never burn it by going off brand, violating your values or being untrue to yourself.

You are your brand. Always.

Chapter 27 - Take great care of YOU

One major truth I can tell you is that, NONE of this information on how to be a world-class leader, how to live the lifestyle of a leader, or how to build a winning team will make ANY difference if you don't first TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.

We live in a fast paced, hectic world. We are always connected thanks to laptops, tablets and smartphones. Social media is adding to the craziness of "always being on." It's insanity. Everyone, everywhere is connected, yet disconnected. Disconnected from reality, from thinking, from creativity, from life and living.

As a leader, one of the most important things you can do for your team, your business and your shareholders is to decompress from the insanity so that your mind can actually think. What comes from it is a level of consciousness and creativity that will blow you away.

Think about it this way. You would never buy a \$100,000 race horse and then allow it to skip breakfast, eat junk food, not drink enough water, drink too much caffeine and alcohol, smoke, and not get enough sleep or exercise.

As a leader, you may think you do not make your living off your body, but you certainly make your living off your brain. And your brain is part of your body. Your brain is affected by the fuel you put into the machine, the rest that you give it, and the physical activity you put it through.

So how do take care of YOU?

- Consciously commit to spending a period of time without your technology.
 - Go for a walk by yourself or with someone else without being 'connected.'
 - Turn off your phone for an hour a day.
 - Do not use your laptop for a day on the weekend - do not even check email.
- Consciously commit to eating healthy
 - Stop eating "White Death" foods: high in salt, sugar and products made with white flour and white rice.
 - Eat good quality protein three times a day.
 - Your plate at every meal should have twice as many vegetables on it than protein.
- Always stay hydrated
 - Drink 2-3 liters of water a day.
- Reduce your coffee intake - switch to green tea.
- Get 8 hours of sleep a day.

- Move.
 - Get your body doing some form of exercise daily.

These are the basics.

Think about it this way: in our thirties, we spend our business and management time being "**corporate warriors.**" Ten-hour days. Two-hour commutes. Dinner in front of our computers while doing email in the evening until we go to bed. Little or no exercise. Crap for breakfast. Too much coffee. Fast food for lunch (usually at our desk). Forget seeing friends. And what about your kids and spouse?

Then we wake up in our late forties or fifties and, while looking in the mirror, ask ourselves: "what the hell are you doing?"

At that moment in time, leaders I know figure it out and change. They finally start living a life by design. One that has more balance. Hopefully, their spouse is still around and the kids will want to be around too.

Don't let yourself get to that position, it is not too late. Start right away.

What I have found that works is going in baby steps. Building your life by design that has realistic balance for family, professional, personal, financial, health and spiritual.

Conclusion - Until next time

This is it, my leadership advice for you. I hope now that you can all confidently say that you know WHAT a world-class leader looks like, HOW you can be one, HOW you can lead others to also be world-class leaders, and WHY this is so important.

Know that this is a process; Rome wasn't built in one day. Know that there will be times when it's easier, and times when it's harder.

There *is* one last suggestion that I have for you to help you in this journey to world-class leadership – get yourself a mentor. One of the most valuable things you can do for your career and the direction you want to take your life is to get a mentor to help nurture your path.

I mentor a number of young leaders. I have throughout my career. I love to do it and I see it as a way to give back and hopefully, prevent someone from making the same stupid mistakes I have along the way. I have also had mentors throughout my career – and I still do.

Finding a mentor is not as hard as you think. First of all, look for someone that you respect and someone that has achieved something that you would like to learn. Then, simply ask them if they would take you on as a protégé.

Here's the key. Do not expect that this person will wave some magic wand or sprinkle some holy water upon you and you will have all this newfound wisdom and success. The old rules still apply – if you want something, you have to work for it!

Next, you want your mentor to push you to look inside for what you truly want and what direction you want to take your career. The best mentors will push you outside of your comfort zone and make you really dig deep to discover, plan and execute on your own personal success strategy.

Finally, you will want your mentor to explore with you the following areas...

1. Relationships – The relationships you have in your life that are helping you get to where you want to go and the ones that are holding you back.
2. Interpersonal Skills – How are you at relating to other people as a follower, a peer and a leader.
3. Goals – What are your goals? Are they actionable? Are they measurable? What is the time line?

4. Strategy – Every leader and businessperson needs to understand strategy however, it is not rocket science. The best strategies are simple and easy to execute. Look for a mentor that understands how to help you understand that.
5. Focus on Action - A good mentor will push you to action. He/She will be impatient with excuses. If you are not in this to win it (for yourself) do not waste your mentor's time.

After you have got yourself a mentor and have started on the path to growth, become a mentor and discover another, higher level of learning!

And of course, know that I am here for you too. Connect with me via social media or email. I want you to be the best you can be, and I know that you have a limitless amount of potential inside of you.

So DO the work, EMBRACE the learning challenges, and BE the leader that I know you can be!

About the Author



Robert Murray lives in Vancouver, Canada, with his amazing wife of over thirty years, Colleen, their two adult children Denielle and Grant and a crazy border collie named Jasper.

Robert has spent a lifetime studying and learning authentic practical leadership. Beyond just taking a group of people from “Point A” to “Point B,” he takes the whole person within the leader and nurtures the whole leader from the inside out.

Currently, Robert is:

A partner at Incrementa Consulting Inc., a Vancouver-based consultancy that specializes in developing strategy for growth and in developing Executive Leaders (www.incrementa.ca)

An Advisory Board Member of Element Four an organization that has developed a technology to produce pure, potable drinking water from atmospheric air.

A passionate speaker on leadership and strategy in life and business. For information on how you can book Bob to come to your organization or next event to speak, visit him at www.Robert-Murray.com.

If you enjoyed **Simple Leadership – Simply Said** then you'll love Robert Murray's first book:

[*It's Already Inside: Nurturing your innate leadership for business and life success*](#)

IT'S ALREADY INSIDE



Nurturing Your Innate Leadership for
Business and Life Success

ROBERT S. MURRAY

And... his second book:

[*Unlocked: Finding the key to practical leadership*](#)

