NOW!
FAIL OR THRIVE

Excerpts for Busy Leaders

Essential Business Concepts

Time Honored Practices

Possibilities to Consider

Inspiring Thoughts

Compiled by

Ronald D. Sears

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my brother Norman F. Sears who never reached is full potential.

I am the person; I am today because of him.

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Forward

To the Reader:

When Mr. Sears was my Academic Dean, I had the privilege of working as a Program Director under his guidance. He mentored many leaders, including myself, during his years of leadership, and he will continue to mentor many more by making this book available as a guide to those in leadership or managerial roles. His method of compiling this book is impressive! Knowing how valuable every second is in a leader's day and how important it is to get a fast reference in a timely manner, he divided the book into eight parts, each with critical business points, great quotes, and additional reading suggestions to consider. The book was extremely user-friendly and would be a valuable addition to any leader's or manager's reference library.

Gaylene Lee, MEd, RRT, RRT-NPS, RRT-ACCS, TTS

About This Book

After years of researching leadership and management methods, I discovered that many of books on the subjects contained in this book were packed with useful knowledge if you had the time to read them during your busy day. A main thought or quote was often used as a key takeaway for further examination of a situation or problem to be solved. This conclusion inspired the development of this book, which is designed for those who want to get to the point quickly.

NOW! Fail or Thrive is written in the style of the famous Dummies Book series, but it is more streamlined for those who are short on time. The author has spent many hours reading and selecting excerpts and quotations from a wide range of business and personal development topics. It is important that the reader understands that the excerpts and quotes in this book come from original sources and are not the author's work. When sharing any excerpts or quotations, please give credit to the original author, not the author of this book.

This is a book for the executive or manager who is constantly on the move. The goal of NOW! Fail or Thrive is to make it simple to find answers or alternatives to consider when running an organization. It is not intended to be a comprehensive examination of a topic. For further study, suggested reading resources are provided.

NOW! Fail or Thrive is divided into eight parts: Accountability and Dependability, Communication, Effectiveness, Employees, Leadership and Management, Thinking and Problem Solving, and Time-Honored Virtues and Personal Development, and Just One More Thing. This book and its contents will always be incomplete because new methods and ideas are constantly being developed. However, the fundamentals remain constant and true.

Ronald D. Sears

"Learning without reflection is a waste,
reflection without learning is dangerous."
Confucius

Part 1
Accountability & Dependability

"Accountability is the glue that ties commitment to the result."
Bob Proctor

"The greatest ability is dependability."
Bob Jones Sr.

Accountability Can Have Positive Results

"I believe that accountability is the basis of all meaningful human achievement." Sam Silverstein

According to U.S. Office of Personnel Management

Accountability means being held answerable for accomplishing a goal or assignment. Unfortunately, the word "accountability" often connotes punishment or negative consequences. Certainly, management should not tolerate poor performance and should take action when it occurs. However, when organizations use accountability only as a big stick for punishing employees, fear and anxiety permeate the work environment. Employees are afraid to try new methods or propose new ideas for fear of failure. On the other hand, if approached correctly, accountability can produce positive, valuable results.

The positive results of practicing a constructive approach to accountability include:

- Improved performance.
- More employee participation and involvement.
- Increased feelings of competency.
- Increased employee commitment to the work.
- More creativity and innovation.
- Higher employee morale and satisfaction with the work.

These positive results occur when employees view accountability programs as helpful and progressive methods of assigning and completing work. For example, managers who involve employees in setting goals and expectations find that employees understand expectations better, are more confident that they can achieve those expectations, and perform at a higher level. Positive results also occur when employees don't associate accountability only with negative consequences. If employees do not fear failure, if managers recognize employees for their accomplishments, and if managers support their employees when goals become difficult, employees are more likely to be creative, innovative, and committed to their work.

Managers need to:

- Involve employees in setting clear, challenging yet attainable goals and objectives, and give them the authority to accomplish those goals.
- Coach employees when they request help, and support employees in all aspects of the job.
- Monitor progress towards goals, and provide feed-back that includes credible, useful performance measures.
- Provide the training and resources employees need to do the work.
- Recognize employees for good performance, both formally and informally.

The General Accounting Office (GAO) recently surveyed 3,816 full-time mid- and upper-level managers on their perceptions about performance and management issues. Here are the findings:

- 63 percent of managers said they were held accountable for the results of their programs.
- 36 percent of them said they had the authority they needed to accomplish strategic goals.
- 31 percent of managers said that employees received positive recognition for helping to achieve organizational goals. If managers are going to hold employees accountable for results, they also need to recognize employees for their efforts.

Suggested Reading

Balanced Accountability: How to Win Hearts and Maximize Performance by Hernani Alves

Point of Reflection
"Accountability is a key concept in moving an organization forward, especially in a challenging business climate."

Cindy Tucker

Being Dependable at Work
"Don't make any promises that you can't keep." Ann Marie Aguilar

Notable Quotes
"If your actions don't live up to your words, you have nothing to say." DaShanne Stokes

"Dependability is more important than talent. Dependability is a talent, and it is a talent all can have. It makes no difference how much ability we possess if we are not responsible and dependable." Floy L. Bennett

"A man who lacks reliability is utterly useless." Confucius

According to Lee J. Colan, PhD: Seven Ways to Become the Most Reliable Person in the Room
Manage ommitments. Ask yourself if a commitment is a high priority for you. Focus on timelines (when work gets done) versus deadlines (when work is due). Know when to say no.

Proactively communicate. If you make a promise that you can't meet because of truly terrible and unforeseen circumstances, let the person know as soon as possible.

Start and finish. The best way to finish strong is to start strong. Keeping your word or simply doing the right thing is rarely convenient, so reliable people let their actions rise above their excuses.

Excel daily. Implement daily disciplines to sharpen your focus, and strive for everyday excellence. Excellence does not equal perfection (which can be a barrier to reliability).

Be truthful. Be full of truth-tell the full truth. Does everything you use to communicate tell the full truth? If not, you are a source of unreliable information.

Respect time, yours and others'. If you tell someone you can meet at a certain time, you have made a promise. Being on time shows others that you are a person of your word.

Value your values. Your values should dictate your behavior, not your circumstances or fleeting feelings. Being a reliable person not only means doing what you say, it also means doing what is right, regardless of what you have committed to.

According to Duncan Muguku, founder of ThriveYard:
6 Tips on How to Prioritize Work and Meet Deadlines
1. Listing down tasks on a master to-do list. A simple to-do list can have four columns showing item numbers, tasks, due dates or deadlines and priority levels. It is important to maintain an up to date to-do list and also to keep an electronic back-up of your to-do list. Your master to-do list serves as a running log of what you need to accomplish over time. A good practice is to update a to-do list at the end of each day where you delete items that have been completed and add new tasks to work on. This also gives you a preview of what the following day's schedule would look like.

Benefits of writing a to-do list include the following:
- Helps you to keep track of everything that you need to work on.
- Helps you to stay organized and manage time.
- Aids our memory so we don't have to struggle to remember everything we need to work on.
- A good reminder for recurring or repetitive tasks.

- Improves efficiency and increases productivity.
- Personal satisfaction when tasks are accomplished.

2. Prioritizing your work. Prioritizing helps you to visually see the highest to the lowest priority tasks. Prioritization is an ongoing activity; it can be done once a day and sometimes even multiple times a day as priorities change during the day.

Questions to guide you when setting priorities:
- What needs to be done immediately?
- What are the consequences if the task is not done?
- When should you start working on the task?
- What resources and inputs do I need to complete this task?
- What has not been done that should have been done?

Questions to guide you when tracking progress on your priority list:
- What tasks have I completed?
- What is the outcome when a task is completed?
- What am I constantly postponing on my list? Why?
- What should not have been on the list in the first place?
- How can I shorten my to-do list?

3. Breaking large tasks into smaller pieces. The thought of handling a big task or project all at once can be overwhelming that is why it is a good idea to break up large projects into more manageable components then start working on one small step after another. Breaking down projects helps to keep sight of future tasks that need to be started early on to meet the due date.

4. Estimating time and effort/being realistic on what you can do in a day. When a list of priorities is too long and is frequently not completed, it can cause frustration over time. Setting realistic expectations helps to build and preserve your reliability and credibility. In addition, it not only meets personal expectations but also meets expectations of your boss, team members and others.

Below are some tips on how to best plan and execute your priorities:
- Visualize what the final outcome will look like for each task you do.
- Endeavor to start and work on a task until it is finished.
- Schedule time to do work on your calendar.
- Start work on your priorities early enough to avoiding rushing at the last minute to meet deadlines.
- Take small breaks to get rejuvenated.
- Follow up on delegated work.
- Anticipate challenges that you may encounter.

5. Giving status updates/reporting progress. Critical components for getting along well with your boss and other stakeholders include regular communication and providing status updates. This is typically achieved through regularly scheduled check-in meetings with your manager and also through meetings with others.

6. Dealing with changing deadlines and priorities. When deadlines and priorities change at a moment's notice, it can have the potential of throwing your well-laid plans into disarray. It could increase your workload and heighten pressure to perform to meet tight deadlines. Being flexible and adaptable is critical in navigating scenarios where the goal posts have moved. Aim to change gears as smoothly as possible despite the limited time to make adjustments.

When faced with changing deadlines and priorities:

- Keep your cool, stay calm.
- Gain a good understanding of the requirements and desired outputs for the new priorities.
- Work with your manager to prioritize the new project or deadlines and reprioritize existing work.
- If possible, renegotiate an extension for existing deadlines to accommodate the emergency priorities.
- Identify the best way to complete the new tasks as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- Breakdown the work and begin handling it immediately.
- If necessary, ask for help in meeting tight deadlines including delegating to others.
- Whenever possible, politely seek to understand the need for the changes in deadlines or priorities.
- Work closely with other team members who are critical in ensuring new deadlines are met.

Suggested Reading
How to Be the Employee Your Company Can't Live Without: 18 Ways to Become Indispensable by Glenn Shepard

Point of Reflection
"Dependability is more important than talent. Dependability is a talent, and it is a talent all can have. It makes no difference how much ability we possess if we are not responsible and dependable." Floy L. Bennett

Building an Accountability Mindset

"If you ready to take your game to the next level, you gotta change that mindset." Eric Thomas

According to David A. O'Brien, WorkChoice Solutions

What is an accountability mindset? Simply put, it's a belief shared by all employees (regardless of level or title) that others are counting on us to go the extra mile to achieve a quality outcome. There are many factors that inhibit the accountability mindset but chief among them is lack of clarity about employer expectations. Clarity of expectations is not only a key driver of an accountability mindset but also a basic human motivator. Although clarifying expectations is often seen as a leadership responsibility, the reality is that this task is everyone's responsibility. Despite this as leaders we need to ensure that all employees can easily answer such questions as:

- What are my key deliverables?
- Who am I responsible to?
- What is their desired outcome?
- What are my key timelines and milestones?
- What resources are available to assist me?
- Am I absolutely clear on what's expected of me?

Seven Things You Can Do Now to Build an Accountability Mindset

1. Assess your leadership. As a leader, you set the climate for your team. Everything you do or don't do impacts employee accountability and engagement at some level. How well do you model the behavior you want from your team?

2. Involve employees. Solicit input from your team about their view of accountability and what they think are the key actions that embody an accountability mindset. Also ask them to consider the actions and behaviors that inhibit an accountability mindset.

3. Show employees that you value them. Research shows that one of the chief influencers of motivation and engagement is feeling valued. You don't need a complex program to show employees that you value them. Schedule 20 minutes of Leadership By Walking Around time on your calendar every week to let your team know that you're there for them and that you care about how they're doing.

4. Communicate clearly and frequently. Another key factor in building an accountability mindset is keeping your team informed about what is happening in the organization, especially around change. Beyond helping them to do their job with greater clarity and purpose, clear and frequent communication from you goes a long way in reducing or even eliminating the rumor mill.

5. Link each person's role and contribution to the key goals of the organization. The more employees understand how their efforts impact the greater good of the group, the more likely they are to help foster an accountability mindset.

6. Give timely and specific feedback. No one knowingly chooses to fail. People need feedback in order to improve their performance. Make sure your feedback helps and motivates them to improve while also reinforcing the accountability mindset behaviors.

7. Emphasize continuous improvement. Acknowledge that personal leadership and the accountability mindset is part of a learning continuum that through time and commitment allows us to achieve greater job impact and greater job satisfaction.

Suggested Reading
Change the Culture, Change the Game: The Breakthrough Strategy for Energizing Your Organization and Creating Accountability for Results by Roger Connors, and Tom Smith

Point of Reflection
"The simple act of paying positive attention to people has a great deal to do with productivity." Tom Peters

Encourage Employee Accountability

"Leaders inspire accountability through their ability to accept responsibility before they place blame."

Courtney Lynch

According to Ron Carucci, co-founder and managing partner at Navalent
Fewer words in corporate vernacular induce a tighter wince than "accountability," and for good reason. Companies and leaders have grappled with what it is and how to achieve it effectively for decades.

Data shows that:
- 82% of managers acknowledge they have "limited to no" ability to hold others accountable successfully.
- 91% of employees would say that "effectively holding others accountable" is one of their company's top leadership-development needs.
- Gallup found that only 14% of employees feel their performance is managed in a way that motives them.
- 26% get feedback less than once per year.
- 21% feel their performance metrics are within their control.
- 40% feel as if their manager holds them accountable for goals they set.
- 70% of employees feel their managers aren't objective in how they evaluate their performance.
- 69% of employees don't feel they're living up to their potential at work.

According to Andrew Robertson, managing consultant at Gallup: 5 Ways to Promote Accountability
Gallup's research and consulting experience shows that, to promote accountability, leaders and managers should:

1. Define what people are accountable for. Employees need clearly defined expectations to achieve goals.

2. Set and cascade goals throughout the organization. Once employees clearly understand what they're accountable for, managers should help them set measurable, individualized goals that align with their individual role. Most, if not all, employees should have metrics defined that help them know if they're delivering on the organization's goals.

3. Provide updates on progress. People need information to course correct toward their goals. Feedback can come from customer or employee surveys, ongoing project updates, key listening posts with critical stakeholders, or some combination of these. The most effective form of feedback, however, comes from frequent conversations between managers and employees.

4. Align development, learning and growth. Whether through conversations between managers and employees, or as part of an ongoing developmental path, organizations must provide opportunities for employees to improve learn and grow.

5. Recognize and celebrate progress. Praise for good work is the most motivating of all forms of feedback. Identify, celebrate and learn from successes. It motivates employees to stretch and creates responsibility role models for others to follow.

Gallup recommends encouraging managers to have frequent coaching conversations with their direct reports; performance is best directed in the moment. But 47% of workers received feedback from their manager "a few times or less" in the past year, and only 26% of employees strongly agree that the feedback they receive helps them do their work better.

Interesting Note:
A company's accountability problem may actually be a coaching problem in disguise.

Brian Cole Miller, the principal of Working Solutions: Six SIMPLE steps:

S = Set expectations.

I = Invite comment.

M = Measure progress.

P = Provide feedback.

L = Link to consequences.

E = Evaluate effectiveness.

According to Partners In Leadership, A Lack of Accountability in the Workplace Leads to:

- Low team morale.
- Unclear priorities across the team.
- Employees become less engaged.
- The team or individual is not meeting goals.
- Low levels of trust.
- High turnover.

Suggested Reading

Supportive Accountability: How to Inspire People and Improve Performance by Sylvia Melena

Keeping Employees Accountable for Results: Quick Tips for Busy Managers by Brian Miller

Point of Reflection

"Accountability breeds response-ability." Stephen R. Covey

Leadership Accountability

"It is not only what we do, but also what we do not do, for which we are accountable." Moliere

According to Hannah Price, freelance content marketer

In a global leadership study, 72% of people believe that leadership accountability is a critical issue in their organization. Clearly, not enough of our leaders are holding themselves accountable.

Are you holding yourself accountable? Think of your language:

- When confronted with an issue, big or small, are you willing to say "that was my fault"?

- If you're willing to own up to it being your fault, do you add "but…" and an excuse?

- How willing are you to simply say "I don't know" when you haven't got the answer to a question?

Five Tips to Hold More Leadership Accountability

Watch your language. This can be a big signal of whether you hold yourself accountable or not. If you find yourself evading ownership, take stock and try to amend your behavior. Use words and a tone that demonstrate intent of ownership and you can begin to rebuild that trust.

Take pause and be honest. Similar to my first point, it really is ok to say "I don't know" or "I forgot". Being a leader doesn't turn you into a robot or superhero. It's ok to make mistakes. Everyone can relate to this and you'll build more respect through honesty than always seeming right.

Work to fix the problem. Once you've owned up to your mistake, don't impose the problem onto someone else. Being accountable for something means getting the job done. That means you need to see the project through, even if you failed at first. And don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it.

Think of what's best for the company. A great leader realizes that true success is when the entire company is doing well. It's not about simply furthering themselves or seeking glory.

Step up to the plate. Leaders, who have a fear of leading, or of getting things wrong, will tend to shirk accountability. If you want to lead, then you need to step into it with real gusto. This means you need to be willing to make hard decisions and own up to them if they turn out to be wrong.

According to Kevin Kruse, chief executive officer, LEADx: Leaders Skilled in Accountability

- Make clear your specific set of expectations for each team member, for the team as a whole, and for the process and the outcome.
- Ensure that individuals have the capability to meet your expectations, and if not, provide the necessary training, or delegate to another person.
- Obtain clear agreement on milestones and on other specific measurements of success throughout the stages of the process.
- Provide clear, fact-based feedback on progress and overall performance of each team member, and ask for input on what more you can do to help each individual succeed.
- Clearly communicate, upfront, the rewards for success and the consequences for failure for each individual participant, for the team, and for the company.

Suggested Reading

Accountability Leadership: How Great Leaders Build a High Performance Culture of Accountability and Responsibility by Di Worrall, Kristin Kalbli, et al.

Fix It: Getting Accountability Right by Roger Connors and Tom Smith

Point of Reflection
"Leaders inspire accountability through their ability to accept responsibility before they place blame." Courtney Lynch

Personal Accountability
"He that is good for making excuses is seldom good for anything else." Benjamin Franklin

- The book *The OZ Principe* by Roger Conners, Tom Smith, and Craig Hickman states it very clearly for achieving results—See It, Own It, Solve It and Do it.

- Nike famous ad slogan *"Just Do It"* there is no excuses, no wiggle room.

- Larry The Cable Guy: *"Git 'R Done!"*

Take: PRIDE in everything you do:
P = Personal
R = Responsibility
I = In
D= Daily
E = Effort

According to Larry Cole, Ph.D., Michael Cole, Ph.D., and Byrd Baggett, CSP
Personal Accountability:
The CEO exclaimed, *"I wish my people would accept responsibility for their behaviors and mistakes rather than finger pointing."* Unfortunately, finger pointing seems to be the rule rather than the exception in many corporate hallways.

Do you have the necessary courage to exhibit personal accountability? You may feel tempted to flippantly answer affirmatively, but you may want to examine the consequences associated with being accountable before answering. First, accountability means you are responsible to somebody or for something. Second, being responsible means that you cause something to happen. Third, exhibiting accountability, as seen through the eyes of your co-workers, looks like the following:

- Accepting complete responsibility for your behavior.
- Meeting/exceeding agreed upon expectations.
- Admitting mistakes.
- Admitting limitations of knowledge.

1. Accepting complete responsibility for your behavior. No more excuses. No more finger pointing. Accepting responsibility is being fully aware of exerting control of your behavior through your choices. Additionally, you accept the consequences of the choices you make while taking the good with the bad.

2. Meeting/exceeding expectations. You can exhibit personal accountability to create this synergy by modeling the following behaviors:

- Know the expected results to be achieved.
- Meet/exceed these expectations proactively.
- Volunteer to assist whenever possible.
- Encourage feedback regarding your performance.
- Use the feedback offered to improve performance.

There is no time for laziness when being accountable. The choice is yours. Are you going to be a peak performer or a lazy team member? Remember, the strength of every chain is determined by the strength of its weakest link.

3. Admitting mistakes. Confident people accept responsibility for their behaviors more easily than those with less confidence.

According to Kevin Daum, author and entrepreneur:
8 Habits of Highly Accountable People
1. They take responsibility. When responsibility is forced upon people they can often be resistant or even resentful. Highly accountable people willingly take on responsibility and actively manage it so it gets done. They make sure once the initiative has their name on it, no one else need worry about its completion.

2. They don't make excuses. Objective hindsight is helpful when problem solving, but when something goes wrong, in-the-moment blame is a waste of time and energy. Highly accountable people don't throw others under the bus for their own missteps or inaction.

3. They are on time. Highly accountable people understand that every project has a time value and that punctuality serves a purpose. Part of what makes them trustworthy is their efficiency and dependability to not waste a minute of other people's time or their own.

4. They control their own fate. In any project obstacles occur. But proper planning with a positive and pragmatic attitude can overcome nearly any obstruction. They do not wait to be checked or monitored by others but work proactively and diligently with the team to finish the job.

5. They own their feelings. Highly accountable people know that negative emotions can derail productivity. They stay in control of their feelings and don't let a bad day or emotional colleague get in the way of accomplishing what needs to be done.

6. They manage expectations. Highly accountable people are clear about what needs to be done and when. They think carefully and realistically about a project and give you an answer you can rely on.

7. They collaborate. There are few worthwhile tasks that can be completed by a single individual. Highly accountable people are great at using the resources around them.

8. They don't expect praise. Accolades are nice, but none are deserved if the project is partially done. Highly accountable people get their satisfaction from delivering quality product on time with a team that feels great about the accomplishment.

Suggested Reading
The Power of Personal Accountability by Mark Samuel and Sophie Chiche

QBQ! The Question Behind the Question: Practicing Personal Accountability at Work and in Life by John G. Miller

Point of reflection
"No individual can achieve worthy goals without accepting accountability for his or her own actions." Dan Miller

Part 2

Communication

"To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others."

Tony Robbins

Active Listening

"The most basic of all human needs is the need to understand and be understood.
The best way to understand people is to listen to them." Ralph Nichols

According to John M. Grohol, Psy.D.
The studies on average say we spend 70-80% of our waking hours in some form of communication. Of that time, we spend about 9 percent writing, 16 percent reading, 30 percent speaking, and 45 percent listening.

Restating. To show you are listening, repeat every so often what you think the person said — not by parroting, but by paraphrasing what you heard in your own words. For example, *"Let's see if I'm clear about this. . ."*

Summarizing. Bring together the facts and pieces of the problem to check understanding — for example, "So it sounds to me as if . . ." Or, *"Is that it?"*

Minimal encouragers. Use brief, positive prompts to keep the conversation going and show you are listening — for example, *"umm-hmmm," "Oh?" "I understand," "Then?" "And?"*

Reflecting. Instead of just repeating, reflect the speaker's words in terms of feelings — for example, *"This seems really important to you. . ."*

Giving feedback. Let the person know what your initial thoughts are on the situation. Share pertinent information, observations, insights, and experiences. Then listen carefully to confirm.

Emotion labeling. Putting feelings into words will often help a person to see things more objectively. To help the person begin, use "door openers" — for example*, "I'm sensing that you're feeling frustrated . . . worried . . . anxious. . ."*

Probing. Ask questions to draw the person out and get deeper and more meaningful information for example*, "What do you think would happen if you . . .?"*

Validation. Acknowledge the individual's problems, issues, and feelings. Listen openly and with empathy, and respond in an interested way — for example, *"I appreciate your willingness to talk about such a difficult issue. . ."*

Effective pause. Deliberately pause at key points for emphasis. This will tell the person you are saying something that is very important to them.

Silence. Allow for comfortable silences to slow down the exchange. Give a person time to think as well as talk. Silence can also be very helpful in diffusing an unproductive interaction.

"I" messages. By using "I" in your statements, you focus on the problem not the person. An, I-message lets the person know what you feel and why — for example, *"I know you have a lot to say, but I need to. . ."*

Redirecting. If someone is showing signs of being overly aggressive, agitated, or angry, this is the time to shift the discussion to another topic.

Consequences. Part of the feedback may involve talking about the possible consequences of inaction. Take your cues from what the person is saying — for example, *"What happened the last time you stopped taking the medicine your doctor prescribed?"*

Seven Communication Blockers
These roadblocks to communication can stop communication dead in its tracks:
1. "Why" questions. They tend to make people defensive.

2. Quick reassurance, saying things like, *"Don't worry about that."*

3. Advising — *"I think the best thing for you is to move to assisted living."*

4. Digging for information and forcing someone to talk about something they would rather not.

5. Patronizing — *"You poor thing, I know just how you feel."*

6. Preaching — *"You should. . ."* Or, *"You shouldn't. . ."*

7. Interrupting — Shows you aren't interested in what someone is saying.

5 Simple Conversation Courtesies

1. "Excuse me…"

2. "Pardon me…."

3. "One moment please…"

4. "Let's talk about solutions."

5. "May I suggest something?"

Source: National Aging Information & Referral Support Center

Leigh Espy, PMP, SPC, CSM, project manager and coach:
Uses the AFFORD method
The acronym **AFFORD** can help you remember the elements to listening full. If you want to ensure you're truly listening fully when someone is speaking to you – especially if the conversation is important or with someone you care about – keep the following components in mind.

Attention. Give the speaker your full attention when you speak with them. Turn your body toward them. Look at them and even look them in the eye. Don't multitask, but rather be fully present with them. And let them know you're listening by giving active motions or indications, such as nodding your head, saying "yes" or making appropriate facial expressions.

Focus on their message. Focus on what they speaker is saying. Don't think about your argument, what you're going to say next, or your grocery list.

Feelings behind the message. If you're conversing about a sensitive topic that involves conveying feelings, listen for what those feelings are. Identify how the speaker feels about the topic they're sharing with you.

Observe body language. Check to see if the body language backs up what the speaker is saying. Does it reinforce the message, strengthen it, or is it incongruous with what the speaker is telling you? If your co-worker tells you she's happy you got a promotion, but she's got her arms folded, is avoiding eye contact and frowning, she's likely not telling you the truth.

Rephrase or restate the message. If you want the speaker to really feel heard, and you want to reinforce that you're hearing correctly, rephrasing the message is a great way to do that. Even just summarizing and restating briefly can help.

Determine your understanding. Determine if you understand correctly if necessary. Especially if you're unclear about the message and need to validate your understanding. After listening to the speaker, and paraphrasing back to them, you can simply ask, "do I understand correctly?" And if you're still not clear, you can even say, *"tell me more about that."*

Suggested Reading
The Lost Art of Listening, Second Edition: How Learning to Listen Can Improve Relationships by Michael P. Nichols

You're Not Listening: What You're Missing and Why It Matters by Kate Murphy

Point of Reflection
"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place." George Bernard Shaw

Aristotle's Three Modes of Persuasion
"Don't raise your voice, improve your argument." Desmond Tutu

Aristotle (384-322BC) was an influential thinker, philosopher and sage, of Ancient Greece. He was a student of Plato, and a teacher of Alexander the Great. Aristotle defined "The Three Modes of Persuasion' for effective communications, especially communications from a speaker or writer to an audience.

The essential ingredients of successful communications:
Ethos - The integrity of the communicator.
Pathos - The emotional effect (of communicator and message) on the listener/reader/audience.
Logos - The relevance and strength of the message content.

Ethos: Integrity of the Communicator.
- Vocal style, body-language, passion, and enthusiasm.
- Humility, modesty, empathy, sensitivity, concern for audience.
- Trustworthiness, experience, reputation, credibility.
- Technical expertise, knowledge, and skills.
- Qualification, reliable referee opinion, evidence of reputation/claims.
- Appropriateness, suitability of style/approach for situation.

Pathos: Emotional Effect on Listener/Audience
- Attention-grabbing, and impactful-(AIDA-Attention, Interest, Desire and Action).
- Involving, engaging, audience is attracted and drawn in.
- Sensitivity, empathy, concern for audience and likeability.
- Passion, enthusiasm, believability, and credibility.
- Inspirational and motivational impact.
- Invites or encourages action, makes it easy to act or decide.

Logos: Relevance and Strength of the Message Content
- Well-structured presentation and meaningful and relevant.
- Clear, in language and terms that the audience will understand easily.
- Achievable, transferable, applicable, and usable for audience.
- Logical, cohesive, demonstrates cause and effect.
- Realistic, believable, appropriate scale and timings.
- Includes tangible measurable positive outcomes.
- Supported with facts and figures, referenced, proven, and convincing.
- Balanced, includes pros and cons, and unbiased.
- Accentuates the positive - gives reasons 'to do', instead of reasons 'not to do'.
- Memorable, can be absorbed and interpreted.

Suggested Reading
Thank You for Arguing: What Aristotle, Lincoln, and Homer Simpson Can Teach Us About the Art of Persuasion by Jay Heinrichs

Point of Reflection
"It's hard to win an argument with a smart person, but it's damn near impossible to win an argument with a stupid person."
                                                                                                Bill Murray

Constructive and Destructive Criticism
"Criticism is always easier than constructive solutions." Jaron Lanier

The main difference between constructive and destructive criticism is the way in which they are delivered. Constructive criticism is criticism given with a compassionate and helpful attitude while destructive criticism is criticism given with the intention to harm or insult someone.

According to Forbes Coaches Council: Is Your Criticism Constructive or Harmful?
13 Ways to Assess Your Feedback Style
1. What is the recipient's perception? The only differentiator between harmful and constructive criticism is the perception of the person on the receiving end. Your intention is never the differentiator. When giving advice, ensure that you are taking into account the perspective of the other person. How might they perceive your criticism? What is the best way to communicate your observations to them? What is your desired outcome?

2. What do you want your feedback to achieve? Before providing feedback to anyone, ask yourself, *"What do I want this feedback to achieve?"* Set an intention and ask yourself if the tone and method of your feedback will accomplish that goal. If the answer is no, adjust. And as a general rule of thumb, never provide feedback when you are experiencing a negative feeling (anger, frustration, hurt) because it won't come across as constructive.

3. Is it true, helpful and actionable? One way to anticipate if your criticism will be helpful or harmful is to ask yourself, *"Was it solicited?"* If yes, proceed cautiously. If no, ask yourself what is motivating your intentions. If it's true, helpful and something the person can act on, go ahead and offer your opinion.

4. Are you offering a solution rather than a problem? Remember the phrase, *"correct, and then direct."* That should be the process you use when addressing employee and client mistakes. When someone you coach or employ makes a mistake, show them the problem, the cause of the problem and how to solve it.

5. Do you have a strong foundational relationship and a growth mindset? The valence of the relationship is the lens through which others experience your feedback. When they see you as an ally, the impact will be positive, even if the delivery wasn't perfect. Also, it helps to employ a growth mindset to communicate your belief in their capacity to learn and grow. Rather than saying, *"You failed,"* try something like, *"You're not there yet,"* to imply they can get there.

6. Is your criticism personal? Constructive criticism focuses on the behavior and the impact and relates it to the expectation that has been set previously. It also focuses on new behaviors could yield positive impacts. Harmful criticism often directs comments about the person and is impacted by the bias the provider has. It's harmful because it's not usually paired with a constructive new action the person can take.

7. Is the recipient ready to hear my criticism? Constructive criticism is knowing when someone is ready to hear the truth and willing to make a change. Harmful criticism means you are not compassionately assessing the other party's state of being. Tough love sometimes is necessary to break through someone's denial system, but unless there is a true desire on the other person's part to make a change, it becomes more harmful than helpful.

8. Are you being empathetic? Constructive criticism starts with empathy. Understanding and sharing your thoughts and feelings builds the foundation for the conversation. Starting with empathy creates trust and opportunities for change. Free yourself from any judgment or assumptions that can cloud your ability to help the other person. Be open to explore what the other person shares with you.

9. Are you focusing on a desired future? The most effective feedback is focused on what you want to see rather than what's wrong. For example, if a colleague constantly interrupts others in meetings, you likely want them to talk less. Effective feedback might be," *Would you consider listening more closely to others in our meetings? That may mean waiting for others to finish their thoughts and asking questions so they feel understood."*

10. Who is this feedback really for? When you are giving feedback there is a sure way to know if it is constructive or harmful. Ask yourself who is the feedback for? If the feedback really is of value for the other person, then it is constructive. If your feedback only makes you feel better, then the feedback is harmful.

11. Am I properly framing my feedback? You need to properly frame your feedback and come from a place of caring for the person that you are giving feedback to. This is difficult if you have been bottling it up for some time. Instead, share your feedback as soon as something that you disagree with happens.

12. Why do I need to give this criticism? Before you speak, ask yourself why you feel you need to give criticism. Are you rushing to judgment with someone you haven't taken the time to get to know? Did you make mistakes along your career path? How would you want to receive constructive criticism? If you still feel the need to give advice, ask permission first and invite the person to share advice about a behavior that you could improve.

13. Are you helping take someone from here to there? Feedback, whether positive or constructive needs to take people from one level of performance to another. When checking whether your criticism is helpful, ensure you are stating the facts as you know them and how it affects the end state. For example: *"When you use X behavior, it affects Y person in Z way."* You are handing someone criticism that is actionable and factual and begins a discussion.

Tips From: Good. Co Team: Other Things to Consider
- When giving constructive criticism, make it a discussion, not a one-sided rant.
- Keep your tone of voice neutral and factual in order to give the impression that your message is well-reasoned and fair.
- Take care to not come off as patronizing.
- Constructive criticism is likely to be most effective coming from a trusted source.
- Ensure you lead by example and strive for a personal connection with your co-workers consider the time and place.
- Don't deliver such feedback in a group space.
- Remember – the purpose of constructive criticism is not to engender feelings of shame or disgrace, but to encourage change!

Bible Verses
Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.   Matthew 7.1-7.2 NIV

The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. Proverbs 12:18 NIV

Suggested Reading
The Power of Positive Criticism by Hendrie Weisinger Ph.D.

Constructing Effective Criticism: How to Give, Receive, and Seek Productive and Constructive Criticism in Our Lives by Randy Garner PhD

Point of Reflection

"Words so innocent and powerless as they are, as standing in a dictionary, how potent for good and evil they become in the hands of one who knows how to combine them."   Nathaniel Hawthorne

Elements of Communication
"Words are like keys. If you choose them right, they can open any heart and shut any mouth." Anonymous

According to Peter Murphy, peak performance expert:
Essential Elements of Good Communication Skill
Here are a few aspects of what it means to have this skill to initiate and sustain an interesting, enjoyable conversation that everyone feels better for having participated in:

Use language and images with are familiar to your listener. You shouldn't really be surprised if you don't get much of a response if the people, you're talking to don't understand you or can't relate to what you're talking about, can you? A conversation is not the time to show off what big words you know or how much more knowledgeable you are than the person you're talking to.

Watch your tone. As well as the words you use, you will no doubt be aware you can change the tone of your voice to portray a different meaning. You wouldn't speak to your boss in the same way you would reprimand your child for stepping into the road, would you? In any conversation, you need to make sure that your tone is right if you are not to offend the people you are talking to or make them worry about answering you.

Be respectful. It's a fact that we 'get on' better with people who are like us. All that means is that we find them easier to talk to. We know they will share a lot of views that we have - or at least if they don't, they will respect out views and not shout us down without allowing us to speak. Good communication skill is about letting other people speak their mind too.

Stick to the point. Don't try to 'steal' a conversation by changing the point just because you don't like it or can't think of anything to add on the topic - that's pretty bad manners!

You don't need to be the center of attention. Good conversationalists are happy to share the limelight and they don't feel the urge to steer the conversation round to focus on them. If you find yourself trying to steal the show often, slow down. Try to focus a little more closely on what is being said.

Know when it's appropriate to change the subject. Whether you were the one who started the conversation or not, change the subject when there appears to be nothing new to say or when others begin to fidget or act bored. That glazed eye look is always a dead give-away!

Don't ask too much. There's a difference between a conversation and an interrogation- or there should be! Firing too many questions at people without giving any of your own information back makes people feel pressurized and uneasy, so don't do it.

Sound and look interested in other people. There's a world of difference between giving someone the third degree and expressing a friendly interest in what they're saying. Face the person you're talking too and use an open posture with unfolded arms, leaning forward slightly but not too close to them that it becomes unnerving. Eye contact is also great for making people feel valued when you talk to them. Let them know you're listening by acknowledging statements with a nod, comment or a question when appropriate.

Open-ended questions are best. People with good communication skill get other people talking. A good way to do this is by asking open-ended questions which can't just be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no'.

Have something of interest to say. Keep up with current affairs and trends and take an interest in what is going on in the world around you. That way you should always have something interesting to say - and that's a pretty useful start for a conversation!

Suggested Reading
Elements of Effective Communication by Randal S. Chase, Wayne Shamo

10 Skills for Effective Business Communication: Practical Strategies from the World's Greatest Leaders by Jessica Higgins

Point of Reflection
"Silence is the best answer to someone who doesn't value your words." Buddhism

Resolving Conflicts
"Peace is not absence of conflict; it is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means." Ronald Reagan

Do understand that conflicts are inevitable. Conflict with others comes from differences in beliefs, expectations, goals, values and behaviors that make us rub each other the wrong way. Here are some valuable resources that could help you resolve conflict in the workplace. Developed by Ken Thomas, PhD and Ralph Kilmann, PhD, both professors of management at the University of Pittsburgh.

The Thomas-Kilmann Model Identifies Five Different Approaches to Resolving Conflict.
These approaches include:
1. Avoiding. Someone who uses a strategy of "avoiding" mostly tries to ignore or sidestep the conflict, hoping it will resolve itself or dissipate.

2. Accommodating. Using the strategy of "accommodating" to resolve conflict essentially involves taking steps to satisfy the other party's concerns or demands at the expense of your own needs or desires.

3. Compromising. The strategy of "compromising" involves finding an acceptable resolution that will partly, but not entirely, satisfy the concerns of all parties involved.

4. Competing. Someone who uses the conflict resolution strategy of "competing" tries to satisfy their own desires at the expense of the other parties involved.

5. Collaborating. Using "collaborating" involves finding a solution that entirely satisfies the concerns of all involved parties.

According to Thomas & Kilmann: Six Steps to the Conflict Resolution
1. **Clarify the disagreement.** Obtain as much information as possible by asking questions until each side understands the other's point of view.

2. **Establish a common goal for both parties.** Find a commonality in both sides, and discuss what each party would like to see happen.

3. **Discuss ways to meet the common goal.** Brainstorm different approaches to meet the goal.

4. **Determine the barriers to the common goal.** Define what can and cannot be changed, and discuss ways to get around those roadblocks.

5. **Agree on the best way to resolve the conflict.** Discuss the responsibility each party has to maintain the solution, ensuring this conflict does not arise again.

6. **Acknowledge the agreed solution and each party's responsibilities in their solution** –Get both parties to acknowledge a win-win situation.

Suggested Reading
Resolving Conflicts at Work: Ten Strategies for Everyone on the Job by Kenneth Cloke and Joan Goldsmith

Point of Reflection
"The difference between people can be like the ocean. The waves always stirring things up and the sand trying to be still and at peace."
                                                                                    Ronald D. Sears

Seven C's of Effective Communication
"Do not say a little in many words but a great deal in a few." Pythagoras

According to Prachi Juneja, there are 7 C's of effective communication which are applicable to both written as well as oral communication. These are as follows:

Completeness. The communication must be complete. It should convey all facts required by the audience. The sender of the message must take into consideration the receiver's mind set and convey the message accordingly. A complete communication has following features:

- Complete communication develops and enhances reputation of an organization.
- Moreover, they are cost saving as no crucial information is missing and no additional   cost is incurred in conveying extra message if the communication is complete.
- A complete communication always gives additional information wherever required. It leaves no questions in the mind of receiver.
- Complete communication helps in better decision-making by the audience/readers/receivers of message as they get all desired and crucial information.
- It persuades the audience.

Conciseness. Conciseness means wordiness, i.e., communicating what you want to convey in least possible words without forgoing the other C's of communication. Conciseness is a necessity for effective communication. Concise communication has following features:

- It is both time-saving as well as cost-saving.
- It underlines and highlights the main message as it avoids using excessive and needless words.
- Concise communication provides short and essential message in limited words to the audience.
- Concise message is more appealing and comprehensible to the audience.
- Concise message is non-repetitive in nature.

Consideration. Consideration implies "stepping into the shoes of others". Effective communication must take the audience into consideration, i.e., the audience's viewpoints, background, mind-set, education level, etc. Make an attempt to picture your audience, their requirements, emotions as well as problems. Modify your words in message to suit the audience's needs while making your message complete. Features of considerate communication are as follows:

- Emphasize on "you" approach.
- Empathize with the audience and exhibit interest in the audience. This will stimulate a positive reaction from the audience.
- Show optimism towards your audience. Emphasize on "what is possible" rather than "what is impossible".

Clarity. Clarity implies emphasizing on a specific message or goal at a time, rather than trying to achieve too much at once. Clarity in communication has following features:

- It makes understanding easier.
- Complete clarity of thoughts and ideas enhances the meaning of message.
- Clear message makes use of exact, appropriate and concrete words.

Concreteness. Concrete communication implies being particular and clear rather than fuzzy and general. Concreteness strengthens the confidence. Concrete message has following features:

- It is supported with specific facts and figures.
- It makes use of words that are clear and that build the reputation.
- Concrete messages are not misinterpreted.

Courtesy. Courtesy in message implies the message should show the sender's expression as well as should respect the receiver. The sender of the message should be sincerely polite, judicious, reflective and enthusiastic. Courteous message has following features:

- Courtesy implies taking into consideration both viewpoints as well as feelings of the receiver of the message.
- Courteous message is positive and focused at the audience.
- It makes use of terms showing respect for the receiver of message.
- It is not at all biased.

Correctness. Correctness in communication implies that there are no grammatical errors in communication. Correct communication has following features:

- The message is exact, correct and well-timed.
- If the communication is correct, it boosts up the confidence level.
- Correct message has greater impact on the audience/readers.
- It checks for the precision and accurateness of facts and figures used in the message.
- It makes use of appropriate and correct language in the message.

Suggested Reading
Everyone Communicates, Few Connect: What the Most Effective People Do Differently by John C. Maxwell

Point of Reflection
"Language is power use it as you would any type of power with discipline and control." Ronald D. Sears

Socrates & The Filter Test

"A man without a filter, is chaos walking" Patrick Ness

The triple filter test refers to an anecdote of the great Greek philosopher, Socrates. Many consider this anecdote a great life lesson that can help you deal with gossip and rumors.

One day an acquaintance met the great philosopher and said, *"Socrates, do you know what I just heard about your best friend?"*

"Hold on a minute," Socrates replied. *"Before you talk to me about my best friend, it might be a good idea to take a moment and filter what you're going to say. The first filter is TRUTH. Have you made absolutely sure that what you are about to tell me is true?"*

"No," the man said, *"Actually I just heard about it . . ."* *"All right,"* said Socrates, *"So you don't really know if it's true or not. Now let's try the second filter, the filter of GOODNESS. Is that what you are about to tell me about my best friend, something good?"*

"No, on the contrary . . ." *"So,"* Socrates continued, *"you want to tell me something bad about him, but you're not certain it's true. You may still pass the test though, because there's one filter left: the filter of USEFULNESS. Is what you want to tell me about my best friend going to be useful to me?"*

"No not really." *"Well,"* concludes Socrates, *"If what you want to tell me is neither true, nor good, nor useful, why tell it to me at all?"*

According to Di Castro, author: How to Apply the Triple Filter Test
In everyday life, it's not easy to define the true, the good, and the necessary. These are abstract concepts that are sometimes difficult to apply. That's why there are also some additional questions that can help you when it comes to applying the triple filter test:

Regarding the truth: Do I know for a fact that this information is true? Can I bet on it? Will I be able to prove it to anyone? Am I willing to compromise my reputation over this?

Regarding the good: Does it benefit me or the other person? Will it make them or me a better person and evoke positive emotions? Will the situation of those involved improve?

Regarding the necessary or useful: By knowing this message, will that person's life or my life improve? Can that person take any practical action regarding this information or message? In what way does not knowing this information hurt or affect the other person?

Before you speak THINK
T— Is it true?
H— Is it helpful?
I— Is it inspiring?
N— Is it necessary?
K— Is it kind?

Bible Verses
Gentle words are a tree of life; a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit. Proverbs 15:4 NLT

A person's words can be life-giving water; words of true wisdom are as refreshing as a bubbling brook. Proverbs 18:4 NLT

Suggested Reading
Socrates: The Best of Socrates: The Founding Philosophies of Ethics, Virtues & Life 3rd Edition by William Hackett

Truth vs Falsehood: How to Tell the Difference by David R. Hawkins

Point of Reflection
"Rumor travels faster, but it doesn't stay put as long as truth." Will Rogers

Part 3

Effectiveness

"When you are dealing with machines what matters is efficiency but when you are dealing with people what matters is effectiveness."

Venugopal Acharya

Law of Diminishing Intent
The longer you wait to do something you should do now,
the greater odds that you will never actually do it." John C Maxwell

According to Darlene Sartore: Excerpts from an article by Jim Rohn
Engaging in genuine discipline to achieve desired results requires developing the ability to take appropriate action, but do not waste too much time either because it's easy for the Law of Diminishing Intent to make sure the action doesn't get done.

Let's say you would like to build your library. Take action as soon as possible, before the feeling passes and before the idea dims. If you don't, you fall prey to the law of diminishing intent.

We intend to take action when the idea strikes us. We intend to do something when the emotion is high. But if we don't translate that intention into action fairly soon, the urgency starts to diminish. So, take action. Set up a discipline when the emotions are high and the idea is strong, clear, and powerful.

Discipline enables you to capture the emotion and the wisdom and translate them into action. The key is to increase your motivation by quickly setting up the disciplines. By doing so, you've started a whole new life process. There is a problem with even a little bit of neglect. Neglect starts as an infection. If you don't take care of it, it becomes a disease.

Start with the smallest discipline that corresponds to your own philosophy. Make the commitment and declaration: "*I discipline myself to achieve my goals so that in the years ahead I can celebrate my successes."*

According to John Maxwell: The 4 steps to overcoming the Law of Diminishing Intent
 1. Start today. The law says you have a 48-hour window of opportunity to act. And if you
    don't, you will often derail your idea and miss your chance.

2. **Stop listening to the gremlin voice**. Stop listening to the voice in your head telling you
    NO, and reminding you of the times you tried in the past and failed.

3. **Sync with your emotions**. The clearer you can get your idea and what it will look like once
    it's achieved, the stronger your emotions are tied to it.

4. Seek help. Tell others what you're doing and why. Have an accountability partner, hire a
    coach.

According to Michael Hyatt, founder and chairman of Michael Hyatt & Company:
How to Beat the Law of Diminishing Intent
If you want to see a big change, you must be willing to take a big LEAP. It's as simple as four steps, one for each letter of the acronym:

1. **Lean into the change with expectancy**. When you notice that a change is desirable or necessary, that's
    the trigger. Determine to follow through. That inkling is all you need to get going.

2. **Engage with the concept until you achieve clarity**. Don't let the feeling pass. Work with it until
    you've got a sense of what to do. That nagging thought in the back of your mind might be the start of a
    whole new adventure—or the ladder you need to climb out of a deep rut.

3. **Activate and do something—anything**. Sometimes we wait to move until we have all the information. That's a mistake. Clarity comes in degrees. And you only need enough light for the next step. Even if you get off on the wrong foot, the rest of the journey will become clearer as you go.

4. **Pounce and do it now**. Once you've determined your next step, take it. Don't wait. Waiting feels safe, but waiting kills dreams.

Suggested Reading

Procrastination: Why You Do It, What to Do About It Now by Jane B. Burka and Lenora M. Yuen

The Procrastination Cure: 21 Proven Tactics For Conquering Your Inner Procrastinator, Mastering Your Time, And Boosting Your Productivity! by Damon Zahariades

Point of Reflection

"Only put off until tomorrow what you are willing to die having left undone" Pablo Picasso

Law of Triviality
"Don't spend major time on minor things." Jim Rohn

According to Cyril Northcote Parkinson, The Law of Triviality describes a phenomenon where people spend a relatively large amount of time, energy, and other resources dealing with relatively minor issues.

According to Effectiviology: Variations of the Law of Triviality
There are various different formulations for the underlying concept behind the law of triviality, including the following:

- Organizations give disproportional weight to trivial issues.

- The time spent on any item of the agenda will be in inverse proportion to the sum of money involved.

- The amount of noise generated by a change is inversely proportional to the complexity of the change.

Furthermore, this underlying concept has also been used in related adages. One example of this is **Sayer's Law**, which is the adage that *"in any dispute, the intensity of feelings is inversely proportional to the value of the issue at stake."*

Why People Focus on Trivial Issues
There are various reasons why people tend to focus on trivial issues, while neglecting more important ones. Common reasons for this are the following:

- The trivial issue represents a problem that is easier to understand and formulate an opinion about.

- The trivial issue requires less time, effort, or money in order to solve.

- The important issue would require them to take more responsibility for their decisions.

- They assume that the people responsible for the important issue must have done already their job and assessed it.

The most important caveat regarding the law of triviality is that it's simply meant to serve as a general observation, rather than as an absolute truth. As such, there are certainly situations where both minor and major issues get the attention that they deserve, in proportion with their importance.

According to John Jennings, president at The St. Louis Trust Company:
How to Combat the Law of Triviality
Be aware of it! As with most irrational human behaviors, the first step to combating it is to be aware of it.

Assign importance. For each meeting item ask yourself *"how important is this?"* If it's not that important, don't spend much time on it. This requires a strong meeting leader.

Prepare for complex items. A chief reason lesser time is spent on important matters is that they are so big. These big issues might be hard for us to wrap our heads around due to their complexity. Thus, it makes sense to have individuals or teams dig into these items in advance of meetings and provide advance information to meeting attendees.

Limit trivial items. Those leading the meeting need to be forceful in limiting trivial agenda items. Place time limits on these items and enforce short discussions.

Limit opinions. It usually doesn't make sense to get a lot of opinions (or maybe any) about a trivial matter. As such, it behooves a business to empower people to make decisions on minor topics. Not everything needs to be reported to a committee or boss.

Suggested Reading
The Art of Majoring in Minor Things: The Leadership Challenge by Jules Ciotta

Point of Reflection
"Most people fail in life because they major in minor things." Tony Robbins

On the Edge of Effectiveness

"Organizational effectiveness does not lie in that narrow-minded concept called rationality. It lies in the blend of clearheaded logic and powerful intuition" Henry Mintzber

According to Insight Consulting: Traits of Personally Effective People

Determination. Personally effective people are highly determined. This allows them to focus on achieving their specific goals without being distracted by spontaneous desires or other less important things. This can be achieved by developing self-discipline.

Self-confidence. To develop self-confidence you will need to get a better understanding of yourself and your capabilities, develop a positive attitude and believe that by performing the right actions and achieving the right goals you will eventually reach success.

Optimism. Effective people must believe that there is much to achieve and much good in the world and that it is worth fighting for. It is only by believing that the future can be better will you step up and take the responsibility for making it so.

Managing stress. Stress can quickly make a once effective person less effective. Managing stress is, therefore, crucial for personal effectiveness.

Persistence. Many people fail because they are not persistent; they try once and when they fail or meet an obstacle they give up. Highly effective people keep moving forward regardless of the obstacles in their way. If you can overcome obstacles and maintain focus, then any goal can be achieved.

Problem solving. We can all agree that no matter what you do, regardless of how simple or complex, problems are likely to arise along the way. Being able to solve problems on the fly increases your efficiency when you are chasing after your goals.

Time management. Time management is a person's ability to plan and control how they spend their time to effectively accomplish their goals. Without proper time management, achievement of goals would take too long and thus negatively affect personal effectiveness.

Planning. They say not planning is planning to fail, and I think they're right. Planning should be done for every minute of time you have so as to avoid wastage. Planning brings you calmness, enables you to achieve more, gives you time to rest and will greatly increase your personal effectiveness.

Creativity. To be effective you have to be different, think differently and let originality and curiosity into your mind. These traits can be developed by putting yourself in an environment that allows you to think creatively and allows you to come up with new ideas, visions and solutions.

Self-motivation. Effective people are able to find motivation within themselves without relying on outside factors. If you can motivate yourself, then executing goals will be much easier as motivation is what gives you the drive to keep pushing. Understand what motivates you and use it to push yourself out of your comfort zone.

According to Lolly Daskal, founder and CEO of Lead From Within:
Top 10 Qualities of Highly Successful People

1. Drive. You have the determination to work harder than most and make sure things get done.

2. Self-Reliance. You can shoulder responsibilities and be accountable. You make hard decisions and stand by them.

3. Willpower. You have the strength to see things through--you don't vacillate or procrastinate.

4. Patience. You are willing to be patient, and you understand that, in everything, there are failures and frustrations. To take them personally would be a detriment.

5. **Integrity.** This should not have to be said, but it's seriously one of the most important attributes you can cultivate. Honesty is the best policy for everything you do; integrity creates character and defines who you are.

6. Passion. If you want to succeed, if you want to live, it's not politeness but rather passion that will get you there. Life is 10 percent what you experience and 90 percent how you respond.

7. Connection. You can relate to others, which in turns makes everything reach further and deepen in importance.

8. Optimism. You know there is much to achieve and much good in this world and you know what's worth fighting for. Optimism is a strategy for making a better future.

9. Self-confidence. You trust yourself. It's as simple as that. And when you have that unshakeable trust in yourself, you're already one step closer to success.

10. Communication. You work to communicate and pay attention to the communicators around you. Most important, you hear what isn't being said.

Suggested Reading
What the Most Successful People Do Before Breakfast: And Two Other Short Guides to Achieving More at Work and at Home by Laura Vanderkam

Point of Reflection
"Efficiency without Effectiveness misses the Purpose. Effectiveness without Efficiency misses all the Profit. Effectiveness with Efficiency brings Performance."   Martin Uzochukwu Ugwu

Parkinson's Law
"Work expands to fill the time available for its completion." C. Northcote Parkinson

C. Northcote Parkinson, (born July 30, 1909, Barnard Castle, Durham, England—died March 9, 1993, Canterbury), British historian, author, and formulator of "Parkinson's Law," the satiric dictum that *"Work expands to fill the time available for its completion."* A relatively obscure academic prior to the enunciation of his "law," which first appeared in an essay in the London Economist in 1955.

According to Merriam-Webster Definition of Parkinson's Law
An observation in office organization: the number of subordinates increases at a fixed rate regardless of the amount of work produced. An observation in office organization: work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion

According to Marc Winn, blogger: Seven Ways to Beat Parkinson's Law
1. Break down your tasks and deadlines. Parkinson's Law always strikes hardest when you have enormous tasks with far-away deadlines. It can all seem so intangible, 'out there' and too daunting to even begin. The best way to fix this is to break those big, monolithic tasks into many smaller, bite-sized tasks, along with several intermediate deadlines to complete them.

2. Know what 'done' means. It's not always easy to know for sure when a task is finished. The more of a perfectionist you are, the more likely you're a victim of Parkinson's Law: there's always one more little thing to add, one little refinement to be made.

3. Set clear boundaries. Most of the time, Parkinson's Law kicks in when we're doing too much stuff at the same time. The dreaded multi-tasking! Avoid at all costs!

4. Challenge yourself. A tight time limit or deadline forces your brain to figure out ways to get the job done in the restricted time available. Don't add "safety buffers" when you estimate and allocate time for your tasks.

5. Create incentives to finish early. One reason Parkinson's Law is so prevalent in businesses is that people rarely have the right incentives to finish early: *"Finished already? Here's more work for you."*
"You're fast! Guess we can bring the deadline forward next time!"

6. Know what's next. We often hang on too long to a task, simply because we don't know exactly what to do next. So ensure that you always have a few 'next actions' on your to-do list or in the pipeline, to keep the momentum going and avoid any stopping to reassess what you should be doing.

7. Consider how you can use Parkinson's Law to change the rules of the game. Deliberately use your awareness of Parkinson's Law to achieve things. If you know how it works, how can you use the law to accomplish incredible things in short spaces of time?

Suggested Reading
Parkinson's Law or the Pursuit of Progress by C. Northc Parkinson

Point of Reflection
"If you want to double your productively, shorten the timeline to by 50%." Richie Norton

Power of Minimization, Less is More
"Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication." Leonardo da Vinci

The great American-German architect, Ludwig Mies Van der Rohe helped to popularize the expression *"less is more"* in the early years of the twentieth century.

According to Matthew E. May, founding partner in the strategy firm Stratechia:
The Laws of Subtraction
There are three critical choices inherent in every difficult decision in business, work and life:
1. What to pursue, versus what to ignore?
2. What to leave in, versus what to leave out?
3. What to do, versus what not to do?

Six Laws
1. What isn't there can often beat what is.
2. The simplest rules create the most effective experience.
3. Limiting information engages the imagination.
4. Creativity thrives under intelligent constraints.
5. Break is the important part of breakthrough.
6. Doing something isn't always better than doing nothing.

Hicks Law
Hick's Law (or the Hick-Hyman Law) is named after a British and an American psychologist team of William Edmund Hick and Ray Hyman. In 1952, this pair set out to examine the relationship between the number of stimuli present and an individual's reaction time to any given stimulus. As you would expect, the more stimuli to choose from, the longer it takes the user to make a decision on which one to interact with. Users bombarded with choices have to take time to interpret and decide, giving them work they don't want.

Overall, remember that Hick's Law is a guideline you can adapt to your design. Always try to "flip" the perspective to see the choices you want to present from the outside. Avoid flooding with options, but bear in mind the balance between users' time and comfort zones for handling options.

According Mads Soegaard, founder at The Interaction Design Foundation APS:
The Implementation of Hick's Law
You can find applications of Hick's Law everywhere, not just in web and app design. Hick's Law determined the number of controls on your microwave or your washing machine. A design principle known as "K.I.S.S." ("Keep It Short and Simple") became recognized in the 1960s for its effectiveness in this regard. Echoing Hick's Law, K.I.S.S. states that simplicity is the key for a system to work in the best way. First embraced by the U.S. Navy, the principle of "K.I.S.S." was in general use in many industries by the 1970s. In some environments, K.I.S.S. gets translated as "Keep It Simple Stupid". The objective of Hick's Law is to try and simplify the decision-making process, not eliminate that process entirely.

Suggested Reading
The Laws of Simplicity by John Maed

Point of Reflection
"Simplicity is an exact medium between too little and too much." Sir Joshua Reynolds

Running Effective Meetings
"People who enjoy meetings should not be in charge of anything." Thomas Sowell

According to Nissar Ahamed, founder & CEO of CareerMetis:
13-Step Guide to Running an Effective Meeting
1. Is this meeting really necessary? Some meetings are both essential and necessary, while others are just a complete waste of time. Before scheduling any meeting, the very first thing you need to consider is if the meeting is necessary.

2. Clear purpose for the meeting. For any meeting to be effective, it needs to have a clear, concise, and well-defined purpose, goals, and objectives.

3. A meeting agenda. After you've clearly defined the purpose, goals, and objectives of the meeting, the next step will be to create the agenda of the meeting. Take your time to prepare your agenda beforehand can help you get your priorities right and keep discussions on the right track, so you don't miss out on important points to be discussed.

4. Meeting attendees. You've determined if a meeting is necessary, you've clearly defined the purpose, goals, and objectives of the meeting, you've created your meeting agenda, now, it's time to determine who and who should attend the meeting. Meetings can come with huge costs, both in productivity and in time used, so you need to take the time to carefully and thoughtfully determine those that can make unique and relevant contributions to the meeting.

5. Share the meeting agenda in advance. There are very few things that are as annoying as someone scheduling a meeting and sending out an invite with no indication as to what will be discussed in the meeting leaving the invitees clueless as to why they are at the meeting in the first place. Sharing the meeting agenda in advance helps you get straight down to business, as it will give the attendees the time to familiarize themselves with the discussion points

6. Keep attendees engaged. According to John Medina, a molecular biologist and author of Brain Rules: "You've got 10 minutes with an audience before you will absolutely bore them. And you've got 30 seconds before they start asking the question, 'Am I going to pay attention to you or not?' The instant you open your mouth, you are on the verge of having your audience check out."

7. Assign a note-taker. Taking notes during meetings is not just a good habit, but a necessary one. It's because it serves as a written record of your discussions, decisions, and the next action steps to follow.

8. Get rid of technological distractions. The same electronic gadgets we carry around these days that help make our lives easier and also have the ability to make us more productive at work — are also the biggest and most dangerous distractions that we have today.

9. Start early and end on time. Starting and ending your meetings on time not only builds your integrity as a trust-worthy timekeeper. It shows that you respect other people's time, and it also saves the company from lost productivity.

10. Be result-oriented. If you have to make a decision — you need to press the team harder to make a decision or recommendation so that action steps can be set and taken at the end of the meeting, rather than let them off the hook with a "maybe," or a vague decision.

11. Make the meeting more inclusive. Some people are born with more extroverted traits in them, while others are more shy and introverted. Those with extroverted tendencies might seem to out-talk everyone

because they have a natural inclination of (over-)expressing themselves, while those that are introverted rarely speak up unless called upon to do so. In contrast, the junior employees sit around watching the conversation and refraining from making any contribution to avoid being reprimanded (or to avoid feeling inept).

If you happen to notice one person unnecessarily dominating the discussions of the meeting and talking more than his or her fair share, call that person out. And do so publicly so that others will know that you care about their opinions too.

12. Decide and assign the next steps. To do this, you need to: First of all, summarize the meeting and the decisions made. Make a list of action steps to be taken. Assign these action steps with a deadline to specific individuals or teams when possible. It will keep the teammates accountable and make expectations clear.

13. Follow-up. You have to regularly track these action items to make sure that some progress is being made.

Perform a quick Plus/Delta Evaluation on The Meeting
Take a minute or less at the end to perform a Plus/Delta Evaluation:
- Plus = what was good.
- Delta = what needs to change/be done better.
- Ask: did we stay on track?
- Start/finish on-time?
- Did we meet our objective?
- Did we clarify next steps?
- Did everyone participate?
- Was this time well spent?
- What can we do to improve this process for the next meeting?
- Include the Plus/Deltas in the meeting minutes.

Complete the meeting notes live, and send them immediately afterwards. Because you've captured meeting minutes, notes, and action items as they happened, the final document is ready to distribute at the conclusion of the meeting. Your attendees will receive the minutes while the meeting is still fresh and action items are clearly defined. Everyone is aware of the next meeting date and objective and who needs to accomplish what in advance of said meeting.

According to Intuit: **Tips for Running Effective Meetings**
- Email an agenda 24 hours in advance.
- Arrive 5 minutes early.
- Start and end on time.
- Come prepared.
- Stay on topic.
- Be brief and concise.
- No side conversations.
- No smartphones.
- Everyone participates.
- Silence = agreement.

Meetings by the Numbers
- 25 million meetings take place in corporate America daily.
- 47% of workers state *"Too many meetings as the number one time-waster."*
- 45% of senior executives believe their employees would be more productive if their organizations banned meetings for a least one day a week.
- 11 minutes is the average amount of time it takes for people's attention to drift in a meeting.

According to Coline de Silans
In 2018, Belgian Tech Company Barco collaborated with Circle Research to conduct a survey 3,000 white-collar workers interviewed in eight countries:

- Only 44% said that the time they spent in meetings was useful.
- 26% of the respondents reported that meeting time was devoted to discussing topics unrelated to set objectives or making small talk.
- An efficient meeting should last 21 minutes, whereas the average length is 48 minutes.

Suggested Reading
Bad Meetings Happen to Good People: How to Run Meetings That Are Effective, Focused, and Produce Results by Leigh Espy

HBR Guide to Making Every Meeting Matter by Harvard Business Review

Point of Reflection
"Meetings move at the speed of the slowest mind in the room." Dale Dauton

The Principle of Least Effort: Zipf's Law
"People choose the paths that grant them the greatest rewards for the least amount of effort." David Shore

According to George Kingsley Zipf: The Principle of Least Effort
The principle of least effort (PLE) was proposed in 1949 by Harvard linguist George Kingsley. The principle of least effort is the theory that the "one single primary principle" in any human action, including verbal communication, is the expenditure of the least amount of effort to accomplish a task. Also known as Zipf's Law, Zipf's Principle of Least Effort, and the path of least resistance.

But the application of the theory goes beyond language, with many fields making use of it including evolutionary biology, information science, web design, psychology, economics, sociology, and marketing. Intelligent creatures, whether humans, animals, or even computers, will choose the path that requires the minimum amount of effort.

"In simple terms, the Principle of Least Effort means, for example, that a person in solving his immediate problems will view these against the background of his future problems, as estimated by himself. Moreover, he will strive to solve his problems in such a way as to minimize the total work that he must expend in solving both his immediate problems and his probable future problems. That in turn means that the person will strive to minimize the probable average rate of his work-expenditure (over time). And in so doing he will be minimizing his effort… Least effort, therefore, is a variant of least work."
(Human Behavior and the Principle of Least Effort: An Introduction to Human Ecology, George Kingsley Zipf)

In terms of library research, a person seeking information will tend to use the most convenient search method in the least challenging method available, and this person will stop seeking information as soon as minimally acceptable results are found. This idea holds true, even for experienced researchers. Even they will use the tools that are easiest and most familiar to them.

According to Stefan Drew: Using simple language is an application Zipf's Principle
If we make the language we use too complex or difficult we find people glaze over. It is easier than engaging the brain and thinking about what is being said. Clearly we don't want to talk down to people, but why not use everyday simple language rather than complex academic or industry language. Unless, of course, these are your audience. Even then don't go over the top.

Suggested Reading
Human Behavior and the Principle of Least Effort: An Introduction to Human Ecology by George Kingsley Zipf

Thinking, Fast and Slow by Daniel Kahneman

Point of Reflection
"Human nature is like a stream of water it always runs into obstacles and like the water it takes the easiest route to reach its destination."
Ronald D. Sears

Part 4

Employees

"100% of customers are people. 100% of employees are people. If you don't understand people, you don't understand business."

Simon Sinek

20 Essential Employee Engagement Survey Questions
"Most people use statistics like a drunk man uses a lamppost; more for support than illumination" Andrew Lang

According to Natalie Wickham, director of marketing at Quantum Workplace
Not all employee engagement surveys are created equal neither is the questions you include. There are many employee survey questions to choose from. But to accurately measure employee engagement here are questions you must be asking.

1. Do you find your work engaging?

2. Are your immediate co-workers committed to the organization's goals?

3. Would you recommend this organization as a great place to work?

4. Is your job in alignment with your career goals?

5. Do you have career growth and development opportunities at this organization?

6. Do you have the materials and equipment you need to do your job?

7. Do you have the information you need to do your job?

8. Do you think your opinions count at work?

9. When the organization makes changes, do you understand why?

10. Do you feel that changes are made in a way that is consistent with the company's mission and long-term vision?

11. When you contribute to the organization's success, do you feel recognized?

12. Does your job give you the flexibility to meet the needs of your personal life?

13. Do you feel that your immediate manager cares about you as a person?

14. Do you regularly receive constructive performance feedback from your manager?

15. Are goals and accountabilities clear to everyone on your team?

16. Are your teammates or co-workers committed to producing top quality work?

17. Do the senior leaders of this organization demonstrate integrity?

18. Do you trust our senior leaders to lead the organization to future success?

19. Do you understand the company's plans for future success?

20. Do you know how you fit into the organization's future plans?

Beyond the basic understanding of your organization's plans for success, employees need to know if and how they fit within that vision. Strong job fit drives employee engagement, but employees also need to see how their current and future aspirations align with the overall direction and success of the business.

Employee engagement is multifaceted so your survey should cover a variety of factors that could impact engagement. When building your next employee survey, use these questions as a starting point.

Suggested Reading
Employee Engagement: A Roadmap for Creating Profits, Optimizing Performance, and Increasing Loyalty by Brad Federman

Point of Reflection
"If we knew what we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?" Albert Einstein

25 Key Qualities of a Good Employee

One thing an exceptional employee never says is, 'That's not in my job description.' Exceptional employees work outside the boundaries of job descriptions. Travis Bradberry

According to Rea Regan, manager at Connecteam
What are the key qualities of a good employee? Really think about it. Because when you're interviewing for the next top talent to join your company, the qualities they possess are crucial to watch out for. Understanding what these employee characteristics are and recognizing them in interviewees can truly benefit your recruitment process.

1. Team player. Companies who want continued success need a team player on hand; it's one of the most important qualities of a good employee.

2. A good communicator. Communicating well with others is an integral part of working with a team and helping others within the company.

3. Speak up at meetings. Not only do you want a good communicator, but you also want someone who isn't afraid to speak up. Even if an employee didn't have much to contribute, just asking a great question or advocating for a fellow employee's idea can go a long way to making a lasting impression.

4. They collaborate. Do the employees you have, or want to hire, work well with others? How comfortable are they collaborating with a team? CareerBuilder says that 60% of hiring managers look for a team-oriented candidate during the application process.

5. They dress for success. It doesn't matter if the dress code is business casual or suit and tie, when employees dress for the job they want, it shows. And it matters. They present themselves in a style that reflects responsibility, brains, and respect.

6. They have a take charge attitude. Employee characteristics like this are huge. Why? When someone is faced with a tough challenge, a roadblock, or even low team morale, you don't want someone who shrugs their shoulders and thinks there's nothing they can do about it. You want someone who takes action. Otherwise, nothing would ever get done.

7. They want leadership opportunities. You want an employee who offers to lead a project or be a mentor to new hires. When a leader is needed, they're ready to get started.

8. They're on time. It's not because clocking in on time is mandatory, but because it shows they're serious and care about what they do.

9. They think like a manager, not an employee. Of our list of qualities of a good employee, this one is crucial. Consider this for a minute, employee's just wait to be told what to do, whereas, a manager thinks about what needs to be done in a strategic manner.

10. Think about results. It's not about the activities you finished; it's about the results you got.

11. Don't compare yourself to others. Look at your own accomplishments and what you can do to continue to better yourself.

12. Detail-oriented. You want someone who can spot the little things because often those can cause the most headache (the wrong date in a contract, a customer's name is misspelled, etc.).

13. Follows trends. Keeping an eye on what is happening in your industry is a great way to stay a step ahead of the competition. This way you can do some strategic planning or can appeal to new customers.

14. They listen to feedback. An employee who doesn't take feedback personally but seriously can make a huge impact on the bottom line.

15. They avoid gossip. It is important to identify problems in the company, but don't engage in conversation about it with other employees. It will only cause a negative atmosphere.

16. Know how to play the game. Just because you avoid gossip doesn't mean you avoid all "politics." When you know who influences change, who agrees with the manager, and so on, you know how to play the political game in the office.

17. Want to learn. You want someone to ask a lot of questions, to read up on the industry and the company will attend conferences, etc. These employees are always working to sharpen their skills and are vital to the company.

18. Go to company events. When you are throwing a company event, from something huge off-site or something small like breakfast in the kitchen, it is important to take note of who shows up.

19. They are comfortable with pressure. As employees, you should go out of your way to get caught in an uncomfortable situation. The more you are exposed to it, the more immune you will be to pressure!

20. They ask for help. You can't get to where you want to be without some help along the way. As far as qualities of a good employee are concerned, this one really does show you an employee's greatest strength – after all, it's better to have someone ask for help than to do something the wrong way.

21. They're adaptable. When an employee is able to adapt to change, even the unexpected ones, they're someone you want on your team. This is someone who is a problem solver and can just get on with it. They welcome change and are keen to get others on-board too.

22. They're honest. When an employee is direct and transparent, they contribute to open company culture. Their co-workers admire their honesty because they know they'll get a genuine answer as they interact.

23. They're optimistic. Someone with optimism can keep the team focused, even when road-bumps present themselves. You want someone who tackles complications with a positive mind because they can energize those around them and will help you cross the finish line.

24. They're humble. When an employee shares their glory and also admits and accepts criticism, the company culture is better for it.

25. Are tech-savvy. When an employee understands the ever-changing technology closely related to your business and competition, that's a huge bonus. Not only can they offer you a fresh perspective but they can easily teach those around them so you don't have to waste time and money bringing in an outside source.

Suggested Reading
The Eight Characteristics of the Awesome Employee by Carl Van

Point of Reflection
"Every employee needs to know that there's somebody out there that they serve. And when we don't let people know that for one reason or another, we're depriving them of a fulfilling job." Patrick Lencioni

Coaching Employees
"Never discourage anyone...who continually makes progress, no matter how slow." Plato

According to W. Steven Brown, Book 13 Fatal Errors Managers Make and How You Can Avoid Them:

- Never condone sub-par performance as this sends a signal to the entire organization that doing less than your best is acceptable.

- The coaching process is most productive when employees are encouraged to help solve their own problems.

- Efficient coaching starts with gathering accurate data based qualified facts and behaviors.

According to Keith Rosen, author of Sales Leadership:
10 Coaching Questions That Work in Any Conversation

1. What is the outcome you're looking to achieve here?

2. Can you share the specifics of what's going on?

3. What have you tried so far?

4. How have you handled something like this before? (What was the outcome?)

5. Why do you think this is happening? (What's another way to look at this/respond? What else can also be possible/true? What assumptions could you be making here?)

6. What's your opinion on how to handle this? (Everyone has an opinion. Seek to understand theirs first.) If I wasn't here, what would you do to achieve/resolve this? If we were to switch roles, how would you handle this? What ideas do you have? What's another approach that may work (which you haven't tried yet?)

7. What's the first thing you need to do to (resolve/achieve this)?

8. What resources do you need? How else can I support your efforts to complete this?

9. What are you willing to commit to doing/trying/changing (by when)?

10. When would it make sense for us reconnect to ensure result you want?

Help employees learn from their mistakes—follow-up questions:

- What went wrong?

- When did it go off track?

- Why did it go off track?

- What could you have done something differently?

- What have you learned from this experience?

- What will you do differently next time?

- What additional help/training can be provided to improve your performance?

- **SHRM/Globoforce Employee Recognition Survey Revealed:**

- 21% of HR professionals believe coaching employees is directly tied to their performance.
- 45% said it is "very important."
- 66% of employees who receive coaching say it improved their satisfaction and performance.

Suggested Reading
Coaching for Performance by John Whitmore

The Extraordinary Coach: How the Best Leaders Help Others Grow by John H. Zenger and Kathleen Stinnet

Point of Reflection
"A good coach will make his players see what they can be rather than what they are." Ara Parasheghian

Employee Burnout

"The strongest hearts have the most scars." Anonymous

World Health Organization has defined employee burnout to include three aspects:

1. Feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion

2. Increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job

3. Reduced professional efficacy.

The burnout process has been divided into 12 phases by psychologists Herbert Freudenberger and Gail North. In a Scientific American Mind article, the stages are outlined as such:

1. **The Compulsion to prove oneself.** Demonstrating worth obsessively; tends to hit the best employees, those with enthusiasm who accept responsibility readily.

2. **Working harder.** An inability to switch off.

3. **Neglecting their needs.** Erratic sleeping, eating disrupted, lack of social interaction.

4. **Displacement of conflict.** Problems are dismissed; we may feel threatened, panicky and jittery.

5. **Revision of values.** Values are skewed, friends and family dismissed, hobbies seen as irrelevant, work is only focus.

6. **Denial of emerging problems.** Intolerance, perceiving collaborators as stupid, lazy, demanding, or undisciplined, social contacts harder; cynicism, aggression; problems are viewed as caused by time pressure and work, not because of life changes.

7. **Withdrawal.** Social life small or non-existent, need to feel relief from stress, alcohol/drugs.

8. **Odd behavioral changes.** Changes in behavior obvious, friends and family concerned.

9. **Depersonalization.** Seeing neither self nor others as valuable and no longer perceive own needs.

10. **Inner emptiness.** Feeling empty inside and to overcome this, look for activity such as overeating, sex, alcohol, or drugs; activities are often exaggerated.

11. **Depression.** Feeling lost and unsure, exhausted, the future feels bleak and dark.

12. **Burnout syndrome.** Can include total mental and physical collapse; time for full medical attention.

According to Ben Wigert, director of research and strategy, Workplace Management, Gallup.
A survey of 7,500 full-time employees by Gallup found the top five reasons for burnout are:
1. Unfair treatment at work
2. Unmanageable workload
3. Unclear communication from managers
4. Lack of manager support
5. Unreasonable time pressure

All five of these factors are significantly influenced by manager behavior. Managers have a responsibility to protect against unfair treatment, communicate clearly and provide support. In addition, managers should be the advocate and ally of their team members when it comes to prioritization, workload management and setting reasonable expectations.

Unfortunately, ineffective managers become the cause of burnout, rather than its cure. They treat employees unfairly, burden employees with impossible expectations and provide little support to help employees achieve them. It's not always the manager's fault. Many organizations don't give managers the necessary training and support to be great at their jobs. And this can cause burnout for the managers themselves, creating their own sense of unreasonable expectations and a perceived lack of support.

According to Forbes: Five Ways to Prevent Employee Burnout In Your Business
1. Always keep your door open. Your team should always feel comfortable with the idea of coming to your office and talking to you. By keeping the communication channel open, you give them the chance to let you know first thing if something is off.

2. Make sure they have what they need to thrive. If your employees are in the right roles, but don't have sufficient resources to ensure their success, they will fail at the end of the day.

3. Give them crystal clear roles. Now, when you don't know who's responsible for a specific issue like negative customer reviews, you end up blaming everyone -- even those who have nothing to do with the problem. The easiest way to avoid it is to give each person a specific role and let them know exactly what you expect from them.

4. Give them constant feedback. Most people just want to feel that they belong in their company. Giving them feedback on their work, even if you don't end up using it, is the best way to make them feel that way.

5. Let them be part of the decision-making process. No one likes to only receive orders all the time. If you make a one-way interaction, where you only give orders and your employees just execute them, they will eventually get frustrated. Most of the time, your employees will have great insights about your customers or your business that you may not know. Ask questions and get them involved in the decision-making process.

Suggested Reading
The Myth of Employee Burnout, What It Is. Why It Happens. What to Do about It. by Matt Heller

Extinguish Burnout: A Practical Guide to Prevention and Recovery by Terri Bogue, Rob Bogue

Point of Reflection
"I think that burnout happens because of resentment. That notion that, 'Wow, I worked 100 hours last week, and I couldn't even have this thing that I really wanted." Marissa Mayer

Employee Engagement

"To win in the marketplace you must first win in the workplace."
Doug Conant, CEO of Campbell's Soup

Notable Quotes

"There are only three measurements that tell you nearly everything you need to know about your organization's overall performance: employee engagement, customer satisfaction, and cash flow." Jack Welch

"Employee engagement is the emotional commitment the employee has to the organization and its goals." Kevin Kruse

"Highly engaged employees make the customer experience. Disengaged employees break it." Timothy R. Clark

According to Temkin Group: The Five "I's" of Employee Engagement

1. **Inform**. Provide employees the information they need to understand the organization's vision and brand values, along with how customers feel about the organization.

   - Follow through a communication plan.
   - Communicate across multiple channels.
   - Make content employee-centric.
   - Create opportunities for employees to hear from customers.

2. **Inspire**. Connect employees to organization's vision and values so that they believe those matters and take pride in their job and the organization.

   - Define, communicate, and live by a set of values.
   - Increase accessibility to senior executives.
   - Tell compelling stories.
   - Give reasons for employees to be proud of the organization.

3. **Instruct**. Support employees with training, coaching and feedback they need to successfully deliver the organization's brand promises to customers.

   - Launch companywide training programs.
   - Embed training in new employee onboarding.
   - Develop training for supervisors and managers.
   - Use managers and front-line employees to deliver training programs.
   - Reinforce training with coaching and feedback.
   - Tap into e-learning for distant employees.

4. **Involve**. Take action with employees when designing their jobs, improving work processes and solving problems identified through customer or employee feedback.

   - Establish a voice of the employee program.
   - Develop employee-driven improvement process.
   - Facilitate cross-role, cross-functional employee connections.
   - Find simply informal opportunities to involve employees.

5. **Incent**. Deploy appropriate to measure, reward and reinforce desired employee behaviors and motivate employees to do their best.

- Enable peer-to-peer recognition.
- Provide on the spot rewards.
- Celebrate high performance teams.
- Turn employee engagement into a management metric.

Suggested Reading
Employee Engagement: A Practical Introduction by Emma Bridger

Engagement Magic: Five Keys for Engaging People, Leaders, and Organizations By Tracy Maylett

How to Win Friends & Influence People by Dale Carnegie

Point of Reflection
"Research indicates that workers have three prime needs: Interesting work, recognition for doing a good job, and being let in on things that are going on in the company." Zig Ziglar

Employee Engagement Statistics

"To build a culture of engagement it is important to incorporate training on intrinsic motivation and employee engagement into management development programs." Kenneth Thomas

According to Jocelyn Stange, Quantum Workplace
20 employee engagement statistics you should know about what engages employees and how engagement impacts your business.

Onboarding and Future Fit
1. 69% of employees are more likely to stay with a company for three years if they experience a great onboarding program. Source: SHRM. Don't Underestimate the Importance of Good Onboarding. The takeaway: Onboarding can make or break whether an employee chooses to stay engaged.

2. Engagement drops by nearly 7% after an employee's first year at an organization. Source: Quantum Workplace. 2019 Employee Engagement Trends Report. Wide-eyed and eager to prove themselves, new employees arrive with the best intentions—but can quickly fall out of love with their new job. While 82% of employees are engaged in their first year, that number drops to 75% in year two and 74% in years 3 through 5. The takeaway: Organizations must be intentional about keeping their tenured employees engaged.

3. 65% of employees prefer more clearly defined responsibilities. Source: Mercer. Global Talent Trends 2019. When employees understand expectations, they perform better. Establishing an employee's role and responsibilities, as well as how they contribute to the bigger picture, will keep employees engaged for longer. The takeaway: Set your employees up for success by providing role clarity.

Manager Support
4. 70% of the variance in team engagement is explained by the quality of the manager. Source: Gallup. Employee Engagement on the Rise in the US. The phrase*, "employees don't leave the organization, they leave their managers"* has been hammered in our brains for years. So, it's no surprise that employee success is directly impacted by a manager's ability to manage. The takeaway: Invest time to ensure managers feel supported and equipped to manage.

5. Only 20% of U.S. employees strongly agree that they've had a conversation with their manager in the last six months about achieving goals. Source: Gallup. 8 Behaviors of the World's Best Managers. In order to keep employees on track and supported, continuous conversations and regular employee feedback is key. The takeaway: Managers and employees should talk about goals frequently.

Productivity and Purpose
6. 47% of American employees say their job is just what they do for a living. Source: Pew Research Center. The State of American Jobs. Though employee satisfaction isn't a recommended measurement of engagement, satisfaction typically increases when employees are more engaged. But to improve engagement, employees must feel a sense of purpose at work. The takeaway: Communicate a shared purpose within your organization to improve engagement.

7. Disengaged employees cost U.S. organizations around $450-550 billion each year. Source: Gallup. How to Tackle U.S. Employees' Stagnating Engagement. Disengaged employees are less productive than their engaged peers and replacing any employee is not cheap. It's important to your bottom line to invest in employee engagement efforts and avoid disengagement at all costs. The takeaway: Prioritize engagement to avoid high costs associated with disengagement.

8. Business units in the top quartile of engagement see 21% higher profitability. Source: Gallup. Employee Engagement on the rise in the US. Research by Gallup shows that businesses with higher engagement levels

are stronger in several other aspects of their business. Engaged teams and organizations benefit from better customer engagement, higher productivity, better retention, and better health outcomes. The takeaway: Engagement impacts every element of a business.

Career Development and Compensation
9. Only 21% of employees see opportunities for personal career growth at their organization. Source: Quantum Workplace. 2018 Employee Engagement Trends. While many organizations and managers are investing in employee development, the data shows a disconnection: employees aren't aware of such opportunities. This suggests that managers are ineffective at communicating about growth and development. The takeaway: Managers must communicate with employees about development opportunities.

10. 43% of employees feel unsatisfied with their career path. Source: Addison Group. What Makes Employees Head for the Hills? When an employee takes a job, they typically have no intention of leaving anytime soon. Yet organizations are surprised when employees leave shortly after they arrive. Research shows that when employees leave a company, it's often because they feel that organization has failed to invest in them. The takeaway: To keep employees around, help them feel like they have a future at your organization.

11. Thriving employees are 4x more likely to work for a company that ensures equity in pay. Source: Mercer. Global Talent Trends 2019. Money may not make us happier, but it makes a difference if we feel like we're not getting paid the amount we think we deserve. The takeaway: Be transparent about compensation decisions and opportunities for growth.

Recognition
12. Only 12% of employees believe employee recognition is a top people priority. Source: Quantum Workplace. 7 Employee Engagement Strategies: Backed by Research. A Quantum Workplace study found that while employers are improving employee recognition efforts, there is still plenty of room for growth. Recognition has long maintained a relatively low favorability and high uncertainty. And organizations aren't prioritizing it either. Roughly 37% said their organizations used employee recognition software. The takeaway: The best way to improve recognition is to make it a priority.

13. 69% of employees say they'd work harder if they were better appreciated. Source: Smarp. When employees complete a project or big assignment, they expect to be appreciated for their hard work. Employee recognition boosts morale, improves productivity, and is a proven driver of employee engagement. The takeaway: Recognition is a key driver of employee performance.

Culture and Well-being
14. 18% of Millennials are dissatisfied with their work-life balance. Source: Commercial Cafe. Work-Life Balance Survey: Gen Z, Millennials Are the Unhappiest Generations. Millennials in particular are known for taking work home and making no time for rest. But they're not the only ones unimpressed by their work-life balance. 16% of Gen X and 12% of Baby Boomers feel the same. The takeaway: Organizations should consider the value of work-life balance in addition to pay and benefits.

15. The number of highly engaged employees decreases by 3% during mergers and acquisitions. Source: Quantum Workplace. 2018 Employee Engagement Trends. It's important to make sure your highly engaged employees remain engaged so they can be advocates for the rest of your organization. The takeaway: Communication is key to avoiding disengagement during big changes.

16. Highly engaged, top-quartile work units demonstrate 70% fewer safety incidents. Source: Gallup. Engaged Workplaces Are Safer for Employees. Engaged employees are less likely to be involved in a work-related injury. Why? Organizations with a strong culture of safety often have a mission or purpose that employees feel supported by. Employees who feel that their opinions count are more likely to produce quality work.

The takeaway: To reduce the number of safety incidents, it's important to develop a clear purpose for your organization that resonates with employees.

Employee Demographics
17. Hourly employees are nearly 10% less engaged than salaried employees. Source: Quantum Workplace. 2019 Employee Engagement Trends Report. Hourly workers need more recognition to overcome the engagement gap. The top five drivers by pay type are almost identical. Except hourly employees would prefer recognition while salary employees are driven by challenging careers. The takeaway: Employees are unique, their recognition should be too.

18. Only 52% of gender minorities are engaged. Source: Quantum Workplace. 2019 Employee Engagement Trends Report. Although the engagement gap between males and females has decreased over the years, employees who indicated their gender as being another identity continue to be the least engaged across all professional and personal profiles. Only half of employees who identify as another gender are considered engaged. The takeaway: While the engagement gap between males and females shrinks, gender minorities are still at risk of disengagement.

HR on Engagement
19. 3/5 of HR leaders believe that the HR function will become irrelevant if it doesn't modernize. Source: KPMG. Future of HR 2020 insights. An emphasis on employee engagement is the secret sauce to successful HR departments and strategic initiatives. Keeping up with socioeconomic trends is just one aspect of building a profitable business. The takeaway: To keep your HR department relevant, consider employee engagement software.

 20. 85% percent of HR leaders say employee experience is the most valuable HR capability. Source: KPMG. Future of HR 2020 insights.

Suggested Reading
Employee Engagement For Dummies by Bob Kelleher

Point of Reflection
"Some companies don't have an engagement problem, they have a hiring problem." Bob Kelleher

Employee Recognition
We must find the time to stop and thank the people who make a difference in our lives."

John F. Kennedy

- According to Globoforce Mood Tracker, 78% of people would work harder in their jobs if they were recognized

- According to Gallup, 65% of working Americans say they receive no praise or recognition on the job.

- According to Bersin and Associates companies with an ineffective recognition program experience 46% more turnovers

According to McKinsey Global Survey Employees are Motivated by:
- 67% praise from manager.
- 63% attention from leaders.
- 62% opportunities to lead.
- 60% cash bonus.
- 52% increase in pay.
- 35% stock/options.

Strategic Recognition Drives Engagement
Say "thank you" to your employees and watch them thrive. A recent poll by Partners In Leadership confirms that when employees are happier at work:

- 85% say they take more initiative.
- 73% say they are better collaborators.
- 48% care more about their work.

According to Katerina Pouspourika, search engine optimization manager/copywriter, iED:
8 Key Benefits of Implementing Employee Recognition Programs
The importance of employee recognition in 2020 is well documented. Yet there are still a lot of companies operating with HR policies and management practices in place that don't seem to be aware of or acknowledge the benefits of recognizing and awarding employees for their work.

Whether you're a manager at a larger organization or the owner of a small and growing start-up here are eight proven major benefits of employee recognition programs:

1. Higher motivation. Highly motivated and efficient employees are one of the key forces that drive growth and success. This applies to corporations, small businesses and charitable organizations alike. If employees get recognized for their hard work and contribution they will perform better. Praise and commendation from manager's rank as the top performance motivator even beating out financial incentives.

2. Lower employee frustration. If your workforce is frustrated and feeling underappreciated trouble is brewing on the horizon. One of the root causes of employee frustration is that they feel underappreciated for their contribution. Companies that have quality employee recognition programs in place report 28.6% lower frustration levels than their counterparts who don't implement these initiatives. Prolonged frustration level can lead to turn-over which will be covered next.

3. Improved retention rates. Employee turnover is a huge issue for many companies, particularly in high turnover sectors and industries. As a manager, it's crucial to understand which employees benefits help retain top talent. The cost of firing and hiring is an unwelcome expense that can significantly cut into profitability, not just due to legal and settlement costs but the time it takes to hire and train new talent. Companies with effective employee recognition programs in place report a 23.2% lower turnover rate.

4. Better performance. Better performance typically goes hand in hand with higher motivation. If your employees are motivated that will directly translate into improved productivity and performance. 60% of surveyed organizations credit employee recognition as one of the most valuable drivers to boost individual performance. A performance like any of these benefits can and should be tracked. This will make it easy to measure the success of recognition initiatives.

5. Improved customer satisfaction rates. Happy employees mean happy customers, especially when it comes to customer-facing teams. It should be no surprise that happy and motivated staff will do a better job of serving and supporting customers. 41% of companies that have tracked customer satisfaction rates prior to implementing peer-to-peer recognition and after have noticed positive improvements. Ensuring your employees and customers are satisfied is a win-win.

6. Increased revenue. Besides wanting to do a good job from a management perspective, increased revenue alone should motivate company owners and executives to implement employee recognition initiatives. Higher motivation, better performance and customer satisfaction can have a significant impact on your gross sales and bottom line. Peer-to-peer recognition is the more effective method over manager-only. Peer-to-peer has a 35.7% higher chance to impact financial key performance metrics than manager-only.

7. Broader engagement. Happy and appreciated employees also translate to broader engagement company-wide. Engagement is often overlooked as a key benefit but it is crucial to morale and company culture. Leading a company with poor company culture is a difficult undertaking and not sustainable. 85% of companies that allocated 1% or more of their payroll to employee recognition see a positive impact on engagement.

8. Enhanced employee satisfaction. Giving appropriate recognition ranks very high when it comes to employee satisfaction, ideally peer-to-peer but manager-only is a sufficient starting point. When employees were asked how managers could improve satisfaction and engagement 58% simply answered 'give recognition'.

It's one thing to understand the importance and benefits of employee recognition programs. It's another to properly implement and manage them. The success of employee recognition programs comes down to how they are structured and managed. If you are in a larger organization the head of HR should definitely spearhead this initiative to ensure proper implementation and acceptance within the company culture.

Suggested Reading
Make Their Day!: Employee Recognition That Works by Cindy Ventrice

1501 Ways to Reward Employees: Low-Cost and No-Cost Ideas by Bob Nelson

Point of Reflection
"Nothing else can quite substitute for a few well-chosen, well-timed, sincere words of praise. They're absolutely free and worth a fortune." Sam Walton

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Employee Satisfaction
"Your number one customers are your people. Look after employees first and then customers last." Ian Hutchinson

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A survey of 25,000 employees found that 69% of their job satisfaction is derived from a manager's leadership skills. Manager-employee relations are a critical part of a work place atmosphere and promoting productivity and cohesiveness.

According to Braja Deepon Roy, content creator and digital marketer at Vantage Circle:
Nine Best Practices to Keep Employee Satisfaction High
1. A positive work environment. A positive work environment has a significant influence on how the employees feel. The work environment plays a vital role in keeping the employees motivated. It significantly influences his/her work life. It reflects in the work they do and helps sustain positivity throughout the day. A positive work environment doesn't only mean the organizational structure. It is the overall experience an employee shares with his/her co-workers, immediate supervisors, and company culture.

Create a positive work environment through:
- Open communication.
- Building trust.
- Building healthy work relationships.
- Listening and promoting equal opportunities.

2. Feedback. Feedback is critical to employee satisfaction, and most of the managers are uncertain when it comes to giving feedback. Lack of employee feedback makes the employees unsure about the work and effort they are putting out. The positive effects of feedback are immense in the workplace. It can build trust, employee satisfaction, keep the employees motivated and reduce turnover.

The best ways to give healthy feedback are:
- The positive intent.
- It should be constructive.
- It should be genuine.
- Don't wait, give your feedback immediately.

3. Rewards and recognition. According to OfficeTeam's study, 66% of employees say they would *"likely leave their job if they didn't feel appreciated."* When employees are rewarded and recognized for their work, it builds employee morale, productivity, and overall employee satisfaction or job satisfaction. Organizations often miss out on this psychological aspect.

4. Work-life balance and employee satisfaction. Work-life balance helps employees to balance their professional and personal lives. Balancing work-life in today's world is quite challenging, and many a time can become burdensome. Management can, therefore, help its employees to bring a balance in work life.

Here are some actionable steps:
- Initiating work-life balance programs.
- To have one to one interaction.
- To provide flexible work hours.
- Giving them enough time for relaxation and leisure.

5. Involve and engage your employees. When you involve and engage your employees, it builds employee satisfaction. Teams that work together with involvement are happier and satisfied. The best way to encourage employees is to make them fully involved. When you involve and engage your employees deliberately, it reduces employee turnover and enhances employee satisfaction.

6. Develop employee skills. Helping employees develop their skill sets is also one of the attributes of employee satisfaction. When you give your employees room for developing their skills, it boosts their job satisfaction and increases work efficiency. This also signifies that, along with your organizational growth, you even care about their career development. Lack of this management approach often makes the employees dissatisfied.

7. Evaluate and measure employee satisfaction
Many small/big organizations conduct biannual or yearly employee engagement surveys. They put up questions on the categories like teamwork, feedback, information, work-life balance, work relationship, self-evaluation, and so on. This is an excellent practice unless it becomes monotonous or complacent.

8. Employee well-being. 'Health is wealth' is an overused phrase but holds true to its meaning. Employers who do not emphasize employees' physical, emotional, psychological, and financial well-being build an inefficient workforce. It is vital to building a work culture for the employees' well-being needs. Employees who are healthy and stress-free have better productivity and a greater sense of responsibility towards their job.

9. Clearly defined goals and objectives. You may have best team working for you, but if you do not have goals and objectives in place, you would slowly kill their enthusiasm. Your team needs directions throughout their work-life cycle. When an organization fails to provide clear objectives or company values, it leads to employee dissatisfaction. Employees do not only work for a paycheck. For their satisfaction at work, they also need a direction and a sense of purpose that keeps them going. At the end of the day, we all want to do meaningful work and make a difference.

Suggested Reading
The Employee Satisfaction Revolution: Understanding and Unleashing the Power of a Satisfied Workforce Perfect by Dr. Patricia Buhler and Jason Scott

Employee Satisfaction Survey: Human Resources by Nupur Mukhopadhyay

Point of Reflection
"Employees who believe that management is concerned about them as a whole person – not just an employee – are more productive, more satisfied, more fulfilled. Satisfied employees mean satisfied customers, which leads to profitability."
<div align="right">Anne M. Mulcahy</div>

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Encourage Employee Accountability
"Accountability is a key concept in moving an organization forward, especially in a challenging business climate."

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Cindy Tucker

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Defining Accountability: Webster's Dictionary defines "accountability" as "the quality or state of being accountable; an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility for one's actions."

According to Bob Cote, blogger:
Seven Ways to Improve Employee Accountability in the Workplace
1. Set expectations during on-boarding.

2. Provide performance feedback early and often.

3. Establish a culture of empowerment and trust.

4. Make consequences and rewards clear.

5. Get casual—as a leader it's your job to know your employees show interest in them.

6. Communication is key.

7. Establish collective values and objectives.

According to Torben Rick, senior executive, both at a strategic and operational level,
Here's the SIMPLE method for employee accountability
S = Set expectations – The first step is to be crystal clear about what is expected
I = Invite commitment – Buy into the goals
M =Measure progress – Measure their ongoing performance
P = Provide feedback – Honest, open, ongoing feedback is critical
L = Link to consequences – Administering appropriate consequences
E = Evaluate effectiveness – Review how the process has been handle

Why lack of employee accountability is a real problem
Research shows that there is a real problem in the American workplace when it comes to employee accountability. A recent survey of business leaders illuminated this:

- 25% of the leaders surveyed felt that 10% to 20% of their workers avoid accountability.

- 21% of these managers felt that 30 to 50% of their employees were unaccountable to anyone.

According to Partners In Leadership: A lack of accountability in the workplace leads to:
- Low team morale.
- Unclear priorities across the team.
- Employees become less engaged.
- The team or individual is not meeting goals.
- Low levels of trust.
- High turnover.

Suggested Reading
Keeping Employees Accountable for Results: Quick Tips for Busy Managers by Brian Miller

How Did That Happen? Holding People Accountable for Results the Positive, Principled Way by Roger Connors, and Tom Smith

Points of Reflection

"Holding employees accountable is where most leaders fail" Anonymous

The Engagement Process from Satisfaction to Dissatisfaction
"To win in the marketplace you must first win in the workplace." Doug Conant

A Gallup study covering 30 years and 17 million workers found there are three key types of employees: Actively Disengaged, Actively Engaged, and Not Engaged.

Actively Disengaged: Simply put. People who are miserable at their jobs. They actively undermine coworkers and sabotage projects.

Actively Engaged: This type of employee works with passion and feels a profound connection to the company.

Not Engaged: Checked out, sleepwalking through the day, putting in hours instead of energy. In other words, zombies that are eating your profitability instead of brains.

According to Tracy Maylett, chief executive officer of DecisionWise
Auto-engaged (5%): This employee is innately inclined to find meaning, purpose, connection, and fulfillment in almost any work.

Engagement optimal (20%): This employee does not engage as instantaneously as the auto-engaged employee, but does not require a great deal of encouragement to do so.

Motivationally engaged (50%): Most will fall into this category. These employees are willing to engage if their motivational and satisfaction needs are met—if they are paid fairly, given appropriate perks, feel emotionally safe in their roles, shown potential paths of advancement.

Engagement hesitant (20%): This employee would rather not engage, but is not opposed to it, either. They are likely to regard her job as something that pays her expenses and nothing more.

Auto-disengaged (5%): These are the lost causes, the people who are unlikely to engage regardless of what the organization does. This employee cannot view work as anything more than a paycheck, and he is likely to hold an adversarial view of his employer.

According to DrivenLeadership, Inc.
- Every business leader wants a team of engaged employees. Employee engagement has to start at the top. If the leadership team isn't engaged nobody else will buy it either.

- Mission and vision statements mean nothing. They are something written for a website, slapped up on the wall, and quickly forgotten. The effort that went into creating that means nothing unless the mission and vision are lived authentically by leadership.

- Human resource focuses on the bottom line instead of employees. Engaged employees don't feel like they have to choose work or life.

- Poor communication. If your employees aren't hearing from you regularly, they assume you have forgotten about them.

- Lack of feedback. Nothing turns a company around faster than a great feedback program. Yet all too often we hold employees back by not providing critical information to let them know how to improve and remind them that we know they exist.

- Little or no planning. An employee knows when the ship is drifting along. Initiative fades quickly when management isn't sure if an idea fits into the plan, or if the course of the company changes so frequently that previous work proves to be a waste of time and energy. Leadership needs a thoughtful, committed strategic plan designed to guide the company and the employees toward the larger vision.

Suggested Reading

Employee Engagement 2.0: How to Motivate Your Team for High Performance by Kevin E Kruse

The Truth About Employee Engagement: A Fable About Addressing the Three Root Causes of Job Misery by Patrick M. Lencioni

Point of Reflection

"*Always treat your employees exactly as you want them to treat your best customers.*" Stephen R. Covey

Team Work

"The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don't play together, the club won't be worth a dime." Babe Ruth

Notable Quotes

"Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results." Andrew Carnegie

"Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success." Henry Ford

"The best teamwork comes from men who are working independently toward one goal in unison." James Cash Penney

"Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence win championships." Michael Jordan

According to Tom LaForce, owner of LaForce Teamwork Services:
The 20 characteristics of Effective Teams

1. We have a clear sense of purpose. This unifies the group. Everyone knows why the group exists. In addition to being clear, it should also be important.

2. We have measurable objectives. Goals are the fuel which drives each member's effort. They know there is work to do, and they strive to get it done.

3. Our purpose supports the larger organization's purpose. Each team represents the use of scarce resources. People are expensive. They should only be deployed doing something that helps advance the larger organization.

4. We know how the team will be evaluated. People want to win. The trouble with many teams is that winning hasn't been defined. If you don't know what good looks like, how do you know you've achieved it?

5. We understand our customers' expectations. Each team serves others. These could be internal or external customers. To succeed in this task requires that the team knows what those customers expect.

6. Groups and individuals that support us understand our expectations. In most organizations, a team's success depends on the support they get from others. To be well-supported, those people need to know how best to provide that support.

7. We agree on the process for completing our work. There are many ways to get the work done. Efficiency usually requires a shared process. When this characteristic is missing, chaos reigns.

8. We each do our "fair share" of the work. This has to happen to prevent the all-too-common fight that begins when team members begin to think I'm working way harder than her.

9. We have access to the resources we need. This could be experts, data, tools, equipment, or decision authority.

10. We effectively make decisions. Teamwork requires decisions, lots of decisions. Getting good at making those decisions quickly separates strong teams from weak teams.

11. We communicate openly on the team. Almost all teamwork problems can be traced back to a team's inability to effectively communicate. Assertiveness and candor are necessary teamwork ingredients.

12. We communicate openly with interested parties outside of the team. Your team might be doing good work, but if nobody else knows it, you have a problem.

13. We effectively resolve conflicts. All teams have conflicts, which in themselves are not problems. They only become a problem when they go unresolved or people are bloodied in the process of resolving them.

14. We quickly address problems that are hurting the team. When the inevitable problems arise, good teams notice, raise the concern, and go into problem-solving mode. They certainly don't struggle with an "elephant in the room."

15. We each understand what is expected of us. A team is a collection of individuals. Each person has to know what he is supposed to do to be an effective team member.

16. We support one another. A bunch of individuals all doing their own thing in isolation from coworkers is not a team. Effective teams are collaborative and supportive entities.

17. We continuously monitor our performance. Doing this assessment is an example of monitoring performance. You can't fix what you don't notice. Ask the questions.

18. We work at continuously improving our performance. Effective teams recognize there are many improvement opportunities. They are all about growing better together.

19. Our team achieves (will achieve) its goals and objectives. The bottom-line is always the results. Working well together means very little if the team can't deliver.

20. We each feel good about being a part of this team. Results without connection to teammates doesn't work either. At the end of the day, people are glad they are a member of this team.

Teamwork Data
- About 75% of employers rate teamwork and collaboration as "very important" Queens University of Charlotte.

- 86% of employees and executives cite lack of collaboration or ineffective communication for workplace failures. Salesforce.

- 97% of employees and executives believe lack of alignment within a team impacts the outcome of a task or project. McKinsey.

- 39% of surveyed employees believe that people in their own organization don't collaborate enough. Visix.com.

- Only 5.9% of companies communicate goals daily. ClearCompany

Suggested Reading
The 17 Indisputable Laws of Teamwork: Embrace Them and Empower Your Team by John C Maxwell

The Wisdom of Teams: Creating the High-Performance Organization by on Katzenbach and Douglas K Smith

Point of Reflection

"Teamwork is almost always lacking within organizations that fail, and often present within those that succeed."

Patrick Lencioni

Terminating Employees

"Be transparent about why the termination is happening. If you did things right, it shouldn't be a surprise to the person." Christine Tsai

According to Indeed Career Guide: Why would you terminate an employee?
Some managers hire and fire employees regularly, while others rarely have this responsibility. Whether you have or have not terminated an employee before, it's important to be familiar with the reasons why you may terminate an employee in the first place. The following are a few of the many categories into which an employee termination may fall:

- Discriminatory behavior, such as sexual harassment.
- Harassment or creating a toxic work environment.
- Physical violence.
- Criminal activities.
- Insubordination.
- Incompetence, such as inability to perform work adequately or low productivity.
- Attendance problems, including frequent tardiness.

It's important to be as objective as possible when deciding to terminate an employee. Even if the issue seems obvious to you, you should seek a second opinion from a Human Resources (HR) representative. Be sure to document all instances of behavior that have led you to the termination decision to ensure the employee, HR department and other relevant management in the organization have a comprehensive understanding of the employee's behavior and how it leads to termination.

How to Terminate an Employee
Here are the steps you can take when terminating an employee to help ensure a smooth and professional process:

- Make the employee aware of the situation.
- Allow the employee to make improvements.
- Inform human resources of the employee's behavior.
- Determine the most appropriate setting to inform the employee of termination.
- Prepare what you will say and what actions will be taken.
- Meet with the employee to announce your decision.
- Keep documentation of the entire process.

1. Make the employee aware of the situation. Before you begin planning the process of termination for an employee, you should first ensure that the employee is aware that their employment is at risk. This means that the employee is notified each time they are in the wrong regarding their behavior.

2. Allow the employee to make improvements. When behavioral issues arise, provide the employee with the chance to improve their behavior and make appropriate changes can prevent termination and even improve their overall work performance. You could develop a performance improvement plan (PIP) with the employee and track whether progress is made. Be clear about the progress you expect to see and by when.

3. Inform human resources of the employee's behavior. You should keep HR informed of all actions taken before terminating an employee, such as an improvement plan and the progress the employee makes, if

any. If no progress is made or you have concluded that termination is the best option, you should also work with HR to ensure this is an appropriate response to the situation.

4. Determine the most appropriate setting to inform the employee of termination. Where you inform the employee of their termination can impact how the employee reacts and influence the final stages and transition period. It's best to let the employee know they are being terminated in a private setting that is as comfortable as possible.

5. Prepare what you will say and what actions will be taken. Before meeting with the employee, take time to determine what you will say and the actions that will follow your delivery of the news. For example, consider whether the employee will be required to leave as soon as terminated or if they can stay through to the end of the day. You may also need to consult with HR to determine if the organization will provide severance pay.

6. Meet with the employee to inform them of your decision. When you meet with the employee, begin the conversation by informing the employee they are terminated and provide the reason for the termination. Discuss all essential details such as pay and the status of current projects. Once you finish speaking, allow the employees to ask questions and express their feelings on the matter. Try to keep the conversation as cordial and professional as possible, and refrain from defending or debating the termination.

7. Keep documentation of the entire process. Documentation includes a written notice of termination; severance pay if applicable and any other pertinent information to the termination. You should also keep documentation of any actions taken before the termination, such as ta PIP implementation and results. The more documentation you keep, the better prepared you are when discussing termination with the employee and in ensuring all necessary and appropriate protocol was followed based on the employee handbook and relevant labor laws.

According to SHRM: Steps to an Effective Termination
- Be transparent about your company's termination policies.
- Begin the documentation process as soon as you notice a pattern of negative performance or behavior.
- Encourage management to avoid charged language and to stick to what's observable.
- Determine if any protected factors pose a particular risk if the employee were to be terminated.
- Work with management to rapidly reach a consensus on whether and when a person should be terminated.
- Create a time frame for termination that aligns with your company policy.
- Schedule the last meeting and prepare any paperwork, including an explanation of benefits and the final paycheck.
- Ask the employee's manager lead the final conversation, which should be brief and to the point. HR should provide paperwork and logistical support.
- Make sure that, before the employee walks out the door, his electronic and physical access to the workplace is disconnected.
- Provide the employee with options for clearing her workspace outside of normal business hours.
- Treat everyone involved with dignity and respect.

Suggested Reading
Firing at Will: A Manager's Guide by Jay Shepherd

We're Going to Have to Let You Go: A Guide for Effectively and Professionally Terminating Employees by Isaac Hammer

Point of Reflection

"It's not the people you fire who make your life miserable. It's the people you don't." Dick Grote,

Tips for Effective Employee Performance Reviews

"In the workplace, employees should be judged on their merit and hard work and not on aspects that are irrelevant to their performance." Paul Singer

According to Susan M. Heathfield, human resource and management and consultant
The employee should never hear about positive performance or performance in need of improvement for the first time at your formal performance discussion meeting unless it is new information or a thoughtful insight. Effective managers discuss both positive performance and areas for improvement regularly, even daily or weekly with reporting employees.

Share the performance review format with the employee. A significant component of this evaluation discussion is to share with the employee how your organization will assess performance.

Document performance throughout the year. Recent events color your judgment of the employee's performance. Instead, you are responsible for documenting positive occurrences such as completed projects, and negative occurrences such as a missed deadline, during the entire period of time that the performance review covers. You need to make these notes throughout the year to assess the employee's performance fairly.

Preparing for a discussion . Never go into a performance review without preparation. If you wing it, performance reviews fail. You will miss key opportunities for feedback and improvement, and the employee will not feel encouraged about his successes. The documentation that you maintained during the performance review period serves you well as you prepare for an employee's performance review.

Meeting with an employee. When you meet with the employee, spend time on the positive aspects of his or her performance. In most cases, the discussion of the positive components of the employee's performance should take up more time than that of the negative components.

The conversation is the key to a productive performance meeting. The spirit in which you approach this conversation will make the difference in whether it is effective. If your intention is genuine, to help the employee improve, and you have a positive relationship with the employee, the conversation is easier and more effective. If you are doing all of the talking or the meeting becomes a lecture, the performance review is less effective. The employee will feel yelled at and treated unjustly. This is not how you want employees to feel as they leave their performance reviews.

Ask question to make the meeting motivational. You want an employee who is motivated and excited about their ability to continue to grow, develop, and contribute. Aim for performance review meetings in which the employee talks more than half of the time.

You can encourage this conversation by asking questions such as these:
- What do you expect to be the most challenging about your goals for this quarter?
- What support can the department provide for you that will help you reach these goals?
- What are your hopes for your achievements at our company this year?
- How can I be a better manager for you?
- How often would you like to receive feedback?
- What kind of schedule can we set up so that you don't feel micromanaged, but I receive the feedback that I need as to your progress on your goals?
- What would be a helpful agenda for our weekly one-on-one meetings?

According to SHRM: Tighter Review Cycles
One trend companies are turning to is a tighter feedback calendar cycle. Consequently, the once-yearly employee review is falling out of favor.

In 2016, 82 percent of workers surveyed said their company used an annual review. That number dropped to 65 percent in 2017, 58 percent in 2018 and 54 percent in 2019, according to the Workhuman report. *"Feedback will become more informal, more iterative and more frequent,"* says Karen Crone, chief human resource manager at Paycor, a human capital management company.

Paycor has 12-week performance discussion cycles called "CONNECT sessions," according to Crone, which better mirror the company's business model and include employee reviews.

"Think about it as a 12-week year," she says. *"In that regard, our employee discussions don't require a laborious form, but rather a quick-hit review of what's been accomplished, what's next and how the person is developing. That way, the employee and the manager have an equivalent voice in preparing for the conversation."*

According to Workhuman
- 55% of workers say that annual performance reviews do not improve their performance.
- 85% of workers who have weekly check-ins with their managers report a higher level of engagement.

Leadership IQ Data
The Leadership IQ study, surveyed 48,012 employees, managers and CEOs to find out what they thought of their annual performance appraisal process (aka performance review, or annual performance ratings, etc.). Here are the results:

- Only 13% of employees and managers think their organization's performance appraisal system is useful.

- Only 6% of CEOs think their performance appraisal process is useful.

- 88% of respondents said their current performance review negatively impacts their opinion of HR.

- 96% of employees, managers and CEOs agree that a performance appraisal should differentiate high and low performers. But only 22% always think that their leader actually distinguishes between high and low performers.

- Only 14% of employees believe that their performance appraisal provides relevant and meaningful feedback. 95% of employees believe that performance appraisal comments should reference and cite specific events from throughout the year.

- Only 28% of people believe that their leader always recognizes their accomplishments. Perhaps more disturbing is that 54% believe that their leader never, rarely or occasionally recognizes their accomplishments.

This study warns leaders and human resources departments of the challenges associated with annual performance appraisal, but it also provides the solution. If we create a performance review that differentiates high and low performers and places greater emphasis on giving each employee meaningful and, where warranted, positive feedback, then leaders' and human resources' credibility will skyrocket.

Suggested Reading
The Manager's Guide to HR: Hiring, Firing, Performance Evaluations, Documentation, Benefits, and Everything Else You Need to Know by Max Muller

Win-Win Performance Appraisals: Get the Best Results for Yourself and Your Employees: What to Do Before, During, and After the Review by Lawrence Holpp

Point of Reflection
"Good performance accountability is about having a positive conversation between manager and employee. A manager is a coach and communicator, not command and controller." Dave Ulrich

Winners vs. Losers

"Winners and losers aren't born; they are the products of how they think."   Lou Holtz

Notable Quotes

"The difference between winners and losers is that winners do things losers don't want to do." Phil McGraw

"A loser says that's the way it's always been done. A winner says there ought to be a better way."   Sydney J. Harris

According to Alison R, freelance author: 27 Powerful Differences Between Winners and Losers

1. Winners Are Driven
2. Winners Take Responsibility
3. Winners Are Eager to Learn
4. Winners Are Positive Thinkers
5. Winners Are Humble
6. Winners Are Certain
7. Winners Set Goals
8. Winners Focus on Solutions
9. Winners Work Hard
10. Winners Take Action
11. Winners Listen
12. Winners Are Passionate
13. Winners Are Willing to Stand Alone
14. Winners Are Self-Motivators
15. Winners Constantly Expand Their Comfort Zone
16. Winners Have Strong Will Power
17. Winners Have High Self-Esteem
18. Winners Are Persistent
19. Winners Aren't Afraid of Failure
20. Winners Don't Procrastinate
21. Winners Are Focused
22. Winners Try to Find A Better Way
23. Winners Are Alert
24. Winners Are Confident
25. Winners Manage Their Time
26. Winners Are Always Improving
27. Winners Learn from Their Mistake

What distinguishes a Winner from a Loser? Anonymous

- The Winner is always part of the answer; The Loser is always part of the problem.

- The Winner always has a program; The Loser always has an excuse.

- The Winner says, *"Let me do it for you";* The Loser says, *"That is not my job."*

- The Winner sees an answer for every problem; The Loser sees a problem for every answer.

- The Winner says, *"It may be difficult but it is possible"*; The Loser says, *"It may be possible but it is too difficult."*

- When a Winner makes a mistake, he says, *"I was wrong"*; When a Loser makes a mistake, he says, *"It wasn't my fault."*

- A Winner makes commitments; A Loser makes promises.

- Winners have dreams; Losers have schemes.

- Winners say, *"I must do something";* Losers say, *"Something must be done."*

- Winners are a part of the team; Losers are apart from the team.

- Winners see the gain; Losers see the pain.

- Winners see possibilities; Losers see problems.

- Winners believe in win-win; Losers believe for them to win someone has to lose.

- Winners see the potential; Losers see the past.

- Winners are like a thermostat; Losers are like thermometers.

- Winners choose what they say; Losers say what they choose.

- Winners use hard arguments but soft words; Losers use soft arguments but hard words.

- Winners stand firm on values but compromise on petty things; Losers stand firm on petty things but compromise on values.

- Winners follow the philosophy of empathy: *"Don't do to others what you would not want them to do to you"*; Losers follow the philosophy, *"Do it to others before they do it to you."*

- Winners make it happen; Losers let it happen.

- Winners plan and prepare to win. The key word is preparation.

According to Frank L. Luntz: The 15 Common Traits of Winners
In the study of hundreds of successful men and women, Luntz surmised these same 15 traits among all subjects he studied.

How many of these traits do you see in yourself?
1. The ability to grasp the human dimension of every situation.
2. The ability to know what questions to ask and when to ask them.
3. The ability to see what doesn't yet exist and bring it to life.
4. The ability to see the challenge, and the solution, from every angle.
5. The ability to distinguish the essential from the important.
6. The ability and the drive to do more and do it better.
7. The ability to communicate their vision passionately and persuasively.
8. The ability to move forward when everyone around them is retrenching or slipping backward.
9. The ability to connect with others spontaneously.
10. A curiosity about the unknown.
11. A passion for life's adventures.
12. A chemistry with the people they work with and the people they want to influence.
13. The willingness to fail and the fortitude to get back up and try again.
14. A belief in luck and good fortune.
15. A love of life itself.

Suggested Reading
The Psychology of Winning by Denis Waitley

Winners vs. Losers by David Lewis

Point of Reflection
"The Winner is always part of the answer. The Loser is always part of the problem. The Winner always has a program. The Loser always has an excuse. The Winner says, "Let me do it for you." The Loser says, "That's not my job." The Winner sees an answer for every problem. The Loser sees a problem for every answer. The Winner sees a green near every sand trap. The Loser sees two or three sand traps near every green. The Winner says, "It may be difficult but it's possible. The Loser says, "It might be possible but it's too difficult." Be a Winner." Vince Lombardi

Workplace Investigations

"The truth must be quite plain, if one could just clear away the litter." Agatha Christie

According to Lisa Guerin, J.D. NOLO: Ten Steps to a Successful Workplace Investigation

1. Decide whether to investigate. Before you put on your detective's hat, take some time to decide whether you really need an investigation. In a few situations for example, if all employees agree on what happened or the problem appears to be minor you may reasonably decide that a full-blown investigation is unnecessary.

2. Take immediate action, if necessary. You might have to act right away even before you begin your investigation if a situation is volatile or could otherwise cause immediate harm to your business. If an employee is accused of sexually assaulting a coworker, stealing valuable trade secrets, or bringing a weapon to work, you'll probably want to suspend the accused employee temporarily with pay while you look into the matter.

3. Choose an investigator. You'll want an investigator who is experienced and/or trained in investigation techniques, is impartial and perceived as impartial by the employees involved, and is capable of acting and, if necessary, testifying in court professionally about the situation.

4. Plan the investigation. Take some time up front to organize your thoughts. Gather any information you already have about the problem such as an employee complaint, a supervisor's report, written warnings, or materials that are part of the problem (such as X-rated emails or threatening letters). Using this information as your guide, think about what you'll need to find out to decide what happened

5. Conduct interviews. The goal of every investigation is to gather information and the most basic way to do that is by asking people questions. Most investigations involve at least two interviews: one of the employees accused of wrongdoing and another of the employee who complained or was the victim.

6. Gather documents and other evidence. Almost every investigation will rely to some extent on documents personnel files, email messages, company policies, correspondence, and so on. And some investigations will require you to gather other types of evidence, such as drugs, a weapon, photographs, or stolen items.

7. Evaluate the evidence. The most challenging part of many investigations especially if witnesses disagree or contradict each other is figuring out what actually happened. You'll want to consider, for example, whose story makes the most sense, whose demeanor was more convincing, and who (if anyone) has a motive to deceive you.

8. Take action. Once you decide what happened, you'll have to figure out what to do about it. If you conclude that serious wrongdoing occurred, you will have to take disciplinary action quickly to avoid legal liability for that employee's behavior and to protect your company and other workers from harm.

9. Document the investigation. Once your investigation is complete, you should write an investigation report that explains what you did and why. This will not only give the company some protection from lawsuits relating to the investigation, but will also provide a written record in case of future misconduct by the same employee.

10. Follow up. The last step is to follow up with your employees to make sure that you've solved the problem that led to the investigation.

Suggested Reading
Essential Guide to Workplace Investigations, The: A Step-By-Step Guide to Handling Employee Complaints & Problems by Lisa Guerin J.D.

The Essential Guide to Workplace Investigations: How to Handle Employee Complaints & Problems by Lisa Guerin

Investigating Workplace Harassment: How to Be Fair, Thorough, and Legal by Amy Oppenheimer JD and Craig Pratt SPHR MSW

Point of Reflection
"Nothing matters but the facts. Without them, the science of criminal investigation is nothing more than a guessing game."
Blake Edwards

Part 5

Leadership & Management

*"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more
and become more, you are a leader."*

John Quincy Adams

*"Good management is the art of making problems so interesting and their solutions so
constructive that everyone wants to get to work and deal with them."*

Paul Hawken

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Actions Speak Louder Than Words
"Well done is better than well said." Benjamin Franklin

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Origin of Actions Speak Louder than Words
"Actions speak louder than words." – It has been reported that this phrase dates back as far as the 1550s, when the French writer Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592) said, *"Saying is one thing and doing is another."*

In a 1693 sermon, English Puritan clergyman Thomas Manton writes:

"So, they would give him Glory, praise him with their lips, and honor him with their Lives. They would make that their work and scope, that this may be the real language of their hearts and actions, which speak much louder than words."

Notable Quotes
"Do not be wise in words be wise in deeds." Jewish Proverb

"Pay less attention to what men say. Just watch what they do." Dale Carnegie

According to John Rampton, entrepreneur leadership network VIP:
Nine Actions Successful Leaders Take Daily That Speak Louder Than Words
1. They clearly communicate their vision and performance expectations.
2. They make lightning-fast decisions.
3. They put the spotlight on others.
4. They put themselves last.
5. They accept full responsibility and share the credit.
6. They keep people on their toes.
7. They focus on the 'how' and 'why.'
8. They take risks without being reckless.
9. They lead by example.

According to William S. Burroughs, American Writer:
Five Reasons Why Actions Speak Louder than Words
1. **Faith in what is seen rather than heard.** What are actions? A deed that is done. In other words, something that you say you will do and then go on and do it. What happens is simple. When you commit to a deed and fulfill it, people are literally able to see that you are a person of your word.

2. **Reliance on capability.** The best thing about keeping your word is that people are not only able to see that you do what you promised, but at the same time see that you are very capable. In terms of working relationships, this is perhaps the most important aspect of why actions speak louder and clearer than words.

3. **Building trust through delivery.** A world without trust is a world incomplete. And trust does not come within a day or even a week. It is developed through time, constant effort and persistent results. This is only possible when you ascertain that you deliver whatever it is that you have promised.

4. **Reputation development.** You are known by the work that you do. Your reputation, be it among your friends or at your work place will be set based on what you do. This is why you must at all times, make sure that you only say things that you have intentions of doing, because your reputation will be marked buy your actions.

5. **Words become actions.** There comes a time that your actions become words. Why? Because people come to rely on the fact that what you are saying is not simply the movement of your mouth or the sound of your voice, but rather a plan of action that you plan to embark upon! Your words become a guarantee.

Bible Verse
Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth. 1 John 3:18 NIV

Suggested Reading
Get Things Done: What Stops Smart People Achieving More and How You Can Change by Robert Kelsey

Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity by David Allen and James Fallows

Point of Reflection
"Action speaks louder than words but not nearly as often." Mark Twain

Biggest Mistakes New Managers Make & How to Avoid Them
"You can't make the same mistake twice. The second time you make it, it's no longer a mistake. It's a choice." Anonymous

According to Rob Cahill, co-founder & chief executive officer, Jhana

1. Doing instead of managing. Although there's nothing wrong with rolling up your sleeves from time to time to help your team accomplish a pressing goal, you're now being paid to direct and oversee others' work not do it yourself. So, don't keep doing what made you successful as an individual contributor. Instead, focus on helping others do their jobs well.

2. Overcommitting. It's natural to want to please others, establish credibility and make a big splash. But target those wins carefully. Try to get comfortable saying, *"I don't know yet, but I'll get back to you."* Promising too much too soon will backfire and erode your credibility.

3. Failing to manage and communicate in all directions. Your direct reports are your most important priority. True or false? False! They are very important but don't make the fatal mistake of forgetting about your new boss and peer managers. You need to manage and communicate up as well as down not to mention sideways, so your team doesn't become siloed.

4. Changing things that are better left alone. Finally, you have your chance to do things your way. You can't wait to make some big changes and show how great you are at this whole manager thing. Not so fast! Just because something seemed like a good idea from where you sat as an individual contributor or just because something worked in your previous company doesn't mean it's the right approach.

5. Relying on your newfound power to get the job done. Expecting good results simply because people are supposed to listen to you might seem to work at first. But those results will be built on a foundation of resentment and fear, rather than goodwill and trust. Set high expectations, but actively welcome alternate ideas, and integrate that feedback into your plans. Also, explain why you'd like people to do things. You don't want to be the managerial equivalent of a parent who says, *"Do it because I said so."*

6. Badmouthing the previous manager. Regardless of whether you're replacing someone terrific or terrible, keep your opinions to yourself.

7. Aligning yourself early on with anyone person or group. Don't assume you understand the politics of your new situation, even if you were promoted from within. Instead, spend the first few weeks getting to know key stakeholders and their relative political standing in the organization. Who has been successful selling their ideas? Who hasn't? Who influences big issues like budgets? Once you know the answers to these questions, you can position yourself accordingly.

8. Falling prey to "analysis paralysis." Some new managers get overwhelmed by all of the options and information coming at them and just freeze. Take a week or two to get a lay of the land, and then decide on a course of action. It's better to move forward with something that's 80 percent of the way there than spend precious time crafting the "perfect" plan.

9. Acting like another one of the gang. Don't pretend that the new power dynamic that goes along with your job doesn't exist. It does. While you can still have great rapport with your team, you need to put fairness above fraternizing.

10. Unknowingly repeating one of your past managers' bad behaviors. It's natural when something goes wrong; we draw on memories of things we've seen before. But many of us have had bad managers (whether we realize it or not). Beware of replicating negative behaviors instead of forging a healthier path.

Avoiding major mistakes is the beginning of the new manager's journey, not the end. It takes years of small steps and daily effort to become a truly great manager. In the meantime, there are three things every new manager can do to improve: get a mentor, do a lot of reading on the topic of management and practice, practice, practice.

Suggested Reading
The 8 Greatest Mistakes New Managers Make by Tom Davidson

Basic Training for New Managers by Lloyd Smigel

Skills for New Managers by Morey Stettner

Point of Reflection
"You cannot correct your mistakes by pointing out the mistakes of others." Anonymous

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Change Blindness

"Sometimes the most difficult thing is to be able to see the most obvious thing!" Mehmet Murat Ildan

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According to a 2005 study published in the journal Trends in Cognitive Science, the term change blindness *"refers to the surprising difficulty observers have in noticing large changes to visual scenes."*

According to Kendra Cherry, educational consultant and speaker:
Change Blindness in the Real World
Detecting change plays a major role in our ability to function in our daily life. You can probably already think of a few examples of when change blindness might cause problems in real-world situations.

Causes of change blindness. The ability to detect change around us plays a major role in our daily life, such as noticing when a car drifts into our lane of traffic or observing a person entering a room. If the ability to perceive a change in our environment is so important, then why do we often fail to notice major changes?

Focused attention and limited resources. At this very moment, your attention is focused on the words you are reading. While you are looking at this sentence, are you giving any attention to the color of the wall of the room you are in? Are you aware of the position that your feet are in? Until you were asked that question, it's highly unlikely that you were paying attention to either of those things.

According to researchers Daniel Simons and Daniel Levin, our attention is limited. We have to pick and choose what we focus on. We can only focus on a limited number of objects at any given time, and it's those few objects that we pay attention to in great detail. Large volumes of information simply pass by our awareness because we lack the resources to attend to it.

According to Jeff Cole, owner and principal of JCG Management Consulting
Recognize that Change Blindness is a very real phenomenon. You know that recent email you sweated over for three hours to get the wording just so? Don't feel downhearted if people don't read it or even if they do and don't remember it. It's one of 150 emails they saw today that fell into the background of change blindness.

Eight times/eight ways. My mentor used to have that as a saying when it came to communicating change. If you want to pop out of the background of everything else that's being deleted, you have to get your messages out multiple times and via multiple communication channels. Stand out – be unique. There is massive competition every second for your audience's attention. Once you have their attention, there's something to be said for being succinct, sincere, and simple.

In an environment, where everyone is trying to do their own job plus the jobs of two other people who have been laid off, you can bet the dial on the delete-o-meter is in the red zone. Not a lot of excess attention capacity when people are spread thin and trying to stay focused as they nimbly jump between multiple projects.

Gorilla Suit Experiment
This infamous study has been replicated many different times. In the original one, participants watched a video of six people and had to count how many times the ones wearing white tee-shirts passed a basketball to each other. During this time, a woman entered the scene in a gorilla suit, stared at the camera, banged on her chest then walked away. Half the participants didn't see the gorilla. It appears that if we focus on one task we cannot see other things.

Bottom Line
Recognize the phenomenon, and be prepared to adjust the length, frequency, content, and delivery methods of your change communications. Also, recognize you are prone to this as well. Work to periodically change your frame of reference and focus you never know what you may find!

Sherlock Holmes teaches us to be constantly mindful of our surroundings, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
"The world is full of obvious things which nobody by any chance ever observes."
Sherlock Holmes Quote-The Hound of the Baskervilles

'You see, but you do not observe. The distinction is clear.'
Sherlock Holmes Quote-A Scandal in Bohemia

"There is nothing more deceptive than an obvious fact."
Sherlock Holmes Quote-Boscombe Valley Mystery

According to Janey Davies, sub-editor of the website Learning-mind.com:
How to Reduce the Effects of Change Blindness
- Individuals are more likely to make this sort of mistake than people in groups.

- Changes are easier to stop when objects are produced holistically. For example, a whole face rather than just the facial features.

- Changes in the foreground are detected more easily than changes in the background.

- Experts are more likely to notice changes in their own field of study.

- Visual cues can help bring the focus back onto the object of attention.

According to Alexis Johannessen, magician:
How do you avoid change blindness?
The most effective way to reduce change blindness is by simply knowing and understanding what it is. If you understand what change blindness is you can use this to become more self-aware of what you could possibly be missing due to your attention being elsewhere.

Suggested Reading
How Attention Works: Finding Your Way in a World Full of Distraction by Stefan Van der Stigchel and Danny Guinan

The Invisible Gorilla by Christopher Chabris and Daniel Simons

Willful Blindness: Why We Ignore the Obvious at Our Peril by Margaret Heffernan

Point of Reflection
"The obvious can sometimes be illuminating when perceived in an unhabitual way." Daniel Quinn

Challenging the Status Quo
"The manager accepts the status quo; the leader challenges it."

Warren G. Bennis

According to Lolly Daskal, executive leadership coach
- Every single leader, movement, and organization that has ever wanted to create greatness has had to challenge the status quo.
- Leaders challenge the status quo to attract improvements.
- Organizations challenge the status quo to assemble advancements.
- Challenging the status quo is inspiring ordinary people to become extraordinary leaders.
- People who challenge the status quo to dig deeper than just surface issues.
- Challenging the status quo takes an open mind that questions everything.
- Every challenge involves confronting the status quo. This precept means we have to test the unproven, dive deep in the unspoken, and challenge the unchallenged.
- Nothing great is ever achieved by doing things the way they have always been done.
- To challenge the status quo, we must take one fearless choice at a time, one brave decision at a time, one courageous action at a time. These choices, decisions, and actions transform challenges into exploration, risk into reward, and fear into determination.

Start by asking yourself:
- What needs to be challenged?
- What action will you take to challenge the status quo?
- What needs to be improved?
- What is the greatest risk?
- What can I expect?
- What can I learn?

After challenging the status quo ask yourself:
- What have I learned?
- What did I not expect?
- What went right?
- What went wrong?
- What would I do differently?
- What could I have done better?

Addition Thoughts
- When we challenge the status quo, we test our skills and we challenge ourselves.
- We are not here to stay content. We are here to do better. The gift of life is to make a difference, and the call of leadership is to say this is not good enough.
- We have the choice to make things better.
- We have an obligation to challenge the status quo.
- When we meet that obligation, we are inspiring others to do better and think bigger.

Suggested Reading
Think Wrong: How to Conquer the Status Quo and Do Work That Matters by John Bielenberg

Do Disrupt: Change the Status Quo. Or become it by Mark Shayler

Point of Reflection
"Everything that can be invented has been invented." Charles H. Duell, (U.S. Patent Commissioner from 1898 to 1901)

Characteristics of a Good Manager

"The best executive is the one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done, and self-restraint to keep from meddling with them while they do it." Theodore Roosevelt

Challenges me to do my best.
Explains the reasons for instructions and procedures.
Helps me polish my thoughts before I present them to others.
Is objective about things.
Let's me make my own decisions.
Cares about me and how I'm doing.
Does not seek the limelight.
Won't let me give up.
Gives personal guidance and direction, especially when I'm learning something new.
Is empathetic and understanding.
Is firm but fair.
Makes me work out most of my own problems but supports me.
Let's me know where I stand.
Listens exceptionally well.
Doesn't put words in my mouth.
Is easy to talk to.
Keeps the promises he or she makes.
Keeps me focused on the goals ahead.
Works as hard as or harder than anyone else.
Is humble.
Is proud of those managers he or she has developed.
Gives credit openly where credit is due.
Practices Management By Walking About
Never says "I told you so."
Corrects my performance in private.
Never flaunts authority.
Is always straightforward.
Gives at least a second chance.
Maintains an Open-Door Policy.
Uses language that is easy to understand.
Let's bygones be bygones.
Inspires loyalty.
Really wants to hear my ideas, and acts on them.
Celebrates successes.

Is open and honest.
Doesn't hide bad news.
Gives me enough time to prepare for discussion.
Is enthusiastic.
Follows through.
Is patient.
Wants me to "stretch" my skills.
Gives me his or her full attention during discussions, won't be distracted.
Has a sense of humor.
Handles disagreements privately.
Reassures me.
Makes me feel confident.
Says "we" instead of "I."
Makes hard work worth it.
Can communicate annoyance without running wild.
Is courageous.
Insists on training.
Is a stabilizing influence in a crisis.
Gets everyone involved.
Wants me to be successful.
Is optimistic.
Operates well under pressure, or in a rapidly changing environment.
Has a reputation for competence
Has a good understanding of the job.
Is tough and tender.
Believes we can do it.
Sets attainable milestones.
Communicates philosophy and values.
Has a strong sense of urgency.
Preserves the individuality of his or her team members.
Thinks and operates at a level above that expected.
Wants to make the organization the best in the industry.
Is there when we need him or her.
Enjoys his or her job.
Likes to spend time with us.

Suggested Reading
The Making of a Manager: What to Do When Everyone Looks to You by Julie Zhuo

The Harvard Business Review Managers Handbook: The 17 Skills Leaders Need

Point of Reflection

"Good management consists in showing average people how to do the work of superior people." John D. Rockefeller

Characteristics of a Successful Mentor

"Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn." Benjamin Franklin

According to Susan M Heathfield, human resource and management consultant:
Characteristics of Successful Mentors

- They want to mentor another employee and is committed to the employee's growth and development and cultural integration.
- They have the job content knowledge necessary to effectively teach a new employee significant job knowledge.
- They are familiar with the organization's norms and culture. Can articulate and teach the culture.
- They demonstrate honesty, integrity, and respect for and responsibility for stewardship.
- They demonstrate effective communication skills, both verbally and nonverbally.
- They are willing to help develop another employee through guidance, feedback, and occasionally, an insistence on a particular level of performance or appropriate direction.
- They initiate new ideas and foster the employee's willingness and ability to make changes in his or her performance based on the constant change occurring in their work environment.
- They have enough emotional intelligence to be aware of their personal emotions and is sensitive to the emotions and feelings of the employee they are mentoring.
- They are an individual who would be rated as highly successful in both their job and in navigating the organization's culture by coworkers and managers.
- They demonstrate success in establishing and maintaining professional networks and relationships, both online and offline.
- They are willing to communicate failures as well as successes to the mentored employee.
- They can spend an appropriate amount of time with the mentored employee.

According to Adam Smith, author The Bravest You:
The Top 10 Qualities of a Great Mentor

1. A great mentor is a great listener.
2. A great mentor is excited to encourage you.
3. A great mentor seeks to understand.
4. A great mentor has prior experience in your specific area of focus and handled it in a way that you agree with.
5. A great mentor genuinely cares about your outcome.
6. A great mentor is truthful with you and won't sugarcoat the situation as they teach you.
7. A great mentor believes in you, because they see your potential.
8. A great mentor can develop a plan for you and will help you execute it.
9. A great mentor isn't there only to teach, but to learn from you as well. Learning from you will help their own journey, and will also help them in future mentoring relationships.
10. A great mentor will teach from the mistakes they have made along the way, in hopes that you will have an easier journey.

Suggested Reading
The Coaching Habit: Say Less, Ask More & Change the Way Your Lead Forever by Michael Bungay Stanier

Mentoring 101: What Every Leader Needs to Know by John C. Maxwell

Point of Reflection

"A mentor is someone who sees more talent and ability within you, than you see in yourself, and helps bring it out of you." Bob Proctor

Chicken Little
"The sky is falling! The sky is falling!" Chicken Little, aka Henny Penny

According to Suzanne Montgomery, physician, author, encourager
In this folktale, an acorn falls on Chicken Little's head. She doesn't see what hit her but instead of investigating; she at once believes the sky is falling. She convinces her friends that a catastrophic event is eminent. Even though this is a children's story, the author obviously aimed its moral at an adult audience. How many times do we respond to bad news like Chicken Little or her friends? Often we believe everything we read or hear without making the effort to truly investigate its validity. This is especially true if it fits the narrative of our worldview. But before we start pointing fingers, please be aware. This behavior isn't reserved for one particular group or another. Every one of us falls prey to unsubstantiated information more than we'd like to admit.

According to In Business Greater Madison Site Staff: Three tips to calm Chicken Little
1. Let Chicken Little vent (but not on and on and on). Many people try to deal with emotional situations by getting straight to the issue and problem- solving right away. This ignores the emotion. When someone presents us with a "sky is falling" situation, it is useful to address three things (in this order): 1) our own emotional reaction to the other person's behaviors (we can't successfully problem-solve if our emotions are getting in the way), 2) the other person's emotions (the other person, aka Chicken Little, can't focus if emotion is driving the discussion), and 3) the content. By addressing these three things in this order, it allows us to better coach others and ultimately address the core issue.

2. Reframe the situation. Understanding and helping Chicken Little see the "other side" of a situation is key to calming a "sky is falling" response. Reassessing the situation and framing it in a new way can help the individual be more positive about what is happening.

Ask the following:
• What's another way to look at that?
• Could the opposite be true?
• What assumptions are you making?
• What is the worst/best thing that can happen?

3. Identify facts versus opinions. Summarize your understanding of what Chicken Little has said. Ask questions and avoid placing blame or judging. Avoid absolute words (always, never, everyone, no one). Acknowledge and validate thoughts and feelings, and be persistent about the purpose and direction of your conversation. If it is your perception or opinion, state it as such; and wherever possible, provide facts and specific examples of behavior. You can calm Chicken Little if you stay calm, don't let him or her sidetrack you, and remember to focus (or refocus) on what you are trying to accomplish.

Suggested Reading
Henny Penny (Folk Tale Classics) by Paul Galdone

Point of Reflection
"*You want me to be all doom and gloom, or just shut up?*" Stephenie Meyer

Choose Your Battles Wisely
"Choose your battles carefully. Peace is often far better than proving someone wrong." Katrina Mayer

According to Personal Excellence: Why is it important to choose your battles?
Not everything is important. Some things simply don't matter in the long run. If you think about what matters 5, 10, even 20 years from now, it's apparent that many of the things we worry about are small, and we should instead focus on the big important things.

Every battle takes up time. Every problem you wrap yourself in takes up time and energy. Even if you win that battle, maybe your time could have been better spent elsewhere. Victory isn't all that matters sometimes making the best use of your time is.

Seven Tips to Choose Your Battles (and Win Them)
1. Evaluate the problem. Believe it or not, most of the things that disrupt us on a daily basis are small, petty things with no impact in the long run. This includes toxic people and people who try to get you down.

When faced with a problem, you want to ask yourself:
- Is this problem really important?
- Do I need to deal with it?
- Can my time be better spent elsewhere?

2. Do a cost-benefit analysis. In the investment world, cost-benefit analysis is a systematic approach to estimate the strengths and weaknesses of a business investment, so that you can determine if this investment is sound.

When facing an impending battle, doing a cost-benefit analysis helps you decide if the battle is worth fighting. Ask yourself:
- Do the costs outweigh the benefits? If the answer is "yes," it's generally better to let go and move on.
- What are the odds of success? If the odds of success are very low, then it may be better to just move on as well.

3. Go for win-win, not win-lose. Should you decide to pick the battle, work toward a win-win situation where both of you will emerge victorious.

4. **Have an open discussion.** An important part of a win-win is to have an open discussion. When we act based on our vision of success, we are shutting the other person out without listening to what they want.

- Seek to understand.
- Share your views and let the person have a chance to share theirs.
- Be supportive as the other person is sharing their views.
- Brainstorm the best solution.

5. Ground yourself in high consciousness (Don't get angry). Once you decide to engage in the battle, ground yourself in high consciousness to achieve the best outcome for both of you. Remember, your goal is to achieve a win-win, not to bring your "opponent" down. The enemy here is the conflict at hand, not the other person.

6. Have an exit point. All battles can be won if you have unlimited resources. The reality though is that we don't have unlimited resources. We can't spend forever working on a problem if it's not progressing despite our best effort.

Have a cut-loss point that tells you, *"Okay, that's it, time to cut my losses and move on."* This is the point where you exit the battle because you have incurred your maximum loss and you don't want to invest any more time or energy into this.

7. Let go of unresolved problems. If the problem remains unresolved despite your best effort, let it go. Success comes not from not winning every battle, but learning to let go when it's time to do so.

Suggested Reading
Choosing Your Battles: Inspiration and Wisdom from a Navy SEAL on How to Win Your Battles and Ensure a Positive Outcome By Don Mann and Kraig Becker

The Art of War by Sun Tzu and Ralph D. Sawyer

Point of Reflection
"Choose your battles wisely. After all, life isn't measured by how many times you stood up to fight. It's not winning battles that makes you happy, but it's how many times you turned away and chose to look into a better direction. Life is too short to spend it on warring. Fight only the most, most, most important ones let the rest go." C. JoyBell C.

Continuous Improvement
"What's Measured Improves" Peter Drucker

Notable Quotes

"That which is measured improves. That which is measured and reported improves exponentially." Karl Pearson

"When performance is measured, performance improves. When performance is measured and reported back, the rate of improvement accelerates." Thomas S. Monson

"What gets measured gets managed." "What doesn't get measured doesn't get managed. What gets measured gets done." "To measure is to know." Anonymous

According to Jeff Slater, director continuous improvement SE Region
There is a lot more that goes into any process than just measurement. There are three fundamental practices that are needed for your scoreboard or dashboard to be effective:

1. The goals and metrics you are measuring have to align with corporate goals. If they align with your overall strategy, those goals and metrics still need to pass the "gut check." Does it make sense? If I do this, will I get the results that I want?

2. Demonstrate the link between the metrics and the overall corporate goals. Just because they align does not mean that the people performing the work see that connection. The metrics/goals must be simple enough that each person sees that the tasks they work on each day impact the overall company's performance.

3. Leadership has to follow-up – simply measuring something will NEVER ensure an action (or actions) "gets done." Leadership must review, challenge and provide feedback on the work being done.

According to Maggie Millard, director of marketing KaiNexus:
28 Questions to Rapid Continuous Improvement
1. Are all critical processes documented?
2. Are all process documents up to date?
3. Can everyone who needs them access the process documents?
4. Could process documents be improved with images or video?
5. Is there a new hire training plan for each role? Is there a process in place to promote and facilitate cross-functional collaboration?
6. Is each workspace adequately arranged and equipped for the work that happens there?
7. Do employees have an easy way to report potential opportunities for improvement?
8. Have employees been trained on the rapid continuous improvement philosophy and introduced to Kaizen?
9. Is there a catch ball system (catch ball ensures that everyone who should give input, does? and ensures that everyone is committed to doing what everyone agreed to.)
10. Do managers have a way to broadcast improvements?
11. Is there a recognition engine for those who contribute to positive change?
12. Do managers spend at least some time each month going to the place where work gets done to observe and reflect?
13. Are individual, departmental and company goals all aligned?
14. Have the company's short- and long-term goals been communicated to every employee?
15. Is there a structure in place to support the PDSA (Plan, Do, Study, Act) approach to? Improvement?
16. Are employees given constructive feedback frequently enough?
17. Is there a repository for documenting improvement efforts and capturing tribal knowledge?
18. Have you trimmed down on excess inventory, parts, or projects?
19. Does each area of the business have a clearly defined list of key performance indicators and a way to measure them?

20. Is it easy for a prospect or customer who visits your website or calls your organization to find the information or person they need?
21. Can employees easily identify and reach others in the organization that might be able to help them with a challenge?
22. Are the results of improvement activities measured against business objectives such as cost savings, quality improvement and revenue?
23. Is employee engagement actively managed and measured?
24. Is there a process for getting to the root cause of product defects or dissatisfied customers?
25. Is the process of buying from you as painless as possible?
26. Is there a simple way for customers to provide both positive and negative feedback?
27. Do managers have real-time visibility into the status of improvement projects?
28. Do employees feel empowered to speak up when they spot an urgent problem?

Suggested Reading
The ASQ Quality Improvement Pocket Guide Basic History, Concepts, Tools, and Relationships
By Grace L. Duffy

How to Succeed with Continuous Improvement by Joakim Ahlstrom

Point of Reflection
"*Small daily improvements over time lead to stunning results.*" Robin Sharma

Dead Horse Management Strategy

"If you focus on results, you will never change. If you focus on change, you will get results."

Jack Dixon

The tribal wisdom of the Lakota Sioux Indians of the Dakota Indians, passed on from generation to generation, says that, *"When you discover that you are riding a dead horse, the best strategy is to dismount"*

According to Jacque Vilet, president of Vilet International

However, in modern business, because of the heavy investment factors to be taken into consideration, often other strategies have to be tried with dead horses, including the following:

- Buy a stronger whip.
- Change riders.
- Threaten the horse with termination.
- Appoint a committee to study the horse.
- Arrange to visit other sites to see how they ride dead horses.
- Lower the standards so that dead horses can be included.
- Appoint an intervention team to re-animate the dead horse.
- Reclassify the dead horse as living-impaired.
- Post a form that reads: "This horse is not dead."
- Hire outside contractors to ride the dead horse.
- Harness several dead horses together for increased speed.
- Donate the dead horse to a recognized charity, thereby deducting its full original cost.
- Provide additional funding to increase the horse's performance.
- Do a time management study to see if lighter riders would improve productivity.
- Purchase an after-market product to make dead horses run faster.
- Declare that because of lower overhead, the dead horse is actually performing better than ever.
- Form a quality focus group to find profitable uses for dead horses.
- Promote the dead horse to a supervisory position.

When Companies Deny that the Horse is Dead

Whip the horse a little harder. When management has a particular way of doing something, and they find that all of a sudden it doesn't work anymore, their first reaction is denial. So, they try the same method again and again. Who was it that said, *"Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results is the definition of insanity"*?

Change the rider. If the same method, model, and technique doesn't work after trying it a number of times and still coming up empty, upper management may decide there is something wrong with the person leading the "charge." They may decide to replace him/her in hopes that if a new person takes responsibility, it will solve the problem and things will return to normal.

Harness several dead horses together for increased speed. If frustration continues with no resolution to the problem, top management may decide to make a team of talent responsible for success, thinking that a combination of people will be able to accomplish what a single person could not do (and in less time).

Emulate the best practices of companies riding dead horses. If the problem is still not resolved, top management may decide to look at the competition to see how they accomplish their goals. After looking at several of their competitors, they may come up with a "best practices" model.

They decide this model should be used in resolving their problem — regardless of whether the companies reviewed have the same business strategies or not. All of a sudden, "best practices" becomes the company mantra and everyone has to march to the same tune. Of course, they cannot understand why implementing these best practices doesn't resolve the dead horse problem.

Proclaim that it's cheaper to feed a dead horse. Management looks at costs and declares that doing the same thing over and over at least saves money. It is less costly, carries lower overhead, and therefore, contributes substantially more to the bottom line of the economy than do some other horses.

Root Cause Analysis (RCA)
The main problem of these decisions is not seeing the root cause. The root cause analysis is one of the most fundamental concepts to improve any process. Root cause analysis (RCA) is defined as a collective term that describes a wide range of approaches, tools, and techniques used to uncover causes of problems.

Don't defend the dead horse (strategy, project, etc.). Don't keep doing things that aren't delivering results or making the desired impact. Don't go from one dead horse to another. Fix the things (people, processes, systems) that are broken. "*Time to get a fresh horse."*

In the 1958 movie, Teacher's Pet, in which Clark Gable plays a successful, but uneducated editor of a New York newspaper, and Doris Day plays a professor teaching a journalism class. The theme of this romantic movie evolves around which is more important, education or experience? Clark Gable concludes that "*experience is the jockey, education is the horse."*

Suggested Reading
The ASQ Pocket Guide to Root Cause Analysis by Bjørn Andersen and Tom Natland Fagerhaug

Root Cause Analysis: The Core of Problem Solving and Corrective Action by Duke Okes

Point of Reflection
"The definition of Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." Anonymous

Delegation Is An Art

"The first rule of management is delegation. Don't try and do everything yourself because you can't."

<div align="right">Anthea Turner</div>

According to Peter Economy, Wall Street Journal best-selling business author

When you lead others, it is important to know that there is an art to delegating. While some leaders think it takes too much of their time and attention to delegate work to their people, there's a big upside to this process. If done correctly, you will find that your staff is more productive and happier as a result. When your people know you trust them enough to delegate an important task, it boosts their motivation to get the job done.

It is time to begin delegating if you haven't started already, or refine how you delegate if you have, by following these steps:

1. Always provide feedback. Make sure to contribute both positive and negative feedback, so the person you're giving responsibility to will understand what he or she is doing well and how they need to improve. Exceptional performance is more likely to continue if it's recognized and rewarded.

2. Be sure to keep an eye on things. Monitoring the work of people will both motivate them and help you to catch problems as they arise. An inexperienced team member will need more oversight. More experienced employees can handle greater freedom and self-manage their initiative, ingenuity, and imagination.

3. Be clear about what you want your employees to do. Make sure employees understand the responsibilities they are assuming and that they accept them. Ask them to confirm their understandings with you.

4. Delegate the right things. Delegate recurring tasks, detail work, attendance at some meetings, and activities that will be part of team members' future responsibilities. Reserve for yourself performance evaluations, disciplinary actions, counseling and morale problems, confidential tasks, tasks specifically assigned to you, complex situations, and sensitive situations.

5. Provide guidance when necessary. If the work veers too far from the planned guidelines, take immediate and decisive corrective action. You're not doing anyone any favors by stepping back entirely from your assignments. Mutually agree on a plan to return to the targeted goals. If the situation doesn't improve, end the assignment and move on.

6. Give employees the authority they need to get the job done. Any delegated task must be accompanied by a delegation of authority--that is, the power and resources to get the job done. Authority may include giving the employee power to spend money, seek assistance from others, or represent the department or company.

7. Have the right attitude about delegating. Leaders sometimes view planning as a hindrance to getting their best work done, but planning to delegate is an investment in your people, your company's culture, and in your business. It's a good thing, not a bad thing.

8. Consider the skills and interests of your people. When assigning a task, consider each person's demonstrated skill, interest in the task, and current workload. Know his or her record of success on similar assignments--how they work with others, when they operate best, and how well they work under pressure.

9. Set clear expectations. Explain both the overall goals of the task along with the standards that will be used to measure results. Make sure the goals are specific, attainable, relevant, and measurable.

Suggested Reading

Successful Delegation: The Hassle-Free Way to Get Other People to Work for Everyone's Benefit
by Bill Truby

The Incredibly Useful Book of Delegation: How to Delegate So It Gets Done Correctly the First Time!
by Silver Rose

Point of Reflection
"If you want to do a few small things right, do them yourself. If you want to do great things and make a big impact, learn to delegate." John C. Maxwell

Deming's 14 Points of Management

"If you can't describe what you are doing as a process, you don't know what you're doing."

W. Edwards Deming

Deming's 14 points of Management

1. Create constancy of purpose towards improvement of products and service in order to become competitive, stay in business, and provide jobs. Replace short-term reaction with long-term planning.

2. Adopt the new philosophy, management must learn that it is a new economic age and awaken to the challenge, learn their responsibilities, and take on a leadership role.

3. Cease dependence on inspection. If variation is reduced, there is no need to inspect manufactured items for defects, because there won't be any.

4. Stop awarding contracts on the basis of solely low bids.

5. Improve constantly and forever. Constantly strive to reduce variation.

6. Institute training on the job.

7. Institute leadership the purpose of leadership should be to help people and technology work better.

8. Drive out fear. Fear is counter- productive in the long term, because it prevents workers from acting in the organization's best interests.

9. Break down barriers between departments so people can work as a team.

10. Eliminate slogans and production targets for the workforce. Substitute leadership.

11. Eliminate quotas and management by objectives.

12. Remove barriers that rob employees of their pride of workmanship.

13. Institute a vigorous program of education and self-improvement.

14. Make the transformation is everyone's job and put everyone to work on it.

Suggested Reading
Out of Crisis by Peter F. Drucker

Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices by Peter F. Drucker

Point of Reflection
A bad system will beat a good person every time." W. Edwards Deming

Deming's 85% Rule

"Eighty-five percent of the reasons for failure are deficiencies in the systems and process rather than the employee. The role of management is to change the process rather than badgering individuals to do better." W. Edwards Deming

- Deming had a principle he called the 85/15 rule. What the rule meant was the 85% of an employees' performance was determined by the system the employee worked within. Only 15% was the actually employee. That means than if you're looking at a poor performer and wondering what to do, look around first and make sure it's not an environmental factor that's diminishing performance.

- So, make sure they have the resources they need. Make sure coworkers are working well together. And honestly, make sure that you've made your expectations clear.

- A lot of poor performance can actually be explained by good employees working hard to achieve what they THINK are management's objectives, only to find out too late they were working on the wrong tasks.

- If it's not the system, then poor performers themselves. But even here, it may or may not be what we would fairly label an individual's "fault." Inside of individual performance, there are many factors.

- Poor performance could be a capability issue, meaning your people lack the knowledge, skills, or abilities to do the job. And hence your role is to find training or find a better position for them.

- It could be a communication issue, meaning they're not interacting properly with the rest of the team (and it is their "fault") but they simply need some interpersonal skills development. Or, it could be a motivation issue.

- Perhaps they're burned out of doing the same projects over and over again and need something that will stretch and grow them. Perhaps they're not responding to the usual company incentives and you need to help find something else they'd work toward.

Suggested Reading
Four Days with Dr. Deming: A Strategy for Modern Methods of Management by William J. Latzko, W. Edwards Deming, and David M. Saunders

Point of Reflection
"The worker is not the problem. The problem is at the top! Management." W. Edward Deming

Effective Management Requires Good Metrics
"If you can't measure it, you can't improve it." Peter Drucker

According to Bruce Eckfeldt, founder of Eckfeldt & Associates:
11 Types of Metrics You Need to Know
1. Absolute number. This is the simplest of metrics. Use it when you only want to know the count. Some examples include number of widgets produced, total headcount, and total revenue.

2. Equivalence number. The best example of this is Full Time Equivalent or FTE. This number is helpful when you have lots of fractional or partial units and you want to know what they all add up to. Use this when you want to see the net impact or total effect.

3. Relative number. Often times, it's better to see things as a ratio or a proportion. For example, if you're growing quickly, Use Accounts Receivable (AR) as a percentage of recent revenue to check to see if our AR is growing faster or slower than the overall business.

4. Number per unit of time. If you want to track a rate or pace, you need to introduce a unit of time. Calls per day or visitors per hour will give insight into changes in activity and rates are better and more meaningful than simply looking at cumulative numbers.

5. Percent of target. If you have a clear number that you're trying to reach, try measuring results as a percentage. For example, if you're trying to hit $24,500 a day in website orders, showing $22,345 as 91.2 percent is easier to compare and interpret.

6. Percent of forecast. If your target is changing over time, set your percentage relative to the changing forecast. This is critical if your business has any seasonality or business cycles. If you're in retail and you use straight line monthly sales targets, you'll be grossly misled. Instead, set monthly or weekly targets based on known peaks and valleys and report actual sales as a percent of those forecasts.

7. Rate of change. When a company is growing, we expect numbers to increase or decrease. So instead of looking at a straight percentage, also show the change in the percentage as a percentage. For example, page views might be going up, seeing that this week's increase was 34 percent lower than last week's increase will catch your eye.

8. Rolling average. If your data is highly variable, it can be difficult to see trends. In this case, take the average of the most recent few days or weeks to get a rolling average to smooth out the ups and downs so you can see the bigger picture.

9. Within limits. This comes up a lot when there is an acceptable tolerance in industries such as manufacturing and product distribution. Here you want set a target and then report on the absolute difference between the actual and the target.

10. Step functions. If things are a little more complicated, you might need to use a step function. This helps when you have measurements that require different levels. For example, if different resources are paid different amounts, if different processes have different costs, you'll need ranges.

11. Multivariate functions. If you have multiple variables that feed into a calculation, you need to create a function. Sophisticated sales forecasts take into account the size of the deal, the type of client, how long it's been in play, and the service being proposed in order to come up with a total pipeline value.

Regardless of the metrics you use, be sure to balance the complexity and cost of collecting and analyzing the data with the benefits you get once these metrics become management tools for your company.

Suggested Reading
Metrics: How to Improve Key Business Results by Martin Klubeck

Measure What Matters by John E. Doerr

Point of Reflection
"It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data." Sherlock Holmes, "A Study in Scarlett" Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Everything Comes With A Price

"Everything comes at a price. Everything in your life. The question you have to ask yourself, what price are you willing to pay?"
Paullina Simons

Notable Quotes

"Whatever the price, identify it now. What will you have to go through to get where you want to be? There is a price you can pay to be free of the situation once and for all. It may be a fantastic price or a tiny one - but there is a price." Harry Browne

"Everything comes with a price. You can never gain something if you don't sacrifice something of equal value. Once a choice is made that is the price." Anonymous

"All of life is a transaction. You can get anything you want, but what are you willing to give up to get it?" Joel Runyon

According to Quora.com.

Everything comes with a price means basically the same thing as choose your battles. You have to decide if the consequences of an action are worth taking the action. While not everything costs money, everything does have consequences.

Excerpt from The Whispering Heart: Your Inner Guide to Creativity, by Shannon Skinner

The price of success. Every goal we set out to achieve has a price tag attached. There is a price to pay for everything in life. Success has its price. Having a family has its price. A life of riches and glamour has its price. Living from paycheck to paycheck has its price. Self-employment has its price, but so does working for a corporation. Whatever lifestyle we choose to embrace has its price. Forget the free lunch. Nothing in life is free. There is a price to pay for everything, even if it is a hidden cost.

Your dream has its price. When we look at the big picture, we must determine if we are willing to pay the price to follow our desires. For instance, perhaps you want to start a second career -- your dream career -- but it may mean taking a salary cut to enable you to dedicate the necessary time. How much is it worth to you? If it means having less money in the short-term it may be worth it.

Your creativity has its price. If you are in a high state of creative flow and work night and day on creating your masterpiece, your social life will pay the price. Maybe to you it is a small price to pay for creating something from your heart. If you are working madly day and night on your creation, your physical health may pay the price. At some point, you will be faced with making difficult choices. If you are afraid to make decisions that will enable you to follow your creative desires that decision alone has its price.

According to Surbhi S, author:

Difference between trade-off and opportunity cost. Economics is all about making choices, in order to make best possible use of the scarce resource. Whenever we make a choice among various alternatives, we have to forgo other options. In this context, two economic terms are often misconstrued, which are the trade-off and opportunity cost. While a trade-off denotes the option we give up, to obtain what we want.

On the other hand, the opportunity cost is the cost of the second-best alternative given up to make a choice. In other words, it is the cost of the opportunity that is missed and so it makes a comparison between the project accepted and the rejected one.

Definition of trade-off. In economics, trade-off means the exchange, in which a person sacrifices one or more things for getting a particular product, service or experience. It refers to all the courses of action which could be employed, other than the present one. It is a deal, that arises as a compromise, wherein to obtain a certain aspect we have to lose another aspect.

Definition of opportunity cost. Opportunity cost or alternative cost, as the name suggest, is the cost of opportunity lost, i.e., an opportunity to generate revenue is lost, because of the scarcity of resources such as labor, material, capital, plant and machinery, land and so on. It is the actual return of the forsaken alternative, which cannot be obtained, due to the scarcity of resources.

Conclusion
The concept of scarcity gave birth to the notion of trade-off and opportunity cost. These directly apply the principle of scarcity, as people have to decide, which one to choose among various alternatives while spending their time and money. The opportunity cost of choosing a project over the other, i.e., it is the alternative you must give up while making a choice. On the other hand, trade-off refers to all the other actions which we could be doing, apart from what we are doing.

Suggested Reading
The Whispering Heart: Your Inner Guide to Creativity by Shannon Skinner

The Power of Discipline: How to Use Self Control and Mental Toughness to Achieve Your Goals
by Daniel Walter

Point of Reflection
"No matter what you're trying to accomplish, you'll have to give up something in order to make it happen." Ronald D. Sears

How You Handle Bad Decisions Defines You
"Own your mistakes and you'll own your achievements." Anonymous

According to Positively Present: Five Steps for Recovering from a Bad Decision
1. **Take full responsibility**. The first step you must take when having made a poor choice is recognize the part you played in a situation.

2. **Understand your choices**. It's essential that you understand why you made the decision you made. Keep in mind that this is not a time to think of excuses for why it happened; this is a time to understand why it happened so you can avoid making similar decisions in the future.

3. **Apologize and explain**. If your decision hurt anyone else, the best thing you can do is apologize and explain. Don't offer excuses or try to play down the situation in any way.

4. **Focus on the present**. When you've made a bad decision, it can be tempting to dwell on that but, that's a waste of time.

5. **Be proactive in the future.** The best thing you can do for yourself when you find that you've knowingly made a bad decision is to find ways to be proactive after the fact. Ask yourself what can be fixed or changed now.

According to Jamie Friedlander, freelance writer
1. Accept your emotions. Suppressing your emotions will get you nowhere.

2. Then, focus on the cold, hard facts. Once you've recognized and accepted the emotions you have following a poor decision, Dr. Benjamin Ritter, Ed.D., founder of LFY Consulting, says one of the best things you can do is focus on the facts.

3. Don't let the bad decision consume you. Tristan Gutner, a life and business coach says it's important to mentally separate yourself from the decision. Doing so can help you strip it of its power. *"Once we've made what we'd call a bad decision, we give it a lot of meaning it does not inherently have."*

4. Forgive yourself. Don't be too hard on yourself in the wake of a poor decision. Use the failure of your bad decision as leverage for future success.

5. Accept your regret. After making a bad judgment call, your mind will likely be flooded with regret. This regret, it turns out, can actually be a powerful tool. Accept your regret and move forward.

6. If your regret is all-consuming, try practicing gratitude. We all have regrets. *"Things we wish we did differently or didn't say. But those regrets don't have to control you. You have to learn to control your thoughts to see the positives instead of the negatives."*

7. Create a decision-making process for the future. The next time you're confronted with a big decision, you might feel anxious or stressed that you'll make another mistake. To counteract this anxiety, consider putting a decision-making process into place for all future calls.

According to Kendra Cherry, author, educational consultant, and speaker:
Three Reasons Why You Make Bad Decisions
1. **Mental shortcuts can trip you up.** In order to make decisions quickly and economically, our brains rely on a number of cognitive shortcuts known as heuristics. These mental rules-of-thumb allow us to make

judgments quite quickly and often times quite accurately, but they can also lead to fuzzy thinking and poor decisions. 2.

2. **You often make poor comparisons.** When making decisions, we often make rapid comparisons without really thinking about our options. In order to avoid bad decisions, relying on logic and thoughtful examination of the options can sometimes be more important than relying on your immediate "gut reaction."

3. **You can be too optimistic.** Surprisingly, people tend to have a natural-born optimism that can hamper good decision-making. When they discover that the risk of something bad happening is actually much higher than they estimated, they tend to simply ignore the new information.

According to Jack Zenger and Joseph Folkman:
10 Habits That Lead to Terrible Decisions, Harvard Business Review
1. **Laziness**. This showed up as a failure to check facts, to take the initiative, to confirm assumptions, or to gather additional input.

2. **Not anticipating unexpected events**. Many people just get so excited about a decision they are making that they never take the time to do that simple due-diligence.

3. **Indecisiveness.** At the other end of the scale, when faced with a complex decision that will be based on constantly changing data, it's easy to continue to study the data, ask for one more report, or perform yet one more analysis before a decision gets made.

4. **Remaining locked in the past**. Some people make poor decisions because they're using the same old data or processes, they always have. Such people get used to approaches that worked in the past and tend not to look for approaches that will work better.

5. **Having no strategic alignment.** Bad decisions sometimes stem from a failure to connect the problem to the overall strategy. In the absence of a clear strategy that provides context, many solutions appear to make sense.

6. **Over-dependence**. Some decisions are never made because one person is waiting for another, who in turn is waiting for someone else's decision or input. Effective decision makers find a way to act independently when necessary.

7. **Isolation**. Effective decision making recognizes that involving others with the relevant knowledge, experience, and expertise improves the quality of the decision.

8. **Lack of technical depth.** Organizations today are very complex, and even the best leaders do not have enough technical depth to fully understand multifaceted issues. But when decision makers rely on others' knowledge and expertise without any perspective of their own, they have a difficult time integrating that information to make effective decisions.

9. **Failure to communicate the what, where, when, and how associated with their decisions.** Some good decisions become bad decisions because people don't understand – or even know about — them. Communicating a decision, its rational and implications, is critical to the successful implementation of a decision.

10. **Waiting too long for others' input.** Failing to know when to make a decision without all the right information and when to wait for more advice. It's no wonder good people make bad decisions. The path to good decision making is narrow, and it's far from straight.

Suggested Reading
Blunder: Why Smart People Make Bad Decisions by Zachary Shore

Think Again: Why Good Leaders Make Bad Decisions and How to Keep it From Happening to You
by Sydney Finkelstein, Jo Whitehead and Andrew Campbell

Point of Reflection
"He who blames others has a long way to go on his journey. He who blames himself is halfway there. He who blames no one has arrived."
Chinese Proverb

Leadership Core Competencies

"Rough waters are truer tests of leadership. In calm water every ship has a good captain."

<div align="right">Swedish proverb</div>

According to USDA.Gov

The 30 Leadership Core Competencies are divided into five levels. Definitions are listed below organized by the leadership levels:

Managing Self

1. **Integrity/Honesty**. Behaves in an honest, fair, and ethical manner. Shows consistency in words and actions. Models' high standards of ethics.

2. **Interpersonal skills.** Treats others with courtesy, sensitivity, and respect. Considers and responds appropriately to the needs and feelings of different people in different situations.

3. **Continual learning.** Assesses and recognizes own strengths and weaknesses; pursues self-development.

4. **Resilience**. Deals effectively with pressure; remains optimistic and persistent, even under adversity. Recovers quickly from setbacks.

5. **Oral communication.** Makes clear and convincing oral presentations. Listens effectively; clarifies information as needed.

6. **Written communication.** Writes in a clear, concise, organized, and convincing manner for the intended audience.

7. **Flexibility**. Is open to change and new information; rapidly adapts to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles.

8. **Problem solving.** Identifies and analyzes problems; weighs relevance and accuracy of information; generates and evaluates alternative solutions; makes recommendations.

Managing Projects

9. **Team building**. Inspires and fosters team commitment, spirit, pride, and trust. Facilitates cooperation and motivates team members to accomplish group goals.

10. **Customer service**. Anticipates and meets the needs of both internal and external customers. Delivers high-quality products and services; is committed to continuous improvement.

11. **Technical credibility**. Understands and appropriately applies principles, procedures, requirements, regulations, and policies related to specialized expertise.

12. **Accountability.** Holds self and others accountable for measurable high-quality, timely, and cost-effective results. Determines objectives, sets priorities, and delegates work. Accepts responsibility for mistakes. Complies with established control systems and rules.

13. **Decisiveness**. Makes well-informed, effective, and timely decisions, even when data are limited or solutions produce unpleasant consequences; perceives the impact and implications of decisions.

14. **Influencing/negotiating**. Persuades others; builds consensus through give and take; gains cooperation from others to obtain information and accomplish goals.

15. **Brainstorming.** The spontaneous contribution of ideas from all members of the group this also felicitates group buy-in.

Managing People

16. **Human capital management**. Builds and manages workforce based on organizational goals, budget considerations, and staffing needs. Ensures employees are appropriately recruited, selected, appraised, and rewarded; takes action to address performance problems. Manages a multi-sector workforce and a variety of work situations.

17. **Leveraging diversity**. Fosters an inclusive workplace where diversity and individual differences are valued and leveraged to achieve the vision and mission of the organization.

18. **Conflict management**. Encourages creative tension and differences of opinions. Anticipates and takes steps to prevent counter-productive confrontations. Manages and resolves conflicts and disagreements in a constructive manner.

19. **Public service motivation**. Shows a commitment to serve the public. Ensures that actions meet public needs; aligns organizational objectives and practices with public interests.

20. **Developing others**. Develops the ability of others to perform and contribute to the organization by providing ongoing feedback and by providing opportunities to learn through formal and informal methods.

21. **Develop a comprehensive on-boarding process for new employees**. The process of integrating a new employee with a company and its culture, as well as getting a new hire the tools and information needed to become a productive member of the team.

Managing Programs

22. **Technology management**. Keeps up-to-date on technological developments. Makes effective use of technology to achieve results. Ensures access to, and security of, technology systems.

23. **Financial management**. Understands the organization's financial processes. Prepares, justifies, and administers the program budget. Oversees procurement and contracting to achieve desired results. Monitor's expenditures and uses cost-benefit thinking to set priorities.

24. **Creativity/innovation**. Develops new insights into situations; questions conventional approaches; encourages new ideas and innovations; designs and implements new or cutting-edge programs/processes.

25. **Partnering**. Develops networks and builds alliances; collaborates across boundaries to build strategic relationships and achieve common goals.

26. **Political savvy**. Identifies the internal and external politics that impact the work of the organization. Perceives organizational and political reality and acts accordingly.

Leading Organizations

27. **External awareness**. Understands and keeps up-to-date on local, national, and international policies and trends that affect the organization and shape stakeholders' views; is aware of the organization's impact on the external environment.

28. **Vision**. Takes a long-term view and builds a shared vision with others; acts as a catalyst for organization change. Influence's others to translate vision into action.

29. **Strategic thinking**. Formulates objectives and priorities, and implements plans consistent with the long-term interest of the organization in a global environment, capitalizes on opportunities and manages risks.

30. **Entrepreneurship**. Positions the organization for future success by identifying new opportunities; builds the organization by developing or improving products or services. Takes calculated risks to accomplish organizational objectives.

Suggested Reading
Building Leadership Competence: A Competency-Based Approach to Building Leadership Ability by Dr. Wesley E. Donahue

Leadership: Competencies that Enable Results by Mike Hawkins

Point of Reflection
"Not everyone is born a great leader, but anyone can foster core leadership competencies for themselves and become actionable, effective leaders." Ravinder Tulsiani

Lessons from Moneyball
"If you challenge conventional wisdom, you will find ways to do things
much better than they are currently done."   Bill James

According to Brian Dodd, On Leadership:
Leadership Principles Learned from Moneyball

All quotes are from Billy Beane, General Manager of the Oakland A's unless otherwise noted.

Leaders set high standards. *"My bar is to take this team to a championship."*

You Must Have the Right People Around You. While Beane's scouts were experienced, they did not see the game in a way that allowed them to compete.

Leaders define reality. *"There are rich teams and there are poor teams. Then there is 50 feet of crap and then there's us. It's an unfair game." –* *"We are the last dog to the bowl. Do you see what happens to the runt of the litter? He dies." "If we try to play like the Yankees in here (board room), we will lose to the Yankees out there (on the field)."*

Leaders cannot allow others to define how they should lead their teams. The value of chance meetings – Beane met Brand completely by accident during a meeting in Cleveland. Always be ready for chance meetings because you never know when they will happen. *"There is an epidemic failure in the game to understand what is really happening." –* Brand.

The problem for leaders is to identify the problem. The solution is then obvious. *"People who run ball clubs, they think in terms of buying players. Your goal shouldn't be to buy players. Your goal should be to buy wins. And to buy wins you must buy runs." –* Brand. *"Baseball thinking is medieval. They are asking all the wrong questions." –* Brand.

What questions are you asking in your current meetings? Are they bringing a new set of solutions?
Great talent and solutions are often found in unusual places. Brand studied economics at Yale. *"If you lose the last game of the year, nobody cares how much you won during the regular season."*

Great leaders do not confuse activity with accomplishment. *"He gets on base. Do I care if it's with a walk or a hit, you do not?"*

Great leaders care more about results than what it takes to achieve them. Just don't do something unethical or illegal.

Great leaders give their teams confidence. Part of the new plan was to put players in positions they had not played previously. As part of this process, they had to give the players confidence they could fulfill their new assignments.

For new plans to succeed, you must have buy-in at all levels. Manager Art Howe was slow to implement the new plans thus delaying the team's development.

Practice tough conversations. As part of Brand's development, Beane practiced with him how to cut players. Unfortunately, this is one of the difficult parts of leadership. *"Would you rather get one shot in the head or five in the chest and bleed to death?* Peter Brand: *Are those my only two options?*

Leaders cannot accept consistent failure. The team's performance began to turn around when Beane got angry and would no longer tolerate an environment that accepted losing. *"I hate losing more than I want to win."*

Great organizations do not keep malcontents around long. As part of improving the team, Beane got rid of three players that did not fit the new culture he was building.

Great leaders believe in their teams more than they believe in themselves. *"You may not look like a winning team but you are one."*

The value of teaching. When Beane and Brand began showing the players the impact of their daily performance, their production increased.

Give people a picture of what they could become. Beane and Brand took their *"Island of misfit toys"* and showed them what they could become if they played to their strengths. *"Let them make the mistakes. When your enemies are making mistakes don't interrupt them. They're just giving you an out. If they want to give you an out, take it."*

"I made one decision in my life based on money and I swore I would never do it again." Beane gave up being the highest paid GM in sports history to be near his daughter. Great call by Beane and a picture for all of us.

"He hit a home run and didn't even realize it." Brand about a minor league player but the application was for Beane who though they did not win the championship, changed the way the game is evaluated.

Suggested Reading
Moneyball: The Art of Winning an Unfair Game by Michael Lewis

Point of Reflection
"If you do not know how to ask the right question, you discover nothing." W. Edwards Deming

Lessons from Sam Walton

"Outstanding leaders go out of their way to boost the self-esteem of their personnel. If people believe in themselves, it's amazing what they can accomplish." Sam Walton

According to Okpe Damion: 10 Success lessons from Sam Walton "From Rags to Riches"

1. Stick to fundamental values. Sam Walton had simple values that guided him through his life and business. He didn't follow the latest management fad, nor did he believe in any of the get-rich-quick ideas. He was solidly living his life by the values that he grew up with.

2. Take care of your people. Sam Walton took extremely good care of his employees and he gave every employee a chance to become successful with him by allowing them to purchase stock options of Walmart at a discount.

3. Motivate your partners. Money and ownership alone aren't enough. Constantly, day by day, think of new and more interesting ways to motivate and challenge your partners. Set high goals, encourage competition, and then keep score.

4. Don't follow the money, follow your passion. Sam Walton didn't start off his variety stores with an ambition to become rich; he simply had a passion for his craft and at each point in time, he only wanted to do it better and better.

5. Control your expenses better than your competition. This is where you can always find the competitive advantage. For twenty-five years running – long before Wal-Mart was known as the nation's largest retailer. You can make a lot of different mistakes and still recover if you run an efficient operation.

6. Communicate everything. Communicate everything you possibly can to your partners. The more they know, the more they'll understand. The more they understand, the more they'll care.

7. Treat the customer as the boss. Sam Walton was a true believer that the customer was his boss. From the greeter at the door of every Wal-Mart to the "Satisfaction Guaranteed" signs he would place on his first Wal-Mart store in 1962, Wal-Mart would distinguish itself from other retailers by maintaining the philosophy that the customer was always in charge.

8. Appreciate. Everything your associates do for the business. Nothing else can quite substitute for a few well-chosen, well-timed, sincere words of praise. They're free and worth a fortune.

9. Embrace new technology. Before the age of the Internet and instant e-commerce, stores across America were relatively low-tech. He went to the IBM school in upstate New York in 1966 to find the best technology students so Wal-Mart would always be on the cutting edge.

10. Swim upstream. Go the other way. Ignore the conventional wisdom. If everybody else is doing it one way, there's a good chance you can find your niche by going in exactly the opposite direction.

Suggested Reading
Sam Walton: Made In America by Sam Walton and John Huey

From Rags to Riches - Inspiring Stories of Ordinary People with Extraordinary Lives! by Elda Watulo

Point of Reflection
"There is only one boss. The customer. And he can fire everybody in the company from the chairman on down, simply by spending his money somewhere else." Sam Walton

MBWA Could Be Your Best Management Strategy
"If a window of opportunity appears, don't pull down the shade." Tom Peters

According to Anastasia Belyh, serial entrepreneur and blogger
In 1982, management consultants Tom Peters and Robert H. Waterman proposed the concept in their book In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best Run Companies. In the book, Peters and Waterman examined the successful companies, realizing a common nominator between the most successful. According to them, the successful companies had CEOs and managers who spent much of their time in the field instead of being confined to their office. Peters and Waterman noticed these managers were more aware of the operations and in general, had better ability to solve problems.

In his book, Peters outlined three components behind successful MBWA. According to Peters, the method works when:

- **Managers listen to people**. You can't just walk around and talk, but you have to listen to what subordinates are telling you. As a manager, you have to become good at reading the subtle signs people are telling you. Your subordinates might not feel comfortable being very honest with you, especially right at the start of implementing the new method.
- **Managers use discussion as an opportunity to transmit the company's values**. The walks and discussions provide you the possibility to strengthen the subordinate's understanding of the company's values and vision.
- **Managers are willing to provide on-the-spot assistance and support**. If your subordinates require help, you must be willing to lead by example and provide support on the spot. The method has a sense of urgency to it and it isn't about "looking into it", but getting problems fixed quickly.

The benefits of MBWA
There are three core benefits to using the method as a management strategy: improvements in communication and employee-superior relationships, effective operational focus, and enhanced efficiency.

1. **Creating stronger communication channels and improving employee-superior relationships:**
- The strategy forces the management to improve the way it communicates with the subordinates.
- The managers teach the practice of listening effectively and talking efficiently to the subordinates.
- The enhanced level of communication helps create an environment of openness.
- The managers are not enforcing communication, but make it part of the fabric of the organization.
- The relaxed and regular communication has been shown to improve relationships and make subordinates feel more motivated about their work.

2. Helping everyone focus on the correct operational aspects with work:
- The manager meets subordinates in the actual work situation and environment and therefore, gets a first-hand experience of what is going on.
- MBWA strengthens an environment of feedback, in which the subordinates can provide the manager with ideas, tips and suggestions to act upon.

3. Improving the organization's efficiency:

- Both of the above points can lead to enhancing operational efficiency. The positive work environment increases work motivation and the managers have a better understanding of the correct operations decisions that must be made.
- Management will be able to clear problems quicker by meeting people face-to-face, rather than relying on writing a string of e-mails.
- Feedback on problems and ideas is instant, resulting in faster actions. If clarification is required, it can be dealt with on the spot.

The Dangers of MBWA

Like any other management theory, the strategy can have its pitfalls. The three problems managers need to keep in mind revolve around the time-consuming nature of the strategy, its emphasis on subordinate opinion, and the difficulties organizations might have implementing the strategy.

1. Time-consuming strategy:

- The actual act of walking from your office to be among the employees can be a timely affair, which can hinder your ability to work on other issues.
- The time-consuming element can be especially detrimental when you consider the fact that not every conversation is going to lead to an immediate benefit.

2. Emphasizing the importance of employee opinion:

- The focus of the strategy is to listen to subordinates and use their insights into the business as a way to improve operations. Although this can be highly beneficial, as subordinates always have the closest view on day-to-day operations, the emphasis can be overemphasized.

3. Implementing can be difficult:

- Getting the strategy right can be difficult. The strategy is not just about being physically present amongst the subordinates, but gaining information from these real situations and conversations.
- If you simply walk around and engage in conversation, you are forgetting the key takeaway of the strategy: information. You can't just sit on the information and insights you gain, you need to be able to use the information as part of your overall management strategy.

The Bottom Line

Management by walking around is another management method you should consider. It has been popular, with small and large companies vouching for the strategy. MBWA can help you better understand what is happening in the organization and to create an environment of authentic and open communication.

Suggested Reading

Management by Walking Around (The Every Day MBA) by Colin Barrow

Point of Reflection

"The best leaders are the best note takers, best askers, and best learners." Tom Peters

Marcus Aurelius' 10 Rules for Being an Exceptional Leader

"I am not afraid of an army of lions led by a sheep; I am afraid of an army of sheep led by a lion."

Alexander the Great

The Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius ruled from 161 to 180 A.D. and has maintained the reputation for being the ideal wise leader whom Plato called the "philosopher king." His book "Meditations" has inspired leaders for centuries because of its timeless wisdom about human behavior.

Ten rules, as prescribed by Marcus Aurelius, that every great leader should know and practice:
1. Understand that people exist to help one another. Marcus believed that even though there will always be people who live selfishly and those who want to destroy others, mankind was meant to live in harmony.

2. Be mindful of others' humanity. Remember it is easy to belittle or to magnify the importance of others when you are making a decision about them. Remember that every person has dignity and pride.

3. Realize that many mistakes, even egregious ones, are the result of ignorance. When a person makes a decision that offends you, first consider whether they were "right to do this" in the sense that they are acting in a way that is morally acceptable, even if it is against your own self-interest. In that case, do not spend energy complaining about it.

4. Do not overly exalt yourself. It is true that leaders should take their leadership roles seriously, but not in a way that makes them feel godlike in some way.

5. Avoid quick judgments of others' actions. A lot of things are means to some other end. You have to know an awful lot before you can judge other people's actions with real understanding.

6. Maintain self-control. While it is natural to react to an offense by losing your temper or even becoming irritated, it is in no way constructive. You can choose to spend your time and energy languishing over things that have already happened, or you can choose to be calm and address any problems that arise.

7. Recognize that others can hurt you only if you let them. The only actions that should truly hurt you are things you do that are shameful, since you are in control of your own self-worth and values.

8. Know that pessimism can easily overtake you. It is common to have strong emotional reactions to disasters, but behaving in this way only keeps you from addressing the challenges. You have power over your mind – not outside events. Realize this, and you will find strength.

9. Practice kindness. Sincere kindness is "invincible," and more powerful than any negative transgression. It takes a strong leader to set aside ego and base emotions and behave with compassion.

10. Do not expect bad people to exempt you from their destructive ways. It is the responsibility of leadership to work intelligently with what is given, and not waste time fantasizing about a world of flawless people and perfect choices.

Suggested Reading
Meditations by Marcus Aurelius

Point of Reflection
"It is the responsibility of leadership to work intelligently with what is given, and not waste time fantasizing about a world of flawless people and perfect choices." Marcus Aurelius

Mistakes Managers Make
"If no mistake have you made, yet losing you are ... a different game you should play." Yoda

According to Wolf J. Rinke, PhD, CSP, is the founder and president of Wolf Rinke Associates, Inc

1. **Providing equal rewards to everyone**. Violates the important management principle of tying rewards to performance. Do not reward slackers. Do reward positive, energetic, high performance team members.

2. **Making work painful**. Many managers make work so painful that 25% of employees in the United States hate their jobs, 56% could take it or leave it, and only 19% love it.

3. **Downsizing.** Improves the bottom line immediately but can lead to successive years of being less profitable. You gain the competitive advantage through people, not by getting rid of them. Your assets are your people.

4. **Hoarding power**. To increase your power, you must give it away. By giving it away, you grow the people under you. Always push decision making down to the lowest level when possible.

5. **Spend too little on training and human resource development.** High performance organizations invest between 3.5 – 5% of payroll in human resource development, education and training. Good training: Builds self-confidence in the employee, creates positive peer pressure, enhances levels of job satisfaction and builds teamwork.

6. **Spend too much time with trouble makers**. If you spend more than 5% of your time with slackers you are inefficient. Spend the majority of your time with people who deliver positive results and high performance.

7. **Catching people who mess up.** Focus your energy on catching people who do things right. Manage by appreciation, not by exception.

8. **Satisfy customers**. If you only satisfy your customer, you will be out of business. If you exceed your customer's expectations your customers will remember you and your organization. Otherwise, they will forget you.

9. **Spending too much time in the office**. You should spend 66% of your time practicing MBWA, or management by walking around.

10. **Mistrusting employees**. If you consistently mistrust all employees you will be correct 3% of the time. If you trust your employees until they prove you wrong, you will be right 97% of the time.

According to Grace Carter, human resource specialist and writer at Academized and Oxessays:
Top 11 Mistakes Leaders Who Fail Make

1. **Thinking that they have all of the answers.** This is a common issue among the leaders. They think that they are the smartest and the most aware of what should be done. So, they never listen to anyone who opposes their opinion.

2. **Slow on making decisions.** Leaders have to be ready to make decisions fairly quickly. They have to always know what would be best for each element of the company starting from profits and the results to employees and various other elements. Of course, they have to think about it carefully, but quickly.

3. **No growth or learning.** Good leaders always learn and grow, even when they become leaders. However, those who usually believe that they know it all, make this mistake as well. They think that they are so good that they don't need to advance. This opposition to learning and growing is what is making them unadaptable and too rigid for the modern business environment.

4. **Talking more than listening.** Leaders need to listen. This is one of their main jobs. They listen for various reasons and with various goals — for example, they take the information someone gives them and turn it into decisions. They are also supposed to listen to the employees and provide them with help. Bad leaders don't do this and that's why they fail.

5. **Unclear vision, demands and expectations.** A good leader should always have a clear vision of what they want and need from their employees, what they want to achieve and what they expect. They give clear directions as well. Bad leaders only confuse their employees with vague explanations and unclear demands which results in poor outcomes not just for the leader but for the entire company.

6. **They don't criticize enough.** Leaders want to be liked which is understandable, who doesn't but leadership isn't all about being loved. People need to respect you. They need to value you. And they can't value you if you never criticize them. Criticism isn't always a bad thing. It can be good as well. It can make them get better and do better. It can help them learn. Good leaders always criticize when necessary, bad ones never do.

7. **They are reactive, not proactive.** Bad leaders often make a mistake of being a person who reacts to events in or outside of the company. However, they are not supposed to be the reactor, they are supposed to be a proactive person creating things for other people to respond to.

8. **They are not good communicators.** Leaders need to communicate with a lot of people. This means that they have to be excellent and persuasive in talking with people from all levels of the company and outside world. They can't be solely focused on their own department or industry. They have to be versatile enough to be able to discuss important things with everyone.

9. **They are serving themselves.** Leaders are there not to serve themselves but the whole team. They are there to help the team operate like one single entity. The team isn't there to serve the leader; the leader is there to serve them.

10. **They look for approval.** As a leader, you are never supposed to look for approval. Don't make decisions or do things because you think that someone will like you for it. Some of the greatest leaders were doing their own thing. Only bad leaders look for someone to approve their actions.

11. **They don't connect with customers.** Bad leaders make the terrible mistake of alienating themselves from the customers. They think that knowing and understanding the audience is someone else's job, not theirs. But who better to get to know the consumers than a leader?

Suggested Reading
The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make by Hans Finzel

The 22 Biggest Mistakes Managers Make and How to Correct Them by James K. Van Fleet

Point of Reflection
"The only real mistake is the one from which we learn nothing." Henry Ford

Mistakes Managers Make Managing People

"If the manager is pulling the strings, he can't blame the puppet for a bad performance."

<div align="right">Suzanne Nemeth</div>

According to Susan M. Heathfield, human resource and management consultant

Fail to get to know employees as people. Developing a relationship with reporting employees is a key factor in managing. You don't want to be your employees' divorce counselor or therapist, but you do want to know what's happening in their lives.

Fail to provide clear direction. Managers fail to create standards and give people clear expectations, so they know what they are supposed to do, and wonder why they fail.

Fail to trust. All managers should start out with all employees from a position of trust. When managers don't trust people to do their jobs, this lack of trust plays out in a number of injurious ways such as micromanaging or constantly checking up is another.

Fail to listen to and help employees feel that their opinions are valued. Active listening is a critical management skill. You can train managers in listening skills, but if the manager believes that listening is a way to demonstrate that he or she values people, training is usually unnecessary. When employees feel heard out and listened to, they feel important and respected.

Make decisions and then ask people for their input as if their feedback mattered. You can fool some of the people. But your best employees soon get the nature of your game and drop out. Good luck getting those employees to engage again.

Fail to react to problems and issues that will soon fester if ignored. Managers have a habit of hoping that an uncomfortable issue, employee conflict or disagreement will go away on its own if they don't provoke it or try to resolve it. Issues, especially among people, get worse unless something in the mix changes.

Trying to be friends with employees who report to you. You can develop warm and supportive relationships with employees who report to you. But you will have difficulty separating the reporting relationship in a friendship.

Fail to communicate effectively and withhold important information. The best communication is transparent communication. Sure, some information is company confidential. You may have been asked to keep certain information under wraps for a while, but aside from these rare occasions, share what you know.

Not treating all employees equally. You don't necessarily have to treat every employee the same, but they must feel as if they receive equal treatment. The perception that you have pet employees or that you play favorites will undermine your efforts to manage people.

Throw employees under the bus. Rather than taking responsibility for what goes wrong in the areas that you manage, blame particular employees when asked or confronted by senior leadership.

Suggested Reading
HBR's 10 Must Reads on Managing People by Harvard Business School

The Truth About Managing People...and Nothing but the Truth by Stephen P. Robbins

Point of Reflection
"All men make mistakes, but only wise men learn from their mistakes." Winston Churchill

Napoleon Hill's, 11 Leadership Lessons from The Law of Success

"Success comes to those who become success conscious." Napoleon Hill

According to Jay Billionairebookclub: Napoleon Hill's Major Attributes of Leadership
1. Unwavering courage. Know yourself, put yourself at "risk" and own up. You can't expect anyone to follow your lead if you don't have courage. "*No follower wishes to be dominated by a leader who lacks self-confidence and courage.*"

2. Self-control. Learn proper self-control. *"The man, who cannot control himself, can never control others. Self-control sets a mighty example for one's followers, which the more intelligent will emulate."*

3. A keen sense of justice. Who wants to follow an unjust leader? No one. At least not voluntarily. "*Without a sense of fairness and justice, no leader can command and retain the respect of his followers."*

4. Definiteness of decision. Be steadfast. *"The man who wavers in his decisions, shows that he is not sure of himself. He cannot lead others successfully."*

5. Definiteness of plans. Always have a plan. *"The successful leader must plan his work, and work his plan. A leader who moves by guesswork, without practical, definite plans, is comparable to a ship without a rudder. Sooner or later, he will land on the rocks."*

6. The habit of doing more than paid for. Give more. "*One of the penalties of leadership is the necessity of willingness, upon the part of the leader, to do more than he requires of his followers."*

7. A pleasing personality. "How to Win Friends and Influence People". People want to you to make them feel good. "*No slovenly, careless person can become a successful leader. Leadership calls for respect. Followers will not respect a leader who does not grade high on all of the factors of a Pleasing Personality."*

8. Sympathy and understanding. Understand your people. Know their problems. *"The successful leader must be in sympathy with his followers. Moreover, he must understand them and their problems.*"

9. Mastery of detail. Steve Jobs knew this. "*Successful leadership calls for mastery of details of the leader's position."*

10. Willingness to assume full responsibility. Taking 100% responsibility for everything is a powerful concept. *"The successful leader must be willing to assume responsibility for the mistakes and the shortcomings of his followers. If he tries to shift this responsibility, he will not remain the leader. If one of his followers makes a mistake, and shows himself incompetent, the leader must consider that it is he who failed."*

11. Cooperation. "*The relationship of employer and employee, or of leader and follower, in the future, will be one of mutual cooperation, based upon an equitable division of the profits of business. In the future, the relationship of employer and employee will be more like a partnership than it has been in the past."*

Suggested Reading
The Law of Success in Sixteen Lessons by Napoleon Hill

Point of Reflection
"The competent leader requires no "title" to give him the respect of his followers. The man who makes too much over his title generally has little else to emphasize. The doors to the office of the real leader are open to all who wish to enter, and his working quarters are free from formality or ostentation." Napoleon Hill

Office Politics

According to Debra Wheatman, president of Careers Done Write
Every office has its office politics. This is unavoidable, as people bring their unique needs, thoughts, fears, and ambitions with them to work. Everyone claims to hate office politics, yet, like the gossip mill, they continue to flourish. Office politics are the unwritten rules that determine who gets what, when, and how a promotion, a budget for a project and who doesn't.

Office politics can make things seem arbitrary, rigged, and unfair, and can work to create a toxic culture but there are ways that you can successfully navigate office politics.

15 Tips for Navigating Office Politics
1. Analyze the org chart. Understand who holds power, and what the reporting structure is. Then sit back and observe. Who actually has influence over major decisions? It's not always the person at the top.

2. Examine the cliques. The so-called real world has so much in common with seventh grade. As is the case in any middle school, your workplace is going to have informal groups and social cliques. Who are in these various cliques? Are these groups based on friendship, mutual interest, or something else? Which are the powerful groups and which are the powerless ones?

3. Build your network. Make connections outside of your immediate team or department. Cross the boundaries and hierarchies. Don't fear those with political power. Instead, get to know them.

4. Develop your soft skills. Office politics are all about interpersonal interactions. Proceed with emotional intelligence. Self-regulate. Censor. Think before you act.

5. Be strategic. You need to be brave, and not cower. Get to know the office politics by getting to know the gossips and the manipulators. Be courteous and guarded. While you should not trust them, understanding their goals can provide you great insight into what the organization values.

6. Don't stir the pot. Avoid spreading rumors and unsubstantiated gossip. Office politics are a dirty game, and you don't need to become soiled.

7. Be assertive, but not aggressive. Couch any dissenting opinions within the context of what impact the issues have on the organization, rather than on you personally.

8. Know when to keep your mouth shut. Sometimes the best course of action can be to sit back and listen, without offering anything in exchange. Particularly if you are new to the organization, you should "shut up and listen" 80% of the time. When you disagree with someone, have a conversation, not an argument. Always frame your position within the context of the impact on the business, the team, or the organization. Avoid talking about personal slights.

9. Avoid copying people's managers. If you send emails in which you always copy the recipient's manager, it's going to make people regard you with suspicion. The same goes for using the BCC. The only time to use BCC is when you have an announcement to make too many people across the organization and you want to avoid the dreaded "reply all."

10. Be boring. A safe way to limit the impact of office politics on you is to be dull and not contribute.

11. Identify your role. Be honest with yourself. To what degree have you immersed yourself into the office politics? Once you do that, you can work on extricating yourself.

12. Know who are the gatekeepers. Focus your powers of persuasion on the right people, and on the right issues.

13. Talk it out. When you disagree with someone, have a conversation, not an argument. Always frame your position within the context of the impact on the business, the team, or the organization. Avoid talking about personal slights.

14. Support others. You get what you give. You need support to get your job done. You will have to give support in return.

15. Don't vent via email. Even if you delete it, email is forever. If you need to write down your frustrations, do so with pen and paper. Paper can be shredded later.

Suggested Reading
Secrets to Winning at Office Politics: How to Achieve Your Goals and Increase Your Influence at Work by Marie G. McIntyre

Office Politics: How to Thrive in a World of Lying, Backstabbing and Dirty Tricks by Oliver James

Point of Reflection
"Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly and applying the wrong remedies."
Ernest Benn

Organizational Corruption
"Corrupt organizations do not like honest or ethical people, and will eventually run them off." Ronald D. Sears

According to Alison Taylor, energy and extractives practice at business for social responsibility:
Cultural Traits of Organizational Corruption
Each one of these characteristics heightens the vulnerability of a team, office or division to corruption:

- **Strategy**. Growth is the primary goal, and all others are irrelevant; competition is high; and the ends justify the means.

- **Leadership**. Leadership is complacent; it hoards information, diffuses accountability and focuses on plausible deniability. Ironically, leaders who preside over corrupt practices are likely to project successfully a self-image of being a high-performing, high-status individual.

- **Structure**. Local devolution and autonomy combines with limited oversight. The group is isolated by circumstance, by design or both.

- **Decision making and authority**. Strongly hierarchical and directive; top down; little consultation; and short time horizons.

- **Incentives**. Discretionary bonuses and targets are unrealistic, set without regard to market conditions or employee behavior.

- **Values and beliefs.** The workplace will hold a pervasive culture of fear, necessity, insecurity, powerlessness and intense rivalry. The language is of war and sport. Further distancing techniques may exist.

- **Norms and behaviors**. Low transparency, secrecy, defensiveness and a lack of pride in the organization.

According to Umar Farooq, investor and entrepreneur:
Power Corruption
When an individual possesses a high degree of power and is not held responsible for the harmful consequences. There are severe disadvantages of power corruption in the organization like:
- The decision making in the organization becomes poor.
- The coercive behavior is promoted in the organization.
- The employees of the organization have a low opinion about the processes & the working environment of the organization.
- The distance between management & employees is enhanced that badly affects the performance of the organization.
- The managers are free to promote illegal or unethical actions in the organization.

The proverbial saying 'power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely' conveys the opinion that, as a person's power increases, their moral sense diminishes.

According to David Straker, director changing works:
Changing Minds
The behavior of a powerful person often leads much to be desired. Some of the unsocial things they may do include:
- Being disinterested in the welfare of others.
- Stereotyping others, including showing bias.
- Not making eye contact when in conversation.

- Acting as if they are entitled to get what they want.
- Expecting others to comply with their requirements without question.
- Acting in untrustworthy ways, but expecting to be trusted.
- Having different rules and values for themselves vs. other people.
- Being more prone to anger than others.
- Acting outside company policy or creating it for their own purpose.

Shakespeare's depiction of human nature through all his plays reveals the corruption that infects human beings. Corruption appears in many forms in Shakespeare. At its most obvious level, corruption is linked to power and we see countless examples of corruption in the most powerful characters in the plays. Shakespeare often explores the ways in which kings and other powerful figures abuse their position, as well as the ways in which ambitious men plot to gain power, usually the throne, by illegitimate means.

Bible Verse
Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals." 1 Corinthians 15:33 AMP

Suggested Reading
Good Business: An Ethics Workshop for Business Leaders by John Endris

Cheating, Corruption, and Concealment: The Roots of Dishonesty by Jan-Willem van Prooijen and Paul A. M. van Lange

Point of Reflection
"Corruption is like a ball of snow, once it's set a rolling it must increase."   Charles Caleb Colt

"No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care." Theodore Roosevelt

People management is the process of training, motivating and directing employees to optimize workplace productivity and promote professional growth. Workplace leaders, such as team leads, managers and department heads use people management to oversee workflow and boost employee performance every day.

According to Sarah Mulvey and Thad Peterson: The Predictive Index: People Management Study
In August 2019, The Predictive Index® conducted a survey to ask 1,038 employees from 13 industries about their managers. Their answers reveal the subtle ways managers sabotage their teams—and what sets world-class managers apart from the rest.

- 96% of employees with good managers feel they can approach their boss with problems; just 43% of workers with bad managers feel the same.
- Nearly 30% of employees believe their manager lacks team-building skills.
- About 60% of employees believe their manager is "good" or "world-class."
- Managers who create psychologically unsafe environments sabotage their teams.

1,000+ employees rated 14 items related to psychological safety. The data shows that great managers create psychologically safe environments. Here are the top four ways bad managers subtly sabotage employee experience by creating psychologically unsafe environments:

- 80% Create frustration.
- 43% Are unapproachable when it comes to discussing tough issues.
- 25% Don't respect their employees' values .
- 20% Don't value for their employees' unique skills.

Much has been written about how to be a good manager, but there's far less research and empirical data about bad managers.

Top 10 Most Common Traits of Terrible Managers
58%   Doesn't communicate clear expectations.
57%   Plays favorites.
55%   Doesn't show concern for my career and personal development.
54%   Badmouths people behind their backs.
54%   Isn't open or interested in feedback.
52%   Wants to prove himself/herself right.
51%   Isn't self-aware.
50%   Betrays my or others' trust.
48%   Doesn't listen to others.
48%   Puts her/his needs in front of my need.

Bad managers tend to put themselves in front of others. They also aren't open or interested in feedback, they lack self-awareness and they don't listen to others. They also tend to fall down when it comes to communication; bad managers don't convey expectations, and they are not good listeners. They also lack self-awareness.

Great managers are both passionate and compassionate. When you analyze the traits most prevalent in them, they tend to work hard, know how to laugh, have a positive disposition, and understand how to do their jobs. Great managers are also passionate about what they do and compassionate to those around them.

Top 10 Traits of Great Managers

82%   Has a strong work ethic.

80%   Is honest.

79%   Has a sense of humor.

79%   Is confident.

79%   Has a positive attitude.

79%   Makes good decisions.

78%   Recognizes me when I do good work.

76%   Is passionate about her/his job.

75%   Is highly knowledgeable in the area she/he manages.

75%   Has a good grasp of the entire business.

94% of employees with great bosses have passion and energy for their jobs, whereas only 59% of employees with bad bosses have passion and energy for their jobs. And when you look at the entire dataset (not just great and bad managers), there's a significant correlation between manager ratings and the passion and energy people feel for their jobs.

Suggested Reading

Predictive Index: People Management Study--http://www.predictiveindex.com/

Point of Reflection

"Management is, above all, a practice where art, science, and craft meet" Henry Mintzberg

Qualities of a Bad Leader
"You don't lead by hitting people over the head--that's assault, not leadership." D. Eisenhower

According to Brian Tracy, motivational public speaker and self-development author
It's a known fact that most workforces are only as capable as their leader. However, not everyone has the good fortune to work under a leader who is inspiring, capable and motivating. Whether you are working under a leader or employing a leader, it's important to learn how to recognize the qualities of a bad leader and act accordingly.

Outlined below are a few leadership qualities to look for in poor leaders.
1. Poor integrity. One of my favorite leadership quotes is, "*Integrity is the most valuable and respected quality of leadership. Always keep your word.*" It doesn't matter how capable, intelligent or effective a leader is. If they lack moral integrity, troubles are bound to follow. If a leader is engaging in unethical behavior, it won't be long before the employees under them are engaging in unethical behavior as well. Sooner or later, a lack of moral integrity almost always leads to a person's undoing, which is why it should be a major red flag.

2. Lack of adaptability. Great leaders know how to employ a range of leadership styles depending on what the situation calls for. The simple truth is that not all employees are motivated by the same factors, and there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach that will work in every situation. Good leaders recognize this and are fluid, while poor leaders may be stuck in their ways and unwilling to adapt to what the situation calls for. If you notice that a leader is stubborn, slow to adapt to changing situations and is demonstrating a *"my-way-or-the-highway"* attitude, they are likely a poor leader.

3. Little vision for the future. The job of a leader is to push forward, and good leaders should always be focused on how they can make tomorrow more efficient and productive than today, as demonstrated by Elon Musk's vision of the future. Bad leaders, though, often get complacent and stay satisfied with the status quo. If a leader is not focused on the future and demonstrating a clear plan for how to continuously improve, progress is unlikely to happen.

4. Lack of accountability. The best leaders take accountability when things go wrong and give credit to others when things go right. Employees want to know that they are working for a leader who will give them due credit when they do well and not throw them under the bus when things go wrong. Some leaders, though, are unable or unwilling to shoulder this responsibility and instead deflect blame to others and take credit for themselves. In the end, this behavior is going to do very little to motivate a workforce to succeed.

5. Poor communication skills. Great communication skills are by far some of the most important traits for a leader to have. It doesn't matter how effective a plan a leader is able to draw up. If they are not able to communicate that plan to their employees in a way that is easy to understand and motivating, then little progress is going to be made. Good leaders need to be able to listen intently and communicate clearly. If a leader is demonstrating an inability to communicate their ideas and expectations to others, they are not likely to be a very effective leader.

Leadership can make or break any business. Because of this, there are a few key factors to consider before you join a new team or hire a new leader. These characteristics should also be applied to anyone trying to improve their own skills, as well. No matter the case, remember that great leaders must regularly demonstrate integrity, adaptability, vision, accountability and communication skills to effectively lead their teams to greatness.

Suggested Reading
Bad Leadership: What It Is, How It Happens, Why It Matters by Barbara Kellerman

Point of Reflection
"Weak leadership can wreck the soundest strategy." Sun Tzu

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Reasons Why Leaders Fail

"My great concern is not whether you have failed, but whether you are content with your failure."

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Abraham Lincoln

According to Dan Schawbel, blogger for The Fast Track

1. Leaders become selfish. Leaders who have responsibilities seem to forget that they are there to support their team instead of themselves. They become power hungry and seek control instead of giving advice, mentoring and ensuring that the team benefits from their leadership.

2. They stop navigating the team. When a leader is satisfied with the current state of the company and group, they stop directing people forward. Leaders need to have clear visions and goals, set expectations, keep track of everyone's progress and hold themselves accountable.

3. Leaders become greedy. Good leaders are those who can delegate tasks and make sure that everyone on their team is learning, growing and is being challenged. When leaders start to do the work that they should be passing down to their employees, they end up hurting themselves.

4. They get arrogant. Even the best leaders think they know everything and it becomes their downfall. Leaders need to be continuous learners if they want to keep up with the challenging demands of today's economy. If you ignore what other people say, it's going to make your job harder because people may oppose it and you might be left stranded.

5. They focus too much on politics. Leaders have to play politics all the time at the office. They have to do the right thing, at the right time and make the right allies without angering too many people. This tends to get in the way of productivity and makes them lose focus. Leaders should instead focus on doing excellent work and managing their team.

6. They don't give enough criticism. It's very easy for leaders to try and please everyone and to befriend co-workers but that's not always effective. You have to take a step back and look at the weaknesses of your team and talk to them about what they can improve. At the same time, you should accept criticism from them. Some of your leadership tactics might not be best for the group and you need to know that.

7. Leaders refuse to adapt. You will always have to change how you lead based on how your work and company are changing. If your company is headed in a new direction, or if you have new team members, you're going to want to adapt your leadership style to that new environment. If you fail to do that, then it's going to be hard to align your group to what the company is doing.

8. They don't understand self-leadership. You have to know yourself, control yourself and communicate your core values, expectations and beliefs. You need to understand your strengths, weaknesses and goals in order to be able to give your best self to your team and to have fulfillment.

9. They are too reactive. Leaders need to be proactive, not just reactive. If you find yourself spending all of your time trying to put out fires, then you aren't using your time effectively. Proactive leaders have an influence on the future and form the right alliances to advance their causes.

10. Leaders don't communicate well. If you want to lead a team, you're going to have to constantly communicate with them and make sure they are all in the know. You can use Skype, instant messaging, email and team meetings in order to get your message to them, but the important part is that it gets there. If you don't communicate effectively, people won't know what to do next or where the group is heading.

According to Douglas R. Satterfield, blogger for The Leader Maker:
10 Major Reasons for Leadership Failure

1. **Over-confidence.** The tendency of humans to overestimate their abilities is a common but only through experience can a leader's views be properly tested. Under confidence is also a reason for failure but not as much as over confidence.
2. **Lack of motivation**. A lackadaisical attitude and complacency can infect anyone who fails to remain focused and enthusiastic about what they are doing. Motivation is contagious.
3. **Poor attitude**. Leaders are expected to be the cheerleader for their organization and to have people willingly follow them. When a leader's attitude is poor, people tend to turn away.
4. **Failure to delegate authority.** Failed leaders are those who pass the buck regarding responsibility to others yet don't give them the authority to carry out assigned duties. Good leaders know they are always responsible regardless of how much they delegate.
5. **Blindness to reality.** Whether by ideology, willfulness, or simply intellectual laziness, not knowing what is going on puts a leader at great risk of failure.
6. **Failure to listen.** Leaders don't have all the answers and so they must listen to those who are closest to the real action and have the knowledge to make good decisions.
7. **Having wrong expectations.** This has to do with expectation management and how leaders don't take the time or make the effort to do well here.
8. **Failure to communicate a vision.** Part of leadership is creating a vision but also insuring everyone knows about it, that it is clear, and the methods of achieving it are established.
9. **Ignoring relationship building.** A complex but easy task that is often ignored.
10. **Lack of social skills.** If you cannot get along with people, "connect" with them, and are capable of getting along, you will fail.

Suggested Reading
21 Reasons Why Leaders Fail by Saturday Nbete

Why Leaders Fail and the 7 Prescriptions for Success by Peter B. Stark

Point of Reflection
"The most serious failure of leadership is the failure to foresee." Robert K. Greenleaf

Reminders for Leaders
CARE for them, Communication, Affirmation, Recognition and Example.

11 Leadership Lessons from Inspiring Leaders
1. Powerful Persistence: Abraham Lincoln
"*Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other.*"

2. Bold Courage: Sandra Day O'Connor
"*In order to cultivate a set of leaders with legitimacy in the eyes of the citizenry, it is necessary that the path to leadership be visibly open to talented and qualified individuals of every race and ethnicity.*"

3. Humble Sacrifice: Nelson Mandela
"*I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.*"

4. Creative Innovation: Eleanor Roosevelt
"*The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.*"

5. Brave Determination: Rosa Parks
"*I have learned over the years that when one's mind is made up, this diminishes fear; knowing what must be done does away with fear.*"

6. Valuable Networks: Oprah Winfrey
"*Surround yourself with only people who are going to lift you higher.*"

7. Moving Beyond Comfort: Geoffrey Canada
"*The tendency in lots of large organizations is to try and find a comfortable place where you think you can get measured rewards for measured work.*"

8. Leveraging Platforms: Bono
"*Real leadership is when everyone else feels in charge.*"

9. Giving More, Taking Less: Angelina Jolie
"*If I make a fool of myself, who cares? I'm not frightened by anyone's perception of me.*"

10. Believing in a Vision: Jeff Bezos
"*A company shouldn't get addicted to being shiny, because shiny doesn't last.*"

11. Make Everyone Happy: Steve Jobs
"*If You Want to Make Everyone Happy, Don't Be A Leader, Sell Ice Cream.*"

Suggested Reading
The Maxwell Daily Reader: 365 Days of Insight to Develop the Leader Within You and Influence Those Around You, by John C. Maxwel

Women and Leadership: Real Lives, Real Lessons by Julia Gillard and Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala

Point of Reflection
"*Leadership is about making others better as a result of your presence and making sure that impact lasts in your absence.*"   Sheryl Sandberg,

Self-Leadership
"Self-leadership is about awareness, tolerance, and not letting your own natural tendencies limit your potential." Scott Belsky

According to By Dr. John Ng, great leadership is a cultivated art. It begins with self- leadership. Because at the center of leadership is the person who, more than anything else makes the difference. Leadership success or failure begins with how the leader approaches self-leadership.

According to Dr. John Ng book "Dim Sum Leadership"
Appreciating Others. When you truly know yourself, your strengths and weaknesses, you will appreciate others.

Preventing derailment. Many rising stars self-destruct, never achieve their early potential because of the lack of self-leadership. Daniel Goleman, in his extensive study on leadership derailment, points out, *"When I compared star performers with average ones in senior leadership positions, nearly 90 per cent of the difference in their profiles was attributable to emotional intelligence factors rather than cognitive abilities."*

Ensuring long-term success. Great leaders have a long-term perspective for life and success. They are not here for the short-term but for the long haul. Only leaders who practice consistent self-leadership can ensure long-term success. The temptation to push for quarterly profits at all costs can derail the leader.

Leaving a legacy. All leaders leave legacies, whether good or bad. They leave their imprint on the organization through their beliefs, values and attitudes. Therefore, effective self-leadership is essentially leaving a great legacy for the people we are leading. Chris Lowney, in his book Heroic Leadership, writes, *"If you want your team to perform heroically, be a hero yourself."*

The Four Pillars of Self-Leadership
1. **Self-awareness**: The ability to acknowledge, understand and be conscious of one's own values, perspectives, strengths, weaknesses, and leadership propensity and emotional needs.

2. **Self-management**: The ability to nurture and harness one's own passion, abilities, emotions and leadership capacity in decision- making.

3. **Other-awareness**: The ability to acknowledge and recognize the passion, gifting, strengths, weaknesses, potential and needs of others.

4. **Other-management**: The ability to grow and motivate other people to develop their potential and/or fulfil the organization's objectives.

According to Indeed Career Guide: Skills for Self-Leadership
Self-awareness. The most important skill for developing self-leadership is a strong sense of self. This self-awareness refers to understanding who you are, what your goals are, what your strengths are and areas where you can improve.

Motivation. Another defining characteristic of self-leadership is being highly motivated. Motivation is the purpose that provides energy to push personal limits and continue to work when challenges arise. Individuals who have strong self-leadership have a passion that drives them to overcome any limitations they may face.

Decision-making. It is important to have strong decision-making skills if you want to develop good self-leadership. You need the ability to know your strengths and weaknesses, identify what you want to do and make a plan for success. It also requires the ability to proactively anticipate needs and challenges and then respond to them in an effective manner when they arise.

Dedication. Dedication is a commitment to a specific task or purpose. Dedication is important to developing strong self-leadership skills because it helps you stay motivated to complete tasks and stay the course to overcome challenges when they arise.

Influence. Influence is another core characteristic of strong self-leadership, which provides you with influence over others because your beliefs and actions inspire them to work harder to achieve the same success you have. If you can control your own emotions, thoughts and behavior to accomplish personal goals, this translates as a positive influence on those around you.

Empathy. Empathy is the ability to understand the emotions and feelings of others and to respond to them in a way that shows you understand and respect their viewpoint. Empathy is often a skill that leaders need because it allows them to make genuine connections with the people, they are leading.

Social skills. Social skills are the ability to build rapport, make strong connections with others and to maintain those relationships. Having strong social skills allows you to build relationships with trust and respect. Every leader needs social skills to effectively encourage their team to follow their lead and work together. Strong social skills are a key component in creating high-performing teams.

Self-regulation. Self-regulation is the ability to regulate your own emotions, thoughts and behaviors, without external interference, in a way that is socially acceptable. Self-regulation skills help you respond to challenges rather than reacting to them. Strengthening self-regulation skills helps you ensure you respond to challenges in a positive and effective manner.

Accountability. Accountability is taking responsibility for your own thoughts, decisions, emotions and actions. Accountability is an important skill of self-leadership that is directly connected to many of the other self-leadership skills. A responsible leader is accountable for the actions and behavior of both themselves and their teams. A leader with strong accountability can build more efficient and productive teams.

Suggested Reading
Mastering Self-Leadership: Empowering Yourself for Personal Excellence by Charles C. Manz and Christopher P. Neck

Self-Leadership: How to Become a More Successful, Efficient, and Effective Leader from the Inside Out by Andrew Bryant and Ana Lucia Kazan

Point of Reflection
"*Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom*" Aristotle

Servant Leadership

"The servant-leader is servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first." Robert K. Greenleaf

In short, servant leadership principles emphasize facilitation and helping employees grow and harness their maximum potential, empowering both individual team members and the company to be successful.

According to Robert K. Greenleaf: Qualities of a Servant Leader: The Servant as Leader

Listens actively. A servant leader's first response to any problem is to listen. She seeks to identify the will of the group and helps clarify that will by listening. When she listens, she does so intently. She does not multitask or interrupt, but truly strives to understand the speaker.

Prioritizes. Can you separate the important from the unimportant? What about the important from the urgent? A servant leader can withdraw from the present situation and prioritize his responsibilities. And he handles his most pressing duties with the knowledge that there may be consequences for neglecting the less pressing ones.

Accepts others. A servant leader accept others as they are, where they are. She assumes that people have good intentions, and she values the unique skills, attributes and contributions of each individual. She does not, however, accept disruptive behaviors or poor performance. She recognizes the difference between accepting a person and accepting his actions.

Guesses correctly. Every day, leaders have to make decisions without enough information, the right information or sufficient time. Servant leaders bridge this information gap through intuition. They look for patterns, they revisit history and they make educated guesses about the best course of action. Most importantly, servant leaders understand that these educated guesses are just that — guesses — and they are willing to change course if necessary.

Foresees the future. Servant leaders have a better than average ability to predict the likely outcome of a situation. Closely related to intuition, foresight refers to a leader's ability to understand the past and present to predict the future. Without this ability, a leader would lose his characteristic "lead."

Possesses awareness. To maintain strong intuition and foresight, a servant leader must know what's going on. He must have an awareness of world history, current events, industry standards and his own organization. He must have a sense of self and of those he leads. In short, a servant leader must be awake.

Adapts readily. Servant leaders have a keen understanding of the past, but don't model their leadership style after a historical figure. Instead, they adapt to the time, place and problem. They invent a unique role that both meets the needs of their followers and relies heavily upon their own strengths.

Sets a vision. A servant leader is not afraid of failure. On the contrary, she initiates a course of action, provides the structure and accepts the risks. As Greenleaf wrote, "A leader says: *'I will go; follow me!' while knowing that the path is uncertain, even dangerous.*"

Persuades others. Another distinctive characteristic of the servant leader is his reliance on persuasion. Instead of using his position to coerce others, a servant leader is able to convince his followers by demonstrating the compelling benefits of his vision.

Empowers others. A commitment to empowering others is the hallmark of a servant leader. She is able to promote and encourage personal and professional growth in the people she leads. They are healthier, wiser and more likely to become servant leaders themselves. When a leader sees these qualities emerge in her followers, she has become a successful servant leader.

Suggested Reading
The Servant as Leader by Robert K. Greenleaf

The Servant Leader: How to Build a Creative Team, Develop Great Morale, and Improve Bottom-Line Performance by James A. Autry

Point of Reflection
"Servant-leadership is more than a concept; it is a fact. Any great leader, by which I also mean an ethical leader of any group, will see herself or himself as a servant of that group and will act accordingly." M. Scott Peck

Social and Emotional Intelligence
"The emotional brain responds to an event more quickly than the thinking brain."

Daniel Goleman

According to Dr. Karl Albrecht, author of social intelligence:

The Five Aspects of Social Intelligence

1. **Situational awareness**. The ability to read a situation and understand people's feelings and intentions in a given circumstance. To improve this situational radar, learn to understand people's use of and need for physical space, their possible behaviors in given situations, and the messages their language choices really convey.

2. **Presence.** How you affect people with your appearance, mood and body language. Albrecht says presence relates to whether you seem approachable and whether you project traits like shyness or hostility. Albrecht offers building blocks for improved presence, including recording yourself talking with friends and listening to your own clarity and sincerity, and asking friends to describe how they first viewed you.

3. **Authenticity**. Reflects how honest you are with yourself and others, how much you respect yourself, and how much faith you truly have in your own values and beliefs. To keep track of whether you're being your authentic self, Albrecht suggests exercises such as creating a personal mission statement or keeping a record of situations in which people tried to get you to act in ways that contradicted your values and how you did or didn't stick to your beliefs.

4. **Clarity**. The ability to express yourself clearly. Albrecht contrasts role-speak, the official language of a job, and real-speak, the ability to turn facts into stories that engage listeners. Guidelines include communication techniques and ways to throw negative, aggressive, sarcastic or dogmatic terms out of your speech.

5. **Empathy**. Measures how aware and considerate you are of others feelings. Empathy helps make an effective connection with another person; Albrecht says. Studying those who seem to connect with others, assessing how toxic situations got that way and brainstorming ways to interact with those who seem unreceptive can bolster your empathy skills.

Emotional Intelligence was first described by Daniel Goleman, PhD, in the Harvard Business Review. Dr. Goleman has described many important scientific discoveries about emotions and human behavior in his book, "Emotional Intelligence." The book organizes the information into a description of how emotion drives behavior, and describes intelligent ways of managing both.

Dr. Daniel Goleman's Model: Four Components of Emotional Intelligence

1. Self-awareness. Self-Awareness means being aware of your own emotions, and being able to identify them correctly. This is the most important of the EI skills. It allows you to recognize your own strengths and weaknesses. This is very important to managing relationships with others successfully.

2. Self-management. Self-Management is the ability to control your emotional reactions while still behaving with honesty and integrity. A person who is emotionally intelligent does not let bad moods or a strong emotional reaction govern his or her behavior. Self-Management also means being able to direct your own behavior toward a goal. It means being able to put off gratification in the present in order to get better results at a future time.

3. Social awareness. Social awareness has two parts: empathy, and attention (noticing how others are reacting to you). Empathy means being able to sense what the other person is feeling, and to know what their emotion feels like from your own experience. It does not necessarily mean you agree with the other person. However, it does mean that you know how they feel and can communicate that you understand, and that you care. Once you have the ability to sense how others react, you can be more effective in choosing how to deliver a message. This lays the foundation for the fourth skill, relationship management.

4. Relationship management. Relationship management includes the ability to communicate in a clear and convincing way. Being clear means being able to say what you mean simply, and being able to offer examples. A person who is emotionally intelligent can communicate ideas, information, and requests to others effectively. They pay attention to how others are reacting and adjust their approach to get a better result. The key is social awareness and flexibility in how they talk to other people. They can adjust words, non-verbal behavior, and timing to get the best reaction from others.

Suggested Reading
Social Intelligence the new science of success by Dr. Karl Albrecht

Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ by Dr. Daniel Goleman

Point of Reflection
"As much as 80% of adult success comes from EQ." Daniel Goleman

The Leadership Style of Jesus Christ
"Perhaps the true mark of a leader is that she or he is willing to stand alone." Laurie Beth Jones

The Gospel of Mark begins by telling the reader about nine characteristics of Jesus as a leader. When you read the first chapter of Mark, there are some distinctive traits of Christ that every team leader can learn! The biblical truths of his teachings and the pattern of his leadership style are valuable to any leader.

According to Dr. Dale Roach, founder and creator of Like A Team: Nine Characteristics of Jesus as a Leader to Consider

1. Jesus was not self-promoting. As Jesus began his ministry, he made it clear that there was a higher power at work. Mark 1:11. The fact that he placed himself under the care of John the Baptist for baptism showed that Jesus was going to teach his followers that submission does not mean weakness.

2. Jesus was obedient to the Holy Spirit. After Jesus' baptism, the Gospel writer Mark says that "at once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him." Many things in life can pull us away from following the Lord. The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus' obedience to His Father. Mark 1:12-13.

3. Jesus cast a vision with clarity, simplicity, and directness. Not long after Jesus began his ministry, John was arrested. When this happened, "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." One of the most active components of Jesus' ministry was his ability to be simple, clear, and direct. Mark 1:15.

4. Jesus was a strategic team builder. When Jesus called the first four disciples, who were fishermen, to follow him, he said, "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." When Jesus began the process of calling his disciples to follow him, he started with men who had something in common. The act of Christ in recruiting the first disciples is a lesson in how important it is for any leader to begin with people who share common traits and values. Mark 1:17.

5. Jesus was a relationship builder. As noted above, Jesus began recruiting his disciples by finding those who shared some common ground. This strong foundation led to calling those of differing character. Matthew worked for Rome in the collection of taxes, while Simon the Zealot was an ardent Jewish nationalist. The bringing together of these two men showed the power of Jesus to merge diverse people. Christ sets an excellent example of how a strong leader can bring together different people. Mark 1:19.

6. Jesus expressed control and authority as a leader when needed. "Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!" When the demon made this statement, Jesus said sternly, "Be quiet and come out of him!" Never doubt that the characteristics of Jesus showed authority and expressed firm control when needed. Mark 1:23-25.

7. Jesus engaged in crisis head-on. Often a crisis will cripple many people. However, Jesus often took a crisis head-on. The Bible story says, "Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. So, he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them." There are times when a strong leader will have to take on what others fear. Christ is the perfect example of such behavior. Mark 1:30-31.

8. Jesus practiced daily prayer. Another strong characteristic of Jesus was that he prayed every day. "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed." Prayer is a powerful and helpful tool for anyone who desires to be a healthy leader. Mark 1:35.

9. Jesus was all about empowering others. Jesus' entire ministry focused on the empowerment of others. A perfect example of this was in his healing of a man with leprosy. "And a leper came to Jesus, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying, "If You are willing, you can make me clean." Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed." Mark 1:40-45.

According to Ron Edmondson, consultant and coach:
12 Leadership Principles of Jesus
1. Jesus was willing to invest in people others would have dismissed. Consider the disciples. They were not the "religious" elite, yet Jesus used them to start His church.

2. Jesus released responsibility and ownership in a ministry. Consider how Jesus sent the disciples out on their own. No micro-management it appears.

3. Jesus had a leadership succession plan. Jesus consistently reminded the disciples He wouldn't always be with them. Of course, He was still the "leader", but He left others to take the ministry forward.

4. Jesus practiced servant leadership better than anyone. The King of kings was willing to wash the feet of His followers.

5. Jesus was laser focused on His vision. Regardless of the persecutions or distractions, Jesus kept on the mission God had called Him to complete.

6. Jesus handled distractions with grace. When the woman who had been bleeding for 12 years touched His garment, Jesus stopped to heal her, even though headed to a definite purpose.

7. Jesus was into self-development. Jesus constantly slipped away to spend time with God.

8. Jesus was into leadership development and replacement. He very purposefully prepared the disciples to take over the ministry. He pushed people beyond what they felt they were capable of doing.

9. Jesus held followers to high expectations. Jesus was not afraid to make huge requests of people. "Follow Me" meant the disciples had to drop their agenda to do so. He told the disciples they must be willing to lose everything to follow Him.

10. Jesus cared more about people than about rules and regulations. He was willing to jeopardize Himself personally by breaking the "rules" to help someone in need.

11. Jesus celebrated success in ministry. He rewarded people generously who were faithful to Him and His cause.

12. Jesus finished well.

Suggested Reading
Jesus, CEO: Using Ancient Wisdom for Visionary Leadership by Laurie Beth Jones

Lead Like Jesus Revisited: Lessons From the Greatest Leadership Role Model of All Time by Ken Blanchard, Phil Hodges

Point of Reflection
But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant.

Matthew 20:26 NLT

Top Leadership Qualities/Skills That Make Good Leaders
"A leader is a person you will follow to a place you would not go by yourself." Joel Barker

According to Sarmad Hasan, digital content producer at TaskQue:
15 Leadership Qualities That Make Good Leaders
1. Honesty and integrity. Honesty and integrity are two important ingredients which make a good leader. How can you expect your followers to be honest when you lack these qualities yourself?

2. Confidence. To be an effective leader, you should be confident enough to ensure that other follow your commands. If you are unsure about your own decisions and qualities, then your subordinates will never follow you.

3. Inspire others. Probably the most difficult job for a leader is to persuade others to follow. It can only be possible if you inspire your followers by setting a good example. When the going gets tough, they look up to you and see how you react to the situation.

4. Commitment and passion. Your teams look up to you and if you want them to give them their all, you will have to be passionate about it too. When your teammates see you getting your hands dirty, they will also give their best shot. It will also help you to gain the respect of your subordinates and infuse new energy in your team members.

5. Good communicator. Until you clearly communicate your vision to your team and tell them the strategy to achieve the goal, it will be very difficult for you to get the results you want. Simply put, if you are unable to communicate your message effectively to your team, you can never be a good leader.

6. Decision-making capabilities. Apart from having a futuristic vision, a leader should have the ability to take the right decision at the right time. Decisions taken by leaders have a profound impact on masses. A leader should think long and hard before taking a decision but once the decision is taken, stand by it.

7. Accountability. When it comes to accountability, you need to follow the approach highlighted by Arnold H Glasow when he said, *"A good leader takes little more than his share of the blame and little less than his share of the credit."*

8. Delegation and empowerment. You cannot do everything, right. It is important for a leader to focus on key responsibilities while leaving the rest to others. By that, I mean empowering your followers and delegating tasks to them. Delegate tasks to your subordinates and see how they perform. Provide them with all the resources and support they need to achieve the objective and give them a chance to bear the responsibility.

9. Creativity and innovation. What separates a leader from a follower? Steve Jobs, the greatest visionary of our time answers this question this way, *"Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower."* In order to get ahead in today's fast-paced world, a leader must be creative and innovative at the same time.

10. Empathy. Leaders should develop empathy with their followers. Unfortunately, most leaders follow a dictatorial style and neglect empathy altogether. Due to this, they fail to make a closer connection with their followers.

11. Resilience. When the going gets tough, the tough get going. You might have heard this adage many times, but did you know that great leaders also follow this rule. They are resilient and have a positive attitude. While most people are busy in complaining about the problems, great leaders always focus on solutions, not the problems.

12. Emotional intelligence. Good leaders always have higher influence but how do they increase their influence on the point where people accept what they say. They do this by connecting with people emotionally. That is where emotional intelligence comes into play.

13. Humility. A good leader is always selfless and always thinks about his or her followers. That is why the leadership styles that most great leaders adopt put lots of emphasis on problem-solving and team dynamics instead of focusing on self-promotion.

14. Transparency. One of the best ways to win the trust of your followers is by being transparent. Instead of hiding information, you should openly share it with them. By giving visibility to your followers, they will buy into your vision and support you with conviction in achieving the goal.

15. Vision and purpose. Good leaders always have a vision and purpose. They not only visualize the future themselves but also share their vision with their followers.

According to Integrity and Values:
20 Leadership Traits
1. Truthfulness. Truthfulness is an essential trait for great leaders. Your capacity to be open, honest and forthright is a measure of your leadership. Telling the truth with zero tolerance for dishonesty in others is your hallmark.

2. Responsibility. True leadership means 100% responsibility for your actions. Total ownership even when the outcome is undesirable. High scores in this attribute gives you the most freedom as a leader.

3. Accountability. In this trait we are measuring your capacity as a leader to hold others accountable for the results they promised. Your ability to notice and not walk past unmet deadlines or commitments will have the team operate at a high level.

4. Loyalty. As a leader making decisions for the greater good where you can put aside your personal needs or goals is Loyalty. Loyalty means the leader serves the organization, not the individuals in it.

5. Self-awareness Great leaders can self-reflect. Their introspection allows them to be aware of their impact on others and the organization.

6. Impression management. Leaders must understand the importance of being seen in a favorable light – not by empty popularity, but by doing the right thing with others.

7. Vision. A leader has to have a vision. Great ones are able to see possibilities and identify opportunities but don't stop there. Great leaders turn ideas into action.

8. Assertiveness. Assertiveness done right has great impact on leadership. Leaders are to express their opinions confidently, irrespective of relationship. They are to stand up for self even in difficult situations. Good leaders know the power of, No, when it is most necessary.

9. Personal happiness. Leadership means leading a life influence, and a successful one starts with contentment. When an individual is happy with his current life circumstance, he can look at the future without fear that hinders.

10. Self-belief. Leaders need the sort of self-belief that gives them confidence in their own skills and abilities, and expectation of success in most situations.

11. Ability to talk. Good leaders enjoy talking with people. They are articulate and have no problem expressing their opinion.

12. Ability to listen. There is nothing more attractive to a member than a leader who listens.

13. Appreciation. A leader is able to inspire by acknowledging others' contribution, and by constantly offering positive and critical feedback.

14. Empathy. Empathy is an enviable trait. One who chooses to see the world through others' eyes is able to provide support and build a sense of trust.

15. Networking. Networking is a requirement in today's competitive environment.

16. Result orientation. Leaders must be winners at heart. They should have clear goals, and are always geared towards achieving them.

17. Organization. It is imperative for any leader to stay organized. There must always be a schedule and structured approach to projects and plans. Effective leaders always know where things are.

18. Task focus. Task-focused leaders get things done. Leaders are able to immerse themselves in work and maintain their focus.

19. Attention to details. Sweat the small stuff. Leaders must be conscious to details, and be thorough, precise and accurate in their work.

20. Reliability. Reliable leaders keep the promises they make. They go beyond simply being individuals on top. They are punctual and do whatever it takes to meet deadlines and expectations.

According to US.Experteer.com
A leadership survey of company leaders around the world, the 10 skills that are critical to effective leadership are:

1. Leading People	71%	
2. Strategic Planning	64%	
3. Resourcefulness	64%	
4. Doing whatever it takes	64%	
5. Managing Change	63%	
6. Inspiring Commitment	62%	
7. Being a quick learner	60%	
8. Decisiveness	60%	
9. Building & Mending Relationships	57%	
10. Composure	57%	

Suggested Reading
The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader: Becoming the Person Others Will Want to Follow by John C. Maxwell

Point of Reflection
"The function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not more followers." Ralph Nader

Toxic Leadership

"Toxic people defy logic. Some are blissfully unaware of the negative impact that they have on those around them, and others seem to derive satisfaction from creating chaos and pushing other people's buttons. Travis Bradberry

Toxic leadership defined this way in the Army's "Leadership Bible."
Toxic leadership is a combination of self-centered attitudes, motivations, and behaviors that have adverse effects on subordinates, the organization, and mission performance. This leader lacks concern for others and the climate of the organization, which leads to short- and long-term negative effects. The toxic leader operates with an inflated sense of self-worth and from acute self-interest. Toxic leaders consistently use dysfunctional behaviors to deceive, intimidate, coerce, or unfairly punish others to get what they want for themselves.

According to Jeff Manson, chief executive officer, Western Psychological Services
Toxic leadership often causes employee dissatisfaction, low productivity, interdepartmental conflict, stagnant innovation, and a high turnover rate. Unfortunately, in many organizations toxic leaders are a painful but undeniable reality. With their destructive behavior patterns and dysfunctional interactions, they create a disillusioned and demotivated workforce.

Common Characteristics of Toxic Leaders
1. Arrogant. Toxic leaders are very boastful and arrogant. They think that they are always right, and expect others to accept their word as gospel truth. They extend no help to others, and they hate it when someone else dares to correct them, especially if that someone is a subordinate.

2. Autocratic. A toxic boss does not want any opinion other than their own to be heard. They expect others to quietly follow their every direction, without ever questioning the direction. A toxic boss often fancies themselves as the top dog or a self-styled king, and their behavior is often reflective of that. Employees are minions, lesser beings who exist only to do the leader's bidding.

3. Irritable. Perhaps not surprisingly, toxic leaders also come across as highly irritable. They do want to be bothered for anything. Since they are not open to other ideas from anyone else, they despise being asked questions and avoid it as much as possible. Under a toxic leader, the organization becomes stunted because of the lack of innovative and free-flowing ideas.

4. Maladjusted. Beneath the tough and arrogant veneer of a toxic boss is an ill-tempered child who is mortified of change. They are highly inflexible, and take changes very hard. The toxic boss is likely to be the most vehement opponent of any changes in the organization.

5. Lack of confidence. Though they act supremely confident, a toxic leader has no confidence in themselves. Consequently, they also find it extremely difficult to trust team members. Because of this lack of confidence, tough problems are often ignored or swept under the carpet.

6. Incompetent. A toxic leader may think that they are the best, but they are incompetent and may often struggle to make even the most commonsensical decisions, or do the simplest of tasks. Their sense of importance and usefulness only comes from criticizing others, and making them out to be less than they really are.

7. Hierarchical. Without the rigid structure of hierarchy, toxic leadership will wither and die. If you're under a toxic leader, you will often feel the pressure of the corporate power structure above you. A toxic leader is adept at controlling team members using hierarchy and seniority.

8. Unrealistic expectations. Toxic leaders are notorious for setting objectives that are unfair and unrealistic. Team members struggle with unachievable goals, and get demoralized. Workload piles up, and the company becomes set up to fail.

9. Symbols of personal authority. These symbols include first right to common parking spaces, complete access to everything, and perhaps even studding the entire workplace with their own portraits and stories of accomplishments.

10. Discriminatory. Not surprisingly, toxic leaders are often discriminatory. Their biases and prejudices often appear in the guise of sexism, racism, ageism, and other discriminatory behavior.

Suggested Reading
The Allure of Toxic Leaders: Why We Follow Destructive Bosses and Corrupt Politicians--and How We Can Survive Them by Jean Lipman-Blumen

Point of Reflection
"A leader who allows their subordinates to suffer as proof of who is the boss likely quenches their thirst with salt water from a rusted canteen." Donavan Nelson Butler, Master Sergeant US Army

Toxic Workplace Culture
"Weeding out the harmful influences should become the norm not the exception." Carlos Wallace

According to SHRM
In July, 2019, SHRM commissioned research on toxic workplace cultures and what happens to the employees who work in them. "*The High Cost of a Toxic Workplace Culture: How Culture Impacts the Workforce—and the Bottom Line,*" found that many workers consider culture and managers to be closely connected. In fact, 58 percent of employees who quit a job due to workplace culture say that their managers are the main reason they ultimately left.

"*Lack of communication [between managers and workers] is a leading contributor to the culture issues facing many organizations,*" the SHRM report notes. Managers are in a prime position to build strong and positive workplaces by listening to employees, holding workers and leaders accountable for their actions, setting expectations, and clarifying information.

To help create these great workplaces, SHRM has announced it is launching new learning and development programs for People Managers in 2020, including a People Manager Qualification (PMQ) to aid new managers in developing soft skills, leadership skills and the emotional intelligence needed for building high-performing teams. With strong managers in place, SHRM says, HR professionals can take on more strategic leadership in their companies.

Below are more takeaways from the research:
- 49% of American workers have thought of leaving their current organization.
- 20% have let their jobs in the last five years and culture is the reason why.
- The cost of turnover due to culture exceeds $223 billion over the past five years.
- 60% say that managers are the reason they left their organizations.
- 33% say their manager doesn't know how to lead them.
- 30% say their manager doesn't encourage a culture of open and transparent communication.
- Nearly 25% dread going to work, don't feel safe voicing their opinions about work-related issues, and don't feel respected and valued at work.

According to Kat Boogaard, career advice author:
The Ladder: 5 Signs of a Toxic Work Culture
1. There's little to no enthusiasm. Bad attitudes create a self-fulfilling prophecy – all that negativity is a result of the culture, but it also fuels the overall gloomy vibe in the office. And worse, it hinders everybody's ability to get things done. 93 percent of workers say they're less productive when they work with people who have poor attitudes.

2. There's a pervasive fear of failure. Nobody wants to screw up at work. 28 percent of people admit that making a mistake on the job is their biggest workplace fear. But there's a big difference between hoping to avoid a brief face-palm moment and feeling paralyzed by a threatening environment that punishes perceived failures.

3. There's constant dysfunction and confusion. Nobody is clear on their roles or responsibilities. Crossed wires are common, and people are always left out of the loop. Team members can barely tell which way is up.

4. There's never-ending gossip and drama. A little bit of office hearsay is normal. Most people are guilty of paying attention the rumor mill in one way or another, with 96 percent of respondents admitting to participating in office gossip.

5. There's high employee turnover. There's a revolving door of employees, and it seems like you can't keep anybody around for the long haul. You're never sure what empty desks or new faces you'll see in the office tomorrow. Organizations that purposefully craft a positive culture experience a 14 percent turnover rate, while those who ignore their culture are saddled with a 48 percent turnover rate.

Suggested Reading
Surviving the Toxic Workplace: Protect Yourself Against Coworkers, Bosses, and Work Environments That Poison Your Day by Linnda Durre

Point of Reflection
"Don't let negative and toxic people rent space in your head. Raise the rent and kick them out." Robert Tew

Why You Should Hire Employees with Emotional Intelligence
"No one cares how much you know, until they know how much you care." Theodore Roosevelt

According to By Robert Half, Global Human Resource Consulting Firm
In a recent OfficeTeam survey of more than 600 human resources managers and 800 office workers in the United States and Canada, most HR managers (95 percent) and workers (99 percent) said it's important for employees to have a high emotional quotient (EQ), a measure of emotional intelligence, because it helps them manage their own emotions and understand and react to the emotions of others in the workplace.

The OfficeTeam survey also suggests professionals at all levels of business place high value on emotional intelligence in the workplace.

Here are some highlights:
- 21% believe a high EQ is more valuable in the workplace than a high IQ.
- 65% said the two are equally important.
- 92% think they have strong emotional intelligence
- 74% believe their bosses do.
- 30% of human resource managers feel most employers put too little emphasis on emotional intelligence during the hiring process, overlooking its many benefits.
- 40% of human resource managers said soft skills, such as communication, problem-solving and adaptability are more difficult to teach workers than technical abilities.
- 61% admitted they've let emotions influence them negatively in the office.
- 86% of workers said when a colleague doesn't control his or her emotions; it affects their perception of that person's level of professionalism.

Tips for hiring for high EQ Candidates:
- Are there indicators candidates were self-motivated enough to take outside development courses?
- Do they give credit to others when describing initiatives that would clearly be joint efforts?
- When it comes to handling criticism, does the candidate display an ability to listen, acknowledge any shortcomings and keep things in perspective rather than becoming defensive and making excuses?
- When it comes to teamwork, can candidates describe how they have confronted simmering issues and helped to solve them with a team, or are the answers slanted more individually?
- Are you able to gauge their ability to juggle multiple demands from different supervisors and shifting business priorities?

According to Justin Bariso, author, speaker, and consultant:
Hire People with High Emotional Intelligence
Smart employers recognize the value of emotional intelligence in the workplace. In a survey of more than 2,600 hiring managers and HR professionals, HR Company CareerBuilder found that:

- 71 percent said they value emotional intelligence more than IQ in an employee
- 75 percent said they were more likely to promote a candidate with high emotional intelligence over one with a high IQ.

Five Things to Look For:
1. **Look for "learn-it-alls." not "know-it-alls."** As an employer, you want to see candidates who are confident in their skills. But you also want people who aren't full of themselves and are willing to learn from others. Look for a candidate who communicates what they do well. But also look for those who share what they've learned from mentors and colleagues, who give others credit for helping them to become the person they are today.

2. Look for people who work on themselves. Think *"What is your greatest weakness?"* is an old and useless interview question? Think again. It's actually a chance to identify emotional intelligence in job candidates. Experienced interviewers know that only a precious few job seeker can identify a true weakness. And even fewer have developed plans to strengthen those weaknesses.

3. Look for People who embrace the rule of awkward silence. Most job candidates try to answer every interview question right away. They're afraid that if they pause before answering, they'll appear unqualified or stupid. In contrast, look for applicants who embrace the rule of awkward silence. They aren't afraid to pause a few seconds, even if slightly uncomfortable--because it means getting their emotions under control to give a more thoughtful answer.

4. Look for relationship builders. You might speak with hundreds of candidates in the course of a job search. If the qualifications and experience are comparable, how can you tell who stands out? Maybe they write a handwritten note after the interview. Maybe they mention something they liked about the company ... or even a question they wish they had answered differently.

5. Look for great questions. Remember that a good job interview should be a two-way street: for the potential benefit of the company, and also a chance for the candidate to determine if the company is the right match for them. So, look for applicants who use thoughtful questions to gather information about your company and its culture. They might ask what their first days on the job would look like. They might ask about company values, and show how these align with their own. They may even ask about the challenges at work.

Suggested Reading
The EQ Interview: Finding Employees with High Emotional Intelligence by Adele Lynn

The Leader's Guide to Emotional Intelligence: Understand and Develop your EQ for Maximum Leadership Impact by Drew Bird

Point of Reflection
""All learning has an emotional base." Plato

Part 6

Thinking and Problem Solving

"A great many people think they are thinking when they are merely rearranging their prejudices."

William James

"Rather than micro-managing to resolve every problem, create the right atmosphere, process, and system that facilitate effective problem solving."

Assegid Habtewold

20 Cognitive Distortions
"When people will not weed their own minds, they are apt to be overrun by nettles." Horace Walpole

According to GoodTherapy Staff
Cognitive distortions can take a serious toll on one's mental health, leading to increased stress, depression, and anxiety. If left unchecked, these automatic thought patterns can become entrenched and may negatively influence the rational, logical way you make decisions.

For those looking to improve their mental health by recognizing bothersome cognitive distortions, we've compiled a list of 20 common ones that may already be distorting your perception of reality:

1. Black-and-white thinking. A person with this dichotomous thinking pattern typically sees things in terms of either/or. Something is either good or bad, right or wrong, all or nothing. Black-and-white thinking fails to acknowledge that there are almost always several shades of gray that exist between black and white. By seeing only two possible sides or outcomes to something, a person ignores the middle—and possibly more reasonable—ground.

2. Personalization. When engaging in this type of thinking, an individual tends to take things personally. He or she may attribute things that other people do as the result of his or her own actions or behaviors. This type of thinking also causes a person to blame himself or herself for external circumstances outside the person's control.

3. 'Should' statements. Thoughts that include "should," "ought," or "must" are almost always related to a cognitive distortion. For example: "I should have arrived to the meeting earlier," or, "I must lose weight to be more attractive." This type of thinking may induce feelings of guilt or shame.

4. Catastrophizing. This occurs when a person sees any unpleasant occurrence as the worst possible outcome. A person who is catastrophizing might fail an exam and immediately think he or she has likely failed the entire course. A person may not have even taken the exam yet and already believe he or she will fail—assuming the worst, or preemptively catastrophizing.

5. Magnifying. With this type of cognitive distortion, things are exaggerated or blown out of proportion, though not quite to the extent of catastrophizing. It is the real-life version of the old saying, "Making a mountain out of a molehill."

6. Minimizing. The same person who experiences the magnifying distortion may minimize positive events. These distortions sometimes occur in conjunction with each other. A person who distorts reality by minimizing may think something like, "Yes, I got a raise, but it wasn't very big and I'm still not very good at my job."

7. Mindreading. This type of thinker may assume the role of psychic and may think he or she knows what someone else thinks or feels. The person may think he or she knows what another person thinks despite no external confirmation that his or her assumption is true.

8. Fortune telling. A fortune-telling-type thinker tends to predict the future, and usually foresees a negative outcome. Such a thinker arbitrarily predicts that things will turn out poorly. Before a concert or movie, you might hear him or her say, "I just know that all the tickets will be sold out when we get there."

9. Overgeneralization. When overgeneralizing, a person may come to a conclusion based on one or two single events; despite the fact reality is too complex to make such generalizations. If a friend misses a lunch date, this doesn't mean he or she will always fail to keep commitments. Overgeneralizing statements often include the words "always," "never," "every," or "all."

10. Discounting the positive. This extreme form of all-or-nothing thinking occurs when a person discounts positive information about a performance, event, or experience and sees only negative aspects. A person engaging in this type of distortion might disregard any compliments or positive reinforcement he or she receives.

11. Filtering. This cognitive distortion, similar to discounting the positive, occurs when a person filters out information, negative or positive. For example, a person may look at his or her feedback on an assignment in school or at work and exclude positive notes to focus on one critical comment.

12. Labeling. This distortion, a more severe type of overgeneralization, occurs when a person labels someone or something based on one experience or event. Instead of believing that he or she made a mistake, people engaging in this type of thinking might automatically label themselves as failures.

13. Blaming. This is the opposite of personalization. Instead of seeing everything as your fault, all blame is put on someone or something else.

14. Emotional reasoning. Mistaking one's feelings for reality is emotional reasoning. If this type of thinker feels scared, there must be real danger. If this type of thinker feels stupid, then to him or her must be true. This type of thinking can be severe and may manifest as obsessive compulsion.

15. Always being 'right'. This thinking pattern causes a person to internalize his or her opinions as facts and fails to consider the feelings of the other person in a debate or discussion. This cognitive distortion can make it difficult to form and sustain healthy relationships.

16. Self-serving bias. A person experiencing self-serving bias may attribute all positive events to his or her personal character while seeing any negative events as outside of his or her control. This pattern of thinking may cause a person to refuse to admit mistakes or flaws and to live in a distorted reality where he or she can do no wrong.

17. 'Heaven's reward' fallacy. In this pattern of thinking, a person may expect divine rewards for his or her sacrifices. People experiencing this distortion tend to put their interests and feelings aside in hopes that they will be rewarded for their selflessness later, but they may become bitter and angry if the reward is never presented.

18. Fallacy of change. This distortion assumes that other people must change their behavior in order for us to be happy. This way of thinking is usually considered selfish because it insists, for example, that other people change their schedule to accommodate yours.

19. Fallacy of fairness. This fallacy assumes that things have to be measured based on fairness and equality, when in reality things often don't always work that way. An example of the trap this type of thinking sets is when it justifies infidelity if a person's partner has cheated.

20. Control fallacy. Someone who sees things as internally controlled may put himself or herself at fault for events that are truly out of the person's control, such as another person's happiness or behavior. A person who sees things as externally controlled might blame his or her boss for poor work performance.

Know the patterns. Familiarize yourself with the twenty distorted thinking patterns. Recognize distorted thought patterns. Once you know the patterns, you can start to recognize thought patterns that may not be serving you well.

Suggested Reading
Check Your Reality: Transforming Distorted Thinking for Lasting Empowerment & Well-Being
by Brian M Keltner

Point of Reflection
"Nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." Hamlet Act 2, scene 2, William Shakespeare

Asking More Questions/Critical Thinking
"Judge a man by his questions rather than by his answers."   Voltaire

According to mystudyfocus
Critical thinking is the ability to think clearly and rationally, understanding the logical connection between ideas. Critical thinkers rigorously question ideas and assumptions rather than accepting them at face value. They will always seek to determine whether the ideas, arguments and findings represent the entire picture and are open to finding that they do not. Critical thinkers will identify, analyze and solve problems systematically rather than by intuition or instinct.

Someone with Critical Thinking Skills Can:
- Understand the links between ideas.

- Determine the importance and relevance of arguments and ideas.

- Recognize, build and appraise arguments.

- Identify inconsistencies and errors in reasoning.

- Approach problems in a consistent and systematic way.

- Reflect on the justification of their assumptions, beliefs and values.

Specifically, We Need to be Able to:
- Think about a topic or issue in an objective and critical way.

- Identify the different arguments there are in relation to a particular issue.

- Evaluate a point of view to determine how strong or valid it is.

- Recognize any weaknesses or negative points that there are in the evidence or argument.

- Notice what implications there might be behind a statement or argument.

- Provide structured reasoning and support for an argument that we wish to make.

Additional Questions to Ask Yourself
- What facts are used?

- Are the sources of facts listed and credible?

- What is the use of opinion in the material presented?

- How does that opinion affect the presented facts?

- How can the facts be verified?

- What is the author's point of view?

- How does their bias influence the presentation?

- What additional questions would you ask the author to formulate a solid opinion about what they presented?

- How do you see the information differently now that you have thought about it critically?

Suggested Reading

Asking the Right Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking by M. Neil Browne, Stuart M. Keeley

Leading with Questions: How Leaders Find the Right Solutions by Knowing What to Ask by Michael J. Marquardt

Point of Reflection

"The most serious mistakes are not being made as a result of wrong answers. The true dangerous thing is asking the wrong questions." Peter Drucker

<h1 align="center">Biblical Principles in Making Decisions</h1>
<p align="center">And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Colossians 3:17 ESV</p>

According to Blake Holmes, senior equipping director, Watermark Community Church
1. What Biblical Principles Should Inform My Decision?
Proverbs 2:6. For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth comes knowledge and understanding.

Proverbs 3:5-6. NKJV. Trust in the Lord with all of your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

Philippians 4:8. NKJV. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything, worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

Questions to Ask
- What does the Bible have to say about this decision?
- Who can help me better understand what God's Word says about this decision?
- Make sure you are not the only one who holds to your interpretation.

2. Do I Have All The Facts?
Proverbs 18:13. NKJV. He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him.

Proverbs 18:17. NKJV. The first to plead his case seems right, until another comes and examines him.

Questions to Ask
- Ask a lot of questions.
- Don't fall prey to "wishful thinking" or let your emotions get the best of you.
- Remember that there are two sides to every story.

3. Is the Pressure of Time Forcing Me to Make a Premature Decision?
Proverbs 19:2. NKJV. Also it is not good for a person to be without knowledge, and he who makes haste with his feet errs.

Proverbs 21:5. NKJV. The plans of the diligent lead surely to advantage, but everyone who is hasty comes surely to poverty.

Questions to Ask
- Beware of the "once in a lifetime" deal and the lure of instant gratification.
- Don't let the fear of missing out drive your decision.
- When in doubt, leave it out.

4. What Possible Motives Are Driving My Decision?
Proverbs 16:2. NKJV. All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, but the Lord weighs the motives.

Proverbs 20:9. NKJV. Who can say, "I have cleansed my heart, I am pure from my sin'"?

Questions to Ask
- Acknowledge that you have "blind spots."

- Honestly assess your motives, both good and bad.
- Give others permission to speak in to your life.

5. How Should Past Experiences Inform My Decision?
Proverbs 17:10. NKJV. A rebuke goes deeper into one who has understanding than a hundred blows into a fool.

Questions to Ask
- Look for patterns of behavior – "triggers."
- Understand how your family background might affect your thinking.
- Learn from your mistakes!

6. What Is the Collective Counsel of My Community?
Proverbs 11:14. NKJV . Where there is no guidance the people fall, but in an abundance of counselors there is victory.

Proverbs 18:1. NKJV . He who separates himself seeks his own desire. He quarrels against all sound wisdom.

Proverbs 18:2. NKJV. A fool does not delight in understanding, but only in revealing his own mind.

Questions to Ask
- Avoid having many separate conversations.
- Recognize the difference between "selling" and "sharing."
- Know when to "open the circle."

7. Have I Honestly Considered the Warning Signs?
Proverbs 10:17. NKJV. He is on the path of life who heeds instruction, but he who forsakes reproof goes astray.

Proverbs 16:25. NKJV. There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

Questions to Ask
- Don't think you are the "exception" to the rule.
- Remember that God's way is the best way.

8. Have I Considered the Possible Outcomes for My Course of Action?
Proverbs 14:1. NKJV. The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish tears it down with her own hands.

Proverbs 14:15. NKJV. The naïve believes everything, but the prudent man considers his steps.

Proverbs 27:12. NKJV. A prudent man sees evil and hides himself, the naïve proceed and pay the penalty.

Questions to Ask
- Do the "long math."
- Assess the potential risks.
- Have a contingency plan.

9. Could This Decision Jeopardize My Integrity or Hinder My Witness for the Lord?
Proverbs 25:26. NKJV. Like a trampled spring and a polluted well is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked.

Proverbs 10:9. NKJV. He who walks in integrity walks securely, but he who perverts his ways will be found out.
Proverbs 20:7. NKJV. A righteous man who walks in his integrity—how blessed are his sons after him.

Proverbs 22:1. NKJV. A good name is to be more desired than great riches, favor is better than silver and gold.

Questions to Ask
- Work toward the "center" rather than flirt with the "edge."
- Ask yourself, "Would this pass the 'newspaper 'test?"

10. Is There a Better Option That Would Allow Me to Make a Greater Impact for God's Kingdom?
Proverbs 11:30. NKJV. The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who is wise wins souls.

Questions to Ask
- Ask yourself, "What story could God be writing?"
- Don't assume that just because something is hard that it is not God's will.
- Understand how God has uniquely gifted and resourced you.

Suggested Reading
Decision Making and the Will of God: A Biblical Alternative to the Traditional by Garry Friesen and J. Robin Maxson

Management by Proverbs by Michael Zigarelli

Point of Reflection
But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere.

James 3:17 NLT

Big Picture Thinking
"If you just focus on the smallest details, you never get the big picture right." Leroy Hood,

According to Eva Rykrsmith, organizational psychology practitioner:
Traits of the Big Picture Thinker

- You can quickly see patterns in complex problems.
- You like to come up with new ideas and new projects.
- You have a low tolerance for busywork, tedious errands, and filling out forms.
- You are great at outlining what needs to be done, but filling in the details can feel exhausting.
- You may have been described as right-brained.

Big picture thinking is dynamic and accessible to everyone, from the corner office to the field. Here's an illustrative story about three stonecutters. It provides a good image of what big picture thinking is:

One day a traveler, walking along a lane, came across three stonecutters working in a quarry. Each was busy cutting a block of stone. Interested to find out what they were working on, the traveler asked the first stonecutter what he was doing. *"I am cutting a stone!"*

Still no wiser the traveler turned to the second stonecutter and asked him what he was doing. *"I am cutting this block of stone to make sure that its square and its dimensions are uniform, so that it will fit exactly in its place in a wall."*

A bit closer to finding out what the stonecutters were working on but still unclear, the traveler turned to the third stonecutter. He seemed to be the happiest of the three and when asked what he was doing replied: *"I am building a cathedral."*

All three stonecutters were correct in their answers, but the third had his big picture glasses on. He had an understanding of what his actions in the quarry were aiming at and that his contributions were part of something larger. In this case, a cathedral.

According to Christian J. Knutson, project management professional:
Big picture thinking is good. Cultivating the skill of big picture thinking is so important. Instead of being restricted by the belief you lack the material to see the big picture, you are able to develop your own big picture based on the materials you do have. When you maintain big picture thinking it:

Allows you to lead. Leaders are typically viewed as having "the big picture". People tend to follow those who have an understanding of where they are headed and where others need to go as well. If you want to lead, then big picture thinking is something you need to be doing routinely.

Keeps you on target. Big picture thinking is essential to goal accomplishment. When you practice big picture thinking you are capable of seeing how goals fit into the fabric of your organizations, or your own, strategy. This helps you to clearly articulate why you are pursuing a goal and this in turn helps you to identify what needs to be done.

Allows you to see what others see. It's important to be able to see the point of view of others. This is one of those emotional intelligence skills all leaders must cultivate to be successful in their careers. When we use big picture thinking, we give ourselves the creative license to open our aperture and see an issue from not only different people's perspectives, but from different levels as well.

Promotes teamwork. Big picture thinking allows you to lead. It also allows people to collaborate on something larger than them and on something they can become energized over. A team needs an effective leader to succeed. But it also needs the big picture to effectively coordinate its actions.

Big-Picture Thinking asks questions that look at the past, present, and future. Here are five to consider from the work of Dr. Freek Vermeulen, professor of strategy at London Business School.

Five Questions for a Big-Picture Conversation with your Team:
1. What doesn't fit that we're spending time and energy on?
2. What would someone outside of my challenge do if they were in charge?
3. Is the foundation of my business consistent with the strategy I'm implementing?
4. Do I fully understand why we do it that way?
5. What might be the long-term consequences?

Suggested Reading
Seeing the Big Picture: Business Acumen to Build Your Credibility, Career, and Company by Kevin Cope

Become a Big Picture Thinker: Learn How to Think Big by Emily Nightingale

Point of Reflection
"Big-picture thinkers realize there is a world out there besides their own, and they make an effort to get outside of themselves and see other people's worlds through their eyes. It's hard to see the picture while inside the frame." John Maxwell

Engaging Possibility Thinking

"When faced with a mountain. I will not quit. I will keep on striving until I climb over, find a pass through, tunnel underneath, or simply stay and turn the mountain into a gold mine! With God's help." Robert H. Schuller

According to John C. Maxwell: Qualities of a Possibility Thinker

- Possibility Thinkers look for — and often find — the good in virtually every situation, sometimes in the most unlikely places.
- Possibility Thinkers look for reasons why something will work, visualizing ways in which it could work.
- Possibility Thinkers explore every challenge to discover the positive opportunities that exist within.
- Possibility Thinkers listen to new ideas; evaluate them thoughtfully; and recognize and seize opportunities.
- Possibility Thinkers succeed because they have trained themselves to look for the positive possibilities in all areas of life.
- Possibility Thinkers have faith, hope, confidence, enthusiasm, and optimism.
- Possibility Thinkers are imaginative, creative, and visionary.
- Possibility Thinkers are dreamers, opportunists, risk-takers, and believers.
- Possibility Thinkers have a positive mental attitude; they are leaders and pioneers.

How Possibility Thinking Can Make You More Successful

- Possibility thinking increases your possibilities.
- Possibility thinking draws opportunities and people to you.
- Possibility thinking increases others' possibilities.
- Possibility thinking allows you to dream big dreams.
- Possibility thinking makes it possible to rise above average.
- Possibility thinking gives you energy.
- Possibility thinking keeps you from giving up.

How to Become a Possibility Thinker

- Stop focusing on the impossibilities.
- Stay away from the "experts" (critics).
- Look for possibilities in every situation.
- Dream one size bigger.
- Question the status quo.
- Find inspiration from great achievers.

Suggested Reading

Move Ahead with Possibility Thinking by Robert Schuller

Success is Never Ending Failure is Never Final by Robert Schuller

Point of Reflection

"Nothing is so embarrassing as watching someone do something that you said could not be done." Sam Ewing

Essence of Genius
"The essence of genius is to know what to overlook." William James

"Most people have the mistaken idea that geniuses are born, not made", declared clinical psychologist Dr. Alfred Barrios, founder and director of the Self-Programmed Control Center of Los Angeles and author of the book, Towards Greater Freedom and Happiness. But if you look at the lives of the world's greatest geniuses like Edison, Socrates, DaVinci, Shakespeare, Einstein, you will discover they all had 24 personality characteristics in common.

According to Dr. Barrois, founder and director of the Self-Programmed Control Center:
24 Qualities That Geniuses Have in Common

1. **Drive**. Geniuses have a strong desire to work hard and long. They're willing to give all they've got to a project. Develop your drive by focusing on your future success, and keep going.

2. **Courage**. It takes courage to do things others consider impossible. Stop worrying about what people will think if you're different.

3. **Devotion to goals**. Geniuses know what they want and go after it. Get control of your life and schedule. Have something specific to accomplish each day.

4. **Knowledge**. Geniuses continually accumulate information. Never go to sleep at night without having learned at least one new thing each day. Read. And question people who know

5. **Honesty**. Geniuses are frank, forthright and honest. Take the responsibility for things that go wrong. Be willing to admit, 'I goofed', and learn from your mistakes.

6. **Optimism**. Geniuses never doubt they will succeed. Deliberately focus your mind on something good coming up.

7. **Ability to judge**. Try to understand the facts of a situation before you judge. Evaluate things on an opened minded, unprejudiced basis and be willing to change your mind.

8. **Enthusiasm**. Geniuses are so excited about what they are doing; it encourages others to cooperate with them. Really believe that things will turn out well. Don't hold back.

9. **Willingness to take chances**. Overcome your fear of failure. You won't be afraid to take chances once you realize you can learn from your mistakes.

10. **Dynamic energy**. Don't sit on your butt waiting for something good to happen. Be determined to make it happen.

11. **Enterprise**. Geniuses are opportunity seekers. Be willing to take on jobs others won't touch. Never be afraid to try the unknown.

12. **Persuasion**. Geniuses know how to motivate people to help them get ahead. You'll find it easy to be persuasive if you believe in what you're doing.

13. **Outgoingness**. I've found geniuses able to make friends easily and be easy on their friends. Be a 'booster' not somebody who puts others down. That attitude will win you many valuable friends.

14. **Ability to communicate**. Geniuses are able to effectively get their ideas across to others. Take every opportunity to explain your ideas to others.

15. **Patience**. Be patient with others most of the time, but always be impatient with yourself. Expect far more of yourself than others.

16. **Perception**. Geniuses have their mental radar working full time. Think more of others' needs and wants than you do of your own.

17. **Perfectionism**. Geniuses cannot tolerate mediocrity, particularly in themselves. Never be easily satisfied with yourself. Always strive to do better.

18. **Sense of humor**. Be willing to laugh at your own expense.

19. **Versatility**. The more things you learn to accomplish, the more confidence you will develop. Don't shy away from new endeavors.

20. **Adaptability**. Being flexible enables you to adapt to changing circumstances readily. Resist doing things, the same old way. Be willing to consider new options.

21. **Curiosity**. An inquisitive, curious mind will help you seek out new information. Always ask questions about things you don't understand.

22. **Individualism**. Do things the way you think they should be done, without fearing somebody's disapproval.

23. **Idealism**. Keep your feet on the ground - but have your head in the clouds. Strive to achieve great things, not just for yourself, but for the better of mankind.

24. **Imagination**. Geniuses know how to think in new combinations, see things from a different perspective, than anyone else. Unclutter your mental environment to develop this type of imagination. Give yourself time each day to daydream, to fantasize, to drift into a dreamy inner life the way you did as a child.

Suggested Reading
The Essence of Being a Genius: The Fifty Genius Traits Enabling the Aspiring Individual to Rise Above Average by Ph.D. Matthew Radmanesh

Point of Reflection
"Man, who catch fly with chopstick, accomplish anything." Mr. Miyagi the character from The Karate Kid Movie

Every Problem Has A Limited Life Span
"Storms don't last forever…." Anonymous

Notable Quotes

"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy." Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Never give up, and be confident in what you do. There may be tough times, but the difficulties which you face will make you more determined to achieve your objectives and to win against all the odds." Marta

According to Remez Sasson, SuccessConsciousness.com.

- Everything has a beginning and an end.
- Every story has a beginning and an end.
- Streets start at a certain point and end at a certain point.
- A plant grows up and then withers, and then, from it seeds another plant grows.
- Every mountain has a peak and every valley has a low point.
- Seasons change, from autumn to winter, and then to spring and summer.
- Storms are followed by sunshine.
- Life has its ups and downs. One day looks bad, but the other day is great.
- In the same way, problems don't last forever. They get resolved sooner or later. No matter how difficult things are, if you believe earnestly that they will improve, and you do everything in your power to solve them, things will eventually improve.
- Every Problem Has a Solution.
- No matter how difficult a problem is, and how unsolvable it looks, most of times, there is a solution. If no solution is found, one might appear later.
- When you face a problem, don't keep dwelling on it. Cheer up! Sooner or later the problem will disappear, become irrelevant, or get resolved.
- And even if the problem is difficult to solve, dwelling on it won't help.
- Yes, some problems might remain without a solution. In this case, a change of attitude toward it will mitigate it. A change of attitude will relieve, at least to some extent, the stress and discomfort it created.
- Remember, every problem has a limited life span.
- Believe that there is a solution.
- Visualize a solution.
- Affirm that there is a solution.
- Know and believe that problems have a limited time span.

Bible Verse

So, let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up.   Galatians 6:9 NLT

Suggested Reading

Tough Times Never Last, but Tough People Do! by Robert H. Schuller

Point of Reflection

"Believe me, every problem has a solution. Some just take longer to figure out." Anonymous

Faith and Vision

"Make your vision so clear that your fears become irrelevant." Anonymous

Notable Quotes

"Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world."

Joel A. Barker

"Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality." Warren G. Bennis

"We are limited not by our abilities but by our vision."   Anonymous

"One's vision is not a road map but a compass." Peter Block

According to Lavender, freelance content marketing writer

Learning how to believe in yourself is one of the most important lessons in life. Master this skill and you'll find immense strength, self-confidence, and resilience. You'll be able to persist through the difficult times and soar during the best. Believing in yourself brings freedom and opportunity into your life.

There's a shortage of people in the world who believe in themselves, and there's a terrible price to pay. What geniuses have we lost, what innovations have never materialized, and what progress has been delayed because of rampant self-doubt? What wonders could you have achieved in your life, had you believed all your life that you are capable—and worthy—of your dreams?

Humans are amazing creatures: ingenious, curious, loving. By learning how to believe in yourself, you are making the world a better place. Chase your dreams with confidence!

The truth is there's so much potential that languishes because we're trapped thinking the worst about ourselves, afraid to try and fail. We convince ourselves that we are just fine—it's everything else that needs to change. We lie to ourselves constantly because we would rather stick with what's familiar, in a tiny comfort zone, than put in the effort to change ourselves and our beliefs.

Bible Verse

Where there is no vision, the people perish. Proverbs 29:18 KJV

Suggested Reading

Leading with Vision: The Leader's Blueprint for Creating a Compelling Vision and Engaging the Workforce by Bonnie Hagemann, Simon Vetter, and John Maketa

The Vision Driven Leader by Michael Hyatt

Point of Reflection

"The future belongs to those who see possibilities before they become obvious." John Scull

It's Got To Be Somewhere, So Keep Looking
A favorite saying from my brother, Norman who is intellectual disabled.

Notable Quotes

"Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time."
                                                                                Thomas A. Edison

"Energy and persistence conquer all things." Benjamin Franklin

"Patience, persistence and perspiration make an unbeatable combination for success." Napoleon Hill

"Let your dreams be bigger than your fears, your actions louder than your words, and your faith stronger than your feelings."
                                                                                Unknown

According to Dr. John Hamby, retired pastor:
Keep Asking, Keep Seeking, Keep Knocking

There is a progression in this persistence: asking, seeking and knocking. Now let's consider their meaning, *"asking means making a simple request. Seeking implies a stronger desire and a more definite kind of request. It is something that takes time. It implies a greater sense of urgency. Knocking shows determination to get an answer."*

According to Harvey Deutschendorf, emotional intelligence expert and author:
Seven Habits of Highly Persistent People

1. An all-consuming vision. Persistent people have a goal or vision in mind that motivates and drives them. They are often dreamers and visionaries who see their lives as having a higher purpose than simply earning a living.

2. A burning desire. Entrepreneur and motivational speaker Jim Rohn once said, *"If you really want to do something, you'll find a way. If you don't, you'll find an excuse."* Persistent people want it bad, really bad, and they never look for an excuse or a way out. What keeps highly persistent people going is their powerful level of desire. Persistent people have the inner energy and intensity to keep them motivated and going through these tough times.

3. Inner confidence. People who overcome the odds and achieve greatly are often described as *"marching to the beat of their own drummer."* They know what they want and are seldom swayed by the opinion of the masses. While that inner confidence gets challenged and shaken, it never gets destroyed and constantly acts as a source of courage and determination.

4. Highly developed habits. Jim Rohn also once said*, "Motivation is what gets you started. Habit is what keeps you going."* Highly persistent people know it is very difficult to stay continually motivated, particularly during difficult times and when it appears that no progress is being made. They have come to rely upon their self-discipline and developing habits they can count on to continue down the path toward their eventual goals.

5. Ability to adjust and adapt. Persistent people have the ability to adjust and adapt their action plan. They do not stubbornly persist in the face of evidence that their plan is not working, but look for better ways that will increase their chances of success.

6. Commitment to lifelong learning. Persistent people realize that any goal worth reaching will take time, effort, and continuously learning new skills and thinking patterns. They welcome change and new ideas and continue looking for ways they can incorporate these into their lives.

7. Role models that act as guides and mentors. While it may appear that highly persistent people act alone and don't need anyone, most have a carefully chosen group of people they admire and emulate. These can be people who are actually involved in their lives as mentors/confidantes or they can be figures who they have read about and who have deeply impacted them.

Bible Verse

Keep asking, and it will be given to you. Keep searching, and you will find. Keep knocking, and the door will be opened to you. Matthew 7:7 HCSB

Suggested Reading

The Resilience Factor: 7 Keys to Finding Your Inner Strength and Overcoming Life's Hurdles by Karen Reivich, and Andrew Shatte Ph.D.

Point of Reflection

"Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no hope at all." Dale Carnegie

Illusory Truth Effect
"When a fact tastes good and is repeated enough, we tend to believe it, no matter how false it may be." Anonymous

Notable Quotes
"The good news is if you can recognize illusion as illusion, it dissolves." Echart Tolle

"Sometimes people don't want to hear the truth because they don't want their illusion destroyed." Friedrich Nietzsche

"The greatest enemy of knowledge is not ignorance, it is illusion of knowledge." Stephen Hawking

The illusory truth effect, also known as the illusion of truth, describes how, when we hear the same false information repeated again and again, we often come to believe it is true. The illusory truth effect was first described in a 1977 paper entitled *"Frequency and the Conference of Referential Validity,"* by Lynn Hasher and David Goldstein of Temple University and Thomas Toppino of Villanova University.

Some other interesting characteristics of the illusory truth effect detailed in Psychology Today by Dr. Joe Pierre include:

- If repeated enough times, the information may be perceived to be true even if sources are not credible.
- The illusory truth effect is very evident on subject matter people perceive themselves to know about.
- The effect can happen even if someone had previous knowledge that the information was false.

Why does it happen? Most of us are cognitively lazy.
According to the renowned behavioral economist Daniel Kahneman, there are two thinking systems in our brains. System 1 is fast and automatic, working without our awareness; meanwhile, System 2 handles deeper, more effortful processing, and is under our conscious control. System 2, since it's doing the harder work, drains more of our cognitive resources; it's effortful and straining to engage, which we don't like. So, wherever possible, we prefer to rely on System 1 (even if we don't realize that's what we're doing).

As with other cognitive shortcuts, the typical explanation is that it's a way our brains save energy. Thinking is hard work remember that the human brain uses up about 20% of an individual's energy, despite accounting for just 2% of their body weight. The illusory truth effect comes down to processing fluency. When a thought is easier to process, it requires our brains to use less energy, which leads us to prefer it. We can't stop the illusory truth effect from existing. But we can recognize that it is a reality and seek to prevent ourselves from succumbing to it in the first place.

How to Avoid Illusory Truth Effect
- Critical thinking and fact-checking are the best lines of defense against the illusory truth effect.
- Stick to reliable, well-known information sources.
- Research unfamiliar sources before trusting them.
- Don't rely on news in social media posts without sources.

Suggested Reading
The Illusory Truth by John James O'Loughlin

Point of Reflection

"Not everything we believe is true. We may act like it is and it may be uncomfortable to think otherwise, but it's inevitable that we all hold a substantial number of beliefs that aren't objectively true. It's not about opinions or different perspectives. We can pick up false beliefs for the simple reason that we've heard them a lot." Shane Parrish

Let Sleeping Dogs Lie/ Minding Your Own Business
Interfering in someone else's argument is as foolish as yanking a dog's ears. Proverbs 26:17 NLT

According to Grammarist
Let sleeping dogs lie means let well enough alone, don't stir up trouble, don't interfere in a situation and risk making trouble. The term has been around at least since the 1300s, and probably well before that.

According to Maggie Cramer, writer, editor, and communications specialist:
 What Does Let Sleeping Dogs Lie Mean?
Although the expression originally did have to do with furry canines, that's no longer the case. When you hear or see it used today, it means *"to ignore a situation or problem, because interfering could make the situation or problem worse."* In other words, it's used when a situation or problem is relatively stable or peaceful, and when that peace or stability could be easily disturbed and disrupted.

According to Diana Derringer, author
In daily life, we often choose to let sleeping dogs lie. Instead of causing trouble, we avoid it. We don't want to make a bad situation worse. If all is well and no one will benefit, why hurt anyone? We leave good enough alone. Many words or actions only cause problems. Therefore, rather than talk about people, we bite our tongues. Rather than take hurtful actions, we bend over backwards to help.

Most situations are none of our business. Gossip and interference make us busybodies and do no one any good. However, at times we need to speak or act. We must take a stand when necessary to: make a bad situation better or help someone who hurts.

Are you an Eagle or a Crow?
The only bird that dares to peck at an eagle is the crow. He sits on his back and bites his neck. However, the eagle does not respond, nor fight with the crow; it doesn't waste…More time or energy on the crow! It simply opens its wings and begins to rise higher in the heavens. The higher the flight, the harder it is for the crow to breathe and then the crow falls due to lack of oxygen. What's the moral of the story?

Stop wasting your time with the crows of life! The crow represents all the challenges of life! You can choose to fight everything, wasting your precious energy and getting nowhere… or you can soar higher like the eagle and watch all of your challenges fade away.

When people criticize you: Go Higher.
When life challenges you: Go Higher.
When there seems to be endless problems pecking at you: Go Higher.

According to Sharon Martin, licensed clinical social worker: Before launching into "fix-it" mode, try asking yourself these questions:
- Is this my problem or is it someone else's problem that's affecting me?
- Is this a problem I can fix or change?
- Is changing this person or situation in my control?
- How can I redefine the problem so that I'm focusing on what's in my control?

- Do I have any influence?
- Did they ask for my help or ideas?
- Am I forcing my solutions and ideas onto someone?
- Am I helping or enabling? What's the difference?
- Why am I trying to solve this problem?

According to Louise M. Finlayson, PhD.
Minding your own business, at its heart, is focusing on what you can control and letting go of what you can't. It is taking responsibility for your own thoughts and actions, and letting other people take responsibility for their own thoughts and actions. The only thing we CAN control is ourselves. And even then, it's imperfect control.

Here are a few examples of NOT minding our own business:
- Judging.
- Criticizing.
- Reacting to circumstances and others instead of being conscious.
- Seeing others as separate from us.
- Trying to solve other people's problems for them.
- Attempting to "fix" others.
- Refusing to accept others as they are.
- Not taking responsibility for your own thoughts and actions.
- Blaming others for your thoughts and feelings.
- Believing every thought that pops into our heads.

The most basic way to start minding your own business is to ask yourself *"Is this something, I can actually control?"*

Remember:
- Your thoughts and actions = your business.
- Other people's thoughts and actions = their business (NOT your business).
- External circumstances (weather, external events, etc.) = NOT your business.

Step 1: Stay out of other people's business
Accept others as they are. "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone…" John 8:7. This does not mean that you accept or enable other people's destructive behavior without doing or saying anything. It doesn't mean that you neglect to set boundaries for yourself.

It does mean that you accept who people are. We can accept that some people are high strung, they talk loudly, are sometimes late, they like things we think are boring, believe things we don't believe in, or do things we don't agree with.

Step 2: Minding your business
Take responsibility for YOU. Minding your own business is choosing not to be the victim and completely taking ownership of your decisions. Don't believe every thought in your head

When we mind our own business, we save a lot of energy because we are focused on what we want instead of what we don't want. Thoughts are like that. Thoughts can bounce around in our heads all day, and they won't

necessarily be helpful. Part of minding our business is figuring out which thoughts are true, useful, and important instead of being distracted by every thought that goes through our minds.

For most of us, minding our own business does not come naturally. This is a practice, like everything else in conscious living. Practice observing yourself and noticing when you're not minding your own business, and practice bringing your attention back to your own lane. Meddlers have no inspirations; they keep on looking into others business because they are bored with their own life.

The Prime Directive: Star Trek TV Series (1966 to 1969)
The Prime Directive, also known as Starfleet General Order 1, the Non-Interference Directive, or the principle of non-interference, was the embodiment of one of Starfleet's most important ethical principles: noninterference with other cultures and civilizations. At its core was the philosophical concept that covered personnel should refrain from interfering in the natural, unassisted, development of societies, even if such interference was well-intentioned.

Bible Verses
Fire goes out without wood, and quarrels disappear when gossip stops. Proverbs 26:20 NLT

Make it your goal to live a quiet life, minding your own business and working with your hands, just as we instructed you before. 1 Thessalonians 4:11 NLT

Suggested Reading
10-Minute Focus: 25 Habits for Mastering Your Concentration and Eliminating Distractions by Daniel Walter

Point of Reflection
"How do I have productive days with minimum drama? Simple; I mind my own business." Steve Maraboli

Questions to Ask Before Making on Any Changes
"The world hates change, yet it is the only thing that has brought progress." Charles Kettering

According to Torben Rick, senior executive, both at a strategic and operational level
1. Laying the foundation

- Why is change necessary?
- Have we got logical and compelling reasons for the change and what are they?
- How can we build a solid business case for the change?
- What's the best way to establish a sense of urgency?
- How do we prepare a road-map for the change?
- How can we communicate why the change is happening in a convincing manner to people?
- How can we say this so employees will understand?
- What are the barriers and implications to a successful implementation of the change?
- How is the proposed change aligned with our organizational strategy plan?
- What is the end state vision? How clear and compelling is this vision?
- Who will form the guiding coalition? Who will help with the change?
- What will tell us that we've been successful?
- How can we paint a picture of what success will be like for people?
- Have we incorporated new values and attitudes to weave into our culture so they are embedded?

2. Learning what we need to know

- What's actually going to change? What will people have to give up?
- Who will feel threatened by the change and how will I deal with their concerns?
- Do people have the skills needed to implement and adopt the new system?
- How well do people trust their leadership?
- Who are the informal leaders who can help advocate for the change?
- Who are the supporters of the change and how can we leverage their support?

3. Planning the change process

- When and how will the change be introduced and reinforced?
- How can we remove obstacles and amplify wins?
- What communications will we need? Who are the right people to communicate those messages?
- What can we do to keep the information flow frequent, timely and clear to all stakeholders and also listen to their concerns?
- How can we involve some of the people affected by the change?
- How can we leverage employee's knowledge and empowerment?
- How can we arrange for people to be coached and supported during the change?
- What training will people need?

4. Making change work

- How well do people understand what we're saying about the change?
- What do our metrics tell us about our progress?

- How well are we reinforcing positive behavior?
- How can we motivate and support people during this change?
- What are our plans in order of priority to manage resistance?
- What are we learning as we implement?
- What course corrections need to be made?

5. Embedding change in the organization
- How can we make this a natural part of everyday life?
- How well have we addressed the problem we set out to solve?
- What will we do to recognize and reward achievements?
- What remains to be done?
- What are our next steps?

6. Review the change
- Later, how do we review the change?
- How can we learn from any lessons learned?

John P Kotter, founder of Kotter International: Eight-Step Change Model can be summarized as:
1. **Increase urgency**. Inspire people to move, make objectives real and relevant.
2. **Build the guiding team**. Get the right people in place with the right emotional commitment, and the right mix of skills and levels.
3. **Get the vision right**. Get the team to establish a simple vision and strategy focus on emotional and creative aspects necessary to drive service and efficiency.
4. **Communicate for buy-in**. Involve as many people as possible communicate the essentials, simply, and to appeal and respond to people's needs. De-clutter communications - make technology work for you rather than against.
5. **Empower action**. Remove obstacles, enable constructive feedback and lots of support from leaders - reward and recognize progress and achievements.
6. **Create short-term wins**. Set aims that are easy to achieve - in bite-size chunks. Manageable numbers of initiatives. Finish current stages before starting new ones.
7. **Don't let up**. Foster and encourage determination and persistence - ongoing change - encourage ongoing progress reporting - highlight achieved and future milestones.
8. **Make change stick**. Reinforce the value of successful change via recruitment, promotion, new change leaders. Weave change into culture.

Suggested Reading
Leading Change by John P. Kotter

Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard by Chip Heath and Dan Heath

Point of Reflection
"Change is the law of life and those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future." John F. Kennedy

Reframing Your Thoughts
"Never solve a problem from its original perspective." Charles Thompson

According to Adam Sicinski, founder of IQ Matrix
Framing is a mental structure that is built upon the beliefs you have about yourself, your roles, your circumstances, and about other people. In other words, the meaning you assign to any event is dependent upon how you frame it in your mind. As such, your frames shape how you see the world, how you see yourself, how you view others, and how you interpret your life.

Frames can be of a positive or of a negative nature; they can also be within your control or out of your control. As such, they are either helpful within the context you are using them, or they are unhelpful. They either expand your opportunities and the possibilities of the situation, or they limit your options moving forward. They are therefore appropriate or inappropriate, good or bad depending on the objectives you have in mind.

Types of frames. You might typically use several unhelpful frames of reference throughout the day. These frames of reference come in the form of your limiting beliefs and unhelpful thoughts.

Limiting beliefs frames. A limiting belief is a state of mind, conviction or belief that you think to be true that limits you in some way. This limiting belief could be about you, your interactions with other people, or with the world and how it works.

Limiting beliefs can have a number of negative effects on you. They could keep you from making good choices, taking new opportunities, or reaching your potential. Ultimately, limiting beliefs can keep you stuck in a negative state of mind and hinder you from living the life you truly desire. Before moving on, it might also be helpful to identify how these limiting beliefs found their way into your life.

Ask yourself:
- How did I come to form this particular limiting belief?
- What has made me hold onto this belief for so long?
- What kind of references supports this limiting belief?
- What knowledge supports this belief?
- What life experiences support this belief?

Principles of reframing and how to do it
There are a few principles to keep in mind when considering the reframing technique. It is critical that you know and accept these principles before you start actively trying to add reframing to your personal development toolkit. A reframe is far more effective when you understand what's going on behind the thought. The first basic principle is that events or situations do not have inherent meaning; rather, you assign them a meaning based on how you interpret the event.

Suggested Reading
When Changing Nothing Changes Everything: The Power of Reframing Your Life by Laurie Polich Short

Point of Reflection
"The world we have created is a product of our thinking; it cannot be changed without changing our thinking."
Albert Einstein

Sometimes Doing Nothing Is The Best Advice, Don't Grab a Falling Knife
"Taking time to do nothing often brings everything into perspective." Doe Zantamata

Notable Quotes
"The sage acts by doing nothing." Laozi

"Doing nothing often leads to the very best something." Winnie the Pooh (A.A. Milne)

"Men of genius sometimes accomplish most when they work least" Giorgio Vasari

"Life is all about balance. You don't always need to be getting stuff done. Sometimes it's perfectly okay, and absolutely necessary, to shut down, kick back, and do nothing." Lori Deschene

"To the mind that is still, the whole universe surrenders." Lao Tzu

"If you don't know what to do, do nothing" Mark Cuban

According to Pastor Eric Speir
People who don't have good motives won't wait long because they're not interested in the commitment it takes to see something through. They're too interested in short-term gains or success. Patience in waiting for small things leads to having patience in the bigger things. We tend to appreciate things the longer we have to wait for them.

Your brain really needs a break
We are all pretty overstimulated in this day and age. We might as well be existing in a perpetual state of informational overload. In fact, a 2010 survey by LexisNexis discovered that many of us spend more than half of our work day's simply receiving and digesting information.

In his paper Doing Nothing and Nothing to Do: The Hidden Value of Empty Time and Boredom, Manfred Kets De Vries, a Distinguished Clinical Professor of Leadership Development and Organizational Change, states that: *"Doing nothing is a great way to induce states of mind that nurture our imagination… seemingly inactive states of mind can be an incubation period for future bursts of creativity."*

Benefits of doing nothing. Taking Time Each Day to Do Nothing Benefits Us in Many Ways:
* It boosts creativity and problem-solving. The time spent on "pause" helps your mind expand and allows for new and different thoughts and ways of doing things.

* It allows your brain to reset and restore. During sleep, your mind restores itself. Time spent doing nothing offers health benefits for your brain that are similar. A bit of quiet time can help your mind reset so that you can be more productive afterward.

* It reduces stress. Too much stress or chronic stress can cause you to experience all sorts of health symptoms, affecting both your physical and mental health.

* It allows the body to rest. All that busyness also impacts your body physically, leading to fatigue and even aches and pains. Pausing occasionally helps to mitigate that some, allowing you short intervals of rest even in the midst of chaos.

Suggested Reading
The Art of Doing Nothing: Simple Ways to Make Time for Yourself by Veronique Vienne

When Nothing Works Try Doing Nothing: How learning to let go will get you where you want to go
by Dr. Frank J. Kinslow

Point of Reflection
"Relax, Recharge and Reflect. Sometimes it's OK to do nothing." Izey Victoria Odiase

Stay The Course

"Beginning in itself has no value, it is an end which makes beginning meaningful, we must end what we begun." Amit Kalantri

Notable Quotes

"Without hope, I wouldn't even try. Hope lifts me to consider new possibilities so I can stay the course of my desire, no matter what."
Sharon Weil

"Sometimes you can't see the road ahead but as you keep going, it gets clearer. Stay the course as the fog of life dissipates."
Sanjo Jendayi

"You will never reach your destination if you stop and throw stones at every dog that barks." Winston Churchill

According to Celestine Chua, founder of Personal Excellence:
10 Essential Tips to Finish What You Start
1. Be selective in what you embark on. When you start on a project (especially a large scale one), make sure it is something you are passionate about and you want to see through.

2. Estimate the resources you need. It doesn't have to be exhaustive. Just a quick outline will help. The point is to have something that guides you.

3. Budget your time and energy accordingly. After you create your outline, you should have a realistic idea of how much time and effort is needed to complete it. Plan out your time and resources accordingly and integrate them into your schedule/to-do list.

4. Quit being a perfectionist. How many of us keep delaying work because we want to get it just right? I'm all for perfectionism and getting the best output, but if your desire for perfectionism is preventing you from getting things done, I think it's good to challenge it.

5. Commit to it. Once you start, commit to it. Whatever you have planned, do them. Give yourself the option to exit a project if it's really not in line with your vision (see #9), but otherwise hold yourself to your word.

6. Connect with your end vision. You might have experienced this. Whenever you begin on a new project, you're full of energy and enthusiasm. Then when you get into the thick of things, this energy fades away, bit by bit. You're still excited about the overall project, but you're not so hyped about the nitty gritty tasks that come as part of the work.

7. Follow the path of highest enjoyment. One of the easiest and most effortless ways to complete a project is to be flexible in the project management approach.

8. Track your progress. Tracking your progress helps you understand how you're doing and gives you a target to reach. This makes it easier to keep up with your momentum. Create a project sheet that records your targets and your current status. Specify your Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that you want to achieve.

9. Celebrate what you've done so far. Sometimes we get discouraged with all the things that need to be done. It seems like no matter how much time we spend, it's impossible to finish it. Everything you've done so far is an accomplishment! Celebrate the process, the resting, the doing, the completion, everything.

10. Don't force it if it's really not working out. Sometimes, it just happens that you lose interest in the goal. It happens, and it's normal. We change, our interests change, and we get new ideas and inspiration the whole time.

According to Pastor Robert Schuller: Don't Quit
When things go wrong as they sometimes will. When the road you're trudging seems all uphill. When the funds are low and the debts are high. And you want to smile, but you have to sigh. When care is pressing you down a bit, Rest if you must, but don't you quit. Life is strange with its twists and turns, as every one of us sometimes learns, and many a failure turns about. When he might have won had he stuck it out. Don't give up though the pace seems slow. You may succeed with another blow! Success is failure turned inside out. The silver tint of the clouds of doubt, and you never can tell just how close you are, it may be near when it seems so far. So, stick to the fight when you're hardest hit– It's when things seem worst that you must not quit.

Bible Verses
You're blessed when you stay on course, walking steadily on the road revealed by God. You're blessed when you follow his directions, doing your best to find him. That's right—you don't go off on your own; you walk straight along the road he set. You, God, prescribed the right way to live; now you expect us to live it. Oh, that my steps might be steady, keeping to the course you set; Then I'd never have any regrets in comparing my life with your counsel. I thank you for speaking straight from your heart; I learn the pattern of your righteous ways. I'm going to do what you tell me to do; don't ever walk off and leave me.   Psalm 119:1-8 MSG

Suggested Reading
Finish What You Start: The Art of Following Through, Taking Action, Executing, & Self-Discipline
by Peter Hollins

The Power of Discipline: How to Use Self Control and Mental Toughness to Achieve Your Goals
by Daniel Walter

Point of Reflection
"Whatever it takes to finish things, finish. You will learn more from a glorious failure than you ever will from something you never finished." Neil Gaiman

Systems Thinking

Systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing 'patterns of change' rather than static 'snapshots.'   Peter Senge

According to Barry Richmond, professor at Dartmouth College: 17 Practices of Systems Thinking

1. Considering both short-and long-term consequences of one's actions. Looking ahead and anticipating not only the immediate results of actions, but also the effects down the road.

2. Looking at multiple perspectives of an issue. Changing perspective to see other points of view within a system.

3. Looking at the 'big picture 'Focusing on the overall 'forest' as opposed to the details of any one 'tree'.

4. Looking for patterns in data. Reviewing information with an eye towards patterns or themes.

5. Looking for trends over time. Viewing changes over time as part of the natural dynamics of the system.

6. Being comfortable with ambiguity. Holding the tension of paradox and ambiguity; taking the time necessary to understand the dynamics of a system before taking action.

7. Checking results and changing actions if needed. Assessing for improvement using benchmarks; seeing errors as a means to learning and adjustment.

8. Looking for interconnected issues. Perceiving connections between multiple issues/parts within a system.

9. Looking for small actions that can make big differences. Using systems understanding to determine what small actions could produce high leverage results.

10. Considering the impacts of accumulations over time. Paying attention to things that build up (or deplete) slowly over time.

11. Being comfortable with questioning one's deep assumptions. Understanding that one's beliefs of how the world works (mental models) may limit one's thinking.

12. Being aware of boundaries. Understanding that boundaries are arbitrary; checking for consistency of understanding about where a particular boundary is drawn.

13. Thinking critically about causation, not just correlation. Looking beyond basic connectedness to understand the dynamic relationship between the connected parts.

14. Being cautious of adopting a win/lose attitude. Being skeptical of a 'zero-sum game' approach to individual goals within a highly interdependent system.

15. Considering unintended consequences. Anticipating ancillary effects of actions over time.

16. Seeing self as part of system under study. Understanding that one's own behavior within the system, impacts the system.

17. Recognizing that a system's structure drives its behavior Focusing on system structure and avoiding blaming others when things go wrong.

According to Michael Goodman, author
When Should We Use Systems Thinking?
- Problems that are ideal for a Systems Thinking intervention have the following characteristics:
- The issue is important.
- The problem is chronic, not a one-time event.
- The problem is familiar and has a known history.
- People have unsuccessfully tried to solve the problem before.

How Do We Know That We've "Got It"?
- You're asking different kinds of questions than you asked before.
- You're hearing "catchphrases" that raise cautionary flags. For example, you find yourself refocusing the discussion when someone says, *"The problem is we need more (sales staff, revenue)."*

System Thinking Practice
According to a survey of 271 participants by Nalani Linder and Jeffrey Frakes:
- 96% think critically about causation, not just correlation.
- 95% look for interconnected issues.
- 95% considering unintended consequences.
- 91% consider both short-and long-term consequences.
- 90% look for small actions that can make big differences.
- 81% look for trends over time.
- 80% look for patterns in data.
- 70% look at the big picture.
- 70% look at multiple perspectives of an issue.

Suggested Reading
The Systems Thinker: Essential Thinking Skills for Solving Problems, Managing Chaos, and Creating Lasting Solutions in a Complex World by Albert Rutherford

Thinking in Systems: A Primer by Donella H. Meadows

Point of Reflection
"Learn how to see. Learn how to see everything connects to everything else." Leonardo Da Vinci

Thinking Like Sherlock Homes

"It is a capital mistake to theorize before you have all the evidence. It biases the judgment."

Sherlock Holmes, A Study in Scarlet

According to Francesca Forsythe, student researcher, Leiden University

Although he is a fictional character, created by British author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Sherlock Holmes is famous for his intelligent detective skills and sharp perception. To many, it may seem as though real people could never reach this level of awareness. This, however, is not true. There are lots of things you can practice so that you can get to the level of the famous Sherlock Holmes.

1. Stay skeptical. A healthy dose of skepticism helps you to not take things as they seem. Being curious about what others say can illuminate areas they may not be 100% truthful. It is also important to be skeptical about your own thinking because we get into patterns of thought which may cloud our judgment. Be aware of how outside influences can change or guide your thinking and try to be objective when assessing the situation.

2. Try to overcome biases, but don't forget them. We all have learned biases we need to learn to move past. With practice, you can rewire your brain to be more objective about the situation in front of you. However, don't forget about biases. Learn how they have affected you and think about how others learn them and how they may affect their behaviors.

3. Observe first impressions closely. Trust your gut. If something sets off your instincts, don't let it guide your reaction but don't forget about it. It may be indicative of a character trait or behavior which you can't yet put your finger on just yet. Consider their confidence, or lack thereof; how they are dressed, or what seems slightly off.

4. Examine things holistically. To really think like Sherlock Holmes, you must examine things holistically. Don't just read a note, read between the lines, and examine how it looks, how it smells and what this could mean. Things are never quite what they seem on the surface, and everything gives more information than it seems to. Use all of your senses to evaluate the situation completely.

5. Engage fully. Engaging in a situation properly will help you to control your automatic responses which can cause us to miss important information. Give situations your full attention, if though you may seem laid back in your responses. Keeping your mind attentive will reveal things you may not have noticed otherwise.

6. Look at the bigger picture. There is always more going on than what there appears to be. It is easy to focus on the small aspects of a situation, but if you want to learn how to think like Sherlock Holmes, remember there is always a bigger picture. Try to consider what may be influencing decisions and behaviors rather than just what is happening at the moment.

7. Educate yourself. The most important practice for those who want to sharpen their perception is constant education. Sherlock Holmes is careful to constantly educate and challenge himself, and this is what makes him such a successful investigator. You never know what might spark your genius, so stay educated and mindful of maintaining healthy habits.

8. Take notes. You may think you know something by simply observing, but this can limit your understanding. Writing things down is the key to thinking like Sherlock Holmes. Reviewing notes can help you recognize patterns and inconsistencies before reaching a conclusion.

9. Practice active passivity. When you think like Sherlock Holmes, it is not all about what you do; it's also about what you don't do. When you talk to someone, give them your full attention, observe everything. Don't be playing with your phone or distracted by words alone. Speaking is not all about the words, it is about how they are spoken and the non-verbal signals which come along with them.

10. Talk it through. Holmes talks everything through with Watson and it is talking things through which helps him find clues he wasn't aware of before. When you talk things through, it forces you to clear your thoughts enough to vocalize them. By doing this, you may find that something clicks into place somewhere and find the logical connection between two disparate events.

11. Be adaptable. The key to thinking like Sherlock Holmes understanding that it is not just an internal process, it is also about adaptability. Holmes does not approach every situation in the same way. Instead, he is careful to observe others and take an approach which will get what he wants out of them. Assessing peoples' behaviors and adapting to them helps him get the information he needs from a wide variety of different people.

12. Find peace. Like anyone, Holmes knows that all brains need peace in order to function properly. Taking the time to rest gives our brains time to process information and make connections. It's not all about the investigation, it is also about reflection.

13. Only give energy where it's needed. It is not necessary to be constantly energetic. In fact, managing your energy properly is one of the key aspects of thinking like Sherlock Holmes. Recognize which tasks are more menial than others and let your gut tell you which characters are more suspicious than others.

Practicing these steps can be a challenge. It can be difficult to see the secret picture behind a situation but, with a little practice, you, too, can learn how to think like Sherlock Holmes.

Suggested Reading
Mastermind: How to Think Like Sherlock Holmes by Maria Konnikova

Point of Reflection
"How often have I said to you that when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth?" Sherlock Holmes, The Sign of Four

Universal Intellectual Standards

"You have to learn the rules of the game. And then you have to play better than anyone else." Albert Einstein

Clarity

- Could you elaborate further?
- Could you illustrate what you mean?
- Could you give me an example?

Accuracy

- How could we check on what you say?
- How could we find out if what you say is true?
- How could we verify or test what you say?

Precision

- Could you be more specific?
- Could you give me more details?
- Could you me more exact?

Relevance

- How does what you say relate to the problem?
- How does what you say bear on the question at issue?
- How does what you say help us with the issue?

Depth

- What factors make the problem a difficult one?
- What are some of the difficulties we need to deal with?

Breadth

- Do we need to look at the problem from another perspective?
- Do we need to look at the problem or question in other ways?

Logic

- Does what you say reasonably and clearly follow from the evidence you have offered in support of your claims?

Significance

- Is this the most important problem to consider?
- What of the facts you offer as support are most important?

Fairness

- Do I have a vested interest in this issue?
- Am I sympathetically representing the viewpoints of others?

Suggested Reading

Thinkers Guide to Intellectual Standards by Richard Paul

The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking Concepts & Tools by Richard Paul, and Linda Elder

Point of Reflection

"No problem can withstand the assault of sustained thinking." Voltaire

Part 7

Time Honored Virtues

And Personal Development

"In this era in which we live, the old-fashioned virtues

grow increasingly unpopular."

B. Carroll Reece

"Personal development is truly the only way to become the

person you were meant to be without it you are only cheating yourself."

Ronald D. Sears

12 Universal Laws/Principles
"Live your life as though your every act were to become a universal law." Immanuel Kant

Knowing the 12 universal laws will help you gain a better, well-rounded understanding of the Universe and how it works. You'll also learn how to apply these laws to your daily life.

1. The Law of Oneness. The Law of Oneness explains that every individual, every situation and everything else in the world is connected to each other. What someone else thinks or does may affect your life in some way and vice versa, even if you don't know the person at all. This law states that there is only one energy flow and one mind, so everyone is connected to each other.

2. The Law of Energy. From thoughts to people, everything is made of energy, and that's what this law stands for. The Law of Energy is also known as the Law of Vibration, and this means that energy comes in countless frequency levels. Energy and vibrations are being sent out into the Universe constantly, so the Law of Energy is always in motion.

3. The Law of Action. According to the Law of Action, you need to take action steps towards your wants in order to manifest them. An example of the Law of Action in natural motion is when a person gets angry and slams a door. The person is feeling angry, so his/her action is to slam the door to show that he/she is angry. Even if the person doesn't want to be angry, he/she supports the emotion by action.

4. The Law of Correspondence. A very popular quote from the Emerald tablet's states, "As above, so below," and this means that whatever happens inside your mental space is reflected on the outside. The Law of Correspondence proves that what you think and feel in your conscious and subconscious minds is what you create on the outside.

5. The Law of Cause and Effect. The Law of Cause and Effect says that events don't happen coincidentally. Everything happens in your life for a reason, no matter if you see how or why it happened. The Law of Cause and Effect can also be related to the concept of karma.

6. The Law of Compensation. This law is like an extension of the Law of Cause and Effect, and it means that what you put out is what you'll get back in abundance. If you do random acts of kindness and good deeds often, you'll receive good things back. The same can happen with negative actions as well.

7. The Law of Attraction. The most well-known universal law out of all 12 is the Law of Attraction. From the words you speak to your beliefs, you attract everything in your life through energy. You can even attract people into your life who have the same energy frequency as you. Like attracts like, so whether it's negative or positive, everything you see in your life is what you've attracted.

8. The Law of Perpetual Transmutation of Energy. This law basically means that you have the ability to change your life into anything you want. It's your responsibility to transform your life, and it's your choice to accept or reject the opportunities that the Universe gives you. Energy is always in motion, and you get to choose whether you want to go with the flow or not.

9. The Law of Relativity. Every life obstacle is an opportunity for people to change their perspective and life so that they can continue to improve themselves. These tests from the Universe also helps us learn to let go of judging events and people as good or bad, nice or mean, etc., which we do when we compare ourselves to others. Everything in the Universe just exists, and that is what the Law of Relativity means.

10. The Law of Polarity. This law states that everything in the Universe has an opposite. The Law of Polarity helps us understand the difference between positive and negative thoughts so that we can change thoughts we don't want into thoughts we do want.

11. The Law of Rhythm. Everything in the Universe has a unique rhythm that it beats to, and these different rhythms develop into patterns, cycles, etc., in life. The Law of Rhythm encourages us to follow the natural flow of energy and harmony of the Universe.

12. The Law of Gender. The Law of Gender is commonly related to the concept of Yin and Yang, and it states that there are masculine and feminine energies in life. It also tells us that everything needs time to nurture and grow in order to balance and master the masculine and feminine energies within ourselves.

Suggested Reading
Twelve Universal Laws: The Truth That Will Transform Your Life by Anne E. Angelheart

The Twelve Universal Laws of Success, Super Achiever by Dr. Herbert Harris

Point of Reflection
"Nature, when left to universal laws, tends to produce regularity out of chaos." Immanuel Kant

Battle Between Good and Evil
"The battle line between good and evil runs through the heart of every man." Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

Cherokee Parable Good vs. Evil
 "One evening an old Cherokee told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people.

He said, *"My son, the battle is between two "wolves" inside us all. One is Evil. It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego."*

"The other is Good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith." The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather *"Which wolf wins?"*

The old Cherokee simply replied, *"The one you feed."*

Author Unknown (possibly a Cherokee parable, and going back probably at least to the 1950's in print)

According to Dean Yeong, search engine optimization specialist, AppSumo:
The fight is eternal. The first part of the story is telling us that we can never get rid of the first wolf; the first wolf will always be there. The fight between two wolves is eternal. Both wolves will always be there. This applies to our emotions, behaviors, habits, and every other aspect of our life.

Start feeding the right wolf. One truth to remember is that it's so much easier to feed the first wolf — the first wolf is there to encourage the easier options in life. It's easier to complain, procrastinate, dismiss, ignore, and give up. There is almost no effort required to do those things, and you're getting the reward with the sensation of relieving and instant gratification without much an action.

The second wolf is very different; it's picky, it's harder to feed. It's challenging, tiring and time-consuming to do things like learning, teaching, inspiring, sharing or simply sticking to a new behavior. These things take so much energy, effort, momentum, and guts. And you don't usually see immediate results from them.

Which wolf you choose to feed will define who you are, and we all know we should feed the second wolf even if it's harder. Feeding the second wolf is how we end up feeling a sense of accomplishment and success at the end of the day. By conquering the temptation of the first wolf we opt for a much more challenging (but right) option in life.

The Armor of God, Ephesians 6:10-17 NIV
Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Suggested Reading
Good and Evil: Interpreting a Human Condition by Edward Farley

The Science of Good and Evil by Michael Shermer

Point of Reflection
"Watch your thoughts. They become words. Watch your words. They become deeds. Watch your deeds. They become habits. Watch your habits. They become character. Character is everything." Frank Outlaw

Choices

"No one else can ever make your choices for you. Your choices are yours alone." Shad Helmstetter

Notable Quotes

"Each person has a choice; the choice to do as one may wish and as one wants remains with the individual. If a person sees no benefit to change, they will not change." Byron Pulsifer

"The choices that we make in our life, indeed determine the kind of results that we experience and the quality of the life that we live."
Sumeet Jain

"May your choices reflect your hopes not your fears." Nelson Mandela

According to Shad Helmstetter, Author of Choices

- Choices create our success and failures in life.
- Who you are, beginning today, is the result of new choices you start to make today.
- We are the roadblock that gets in the way of making our choices work.
- What brought you to where you are now is your programming.
- It is only when you exercise your right to choose that you can also exercise your right to change.
- Our past programming, both from others and from our own harmful self-talk, that stops us from exercising our free will.
- It is the choices you make today that are creating the programs of your future.
- Our programs influence or direct what we think, how we feel, and what we do, day in and day out in every area of our lives.
- If you want to change your programs, change your choices. Choices create change.
- Your attitudes are created by your beliefs, and your beliefs are created by your programming.
- When we have major choices under control, we tend to do better with the minor choices that confront us every day.
- The choices we make by accident are just as important as the choices we make by design.
- The choices we make unconsciously can be no better than the programs behind them.
- People who have unclear goals, unclear pictures of themselves, and make unclear choices, end up with an unclear future.
- Is my present program working for me or isn't it?

Four Steps of Choice:

1. Say to yourself. *Is this a choice*?
2. If the answer is yes, say to yourself *This choice is mine.*
3. Given the choice as much or little thought, say to yourself. *My choice is.*
4. Say to yourself. *The reason I made this choice is…*

Suggested Reading
Choices by Shad Helmstetter

Point of Reflection
Are my present choices and actions taking me where, I want to go? Ronald D. Sears

Do Overs
"The chance to do it over again is called now." J.R. Rim

According to Nicholas Hemming, content specialist, American Bible Society:
4 Bible Verses for Do-Over in Life
When the weight of your circumstances feels unbearable, I encourage you to find a quiet place, open your Bible and begin reading God's Word.

These four Bible verses will get you started:
Isaiah 41:10 GNT, Do not be afraid—I am with you! I am your God—let nothing terrify you! I will make you strong and help you; I will protect you and save you.

2 Corinthians 12:9 GNT, But his answer was: "My grace is all you need, for my power is greatest when you are weak." I am most happy, then, to be proud of my weaknesses, in order to feel the protection of Christ's power over me.

James 1:2-4 GNT, My friends consider yourselves fortunate when all kinds of trials come your way, for you know that when your faith succeeds in facing such trials, the result is the ability to endure. Make sure that your endurance carries you all the way without failing, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

Psalm 55:22 GNT, Leave your troubles with the Lord, and he will defend you; he never lets honest people be defeated.

How to Start Over in Life: Co-authored by Lucy Yeh, human resources director, recruiter, and certified life coach
Each day is a new chapter for anyone. Are you feeling stuck in your life? Do you want to start over and make some changes? Do you feel like Bill Murray in the movie Groundhog Day, where you relive the same day over and over again? Starting over can be scary, but you deserve the life you want. Here are some techniques that will help you reconsider your life and start fresh and move forward.

Accept the past. You can't start over in your life if you're still holding onto the past. Whether be a relationship, job, family or other situation, you need to accept what has happened. Acceptance doesn't necessarily mean forgiveness or understanding. It just means that you have realized something has happened, you acknowledged it, and you are ready to move on from it.

Remember that things happen for a reason. This is not to say that you are powerless and that things are just "fated" to be a certain way. Rather, nothing has meaning besides the meaning you assign to it. It's up to you to make every event, incident, and moment in your life empowering or disempowering.

Take stock of your failures and successes. You can't "quit life", so instead of getting down when things aren't work out as planned, ask yourself, "What is or was working in my situation or circumstance?" Write it all down. Keep notes to yourself about your successes, even the small ones. Write every night about something that went well that day. Focusing on the positive helps attract more of it!

Don't announce that you are starting over. Just do it. You don't need to validate your choices to make a change in your life. You don't need to tell other people or ask them what they think you should do; often when we feel insecure, we consult others so that we feel better about our plan or to prepare them for the transformation.

Your next steps in life aren't about anyone else but you. Ignore what everyone else says. A lot of their resistance will be about them and not you because it makes them question their own lives. Remember that only you need to feel comfortable with your choices and decisions.

Suggested Reading
Life Is a Do-Over by Cindy Clemens

Point of Reflection
"Second chances do come your way. Like trains, they arrive and depart regularly. Recognizing the ones that matter is the trick."

Jill A. Davis

Fruit of the Spirit

But the Fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Galatians 5:22–23 ESV

According to Pastor Phil Ressler

The Fruit of the Spirit is not apples, oranges, watermelon, bananas and the like. The Fruit of the Spirit is what is produced in you and through you as a result of the Holy Spirit living in you. It is the natural by-product of God's presence in your life.

Love. It is unconditional love that expects nothing in return. It is not based on emotion. It is an unwavering commitment toward the welfare of others. Opposite: Self-serving.

Joy. It goes beyond happiness. Even in the midst of difficult circumstances when I may not be happy, I have joy. Opposite: Discontent.

Peace. This is living with contentment in a world that is never satisfied. It is not that the storms of life cease, but that I find shelter from the storms through my relationship with Jesus. Opposite: Anxiety-filled.

Patience. It is long-suffering. It is enduring. It is willing to wait. In a world of instant gratification, patience is rare. Opposite: impatient and high-strung.

Kindness. It is compassion. It is care. It is generosity. It is the willingness to go out of my way for others and to be inconvenienced. Opposite: Privileged and elitist.

Goodness. This is integrity. This is the courage to do the right thing even though it is the hard thing. It is to speak the truth in love even though I may be reviled for it. Opposite: Dishonest and deceitful.

Faithfulness. This is having a stick-to-it-ness. This is a person who is true to their promises. They say what they mean and mean what they say. You can rely on them. Opposite: Unreliable.

Gentleness. It is quick to listen and slow to speak. But when this person speaks, people listen. It is to put the desire for wisdom and understanding before the desire to be heard. Opposite: Overbearing, arrogant, divisive, melodramatic.

Self-Control. I don't know if I like any word that starts with "self." Maybe a better word would be surrendered. Self-controlled is about being God-controlled. Opposite: Undiscerning and undisciplined.

Suggested Reading

The Fruit of the Spirit: Becoming the Person God Wants You to Be by Thomas E. Trask and Wayde I. Goodall

Living the Fruit of the Spirit: How God's Grace Can Transform Your World by Joshua Danis

Point of Reflection

"Grow deep roots to harvest rich fruit! When your roots run deep, you cannot help but bear the fruit of the Spirit."

Michael Beckwith

GROW

"What you stay focused on will grow." Roy T. Bennett

GROW was created by Sir John Whitmore and colleagues in the late 1980s. It has since become the world's most popular coaching model for problem solving, goal setting and performance improvement. GROW, the name is an acronym for the four key steps in GROW coaching: **G-oals, R-eality, O-ptions and W-ill**. With a few powerful coaching questions, a leader or coach can quickly raise awareness and responsibility in each area:

G: goals and aspirations.
R: current situation, internal and external obstacles.
O: possibilities, strengths and resources.
W: actions and accountability.

Self-Coaching GROW Exercise

Goal. As in, determining what your team members actual goals are going to be. They can be short term goals, long term goals, or a combination of the two. As with all goals, it needs to be realistic, specifically detailed, and something that can be measured for progress.

Questions to ask:

- What would you like to work on?

- What would you like to have after answering this set of questions?

- What is your goal related to this issue?

- When are you going to achieve it?

- What are the benefits for you in achieving this goal?

- Who else will benefit and in what way?

- What will it be like if you achieve your goal?

- What will you see/hear/feel?

Realty. Where a person believes himself to be in the present will have a significant impact on his ability to grow in the future. If he already believes he is proficient at a task, he may not try to grow. Someone who isn't sure of his stance on a position now will have problems solving future dilemmas. Help your team members to understand what is currently happening in their lives so that they can form a baseboard from which they can grow.

Questions to ask:

- What is happening right now?

- What action have you taken so far?

- What is moving you toward your goal?

- What is getting in the way?

Options. Once you've determined your goal (identifying the need to solve a problem) and examined the current reality, you should spend some time identifying the different methods, or options, for solving the problem at hand. Your team members need to have ideas of their own, so let them guide this conversation and offer your own suggestions only if you feel as though you aren't making progress.

Questions to ask:
- What different kind of options do you have to achieve your goal?
- What else could you do?
- What are the principal advantages and disadvantages of each option?
- Who could help you to achieve your goals?
- What information do you need and how could you acquire it?

Will. Do you have the willpower, or the desire, to make a change and choose one of the options you've outlined? Spend some time outlining exactly what needs to be done, how it will be done, and when.

Questions to ask:
- What is the way forward?
- What next?
- What will you do to achieve your goals?
- Are there any other measures you need to put into place?
- Which options will you choose to act on?
- When are you going to start each action?
- How committed are you, on a scale of 1–10, to taking each of these actions?
- If it is not a 10, what would make it a 10?

(GROW questions from Coaching for Performance, 5th Edition (c) 2017 The Estate of Sir John Whitmore and Performance Consultants International)

Suggested Reading
Goal! How to Get Everything you Want—Faster Than you ever Thought Possible. By Brian Tracy

Coaching for Performance: GROWing Human Potential and Purpose - the Principles and Practice of Coaching and Leadership by John Whitmore

Point of Reflection
"You must have a level of discontent to feel the urge to want to grow." Idowu Koyenikan

It's Not Where You Start, It's Where You Finish
"It's not what you start in life, it's what you finish." Katharine Hepburn

According to Issac Breese, fashion designer:
Life Isn't Determined by The Cards You Were Dealt But How You Play Your Hand

"Life is a lot like a game of cards. We all are dealt a hand and whether good or bad we have to play that hand according to the rules of the game of life."

We live or die with the hand that was dealt to us. We do their best with the hand we were given. And no matter how unfair we think our hand is we can't trade it in. There is no option to give our hand back to the dealer in hopes of getting a better hand in return. Whatever hand we were dealt is the hand we must play.

However, as in most card games, every player has a chance to pluck meaning pick new cards can be added to each player's hand. If you get enough plucks you can even replace your original hand. The only scary thing is you never know which card you will pluck.

For some, they will strike big and pluck a great card giving them a better chance at winning. Some may pick a card similar to the one they already have leaving them in the same position they were in before they plucked, and others will have the unfortunate luck of plucking a card that sets them back.

However, even a great pluck can be wasted if the card picked isn't played correctly. In life we all are given opportunities big and small. Sometimes these opportunities hit us like a ton of bricks and we would be dumb if we didn't take them. But sometimes they are a bit more subtle.

Regardless, we all are given opportunities in life. Yet, these opportunities are worthless if we squander them. If you get an opportunity don't let it go to waste, take full advantage of it no matter how big or small.

According to Josh Spector, founder Very Good Copy:
How to Finish What You Start
Everybody starts projects. Successful people finish them. The ability to finish is the most important skill any creator, entrepreneur, or artist can develop and it's often-what separates those who succeed from those who don't.

What we start is meaningless. What matters is what we finish. You won't be a good novelist if you don't ever finish a novel. Your innovative product can't prove your entrepreneurial talent if you don't build it. You won't develop a better body in 30 days if you stop trying after 10.

A finished creation — even if it's terrible — is always more valuable to us than a potentially great unfinished creation. Even if our final product doesn't live up to our initial vision — and it likely won't — it's crucial to learn how to push through the insecurity, finish what we start, and put our creations into the world.

Because only when we finish something can we truly learn from it. When we fail to finish, we fall into a cycle of abandonment that impedes our development — we don't learn lessons and jump from project to project without having anything to show for our time and effort.

How to Become a Finisher
The way to learn to finish projects is to make finishing the primary goal. Not perfection, not the approval of others, not a sale finishing. When finishing becomes the primary goal of our work, we can take satisfaction from doing so and be driven by a goal that's 100% in our control.

No matter who we are or what we do, NOBODY and NOTHING can stop us from finishing a project if we make it a priority. It's also an easy way to separate ourselves from the masses because most people DON'T finish things. Professional's finish. Wannabes don't. Finishing things also creates momentum to fuel our next work.

When we finish what we start, our skills improve; we become less critical of ourselves, and less creatively blocked. We can't make a living as a creator until we learn how to finish because we don't get paid to start things; we get paid to finish them.

Bible Verse
Now you should finish what you started. Let the eagerness you showed in the beginning be matched now by your giving. Give in proportion to what you have. 2 Corinthians 8:11 NLT

Suggested Reading
It's Not Where You Start, It's Where You Finish: How I Won My Race from Last Place! by Michael Miller and Ben Carson

Finish What You Start: The Art of Following Through, Taking Action, Executing, & Self-Discipline
by Peter Hollins

Point of Reflection
"Many will start fast; few will finish strong." Gary Ryan Blair

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Make a Difference
"The purpose of life is to contribute in some way to making things better." Robert F. Kennedy

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The Star Fish Story, It Made a Difference For That One
An old man walked across a beach until he came across a young boy throwing something into the breaking waves.

Upon closer inspection, the old man could see that the boy was tossing stranded starfish from the sandy beach, back into the ocean.

"What are you doing young man?" He asked.

"If the starfish are still on the beach when the sun rises, they'll die." The boy answered.

"That is ridiculous. There are thousands of miles of beach and millions of starfish. It doesn't matter how many you through in; you can't make a difference." The old man said.

At this, the boy bent down, picked up yet another starfish, and threw it into the ocean. As it met the water, he said, *"It made a difference for that one."*

(The starfish story adapted from The Star Thrower, by Loren Eiseley)

According to Sat Sindhar, MD, peoplehr.com:
How Often Do You Make a Small Difference?
If everything you did had to have a huge, immediate impact before you gave it a little of your time, then you'd end up doing very little with your life. And sometimes, the little things we do can add up and turn into big things – they make ripples that spread further than we can see.

Those starfish that the young boy saved may have gone on to produce thousands more.

So, the next time you get chance to make a small difference, don't think of the big picture and just do it – after all, it might not make a difference to you, but to somebody else, it might.

According to Marica Zammit, designer/artist:
Moral of the story. The starfish story is a good reminder to us all that yes, even the smallest thing can make a difference. And if we can touch just one person with a simple gesture, then we must not let that opportunity pass by without doing something.

The ripple effect. Picture a pond that is perfectly calm. It is so smooth that it looks like glass. See yourself throwing a stone into the middle of that pond. What do you see? A ripple that seems to go on forever. It seems to flow out so far that it touches all parts of the pond. Not one square inch of the pond's surface is left unaffected by the ripple. The entire pond has been impacted and touched by the action of that one stone.

The pond is the world and the stone is each and every action you chose to take in your life. Even the actions that seem little and insignificant are a stone as well. They are ALL accounted for. They ALL make a difference.

Bible Verse
God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.
1 Peter 4:10 NLT

Suggested Reading
Making A Difference: A Matter of Purpose, Passion & Pride by Steve Gilliland

A Pebble in the Pond: The Ripple Effect Leadership Skills Every Women Can Achieve by Julie Baker

Point of Reflection
"Just as ripples spread out when a single pebble is dropped into water, the actions of individuals can have far-reaching effects."

Dalai Lama

Persistence Usually Pays Off

"My motto was always to keep swinging. Whether I was in a slump or feeling badly or having trouble off the field, the only thing to do was keep swinging." Hank Aaron

Notable Quotes

"Nothing in the world can take the place of Persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent." Calvin Coolidge

"When you have exhausted all possibilities, remember this, you haven't." Thomas Edison

"Persistence is the key to solving most mysteries." Christopher Pike

"Persistence and determination are always rewarded." Christine Rice

According to Z. Hereford, author of Essential Life Skills.net:
Tips on How to Develop Persistence

- **Decide what you want to accomplish and set goals.** We all know how important setting goals is for achieving success in any endeavor, so take some time to figure out what it is you want.

- **Prepare for obstacles and setbacks.** Know and accept that there will be obstacles and setbacks; then prepare for them. Nothing important was every accomplished without adversity, setbacks and difficulties to contend with along the way.

- **Take the first step**. You cannot persevere; much less succeed, if you never try to accomplish something. So many of us procrastinate, fear failure or are too frozen in our tracks to take the first step towards achievement. As the popular saying goes, "*The only real failure in life is the failure to try.*"

- **Review, reevaluate and revise**. If things do not work out the way you hoped then review the steps you took and the process you followed. Reevaluate by examining what went wrong and where. What didn't work? What could you have done better?

- **Garner support and encouragement**. Stay away from naysayers; instead seek advice from those experienced in your field of endeavor and those who want you to succeed.

- **Maintain focus**. One of the obstacles to attaining success is losing motivation and focus. A good way to maintain focus is to visualize yourself accomplishing your goal no matter what it takes.

- **Enjoy!** The greatest feelings of accomplishment derive from knowing you've overcome obstacles and conquered adversities to achieve your goals.

According to Sarah Hudson Pierce, columnist Shreveport Times:
The Story behind The Power of Positive Thinking

About the time we feel like throwing up our hands or going off the deep end, we need to think about some of our heroes. One such person is Norman Vincent Peale, who authored *"The Power of Positive Thinking,"* published in 1952. The book was translated into 40 languages and sold over 2 million copies. No doubt this book has influenced more people than anyone since the time of Jesus. A few publishers had told Peale that it wasn't worth publishing, which infuriated his wife, Ruth. When she saw her husband throw his manuscript into a trash can, she immediately started to retrieve the book. Her husband told her never to take it out of the waste basket. So

Ruth took another route. She went into another publisher's office carrying the trash can — a novel idea. The book caught the publisher's attention, and he immediately published the manuscript. The rest is history.

Suggested Reading
The Art of Persistence - The Simple Secrets to Long-Term Success by R.L. Adams

Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance by Angela Duckworth

Point of Reflection
"A river cuts through rock, not because of its power, but because of its persistence." James N. Watkins

Promises

"Promises are like crying babies in a theater, they should be carried out at once."

Norman Vincent Peale

Notable Quotes

"Be able to keep a secret or promise when you know in your heart that it is the right thing to do." Marilyn Vos Savant

"Don't ever promise more than you can deliver, but always deliver more than you promise." Lou Holtz

"Your capacity to keep your vow will depend on the purity of your life." Mahatma Gandhi

According to Meerabelle Dey, JD:
The Decline of Trustworthiness

We, sadly, live in a world in which you cannot trust other people to do what they say they will do. That is because we, as a society, don't value trustworthiness. Instead, we admire beauty, charisma and financial success.

How many employees are frustrated with their jobs because their employer promises them a raise or flexible hours, but then doesn't follow through? If an employee believes that their employer is untrustworthy, that person isn't going to give 100% to their job.

The bottom line is this: Your word should be your bond. Yes, we all make mistakes. We all, on occasion, make promises that we ultimately can't keep. But our intention always should be to keep our word. And we should do everything possible to honor what we promise. That means that we should be keeping our word, even if it is inconvenient or uncomfortable.

According to Zenshoumuki, author (The story is adapted from aspiringentrepreneurs188)
Your Promise Could Mean a World to Someone Else

One cold night, there is a billionaire who met an old poor man while he walked out his house door. He called the poor man and said to him *"don't you feel cold being outside and not wearing anything?"*

The old man replied *"I don't have it but I got used to that."* *"Wait for me, I will enter my house now and bring one for you"*, said the billionaire.

The poor man got so happy and said he will wait for him. The billionaire entered his house and suddenly received a call. He got busy for calls and work and forgot the poor man.

In the morning, he remembered the poor old man and he went out to search for him but he found him dead because of cold.

Beside the old man, the billionaire found a note saying, *"When I didn't have warm clothes, I had the power to fight the cold because I was used to that. But when you promised to help me, I got attached to your promise and that took my power of resisting."*

That teaches a lesson: you shouldn't promise anything to anyone if you cannot keep it. Your promise might not mean anything to you but it could mean everything to someone else.

Bible Verses

A man who makes a vow to the Lord or makes a pledge under oath must never break it. He must do exactly what he said he would do. Numbers 30:2 NLT

No, I will not break my covenant; I will not take back a single word I said. Psalm 89:34 NLT

Suggested Reading
Your Word is Your Bond by Perry L. Cochell

Point of Reflection
"Promises are like the full moon, if they are not kept at once they diminish day by day." German Proverb

The Garden a Metaphor for Life
"If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need." Marcus Tullius Cicero

Notable Quotes
"Life begins the day you start a garden." Chinese proverb

"A garden requires patient labor attention. Plants do not grow merely to satisfy ambitions or to fulfill good intentions. They thrive because someone expended effort on them." Liberty Hyde Bailey

"A life without dreams is like a garden without flowers." Anonymous

"Every life form seems to strive to its maximum except human beings. How tall will a tree grow? As tall as it possibly can. Human beings, on the other hand, have been given the dignity of choice. You can choose to be all or you can choose to be less. Why not stretch up to the full measure of the challenge and see what all you can do?" Jim Rohn

According to Marelisa, lawyer and entrepreneur:
Excerpts 10 Life Lessons You Can Learn from Gardening
1. Have a vision for your garden. When you're going to plant a garden you have to create a vision for it. You don't just grab whatever seeds you can get your hands on, throw them around willy-nilly, and hope for the best. Just as you should have a vision for your garden, you should have a vision for your life. What kind of life do you want to have? What's your life's mission? What do you want to achieve? What do you want to do, have, and experience?

2. You need to prioritize. When you're planning your garden you can start by creating a wish list of everything you want to grow there: tomatoes; geraniums; pumpkins, watermelons, strawberries, green beans, sweet corn, cucumbers, forget-me-not flowers, zucchini, sunflowers, and on and on. However, you then need to trim down your list to the plants that you feel are the most important for you to grow.

Keep in mind that your garden is a limited space, and you can't possibly grow everything at once. If you try, you'll end up with a huge mess that will soon be unmanageable. In much the same way, when you're planning your dream life you can start out by creating a list of everything you want to do. Then, you need to prioritize your list and get to work on the things you want most.

3. You need good soil. Whatever it is that you decide to plant in your garden, it won't grow well unless you have healthy soil. A gardener spends a lot of time, energy, and expense to improve the soil of their garden and create a strong, rich, durable soil. In the same way, you need to build a strong foundation for your dreams.

You achieve this by doing the following:
• Getting the education that you need and learning the skills to achieve your goals.
• Creating spatial order – decluttering and getting organized.
• Getting your financial life in order – creating and following a budget, getting out of debt, and starting an emergency fund.
• Creating cornerstone habits: exercising, eating clean food, getting enough sleep, and meditating.

4. You reap what you sow. Gardeners know that they reap what they sow. If they want tomatoes, they plant tomato seeds. Many people take a look at their lives, they don't like what they see, and they wonder what went wrong. The answer is that they planted the wrong seeds.

Look at the following:
• Instead of eating well and exercising, they overate and watched too much TV.
• Instead of spending time bonding with their spouse, they spent too many hours at the office.

• Instead of saving and investing their money, they bought things they didn't need to impress other people.

Ask yourself what you want, and then make sure that you're planting the seeds that will get you those results.

5. Assess your garden's conditions. Different plants need different environments to thrive. How well a plant will do in your garden depends on many different factors, including the following:
• Climate and temperature.
• Amount of sunlight.
• Amount of water.
• The pH levels of the soil – how acid or alkaline the soil is.

In life, when you set goals you need to take into account things such as the following:
• Your strengths.
• Your weaknesses.
• Your likes and dislikes.
• Your character and temperament.
• The people who surround you.

Depending on what these factors are, some goals will be much easier for you to achieve than others. So make sure that you choose goals that are a good fit for you. When setting your goals, take inventory of who you are, and analyze the environment and the circumstances you find yourself in.

6. Build a fence around your garden. If you want a pest-free garden, you need to build a fence around it. The last thing you want is to look out at your garden and spot a furry creature munching away at your carefully planted crops. In much the same way, you should build a fence around your goals. That is, set boundaries.

Here's what you should do:
• Keep naysayers and toxic people at arm's length.
• Say "no" to unwanted commitments.
• Block out time to work on your goals and refuse to allow interruptions or distractions to take your attention away from the task at hand.

7. A garden needs constant tending. After you've prepared your soil and planted your seeds, there's still a lot of work to do in your garden. A garden requires constant care and attention.

You need to do all of the following:
• Set a watering schedule.
• Pull weeds regularly, or crabgrass and all kinds of unwelcome weeds will sprout up.
• Prune trees, shrubs, and bushes—cut away dead or overgrown branches or stems.
• Add fertilizer.
• Check to see how the plants are growing and take corrective action if necessary.

Just as a garden needs constant tending, so do your goals and dreams. Make sure that you take the action necessary to achieve your goals on a continuous basis. It's the only way you'll get your goals to bear fruit. Devote one-hour-a-day to tending your most important goal so that it can grow nice and strong.

8. Have patience and trust the process. There's a quote by John Wenger that states, *"You can't pull on the plants and expect them to grow faster."* That is, you can't force a seed to grow faster than nature intended it to, and you can't make trees bear fruit on demand. All you can do is create the best possible conditions in your garden, plant the right seeds, and give those seeds the care and attention they need. Then, trust that nature will take care of the rest.

9. Learn to deal with things outside of your control. Gardeners know that sometimes it doesn't rain as much as it should, so the plants don't get the amount of water that they need and their growth is stunted or they die. Or it rains too much and the roots drown. In addition, there are many other things which are not within their control that can damage the garden—the climate, diseases, a bug infestation, and so on. In much the same way, as you're working on your goals it's almost certain that you'll run into obstacles and that you'll suffer some unforeseen setbacks. That's just the way it is. Be flexible and look for ways to keep moving forward.

10. Reap your harvest. After all your hard work, your garden should start producing a bountiful crop, ready to be picked. Similarly, if properly executed, a good life plan will produce bountiful rewards: you'll have a career you love, financial security, good relationships, fond memories of trips and adventures, and so on.

Suggested Reading
The Garden in Every Sense and Season: A Year of Insights and Inspiration from My Garden by Tovah Martin

Point of Reflection
"A man has made at least a start on discovering the meaning of human life when he plants shade trees under which he knows full well he will never sit." D. Elton Trueblood

The Bushido Code: The Eight Virtues of the Samurai

"The virtues are a chain, and if you break one link, the whole chain is useless." Austin O'Malley

Notable Quotes
"Bushidō is about experiencing life in every breath. Seeing life in the simplest of things. There is beauty and honor in that."
Renée Ahdieh
"Self-control is the chief element in self-respect, and self-respect is the chief element in courage." Thucydides

"He who controls others may be powerful, but he who has mastered himself is mightier still." Lao Tzu

Wisdom is knowing what to do next; virtue is doing it. David Starr Jordan

The word samurai originally meant *"one who serves,"* and referred to men of noble birth assigned to guard members of the Imperial Court. This service ethic spawned the roots of samurai nobility, both social and spiritual.

According to Nitobe, Japanese author, educator, agricultural economist, diplomat, and politician:
Bushido's Eight Virtues
1. **Rectitude**. Rightness or practice; exact conformity to truth, or to the rules prescribed for moral conduct, either by divine or human laws; (moral) uprightness, integrity; honesty; morality; straightness.

2. **Courage**. The quality of a confident character not to be afraid or intimidated easily but without being incautious or inconsiderate; the ability to do things which one finds frightening; *"Courage is not the absence of fear. It is acting in spite of it."* Mark Twain

3. **Benevolence**. Disposition to do good; charitable kindness; an altruistic gift or act. Both Confucius and Mencius often said the highest requirement of a ruler of men is benevolence.

4. **Respect**. An attitude of consideration or high regard; good opinion, honor, or admiration; polite greetings, often offered as condolences after a death.

5. **Honesty**. The act, quality, or condition of being honest; to be truthful.

6. **Honor**. An objectification of praiseworthiness, respect (for example: something that represents praiseworthiness, respect).

7. **Loyalty**. Unswerving in allegiance; faithful in allegiance to one's lawful sovereign or government; faithful to a private person to whom fidelity is due; faithful to a cause, ideal, custom, institution, or product; the state of being loyal; fidelity.

8. **Character and self-control**. Bushido teaches that men should behave according to an absolute moral standard, one that transcends logic. What's right is right, and what's wrong is wrong.

Suggested Reading
The Code of the Samurai by Inazo Nitobe

Point of Reflection
"Virtue is a good as a thousand shields" Latin Proverb

The Knights' Code of Chivalry

Code of Chivalry, The Song of Roland

A Code of Chivalry was documented in an epic poem called 'The Song of Roland'. The 'Song of Roland' describes the 8th century Knights of the Dark Ages and the battles fought by the Emperor Charlemagne. The code has since been described as Charlemagne's Code of Chivalry.

The Song of Roland was written from 1098-1100 and described the betrayal of Count Roland at the hand of Ganelon. Roland was a loyal defender of his liege Lord Charlemagne and his code of conduct became understood as a code of chivalry. The Code of Chivalry described in the Song of Roland and excellent representations of the Knights Codes of Chivalry are as follows:

To fear God and maintain His Church.
To serve the liege* lord in valor and faith.
To protect the weak and the meek.
To give succor (aid) to widows and orphans.
To refrain from the wanton giving of offence.
To live by honor and for glory.
To despise pecuniary (monetary) reward.
To fight for the welfare of all.
To obey those placed in authority.

To guard the honor of fellow knights.
To eschew (avoid) unfairness, meanness and deceit.
To keep faith.
At all times to speak the truth.
To persevere to the end in any enterprise begun.
To respect the honor of women.
Never to refuse a challenge from an equal.
Never to turn the back upon a foe.

Of the seventeen entries in the Knights Codes of Chivalry, according to the Song of Roland, at least 12 relate to acts of chivalry as opposed to combat. The Code of Chivalry was the code of conduct followed by the knights during the medieval period. It was developed between the 11th and 12th century.

The Ten Commandments of the Medieval Code of Chivalry

1. Thou shalt believe all that the Church teaches, and shalt observe all its directions.
2. Thou shalt defend the Church.
3. Thou shalt respect all weaknesses, and shalt constitute thyself the defender of them.
4. Thou shalt love the country in which thou was born.
5. Thou shalt not recoil before the enemy.
6. Thou shalt make war against the Infidel without cessation, and without mercy.
7. Thou shalt perform scrupulously thy feudal duties, if they be not contrary to the laws of God.
8. Thou shalt never lie, and shalt remain faithful to thy pledged word.
9. Thou shalt be generous, and give largesse to everyone.
10. Thou shalt be everywhere and always the champion of the Right and the Good against Injustice and Evil.

According to Scott Farrell, founder and director of Chivalry Today's: The Seven Knightly Virtues

There was no such thing as a "uniform" code of chivalry in the Middle Ages. Many people — from successful knights to contemplative philosophers — compiled lists of virtuous qualities, called the "knightly virtues," which they felt defined chivalry. No two were exactly the same. There were, however, several common themes found in these lists of knightly virtues. By combining these, we have created what we consider to be the seven knightly virtues of the modern code of chivalry:

1. Courage. More than bravado or bluster, today's knight in shining armor must have the courage of the heart necessary to undertake tasks which are difficult, tedious or unglamorous, and to graciously accept the sacrifices involved.

2. **Justice.** A knight in shining armor holds him- or herself to the highest standard of behavior, and knows that "fudging" on the little rules weakens the fabric of society for everyone.

3. Mercy. Words and attitudes can be painful weapons in the modern world, which is why a knight in shining armor exercises mercy in his or her dealings with others, creating a sense of peace and community, rather than engendering hostility and antagonism.

4. Generosity. Sharing what's valuable in life means not just giving away material goods, but also time, attention, wisdom and energy — the things that create a strong, rich and diverse community.

5. Faith. In the code of chivalry, "faith" means trust and integrity, and a knight in shining armor is always faithful to his or her promises, no matter how big or small they may be.

6. Nobility. Although this word is sometimes confused with "entitlement" or "snobbishness," in the code of chivalry it conveys the importance of upholding one's convictions at all times, especially when no one else is watching.

7. Hope. More than just a safety net in times of tragedy, hope is present every day in a modern knight's positive outlook and cheerful demeanor — the shining armor that shields him or her, and inspires people all around. Modern-day knights should strive to keep these virtues alive in their own hearts, but, perhaps more importantly, they should work to bring these wonderful qualities out in the people they see every day.

Suggested Reading
Rules for a Knight by Ethan Hawke

Point of Reflection
"Chivalry is always in style." Frank Sonnenberg

Timing Is Everything
"For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven." Ecclesiastes 3:1 NLT

According to Denis Waitley, author:
Seven Principles of Timing in Your Life
1. View your success from the long view of time.

- Success is a process, not a status.

- All enduring success must be grown from the inside out.

2. View your failures from the short view of time.

- Failure is delay, not defeat. It is a temporary detour, not a dead-end street.

- Choose to use failures as the fertilizer of your success.

- The only way to avoid failure at all cost is to do nothing.

3. Dreams and goals must be charted in time to be realized.

- A dream is your creative vision for your life in the future.

- Dreams and goals should be just out of your present reach but not out of sight.

- Dreams and goals are previews of coming attractions in your life.

- Successful people work their plans. They exert effort, adapt, and persevere until their goals are reached.

4. Your purpose in life will determine how you choose to segment and prioritize your time.

- Purpose is the engine that powers our lives.

- All of your real value and worth is built in by design.

5. Your sense of responsibility and your integrity keep you concerned with time.

- The person of integrity does not blame others for his failures or expect others to provide his success.

- Every choice has a corresponding reward or consequence based on the integrity of that choice.

6. Perseverance maintains you through the passing of time.

- The lack of persistence is the major reason most people fail to attain their goals.

- Perseverance is not complaining but sustaining.

- Everything over time, is either ongoing or off going.

7. Success is sequenced in time.

- Most everything in life can be broken down into phases.

- The seasons of our success are stages, segments, time frames.

According to Sadhguru, author of over 100 books
If you do not time your actions right, even the best actions will go waste. Timing is most important. If the timing is right, even a small action will produce a huge impact. If the timing is wrong, even if you push hard, only little will happen. Timing is the most important thing, because the time and the energy you have in your life are limited resources. No one has endless energy. No one has endless time. So, you have to time it right. First thing is to start observing yourself. When you are at your best, you must do things.

Suggested Reading
Timing Is Everything, Turning Your Seasons of Success into Maximum Opportunities by Denis Waitley

Point of Reflection
"Learn from the past, set vivid, detailed goals for the future, and live in the only moment of time over which you have any control: now." Denis Waitley

Self-Reliance
"No one can cheat you out of ultimate success but yourself." Ralph Waldo Emerson

Ralph Waldo Emerson may not have introduced the concept; it was he who brought it to the general public with his 1841 essay Self-Reliance. Self-Reliance contains Emerson's beliefs and perspectives on how society negatively impacts our growth. He argues strongly that self-reliance, self-trust, and individualism, amongst other things, are ways that we can avoid the conformity imposed upon us.

According to Sim Campbell, writer:
Four actionable takeaways from Emerson's Self-Reliance
1. Trust yourself. *"A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within more than the firmament of bards and sages. Yet he dismisses without notice his thought because it is his. In every work of genius, we recognize our own rejected thoughts; they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty."*

When you're young, you're told that you don't know that much about the world and that you need to sit down and shut up. While that may be partially true, what isn't true is that we are completely ignorant. From a young age, people start to find out their knacks and inclinations quite fast.

2. Create beneficial habits. *"The other terror that scares us from self-trust is our consistency; a reverence for our past act or word because the eyes of others have no data for computing our orbit than our past acts, and we are loth to disappoint them."*

In any social circle you run in, you'll notice that everyone has some sort of "archetype". Some people have the archetype of the Joker, another one has one of the Player, another one has that of the Storyteller. These are predictable habitual grooves that keep people locked into a certain one-dimensional persona and prevents them from expanding. Consistency is comfortable. Change is not. You'll need consistency, discipline, and faith to institute new behaviors that go against your current comfortable programming.

3. Learn how to fail. *"If young men miscarry in their first enterprises, they lose all heart. If the young merchant fails, men say he is ruined. If the finest genius studies at one of our colleges and is not installed in an office within one year afterwards in the cities or suburbs of Boston or New York, it seems to his friends and to himself that he is right in being disheartened and complaining the rest of his life."*

Like there is an art of self-reliance, there is an art of failure – that comes from taking risks. When you take risks, you will fail a majority of the time. When you do fail, however, you gain experience – which is invaluable.

4. Think on your own. *"Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist. He who would gather immortal palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness. Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind."*

According to Benjamin Spall, writer: Examples of Self-Reliance
Self-reliance means different things to different people. The character traits most readily associated with self-reliance are, in no order:

- **Reliability**: You can be depended on to be consistent in everything you do.
- **Perseverance**: You keep going, weathering the storm through thick and thin.
- **Dependability**: You can be trusted to do what you say you're going to do.
- **Hardworking**: You believe in the value of hard work and dedication.
- **Self-discipline**: You control your behaviors in order to improve your actions.

Being self-reliant allows you to survive the harshest of winters and the most brutal of summers. It gives you a sense of agency over yourself and your decisions. And while it isn't an excuse to never seek help from others, it means you are no longer at the whim and mercy of those who may have other plans for you.

Bible Verses
Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.   Jeremiah 17:7-8 ESV

Suggested Reading
Self-Reliance by Ralph Waldo Emerson

Taking Responsibility: Self-reliance and the Accountable Life by Nathaniel Branden

Point of Reflection
"If it is to be, it is up to me." William H. Johnsen

Virtues
"Humility is the solid foundation of all virtues." Confucius

Source: Merriam-Webster online dictionary

Acceptance
- The act of accepting something or someone.
- Complements: Contentment, Forgiveness.
- Transcends: Denial, Rejection.

Assertiveness
- Disposed to or characterized by bold or confident statements and behavior.
- Complements: Confidence, Courage.
- Transcends: Self-doubt, Shyness.

Authenticity
- True to one's own personality, spirit, or character.
- Complements: Honesty, Integrity.
- Transcends: Low self-esteem.

Caring
- Feeling or showing concern for other people.
- Complements: Compassion, Kindness.
- Transcends: Cruelty, Insensitivity.

Commitment
- An agreement or pledge to do something in the future.
- Complements: Loyalty, Perseverance.
- Transcends: Lack of Direction.

Compassion
- Sympathetic consciousness of others' distresses together with a desire to alleviate it.
- Complements: Caring, Understanding.
- Transcends: Grief, Judgment.

Confidence
- A feeling or belief that you can do something well or succeed at something.
- Complements: Assertiveness, Courage.
- Transcends: Self-doubt, Uncertainty.

Consideration
- The act of thinking carefully about something you will make a decision about.
- Complements: Caring, Compassion.
- Transcends: Selfishness.

Contentment
- The state of being happy and satisfied.
- Complements: Fulfillment, Joy.

- Transcends: Dissatisfaction, Restlessness.

Cooperation
- A situation in which people work together to do something.
- Complements: Teamwork, Unity.
- Transcends: Defiance.

Courage
- Mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty.
- Complements: Boldness, Confidence.
- Transcends: Fear, Self-doubt.

Creativity
- The ability to make new things or think of new ideas.
- Complements: Joy, Purposefulness.
- Transcends: Ordinary.

Determination
- A quality that makes you continue trying to do or achieve something that is difficult.
- Complements: Commitment, Tenaciousness.
- Transcends: Complacency.

Dignity
- A way of appearing or behaving that suggests seriousness and self-control.
- Complements: Honor, Respect.
- Transcends: Egoism, Selfishness.

Encouragement
- Something that makes someone more determined, hopeful, or confident.
- Complements: Support, Caring.
- Transcends: Self-doubt, Discouragement.

Ethical
- Following accepted rules of behavior; morally right and good.
- Complements: Fairness, Respect.
- Transcends: Immorality.

Fairness
- Treating people in a way that does not favor some over others.
- Complements: Equality, Justice.
- Transcends: Grievance, Injustice.

Faith
- Strong belief or trust in someone or something.
- Complements: Confidence, Hope, Trust.
- Transcends: Apprehension, Doubt.

Forgiveness
- The act of forgiving someone or something.
- Complements: Freedom, Peace.
- Transcends: Anger, Bitterness.

Generosity
- The quality of being kind, understanding, and not selfish; the quality of being generous.
- Complements: Kindness, Service.
- Transcends: Stinginess, Self-centered.

Gentleness
- Having or showing a kind and quiet nature; not harsh or violent.
- Complements: Patience, Peace.
- Transcends: Aggression.

Graciousness
- Very polite in a way that shows respect.
- Complements: Dignity, Tact.
- Transcends: Disrespect, Rudeness.

Gratitude
- A feeling of appreciation or thanks.
- Complements: Hope, Joy, Peace.
- Transcends: Disappointment, Pain.

Helpfulness
- Making it easier to do a job, deal with a problem, etc.; giving help.
- Complements: Graciousness, Service.
- Transcends: Negativity.

Honesty
- The quality of being fair and truthful.
- Complements: Integrity, Truthfulness.
- Transcends: Deceitfulness.

Honor
- Respect that is given to someone who is admired.
- Complements: Dignity, Respect.
- Transcends: Shame.

Hope
- To want something to happen or be true and think that it could happen or be true.
- Complements: Faith, Joy, Trust.
- Transcends: Despair, Frustration.

Humility
- The quality or state of not thinking you are better than other people.

- Complements: Modesty.
- Transcends: Arrogance, Pride.

Integrity
- Firm adherence to a code of especially moral or artistic values; the quality or state of being complete or undivided.
- Complements: Honesty, Trust.
- Transcends: Corruption, Deceitfulness.

Justice
- The process or result of using laws to fairly judge and punish crimes and criminals.
- Complements: Fairness, Integrity.
- Transcends: Discrimination.

Kindness
- The quality or state of being kind; a kind act.
- Complements: Caring, Compassionate.
- Transcends: Cruelty, Loneliness.

Love
- A feeling of strong or constant affection for a person.
- Complements: Caring, Forgiveness, Unity.
- Transcends: Fear.

Loyalty
- The quality or state of being loyal.
- Complements: Honesty, Trust.
- Transcends: Betrayal.

Optimistic
- Having or showing hope for the future; expecting good things to happen.
- Complements: Hope, Joyfulness.
- Transcends: Pessimism.

Patience
- The ability to wait for a long time without becoming annoyed or upset.
- Complements: Determination, Peace.
- Transcends: Frustration.

Peace
- A state of tranquility or quiet.
- Complements: Love, Serenity, Unity.
- Transcends: Anger, Cruelty.

Perseverance
- Continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition.
- Complements: Commitment, Determination, Resilience.

- Transcends: Laziness.

Reliability
- The quality or state of being reliable.
- Complements: Integrity, Loyalty.
- Transcends: Untrustworthy.

Respect
- An act of giving particular attention.
- Complements: Dignity, Reverence.
- Transcends: Inconsideration.

Responsibility
- The quality or state of being responsible as in moral, legal, or mental accountability.
- Complements: Courtesy, Tact, Trust.
- Transcends: Selfishness.

Reverence
- Honor or respect that is felt for or shown to (someone or something).
- Complements: Respect, Worth.
- Transcends: Hatred.

Sincerity
- The quality or state of being sincere; honesty of mind.
- Complements: Authentic.
- Transcends: Disingenuous.

Tact
- A keen sense of what to do or say in order to maintain good relations with others or avoid offense.
- Complements: Graciousness, Responsibility.
- Transcends: Clumsiness.

Tolerance
- Capacity to endure pain or hardship; sympathy or indulgence for beliefs or practices differing from or conflicting with one's own.
- Complements: Patience, Tenacious.
- Transcends: Narrow-mindedness.

Trust
- Assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something.
- Complements: Loyalty, Respect.
- Transcends: Doubt, Skepticism.

Truthfulness
- Telling or disposed to tell the truth.
- Complements: Honesty, Faith, Trust.
- Transcends: Corruption, Deceit.

Understanding
- An agreement of opinion or feeling; adjustment of differences.
- Complements: Kindness, Tolerance.
- Transcends: Egoism.

Unity
- The quality or state of being made one.
- Complements: Harmony, Love, Peace.
- Transcends: Loneliness.

Visionary
- A thought, concept, or object formed by the imagination.
- Complements: Imagination, Leadership.
- Transcends: Lack of Inspiration.

Wisdom
- Accumulated philosophic or scientific learning; knowledge.
- Complements: Idealism, Visionary.
- Transcends: Lack of Intelligence.

Bible Verse
Better to be poor and honest than to be dishonest and a fool. Proverbs 19:1 NLT

Suggested Reading
The Book of Virtues by William J. Bennett

Point of Reflection
"He who sows virtue reaps glory." Leonardo Da Vinic

We Didn't Do Anything Today, We'll Have to Give Them Hell Tomorrow
A favorite saying from my uncle Steve who grew up on a 600-acre potato farm in North Dakota
and knew hard labor was from sun-up to sun-down.

Notable Quotes
"There is no substitute for hard work."   Thomas Alva Edison

"Great things come from hard work and perseverance. No Excuses."   Kobe Bryant

"I know the price of success: dedication, hard work and an unremitting devotion to the things you want to see happen."
Frank Lloyd Wright

According to Jack Busch, writer primer magazine:
The elements of hard work. Hard work is but one of the ways you can achieve your goals. For those of us who aren't inordinately wealthy, smart, or lucky, it's the only way. While each person's path to success will be unique, the anatomy of the hard work that they do often looks very similar. For most successful people, the hard work that they put forth included all of the following:

The drive. This is the motivation, the inspiration, the entire reason you work hard. This is the engine that pushes your efforts forward.

The plan. If the Drive is the heart of your hard work, then the plan is the skeleton. The plan maps out your course of action and helps plot your progress and keep you on track.

The grind. The Grind is the point when working hard stops being fun and exciting and starts becoming tedious, stressful and perhaps even discouraging. How you handle the grind is often what separates the winners from the quitters.

The sacrifice. This is the crux of hard work, and the one thing that makes hard work truly hard. Any ambitious goal requires significant personal sacrifice. Enduring the strain in your relationships, finances and comfort level is the real test.

The payoff. This is the brass ring. In order for hard work to be worthwhile, you have to define a number of goals and milestones and recognize when you've achieved them. And once you do, you have to up the ante and keep going.

Farmer and the Preacher, Ronald Reagan, in a speech in Indianapolis
A farmer took a piece of bad earth and made things flourish thereon. Proud of his successes, he asked his minister to come by and see what he had done. The minister was impressed. *"That's the tallest corn I've ever seen. I've never seen anything as big as those melons. Praise the Lord*!" He went on that way about every crop, praising the Lord for it all. Finally, the farmer couldn't take it anymore. *"Reverend,"* he said, *"I wish you could have seen this place when the Lord was doing it by himself."*

Suggested Reading
Hard Work: Success Made Easy by Michael Crews

Great at Work: The Hidden Habits of Top Performers by Morten T. Hansen

Point of Reflection
"A lot of hard work is hidden behind nice things." Ralph La

Who Would Buy Green Bananas?
"To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow." Audrey Hepburn

Notable Quotes
"You've got to believe in the possibilities. You've got to believe that tomorrow can be better than today. And here's the big one. Believe in yourself." Jim Rohn

"Faith makes: Yesterday a stepping stone, today a new beginning, tomorrow a limitless possibility!" Nishan Panwar

"Faith speaks the language of the heart. It is an expression of hope that goes beyond the conscious mind." Arthur Dobrin

According to Arthur Dobrin, doctor of social work
Faith is an expression of hope for something better. More than a wish, it is closer to a belief, but not quite. A belief is rooted in the mind. Faith is based in the heart. Faith speaks the language of the heart. It is an expression of hope that goes beyond the conscious mind.

Here is a famous parable: Once a traveler came across an old woman who was stooped over what appeared to be thin sticks. He asked the woman what she was doing. *"I am planting orange trees,"* she explained. The traveler thought this was a waste of her time. *"Why do you bother?"* he asked. "*You are an old woman. These saplings will take years before they will be old enough to bear fruit. You will be long gone by then." "True enough,"* she answered. "*But I don't plant these trees for myself but for those who will come after me, just as those before me planted the trees that bear the fruit that I eat today."*

Bible Verses
So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today. Matthew 6:34 (NLT)

For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. Jeremiah 29:11 (NLT)

Then Jesus told him, "You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me." John 20:29 (NLT)

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Hebrews 11:1 (KJV)

Jesus responded, "Why are you afraid? You have so little faith!"… Matthew 8:26 (NLT)

Suggested Reading
What Would You Do If You Knew You Could Not Fail? How to Transform Fear into Courage by Nina Lesowitz and Mary Beth Sammons

Success Through a Positive Mental Attitude by Napoleon Hill and W. Clement Stone

Point of Reflection
"What great thing would you attempt if you knew you could not fail?" Robert H. Schuller

Part 8

Just One More Thing

Just One More Thing
"The thoughts and words are not mine, just tapping into the universe of existing thoughts."

Ronald D. Sears

The line *"Just One More Thing"* spoken by Lieutenant Columbo, became a sort of trademark for Columbo, played by Peter Falk.

Quotes to ponder by Ronald D. Sears

"That which is not shared is not multiplied."

"The memories of one are not sufficient even when gathered together they cease to offer comfort when they cannot be shared."

"Savor life like a rainbow, it lasts only a short time and only under the right conditions."

"People tend to try to recreate what they once had at an earlier stage in their lives."

"Make wise decisions as some decisions can't be undone."

"The things most people worry about neither can be changed nor foretold."

"The greatest gift one can obtain is the gift not sought."

"Many things are forgotten before the work is completed."

"The minds of men hold many riches scattered among the rubble."

"That which is known can be lost over time that which is uncertain will be revealed when called for."

"What stops most individuals from achieving their desires? Is usually a lack of will power?"

"Look beyond the obvious for answers for some answers are beyond our current understanding."

"Everyone has an internal clock . . . that has a set limit for expiration."

"Life is a series of short-term experiences filled with people, places, and events and once these past they cannot be revisited or relived. You never know when you will not share those life experiences again . . . so treasure each one as they come into your life. You will only remember and try to instill that feeling and wonder once again."

"Everything is temporary; treasure each moment for the river of time is constantly moving."

"Conclusions drawn from facts are frequently in error."

"A house is small when filled with your friends and large when empty."

"Love is an energy source that is never diminished by its use."

"Take time to enjoy the child that is within all of us."

"If you want better answers, ask better questions."

"Nobody lives long enough to learn everything that might be useful to him."

"When you talk to yourself you are assured of getting the answer you want."

"The success of any instruction is dependent largely upon the degree of interest awakened in the student."

"Time is always the hardness to get from the ones you want it most."

"Too many thoughts often enter into one's head without one's permission."

"Everything has a source relative to its point of origin in time."

"Friendship grows like a tree both extend roots in order to grow more. As more roots develop the stronger the friendship just as the tree."

"There is a peace in the wind that blows the leaves in a tree gently back and forth."
worry
"Inexperience doesn't mean inability."

About the Compiler of this Book

Ronald D. Sears has more than 30 years of management experience in the areas of recruiting, training, coaching, and forming effective cohesive teams. Via empowerment, delegation, and emotional intelligence approach to leadership is emphasized, with a focus on developing an atmosphere that engages team and personal success.

He has a master's degree in Leadership and Organizational Studies from Fresno Pacific University. His varied career includes working as a circulation director for a community of five newspapers, serving on the board of the Cal Western Circulation Managers' Association, business adjunct instructor at three separate universities facilitating courses in business management, critical thinking, and organizational behavior, academic dean, career school director, Christian education chair, Stephen minister, and church trustee. In his spare time he enjoys painting, writing music and playing the piano.

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