

The Business Coaching Toolkit



Top 10 Strategies
for Solving
the Toughest
Dilemmas Facing
Organizations

STEPHEN G. FAIRLEY
BILL ZIPP

THE BUSINESS COACHING TOOLKIT

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the Toughest Dilemmas
Facing Organizations*

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and
BILL ZIPP



John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Praise for *The Business Coaching Toolkit*

“Bill’s wealth of experience in managing and coaching so many business leaders accounts for the depth and wisdom of this book. Here is a great source of practical advice that will help you be a better coach, a better manager, and a better partner to your colleagues.”

—Tony Rutigliano
Vice President and Chief Learning Officer, ADP

“*The Business Coaching Toolkit* is the perfect follow-up and complement to Stephen’s prior book, *Getting Started in Personal and Executive Coaching*. This book provides top strategies from the master and a game plan for everyone interested in business coaching!”

—Joe Cullinane
Executive in Residence, Northern Illinois University
CEO, Joe Cullinane Enterprises, Inc.

“A powerful and immediately practical tool for every manager’s toolbox. Fairley and Zipp have created a how-to manual for overcoming the top 10 most common challenges faced by today’s busy professionals. If you are a leader or coaching one, this go-to reference guide will be a welcome resource you’ll turn to time and time again.”

—Tim Ursiny, PhD, RCC
CEO, Advantage Coaching and Training
Author of multiple books, including
The Top Performer’s Guide to Conflict

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About the Authors



Stephen Fairley is a nationally recognized law firm marketing expert and appears on over 250,000 web sites. He has helped more than 6,000 attorneys from hundreds of law firms across the country discover the secrets of generating more referrals and filling their practice. Stephen's Rainmaker seminars have been sponsored by more than 14 of the largest state and local bar associations.

He is the international best-selling author of 10 books and 5 audio programs including: *Practice Made Perfect for Lawyers* (TLC Business Press, 2005), *Becoming A Rainmaker: Business Building Strategies for Lawyers* (TLC Business Press, 2005), and *Getting Started in Personal and Executive Coaching* (John Wiley & Sons, 2003)—a best-selling book in the field of professional coaching.

In 2004, Stephen was named America's Top Marketing Coach by CoachVille and given their top industry award. He is a professional member of the National Speakers Association and his work has been featured in the *American Bar Association's Journal*, *Harvard Management Update*, *Entrepreneur, Inc*, *Business Advisor*, the *Chicago Tribune*, *Crain's Chicago Business*, and on the front covers of *AdvantEdge* and *Choice* magazines.

Stephen is CEO of The Rainmaker Institute, the nation's largest provider of strategic marketing services for small law firms. He

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

specializes in helping partners at small law firms find new clients fast and generate high quality referrals.

You can find more about his programs at www.RainmakerRetreat.com and www.YourPracticeMadePerfect.com.



Bill Zipp, President of Leadership Link, Inc., is a seasoned small business specialist. Bill has spent thousands of hours working with hundreds of business leaders across the country, and his proven program, The Business Fitness™ System, provides a step-by-step plan for building a strong, self-sustaining small business.

An award-winning author, speaker, and master business coach, Bill is a professional member of the National Speakers Association and their Business Coaching Professional Experts Group. He is also a certified FranklinCovey Coach and a certified trainer with The Ken Blanchard Companies. Bill has earned a Master of Arts degree and graduated with honors.

Bill has applied the principles of The Business Fitness™ System to build a series of successful small businesses in his hometown of Corvallis, Oregon.

For more information or a FREE Special Report, “The 3 Biggest Killers of Small Businesses Today and What YOU Can Do About Them,” visit www.LeadershipLink.net.

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—*Bill Zipp*

To my Beautiful Bride of 12 years: Ruth, you continually amaze me with your insight, dedication, loyalty, and passion. You truly are a kindred spirit and I can't wait to spend the next 30 years with you. I love you more!

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And finally, thank you to our Clients: To over 6,000 attorneys from hundreds of law firms across the country who have trusted us to teach them how to become more powerful Rainmakers.

—Stephen Fairley

The Evolution of Professional Coaching

The professional coaching industry has undergone a significant evolution over the past several years. The use of business and executive coaches has become mainstream and the results are in—coaching works! Business coaches and consultants are commonly used to help smooth the transition of a new executive, provide hands-on training for a high-potential manager, strengthen relationships between team members, and help business owners achieve higher levels of success. But as the industry evolves, we see several trends emerging; some are exciting while others give us pause.

TOP FIVE TRENDS IN PROFESSIONAL COACHING

TREND ONE: Manager as Coach

More and more companies, both large and small, are starting to add another responsibility to busy managers' plates—coaching. It is common for today's managers to refer to one-on-one meetings with their associates as a coaching session and for some of these managers to be enrolled in a coach training program. There are three primary reasons for this trend. First, companies want to publicly recognize the capabilities of their best managers by giving them an official designation: Coach. It provides these leaders a platform to solve problems with other leaders and to

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facilitate teams within the organization. Second, it is a way for companies to give people a level of prestige within the company. Being chosen by your peers as a person who demonstrates exceptional communication skills and finds creative solutions to troublesome situations can place you on the fast track for promotion. Third, it can be a cost-cutting method that enables companies to say they have coaching resources available for their associates without actually spending money on coaching services.

While we applaud the development of business leaders' people skills that coaching brings, we are also concerned, because not everyone has the professional expertise and experience needed to help people through their toughest challenges. A busy manager may become distracted from his or her core responsibilities of running the business to provide coaching attention to a challenging situation. Associates receiving this coaching may need more than their manager is able to give them. First aid is great, if that's all you need. But sometimes you have to see a doctor. This trend is here to stay, however, in spite of what many professional coaches think about it. Innovative coaches will learn how to tap into it as a revenue stream.

TREND TWO: Rise of the Internal Coach

With the broad acceptance of professional coaching among Fortune 500 companies and recent studies pointing to its great return on investment, more and more organizations are tapping into the benefits of coaching. With the cost of top executive and business coaches increasing and the availability of self-employed coaches barely making a living in their practice, there is a simultaneous push to train internal coaches and hire coaches from the outside as internal practitioners.

We have heard reports of several large coach training organizations that started off just training individuals interested in professional coaching, but are now finding they can make much more money offering coaching certifications for managers and internal coaches. This is just the beginning. Over the next several years, companies that specialize in training managers and internal coaches will generate greater revenue than those that train individual coaches and consultants, who will become increasingly unable to pay premium pricing for certification. When individual coaches discover their coach training school is working hand in hand with companies to train their replacements, there

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could be a backlash. Innovative training companies will see this as an opportunity to use graduates of their programs to lead “train the trainer” seminars and thereby become more attractive to potential students by being able to instantly guarantee clients upon graduation.

TREND THREE: Commoditization of Coaching

As the numbers of coaches continue to grow exponentially, supply is outstripping demand. As with any industry, when supply exceeds demand prices drop, often precipitously. There are signs of this in almost every major city with an ever-growing contingency of coaches. With low barriers to entry, the teaching that “everyone’s a coach,” while well-intentioned, is starting to undermine the professionalization of the field. You can barely go to a networking event today without meeting half a dozen people with “coach” on their business card. As the title becomes ubiquitous, coaches face the danger of becoming the “consultant” of the twenty-first century—the title everyone uses when they’re in between jobs.

Unfortunately, this trend will continue to grow as more and more people with less and less training enter the field, pushing the cost to hire a professional coach to new lows. How low can we go? I recently came across a coach offering his services for \$25 per hour with the first month free. That kind of desperation pricing undercuts the ability of other coaches to make a serious living.

We must work together to develop a clear delineation between coaching with a capital “C” and coaching with a small “c.” Coaching with a capital “C” is someone who has met a certain level of professional standards, has received coach-specific training, and receives her primary income from coaching and consulting. Coaching with a small “c” is anyone using an interactive approach to help others achieve their goals. While everyone can use the *skill* of coaching, we believe the efforts of some to call everyone a “Coach” are detrimental to the long-term professional status of the field.

TREND FOUR: Growth at the High End

For many coaches, the words of Charles Dickens in *A Tale of Two Cities* still ring true: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.”

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While many top coaches are doing very, very well and continuing to land bigger and bigger jobs, the number of coaches who are barely eking out a living is growing. In my previous book, *Getting Started in Personal and Executive Coaching* (John Wiley & Sons, 2003), I found 53 percent of coaches reported earning less than \$20,000 per year, while fewer than 9 percent made over \$100,000. Other studies have found slightly different numbers, but the overall growth among the top 10 percent is much higher than the growth of the bottom 50 percent. So the rich get richer, because they are masters in their field, and the poor get poorer, feeding the trends outlined earlier.

One major reason for this is the failure of coaches to understand the importance of the newest trend, the “Double Niche.”

TREND FIVE: The Double Niche

In studying business and executive coaches making over \$100,000 per year, virtually all of them use a strategy my co-author Bill Zipp calls the “double niche.” Not only do top coaches have a specific area of expertise, such as marketing, leadership development, sales, team building, or diversity (the first niche), they also apply this expertise to a specific industry or profession (the second niche).

For example, like many of you, I started off as a generalist, coaching small to midsized companies on leadership development, marketing, and skill-based training. I’ll be honest, I would coach them on almost any topic they would pay me for. While my business was good, it wasn’t near the level I knew it could be. It took me a few years before I started to target small professional service firms, like technology consulting firms, accountants, doctors, and lawyers. I continued to hover around a six-figure income.

It wasn’t until I started emphasizing just my marketing expertise (niche one) and focused on one industry, small law firms (niche two), that my business began to experience rapid growth. We have seen triple-digit growth every year now for the past three years and signed up more than 6,000 new clients in just the last 24 months. With the help of my business partner, Travis Greenlee, the Rainmaker Institute has rapidly become the largest provider of strategic marketing services to small law firms across the country. We specialize in helping attor-

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neys generate more referrals and find new clients fast, and use coaching, consulting, training, and speaking to help our target market.

My experience is not unique. I have had many other colleagues share similar stories of rapid growth when they fully leveraged their area of expertise and applied it to a specific industry or profession. In this hypercompetitive field of coaching, being perceived by your ideal target market as a “double specialist” may be the best way to guarantee your success. For more success strategies, be sure to visit our web site at www.BusinessCoachingToolkit.com.

WHAT IS *THE BUSINESS COACHING TOOLKIT*?

The Business Coaching Toolkit is a collection of application-based coaching tools you can use with clients, managers, or employees to help them overcome a variety of common problems encountered in today’s workplace. Whether it’s increasing their time management skills, giving feedback to an employee, or building their leadership team, these proven tools present an endless supply of easy-to-apply exercises.

In starting out, it is important to understand that this book is not:

- A philosophy or model of coaching
- An academic book filled with various theories
- For beginning coaches who are just starting out
- Just for external coaches

The Business Coaching Toolkit is an application-based training manual for advanced coaches and business leaders who need coaching tools to help them find creative solutions to difficult problems.

In addition to our personal experience as small business owners, business coaches, and consultants, we have interviewed several nationally recognized internal and external coaches who have graciously given us direct access to some of the most transformational tools they regularly use with clients.

In addition to this book, we have compiled a resource guide and other instructional tools on our website: www.BusinessCoachingToolkit.com. We invite you to visit to find additional tools, free articles, training events, and to sign up for our free newsletter.

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Who Is This Book For?

This book was written for four primary groups:

- Professional business coaches and consultants
- Professional speakers and trainers
- Internal coaches
- Managers and executive leaders

Professional Business Coaches and Consultants will find practical tools to use with a wide variety of clients. You will find these tools and techniques bring a new dimension to your work with clients and often open up doors to “speak truth” to them at a deeper level. Both authors and all the contributing experts are accomplished business coaches and consultants who understand how to leverage a tool to quickly establish rapport or to create a stronger client-consultant relationship.

Trainers and Professional Speakers often use group exercises in teaching attendees a new skill or to illustrate a point. Many of these tools can be used in large group settings or can be easily adapted for your next small group training event. Both authors are members of the National Speakers Association (www.nsaspeaker.org) and regularly conduct public and private training seminars. We know the importance of making sure every group exercise is a big success. Every single tool in this book has been extensively used and perfected in a wide variety of settings.

Internal Coaches often have the thankless job of providing developmental feedback to a manager or working with a high potential to overcome a specific negative trait. At the same time, they need to present it in such a way that the person will grow past it or change their behavior to avoid the negative consequences of it, such as getting fired, demoted, or transferred. Many of the experts we interviewed for this book work extensively within mid-to-large organizations, including a few who either are, or train, internal coaches. They understand the sensitive nature of being an internal coach, the limitations of confidentiality, and the necessity of building a culture of trust. The techniques we present in this book will not only help you establish your expertise as a creative problem solver, but will also assist you in coaching high potentials to achieve even greater levels of success.

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Managers and Executive Leaders are frequently required to act as a “coach” to their direct reports and peers. However, most managers, leaders, or business owners have little to no training about how to effectively help their people overcome obstacles, negative behaviors, or increase their communication skills. If you’re a leader looking for some easy-to-use tools, this book is definitely for you. We have taken the most common situations encountered in a company and found the best tools around to help you successfully coach others in a variety of tough situations.

Why Should You Buy This Book, and What’s Different about It?

There are several great books about coaching skills and training tools, but here are four reasons why we believe this toolkit uniquely deserves to be on every practitioner’s desk.

1. **Proven Tools.** This is not an academic book filled with theoretical exercises that sound good on paper, but lack practical application. We require each tool to have been time-tested and refined at least a dozen times in the real world before we would include it in the book. You can trust these tools will not flop when you use them.
2. **Practical Approach.** This is not a book to be read, it is a manual to be used. We have laid out each tool step by step to make it as simple and practical as possible to apply in as wide a context as possible. Please do not mistake *simple* for *easy*. We are not of the opinion that every problem can be easily solved with a tool, but just like an auto mechanic, the difficulty level often decreases when you have the right tool in your toolbox. Increasing the number of tools you are adept at using strengthens your skill set in coaching a more diverse audience.
3. **Easy Access.** Each chapter stands on its own and is a separate tool. This means you can easily turn to the chapter that most clearly focuses on the issue you’re facing or the skill you want to teach. While advanced practitioners will use this book as a reference to coach clients through common problems managers face, trainers and internal coaches will be able to quickly pick and choose tools based on the need at hand.
4. **Specific Ideas for Implementation.** At the end of every chapter we provide 10 specific ways you can use each tool, depending on your role.

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How Can This Book Help You Grow Your Practice?

I'm frequently asked to speak at events for coaches, consultants, speakers, and trainers where I often tell their members, tongue firmly in cheek, "The two biggest problems faced by service professionals today is they don't know how to find new clients and second, they don't know what to do with them once they land them." In my previous book, *Getting Started in Personal and Executive Coaching* (John Wiley & Sons, 2003), I dealt extensively with the first problem. This book focuses on the second.

As professional business coaches and consultants, we often have only our personal past experiences to guide us when working with difficult clients or politically charged business situations. Bill Zipp and I have diligently worked to supply you with cutting-edge tools and techniques you can use and adapt to working with clients, regardless of your role. At the end of the first 10 chapters are 10 different applications of the tool we believe you will find especially helpful.

For those of you who are external consultants, here are a couple of specific recommendations on how to use this toolkit to build your practice.

BUILD A STRUCTURED PROGRAM USING THIS BOOK AS YOUR GUIDE. We have selected over a dozen of the most common skill-based problems a person would encounter that would lead them to seek out a business coach. We have heard from many clients that they dislike the vagueness of the formal coaching relationship and feel frustrated by the lack of structure most coaches use. See whether this conversation sounds familiar:

"What are we going to talk about in our coaching?"

"Anything you want to."

"How long will the coaching relationship last?"

"As long as you want."

"How do I know when I've achieved my goal?"

"Coaching is more about the journey than the end result."

One of my favorite graduate school professors, Joseph A. Kloba, Ed.D., taught me "structure provides freedom." Business clients generally seek out structure in their relationships and are often goal-driven. Use this toolkit to structure your coaching relationship by leading your

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individual clients through one exercise per session and then have them practice that skill with an employee before the next coaching session. Of course, within that structure you have the freedom to customize it to meet your client's specific needs, but instead of selling them an open-ended coaching relationship, offer them a 10-session coaching program called *Communication Tools for Leaders* (one session per toolkit chapter).

Just by giving your "coaching program" a name and a time frame we have found clients are much more willing to commit to it. Also, companies are more likely to pay for a program like this out of their education or training budget than they are for an open-ended coaching relationship.

PLAN A SKILL BUILDING FOR MANAGERS WORKSHOP. Consider creating a daylong *Skill Building for Managers Workshop* based on several tools from this guide. Teach each skill to the managers or employees and then have them practice in small groups.

Alternatively, set up an 8- to 12-week *Best Practices in Leadership* course, live or by teleseminar. Lead the group through practicing each of the tools during the session and then have them use it with an employee or peer during the next week. We have sold these programs to our clients for anywhere from \$2,000 per person to \$15,000 a day for a customized version with a specific company. Depending on your expertise, specific niche, and geographic area, it could be more or less.

What Will You Discover in This Book?

Each chapter of this book presents a specific coaching tool. A business case is made for each tool and a business impact story on the real-life use of the principles behind the tool is presented. And, as mentioned before, the first 10 chapters end with the top 10 ways to use the tool. Here's a brief overview of each chapter and some of the highlights you will learn.

Chapter 1: Developing a Leadership Vision (It's not What You Think!)

One of the most critical aspects of being a great leader, manager, or coach is setting a vision for where you are going. Most people, however, think of *vision* as some big, challenging goal. With this tool, you will discover the deeper meaning of vision and how to tie your goal

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into your company's or client's core values and how to make a truly significant and sustainable impact on their long-term success.

Chapter 2: The One-Percent Solution

Technology has created a tidal wave of tasks that leave most people drowning in a sea of things to do. Traditional time management just doesn't work anymore because there is not enough time in any day to keep up with the exponential increase of things to do. The one-percent solution is a tool that allows leaders to use the discipline of focus, not efficiency, to master their time. Priority management, *not* time management, is the secret to great performance.

Chapter 3: Getting Things Done through Others

Delegation dysfunction plagues most businesses. Here's how it works: You give something to someone else to do. They put it on the bottom of their pile. You check on it and discover that it's not done. You press them on it, and it finally gets done (with rolled eyes and raised eyebrows). But it's not done right and you end up doing it yourself. That is the definition of dysfunction!

The secret to getting things done through others is having a system that allows for both freedom and accountability. This system must be able to clarify expectations up front and provide opportunities for input from those involved in completing the task. There must also be flexibility in the system to allow for midcourse corrections, reworking plans, if necessary. That is the system we propose here, captured in the acronym PAR (**P**lan, **A**ct with Authority, and **R**eview).

Chapter 4: Making Goals SMART

Goal setting is critical to the success of any organization, but making ill-thought-out goals that don't accurately reflect long-term strategy is not helpful. With this tool you will learn how to lead your team or client through setting goals that are specific, measurable, and within a reasonable time frame. The purpose of setting a goal is to achieve it. Using this tool will help you set better goals and achieve a better success rate.

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Chapter 5: The Power of Positive Praise

In 1992, psychologist John Gottman conducted hundreds of 15-minute conversations with newly married couples and predicted whether these marriages would end up in divorce. *Ten years later, his predictions were 94 percent accurate.* He used one metric to make his prediction: the ratio of positive comments to negative comments within the conversation. If the ratio was five to one or greater, that is five positive comments to one negative comment, the relationship thrived. If not, it ended in divorce. We use this same metric to help leaders increase their effectiveness with others in building equity in their business relationships through regular, repeated affirmation.

Chapter 6: Making Feedback Effective

Giving negative feedback to an employee, peer, manager, or client is never easy. Say the wrong thing at the wrong time and you risk ruining the relationship or making the person feel unmotivated to remain part of the team. If you're like most leaders, giving feedback is one of the most difficult parts of your job. If you remain silent, however, a problem goes unresolved and cracks start to appear in the foundation. With this tool, we will show you how to create a safe context for giving feedback and specific steps so you can deliver it with the best possible outcome.

Chapter 7: A New Twist on SWOT

Evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of your client, your management team, or your company is something most leaders do on an unspoken level. This tool will give you the process for guiding your people through a comprehensive analysis of your current situation—the good, the bad, and the ugly. We will then show you how to evaluate your options and focus on using your strengths to the best of your ability.

Chapter 8: The Life Leadership Dashboard

Renowned psychologist Alfred Adler identified five life tasks that all of us are hard-wired to complete. Just as with our senses of

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sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell, when we fail to experience a specific life task, we are the poorer for it. However, when we address the needs of these five areas, we are better people who deliver better business results. This tool presents each of the five life tasks and poses five probing questions related to them for an amazingly complete personal and professional inventory. You will also be introduced to a different coaching paradigm that you may want to consider using in your practice.

Chapter 9: The Sixth Suitcase

Birds don't swim. Fish don't run. Chipmunks don't fly. These are obvious. What is not so obvious, though, is when we continue to struggle in an area that is not aligned with our talent. Somehow we feel guilty for not being able to do something we were never designed to do. It would be like sending a bird to remedial swimming, or a fish to remedial running, or a chipmunk to remedial flying school. The secret to achieving great performance is maximizing our strengths, our sixth suitcase, and managing around our weaknesses. This tool will show you how.

Chapter 10: What Color Is Your Team?

When faced with world-class competition, genius takes you only so far. Greater competition requires greater collaboration, making teamwork more than just the corporate "flavor of the month," but an essential business strategy. This chapter lays out the essentials for true teamwork—Trusting relationships, Established purpose and goals, Active participation by all the members of the group, and Mutual accountability. Based on those four dynamics, we explore the life cycle of a team and provide a survey any leader can use to determine the development level of the team.

Chapter 11: Using the 10 Tools

We conclude this book by presenting an overview of the six fundamentals of coaching and a self-scoring questionnaire. We also overview the four phases of a coaching engagement—Connecting and Contracting, Dialogue and Discovery, Engagement and Implementation, Closure

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and/or Recontracting—and give examples on how to use specific tools in each phase. We also present here a unique cluster approach to setting up an objective within a coaching engagement.

SUMMARY

Coaching works, there's no doubt about that. But the coaching industry is going through tremendous change that all professional coaches will need to address. Getting better at what we do will go a long way to helping us meet the challenge of change. That is what this book is committed to providing you: tools to keep you on the cutting edge of your coaching craft.

Developing a Leadership Vision

(It's *not* What You Think!)

Look at any list of great leaders of the twentieth century, and you will find these five people at the top:

- Mohandas Gandhi
- Nelson Mandela
- Mother Teresa
- Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Franklin Roosevelt

At first blush, these people had more things *not* in common with one another than they had in common. They came from vastly different parts of the world: India, Africa, Germany, and the United States. They had different religious viewpoints: two were Protestants, one a Hindu, and one a Catholic. And they had vastly different economic and educational backgrounds.

Yet each one of these leaders started movements that still exist today and delivered sustainable results that any executive would envy. How? By the one thing they did have in common with one another: commitment to a cause. Deep in their soul was a vision for what they believed

Developing a Leadership Vision

in and a dedication to see that vision lived in real, tangible ways. Although Martin Luther King, Jr. was the only orator of the group, “I have a dream . . .” could be words that introduce each of these five’s life’s work.

We tend to think of vision differently in business, and that is not a good thing. Too often we define a “good leader” simply as someone who sets a big, measurable goal for a company. The problem is an organization may meet the goal but not grow in its character, undermining the ability for continued goal achievement. In others words, goals, as important as they are, must have a deeper *why* or they are not sustainable. There must be an engine that drives them, commitment to a cause that is bigger than just raw market share.

In coaching executives on the issue of tying vision and values together, you may experience significant push-back. Talking about values in today’s postmodern work environment is often seen by hard-charging personalities as soft and unrelated to the bottom line. Nothing could be further from the truth. Values-based vision is the essential foundation for enduring success, not just a good quarter or two, as evidenced by the research that follows.

A BUSINESS CASE FOR VALUES-BASED VISION

In 1982, Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman wrote a groundbreaking business book titled, *In Search of Excellence*. It quickly became one of the best-selling business books of all time, making phrases like “management by wandering around” and “stick to your knitting” a permanent part of our corporate lexicon. Peters and Waterman examine in this book the practices of America’s best-run companies and reach this final conclusion:

Let us suppose that we were asked for one all-purpose bit of advice for management, one truth that we were able to distill from the excellent companies’ research. We might be tempted to reply, “Figure out your value system. Decide what your company stands for. . . .”

Every excellent company we studied is clear on what it stands for, and takes the process of value shaping seriously. In fact, we wonder whether it is possible to be an excellent company without clarity on values. (Peters and Waterman, 1982, pages 279, 280)

Twelve years later, in 1994, Jim Collins and Jerry Porris conducted a similar six-year research project of companies that had achieved

Three Reasons Values-Based Vision Is Critical to Success

long-term corporate success, and another business classic was born: *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*. What Peters and Waterman called being “value-driven,” Collins and Porris refer to as having a “core ideology.” Either way, *Built to Last* concludes as well that this is key to a company’s success:

Contrary to business school doctrine, we did not find “maximizing shareholder wealth” or “profit maximization” as the dominant driving force or primary objective through the history of most of the visionary companies. . . . Through the history of most of the visionary companies we saw a core ideology that transcended purely economic considerations. And—this is the key point—they have had core ideology to a greater degree than the comparison companies in our study. (Collins and Porris, 1994, page 55)

Fast-forward another decade to yet another business best seller, *The Leadership Challenge*, by Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner. More research on this subject yielded the following real-world results:

Shared values make an enormous difference to organizational and personal vitality. Research confirms that firms with strong corporate culture based on a foundation of shared values outperform other firms by a huge margin. Their revenue grew four times faster, their rate of job creation was seven times higher, their stock price grew twelve times faster, and their profit performance was 750 percent higher. (Kouzes and Posner, 2002, pages 80, 81)

What would these numbers do for the companies you serve? Clearly this issue has application beyond that of religious organizations and social movements. Here’s why.

THREE REASONS VALUES-BASED VISION IS CRITICAL TO ORGANIZATIONAL SUCCESS

REASON ONE: Values Give Your People a Cause to Live for Instead of Just a Job to Do

The human spirit yearns to contribute to something that is bigger than itself. Human beings have an amazing ability to sacrifice almost anything for something they believe in. Individuals and organizations that

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think more deeply about their work, and the greater good it serves, tap this power of the human spirit and unleash its potential to deliver extraordinary results.

Consider the difference between these two statements, a first and second draft of a real mission statement for a local organization:

Statement One: To provide affordable housing for the citizens of Wayne County.

Statement Two: To raise the dignity of the families and children of Wayne County by providing affordable housing.

Which one moves you? Why? The first statement gives you a job, providing affordable housing, but the second statement gives you a cause, raising the dignity of families and children. Yes, you need a job to fulfill a cause, but it is a cause that will drive you to do the job to the best of your ability and overcome all its obstacles along the way. Effective organizations and effective leaders help their people understand that they are not just laying bricks, as the well-worn story goes, they are building a great cathedral. And that makes all the difference in the world.

Walk into any Starbucks and you will find the lush aroma of fresh ground coffee, a friendly greeting—by name if you're a regular—and a values statement. Prominently placed in every Starbucks is a 12-panel color brochure titled, "Social Responsibility." On that brochure is a list of Starbucks's core values, things like fair trade, the environment, social responsibility, and employee health insurance. But the brochure's title is "Social Responsibility," so in addition to these topics, specific, measurable steps of action for each value are enumerated for all to see. One of the reasons for Starbucks's meteoric rise in the industry is that working there is not just a job, it's a cause, a cause their employees fervently believe in and give their best effort to support.

In the war for top talent that hiring has become today, values-based vision also sets you apart. The best and brightest want to work for a company that is making a difference in the world, not just making

Three Reasons Values-Based Vision Is Critical to Success

money. Your values, your core ideology, your commitment to a cause will make your organization an employer of choice and attract the very best candidates to the hiring table.

REASON TWO: Values Give Your Associates Principles to Apply Instead of Just Policies to Enforce

One of the most infuriating customer service experiences is to be told by someone that your reasonable request cannot be met because “it’s not our policy.” Many companies develop policy manuals as a rule book to keep people in line and keep customers from stepping out of line. Leading companies, however, do not throw rules in your face, but teach their people values that can be applied in any situation to serve the customer.

Visit any Marriott hotel and you will experience this phenomenon. “Do whatever it takes to take care of the customer” is their mantra and they live it every day. The heroes at Marriott are frontline employees who give money out of their own pocket to help with a guest’s cab fare or take special care of a package so that a traveler’s child receives it on her birthday. “Do whatever it takes to take care of the customer” drives fanatical care for their properties with extraordinary attention to detail and personal pride in their appearance. Not surprisingly, this also affects the bottom line. Marriott consistently stands as one of the most profitable businesses in the hospitality industry and in 2005 won an award for best customer service for any hotel chain in the United States.

Rules take you only so far with people. Principles like service and social responsibility learned and lived by everyone in your organization deliver an unparalleled customer experience that keep people coming back again and again and again. And the really good news is that this loyalty, once gained, makes price irrelevant. Clearly, Starbucks doesn’t sell the cheapest cup of coffee you can buy, nor does Marriott have the cheapest room in town. “Why would I go somewhere else just to save a few dollars,” your customers will say to themselves (and others), “when they treat me so well?”

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REASON THREE: Values Produce Leaders with Relational Authority and Not Just Positional Authority

There are two kinds of authority that leaders can possess: positional authority and relational authority. Positional authority is the authority of title, rank, or status within an organization. It is the authority that is conferred on us by virtue of moving up the organizational ladder. A second kind of authority is relational authority. This is authority that is given to us, not by words on a business card or a sign on the door, but by the relationship we have with real people. It is the authority we earn from others over time and is measured by the trust and respect they have for us. These two kinds of authority put together determine our effectiveness as leaders.

We have all worked for bosses who had positional authority without relational authority and remember how painful the experience was. They could tell us what to do, and did so repeatedly at various volume levels, but never won our respect, because on a personal basis, they were so offensive. We couldn't wait for them to move on, very often further up the organizational ladder. This kind of leadership ultimately derails as everyone tires of its tone.

Those of us who have sold for a living know well the person who has relational authority without positional authority within an organization. She is the executive assistant who does not appear on any flowchart but knows everyone in the company and is trusted explicitly by all. These unofficial leaders have great power, and you cross them at your peril, for they can kill any sale at its inception. Yet, as many a sales professional has found out, this person often has no vote on a final decision because she is not in the room when it is made. Their leadership influence, while real, is limited by their lack of positional authority within the company.

The most effective leaders have both positional authority and relational authority. They have the character that complements their rank and status. People follow them—and give them their very best effort—not because they are ordered to but because they want to. What they say they believe and how they actually live are in congruence, and that congruence earns our trust and respect. Emotional intelligence gurus Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee call this dynamic “resonant leadership” and state in their book by the same name, “We trust—and follow—

Business Coaching Exercise: Values and Vision

people who are real, who are consistent, whose behavior, values, and beliefs are aligned. We trust people whom we do not constantly have to second-guess.” (Boyatzis and McKee, 2005, page 120)

A young Abraham Lincoln first ran for elected office at the age of 23. He did so with this pledge, “I have no other ambition so great as that of being truly esteemed of my fellow men by rendering myself worthy of their esteem.” (Oates, 1994, page 22) Over 30 years later he remained true to this pledge and died in large part because of it. The shadow of his leadership looms large across the pages of history as the greatest example of positional authority and relational authority working in concert.

Two Kinds of Authority

Positional Authority	YES	NO	YES
Relational Authority	NO	YES	YES
Leadership Effectiveness	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH

Leaders who effectively lead others have a clear understanding of the way in which they will lead, the values that are at the core of their being. This is their vision, the cause to which they are committed. Goals come and go, as do sales contests and marketing strategies. Leaders who build enduring organizational capacity base their leadership on a clear set of values that drive them in everything they do.

BUSINESS COACHING EXERCISE: VALUES AND VISION

How do we develop these kinds of leaders and create these kinds of organizations? We do it by starting with a leader’s vision: identifying core values, defining them, and doing what it takes to live in line with them, both now and in the future. Here are four steps for doing just that:

Identify Your Core Values

On the following page is a list of 60 values. Read through the words or phrases and pause to reflect on each. Circle 10 that you would say are your top values. This may take a few minutes, so don’t rush it.

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Core Values Master List

Abundance	Authenticity	Harmony
Achievement	Balance	Well-Being
Acceptance	Commitment	Honesty
Contentment	Care for others	Humor
Competence	Order	Dependability
Quality	Courage	Kindness
Effectiveness	Creativity	Knowledge
Diversity	Empathy	Loyalty
Fun	Excellence	Openness
Innovation	Fairness	Passion
Fitness	Faith	Perseverance
Gratitude	Family	Respect for others
Simplicity	Freedom	Responsibility
Peace	Friendship	Security
Self-Respect	Generosity	Serenity
Success	Peace	Service to others
Wisdom	Independence	Spirituality
Discipline	Cooperation	Love
Equality	Stability	Winning
Teamwork	Self-Control	Joy

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Look at the list and the top 10 values that you have circled. Here comes the hard part. Cross out six of the top 10 that you have circled, leaving four values that you would say are at your very core. Crossing out a value doesn't mean you don't believe it; you are just saying that another word or phrase more accurately describes what you truly believe and makes it to your final four.

Business Coaching Exercise: Values and Vision

Look at this list in another way. Pretend your retirement dinner is next week and you will be presented with a very, very expensive gold watch for your years of faithful service. On the back of the watch is enough room for only four words. What four words would you want etched there as the legacy you leave for your life and leadership?

Personally Define Each of Your Core Values

Now ask yourself the question, what do these four values mean to me? Write an action-oriented definition, not from the dictionary, but from your heart. Focus on the positive things you will do to apply your values. In 25 to 30 words, define each of your top four values.

VALUES EXERCISE

Value: *Success*

I am passionate about getting things done. Big things, important things. I will set challenging goals and see them through to completion; earning, investing, and spending wisely so my family is financially independent.

VALUE: *Well-Being*

I will be a whole person, healthy in body and soul, staying fit physically and staying refreshed mentally and emotionally. I will always take the time to do the things I love.

VALUE #1: _____

VALUE #2: _____

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VALUE #3: _____

VALUE #4: _____

Envision What It Means to Live Your Values

Up to this point, this exercise has been fairly theoretical. But values are useless unless they are lived. This next step requires self-reflection and honesty. How do your actions line up with what matters most to you? Here is a series of questions to help you create a practical vision for the application of your values:

- What would your organization or department look like if you consistently led people based on the four values you have chosen? How do you see people working together, treating one another, serving the customer, and communicating differently because of them?
- Write this vision for your organization down on a sheet of paper. Be very, very concrete and specific.
- How does your current leadership style and behavior *support* the values and vision you have for the future of the organization?
- How does your current leadership style and behavior *detract* from the values and vision you have for the future of the organization?
- What are three specific steps of action you can take in the next 30 days to more fully implement your values and vision? How will you know if these steps are working? Who will hold you accountable for taking them?

Business Coaching Exercise: Values and Vision

Check Your Vision with Current Reality

It is critical that we see ourselves as others see us or we will live in the world out of touch with reality. As uncomfortable as the feedback process may be, it makes us a better person. “As iron sharpens iron,” the proverb goes, “so one man sharpens another.”

Choose three people you trust to tell you the truth. Share with them your final four values and the personalized definitions you have written. Also share your vision for how you intend to live out your values within the organization. Then ask for feedback. How are you currently doing this? How are you not doing this? Where do you need to grow to ensure that you are true to what matters most to you? This is a powerful exercise that people take very seriously and will give you great positive affirmation and caring, constructive input for your life and leadership.

BUSINESS IMPACT STORY: HOW A CLEAR SENSE OF ONE'S VALUES CREATES LOYALTY FROM THOSE WHO WORK FOR YOU

The presidency of Harry Truman was perhaps the most tumultuous in modern history. After serving only 82 days as vice president, Truman came to the White House as Franklin Roosevelt's fourth term of office ended with a cerebral hemorrhage. America was waging war on two fronts and the atom bomb, a weapon Truman had no knowledge of, was nearing completion. In a matter of weeks, Truman, a farmer from Missouri without a college education, was negotiating the terms of postwar Europe with Churchill and Stalin.

What followed these talks was the unconditional Nazi surrender, the dropping of the atom bomb, the Berlin airlift that saved Germany, and the start of both the Cold War and the Korean war. Along the way Truman was reelected against overwhelming odds—remember the headline “Dewey Defeats Truman”—and endured the slurs of McCarthyism. There were scandals as well that seem to afflict every president. None that Truman was personally connected with, but many that brought down close cabinet members and personal aides. Truman added to the tension by occasionally putting his foot in his mouth in very public ways.

(Continued)

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BUSINESS IMPACT STORY: HOW A CLEAR SENSE OF ONE'S VALUES CREATES LOYALTY FROM THOSE WHO WORK FOR YOU *(Continued)*

What is remembered about Truman in the midst of this drama is that he was an authentic human being. He was plainspoken, honest, and real, unaffected by power or popularity, faithful to his home and family. Hard-working, he stayed true to his farming roots, rising early for morning walks and taking on tough tasks because they were jobs that had to be done. "The buck stops here" was coined by Truman as well as the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan that decades later resulted in the fall of the Iron Curtain.

Here is the point of all this history. The people who worked for Truman were fiercely loyal to him because of the kind of man he was. His character produced a trust and respect that was unparalleled inside or outside of government. Even when he made mistakes, his staff stood by him and defended him vigorously. When Truman decided not to run for a third presidential term and to return to private life, he told his staff four months before his public announcement so they could find other work. He only asked that they not tell anyone else. For four solid months, not one person breathed a word of the news. Loyalty of this kind is unheard of in politics, both past and present, earned by a leader who first and foremost led with his life.

TOP 10 WAYS TO USE THIS TOOL

1. For the first 30 days after doing this exercise, read through your values every day until you have them committed to memory. Then read them once a week. Do *not* put these nice words and phrases away in a file drawer and never think about them again! Constantly ask yourself, "How can I live these values?"
2. Many times, organizations are willing to invest in coaching or training for new managers to avoid costly mistakes at the start of their tenure. Make the Values Exercise tool a key piece in working with new managers and have them share these values with their new team. It will put them on a solid footing with those they are beginning to lead.
3. Established managers often have eroded followership. The

Top 10 Ways to Use This Tool

honeymoon is over with their people and reality has set in. This Values Exercise is a great way for managers to reconnect with their team. Have them openly share what their top four values are, what they mean personally, and how they intend to live them. This act of vulnerability is incredibly powerful and builds deep loyalty. For established managers, the way up is down.

4. The Values Exercise can also be helpful in hiring. Identify the core values of your organization or group and summarize them in a paragraph or two. Ask open-ended questions about these values during candidate interviews and mentally check off whether this person is a good fit for the culture of your company.
5. Revisit your company's mission statement. Is it just a functional definition of what you do or a rallying cry to support an important cause? What would it take to add a core value or two, a deeper *why*, to the stated purpose of your organization?
6. Use the Values Exercise as your initial free coaching consultation. Have prospective clients pick their top 10 values before your free consultation and have them choose the final four in your appointment with them. Then begin to form actionable, personalized definitions. This demonstrates the quality of coaching content you will bring to the table and the impact it can make. Ask, "What would it be worth to you to have someone help you apply these values in your life and leadership?" Professional coaches report having a higher prospect-to-client-close ratio when using a method like this.
7. The Values Exercise is a great team-building activity. Have each member of a team identify his or her top four values and share what they mean with the group. Relationships are strengthened, and by extension, performance increased, as this team gets to know one another better and trust one another more. By flip-charting each team member's values and identifying the top one or two team values, the team can define what it is committed to as a group. Individual values become a starting point for group values that will drive the entire team, giving the group a bigger *why* to pursue than just the *what* of their work.
8. "How do you make decisions around here?" is one of the most

Developing a Leadership Vision

powerful coaching questions you can ask and will yield clear insight into the inner workings of an organization. You can use the Values Exercise in seeking to help a department or leadership team answer that question better. By identifying their core values, you can help them make better decisions that are in line with their center instead of just throwing a dart at the wall.

9. Stress and burnout often come from living out of alignment with our values. Like uneven wear on a tire or static on the radio, when we are not in tune with our inner core, we experience distress. One's work and life balance is an important topic in corporate life today and one that many are willing to address. The Values Exercise, with important steps of action that you keep your client accountable for taking, is a powerful way to approach this topic.
10. Use storytelling to reinforce a company's core values. When you see an associate living a core value, talk about it publicly, send out an e-mail, print it in your newsletter. Make the ones who live out their values heroes of the organization. Make customers and business partners heroes too. When you see them living a value, tell their story as well. Use social events, year-end banquets, and award ceremonies to tell these stories.

The One-Percent Solution

Cell phones in the United States have topped 203 million and worldwide sit at an estimated 3.25 billion. It's the invention, according to a 2004 MIT survey, that people hate the most but can't live without, beating out the alarm clock and the television. (Leo, 2006, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*) Knowledge workers receive 23,000 pieces of e-mail a year. That's 500 pieces of e-mail for every executive every workweek. Advertisers estimate that the average American consumer receives over 3,000 marketing messages—logo placement, pop-up ads, billboards, radio spots, television commercials—**every single day!**

In the 1960s, expert testimony was given to a Senate subcommittee that, because of the advances of technology, within 20 years from then, America would have to radically change the way it does business. Employees would have to work only 22 hours a week and come to work only 32 weeks a year. Because of technological efficiency, people would be forced to retire at the age of 40. Amazingly, just the opposite is true. We're working harder and longer. Every year average vacation time shrinks as the retirement age grows.

A BUSINESS CASE FOR TIME MASTERY

Demands on our time have increased exponentially as we are caught in a tidal wave of 24/7/365 living, made possible by technology. Corporate executives and business owners alike face a list of things to do every

day that no 24-hour time period could bear, let alone an 8-hour work-day. Unfinished tasks get moved to the next day with just as long a list. Consequently, one of the highest priorities in business coaching must be mastering the tyranny of time.

“Everything you do requires your time,” wrote Peter Drucker over 40 years ago, rereleased in 2006 as *The Effective Executive in Action*. “This means that your accomplishments and your effectiveness are set, or limited, by the way you manage your time, your scarcest resource. Unless you manage your time, you will not be able to manage anything else. The management of your time, therefore, is the foundation for your effectiveness.” (Drucker, 2006, page 11)

FOUR FACTS ABOUT TIME

FACT ONE: Time Is a Limited Resource

All of us get 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. No more. No less. The richest person in the world cannot buy an extra hour in the day. No amount of willpower can add an extra day to the week. No matter how high the demand, the supply of time will never increase. Ever. This is a brutal fact we must all reckon with. We can always find more money to get something done or hire more people to help us with a project. But the single most limiting factor in the completion of our objectives is time. It is our scarcest resource and must be managed that way.

FACT TWO: Time Is an Inflexible Resource

People say time is money, but nothing could be further from the truth. You can save money and have some in the bank for when you run low in your wallet. Not so with time. An hour lost is lost forever. You can borrow money and pay it back little by little. But no one can travel into the future and bring you a fresh supply of time to spend today and pay back in your retirement years when you have more of it. Time marches on, minute by minute, day by day. It is our most limited resource and our most inflexible. A double constraint that should give us pause in how we spend it.

Four Facts About Time

FACT THREE: There Will Always Be More Things to Do than Time to Do Them In

The double constraint of time's limited supply and its inflexible nature produces demands that exceed its ability to meet. It is a myth, one we cling to hopelessly, that one day, we will be caught up with all the things we have to do. The stark truth about time: There will always be more to do than can be done.

This fact is compounded with the technological advances that have occurred in the last decade. Fiber optics, digitization, broadband communications, instant messaging, and the like have multiplied our things to do exponentially. Returning from a typical week out of the office, today's executive has hundreds of e-mails to reply to, scores of voice mail messages to answer, and a series of appointments in her calendar made electronically without her consent. That's why a traditional approach to time management fails us. Traditional time management says, "Do you have 10 things to do today? I can show you how to do 15. Do you have 15 things to do today? I can show you how to do 20." But the stark reality of business today is that we have 30, 40, and even 50 things to do every single day that simply cannot be done through greater efficiencies.

FACT FOUR: Focus, Not Efficiency, Is the Key to Mastering Our Time

With this explosion of things to do we must make choices, hard choices, about the things we spend our energy on. Being effective with time requires a filter to sift through our expanding list of things to do, a filter that will force us to choose that which is of the highest priority, leaving undone that which is not.

Triage is a perfect metaphor for this filtering process. When medical personnel arrive at a disaster scene, they don't start helping the first person whose path they cross, and then the next person, and the next. A system is established that sorts through the injured and sets an order of priority of who should receive help first. That is what the word *triage* actually means, sorting.

When we take our task list and start at the top working our way down—or start every day answering e-mail—we are not applying triage to time. There is no list that can tell us the best use of our energy,

THE ONE-PERCENT SOLUTION

which tasks are best aligned with our talent, and which will have the greatest impact in the marketplace. Only focus can do that. And only focus will help us make the decisions that are needed to live a life based on importance and not urgency. Again, Peter Drucker counsels, “Concentration—that is, the courage to impose what really matters most and comes first—is the executive’s only hope of mastering time and events instead of being their whipping boy.” (Drucker, 2006, page 142)

BUSINESS COACHING EXERCISE: THE ONE-PERCENT SOLUTION

Here is a very simple system that allows you to apply the principles of focus, or triage, to your time:

*Devote 30 Minutes One Time Each Week to Assess the Past Week
and Plan the Next Week*

There are 168 hours in a week. If we took away the time we spend sleeping and eating, we are left with around 100 hours. The One-Percent Solution asks for only one of those 100 hours to apply a filter to the rest of the week. Half of that hour is spent sometime in the week looking back and looking forward. I have a client who does this on Friday morning, and another who does it on Sunday evening. I prefer the quiet of Sunday morning while my family is sleeping in. It is crucial, however, that you schedule a private, uninterrupted space of 30 minutes to reflect and plan. The unexamined life is not worth living, wrote the philosopher; neither is the unexamined week.

*Identify Four to Six Areas of Your Life, Both Personally
and Professionally, that Are Your Highest Priorities*

Your weekly assessment begins with setting your filter. What are your highest priorities both personally and professionally? You don’t get more than six; most people land on around four or five. Your first priority is yourself. I have a friend who just moved from Chicago to Phoenix. One too many bitter winters sent him to the Valley of the Sun. I visited him in Phoenix and we soaked in his pool as the outside temperature soared to 115 degrees. I thought he had made an interesting trade.

Business Coaching Exercise: The One-Percent Solution

My friend explained to me that his pool is equipped with a regulator that adds water to it every day. In the Phoenix summertime, water evaporates from a pool that size at a rate of 5 to 10 gallons every 24 hours. In very short order, without a refill filter in the blistering desert heat, the pool would be empty. The heat of leadership does the same thing. It drains us dry. Every week we must attend to the priority of our physical, mental, and emotional health. Ignore this at your peril.

A second priority almost all of my clients identify is family. I remember being at work when the tragedy of 9/11 unfolded and there was only one place I wanted to be, back home with my wife and children. The sentiment was nationwide as Americans sat transfixed in their living room with the ones they loved watching the drama unfold, hurting and healing together. It shouldn't take a tragedy, though, to alert us to this very important priority. Whatever form your family takes, even a community of friends, attend to it every week.

The remaining priorities are reserved for work and community service. Most of my clients break down their work into three or four key areas. Tom, a busy manager, breaks his work up into these four crucial components:

- *Recruit top talent*
- *Rehire my best people every day*
- *Build internal partnerships*
- *Excel at coaching team members*

List these on the left column, as Tom has, on the worksheet on the following page.

Target One or Two of the Most Important Steps of Action to Be Accomplished This Week for Each Priority Area

Having identified your top priorities, the next step is to target what you are going to do about them. Ask yourself, "What is the most important thing I can do this week for this priority?" Your answer may not be just one thing, it may be one or two things, but they must be the most important things you can do this week. It may be regular exercise, a date night with your spouse, or visiting your aging parents. It

The Weekly Planning Worksheet

PRIORITIES	THIS WEEK'S STEPS OF ACTION
<p>Area One</p> <p>Myself</p>	<p>Exercise five times this week, M/T/W/Th/Sat.</p> <p>Make an appointment to see my doctor.</p>
<p>Area Two</p> <p>My Family</p>	<p>Take my wife out to dinner on Friday.</p> <p>Get a sitter.</p> <p>Plan a family trip to the zoo.</p>
<p>Area Three</p> <p>Recruit top talent</p>	<p>Set up second interviews with top candidates.</p>
<p>Area Four</p> <p>Rehire my best people every day</p>	<p>Place birthdays of team members in my calendar.</p> <p>Purchase personalized thank you cards for quick notes to team members. Write two.</p>
<p>Area Five</p> <p>Build internal partnerships</p>	<p>Contact HR department head and schedule her to come in and speak to our team.</p>
<p>Area Six</p> <p>Excel at coaching team members</p>	<p>Schedule one-on-one review sessions with each team member for the next month.</p> <p>Conduct one hour-long review session this week.</p>

Business Coaching Exercise: The One-Percent Solution

may be one-on-one meetings with your team, follow-up calls to current prospects, or writing thank you notes to new customers. All tasks are *not* created equal and you are choosing the most important ones to spend your time on.

Some of the top priority steps of action I list on my Weekly Planning Worksheet are recurring tasks, but many times ideas have come to me in my morning planning sessions that I had never thought of before and are the perfect solution to a pressing concern. I've planned trips with my kids, and employee rewards, marketing campaigns, and coaching innovations. Bottom line: The half hour I spend reviewing my top priorities and planning steps of action for the week is the most important discipline in my life. It drives everything I do and keeps me consistently on track with what matters most to me.

To the right of the priorities you listed on the Weekly Planning Worksheet, write out the steps of action you plan to take this week to fulfill each priority. This is not everything you will do in the week, just the most important things. Your list should not exceed 10, roughly one or two items for each priority area.

Schedule Your Top Priority Steps of Action First in Your Calendar for the Week

If you had an important doctor's appointment scheduled for Friday, how would you make sure you got there? You would put it in your calendar, of course. Nothing really magical about that. But the fact that an hour appointment is scheduled on Friday allows all the other things in your day, and even your week, to fit around your appointment. Answering e-mail can take 30 minutes or it can take 3 hours; the activities you have scheduled for your day will determine which of those two, 30 minutes or 3 hours, will occur.

As Stephen Covey aptly points out, if you have to fill a five-gallon bucket with both sand and rocks, what do you put in first? If you put the sand in first, the rocks won't fit. But if you put the rocks in first, the sand will find its way around the rocks and fill the bucket. Your top priorities are your rocks. Place them in your calendar for the week *first*. The rest of the activities you do, your sand, will "magically" find a way to fit around them.

THE ONE-PERCENT SOLUTION

I just returned from a two-week mission trip with my 13-year-old daughter. It was an idea that came to me in one of my Sunday morning planning sessions. I have a busy coaching and speaking schedule, but showing my teenage daughter how two thirds of the world lives is a high priority to me. Months in advance we put this rock in my schedule, and the most incredible thing happened: Everything else began to fit around it. In fact, when my clients heard what I was doing, they applauded my efforts and bent over backward to accommodate me. Sitting in the dirt of a migrant farmworkers' camp eating hot dogs and beans with my teenage daughter is the fondest memory I have of the trip, and it happened solely because of this five-step system of living by priority.

Devote Five Minutes Each Day to Adjust Your Schedule and Realign with Your Priorities

Not all tasks are created equal. Failure to realize this is the number one reason we get derailed from fulfilling our highest priorities. In other words, the sand needs sifting. This is how you spend the other half of the hour, one percent of your waking week. Five minutes spent at the beginning of each workday and once on the weekend totals 30 minutes. The point of these five minutes is to check in with your Weekly Planning Worksheet and see how the items listed are coming along. Perhaps an unexpected meeting popped up and kept you from working out. You can reschedule it for this afternoon. Maybe your daughter's soccer game got moved and you have to rearrange your schedule. No problem, a few quiet minutes at the beginning of the day allows you to make that adjustment.

I use the A, B, C, D, E method for sifting through my things to do. An **A** task is a top priority that needs to be done today. A **B** task is a normal priority that needs to be done this week. A **C** task is a low priority that has a deadline within the month. The letter **D**, however, stands for a very important word: Delegate. Go through your ABCs and ask yourself who else can do these things? Anything that can be done by someone else should *not* be done by you. Your time is too limited.

The final letter is **E** and stands for Eliminate—in other words, simply

Business Coaching Exercise: The One-Percent Solution

choosing to not do some things. Peter Drucker refers to this as abandonment and regards it as a crucial component to time mastery. “I have yet to see an executive, regardless of rank or station,” he boldly writes in *The Effective Executive in Action*, “who could not consign a quarter of the demands on his time to the wastepaper basket without anybody’s noticing their disappearance.” (Drucker, 2006, page 17)

By this time you are back at the beginning of the week. Review your worksheet and see which top priority steps of action were completed. Which were not? Why? Reassess, reschedule, and reload for another week lived in tune with what matters most to you.

BUSINESS IMPACT STORY: HOW FOCUSING ON STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REVOLUTIONIZED IBM

Louis V. Gerstner was appointed CEO of IBM on April 1, 1993. At the time IBM was taking a beating in the marketplace and its stock had plunged to \$12.73 a share. Talk of breaking up this American icon—or worse, its ultimate demise—became commonplace in the business community. When Gerstner left the company eight years later, however, Big Blue’s stock was trading at \$120.96 a share. It was one of the greatest turnarounds in corporate history. Gerstner tells the story of this historic accomplishment in his book, *Who Says Elephants Can’t Dance?*

Central to his success was an epiphany he had a year into the job. In Gerstner’s first year he traveled to all of its various locations, delivering stirring messages of his plans for a new IBM. After hearing a series of these talks, one of his senior leaders came to him and said, “Over the weekend, I counted them up, there are about two dozen things that you want me to wake up in the morning and focus on. I can’t do it. I’m not that good. What do you really want people to do?” (Gerstner, 2002, page 211)

These words stunned Gerstner: What do you want your people to do? Not 10 things, certainly not 24 things. Gerstner landed on three: win, execute, and team. He gave them very specific definitions and these three became the core of IBM’s new culture. “Win, Execute, and Team,” Gerstner states, “began as a mantra—spread throughout the company via multimedia—and eventually took the form of a new performance management system.”

It takes courage to apply this kind of focus to an organization. It means making hard choices to focus on the few and not the many. There is comfort in doing many things. We think that by doing them we'll have all our bases covered and rest in the routine of well-worn practices. But the cost of this approach is high. Market leaders **without exception** focus on a vital few priorities, not the many but the few, and execute them flawlessly.

This choice also means that we must leave some things undone. That, too, requires courage because every activity has its fans, some of them rabid. Fear of offending a vocal constituency often keeps us from doing what is right for the health of our organization. I once owned some property that had grapevines on it. Year after year I had the most beautiful vines with long branches, big leaves, and *no grapes*. I learned for a grapevine to produce fruit it needs to be pruned, rigorously pruned. The same is true for the organizations we serve.

The runaway business best seller, *Good to Great*, examines how 11 companies transformed themselves from being average performers to delivering spectacular results sustained over a period of 15 years. One key to this transformation was consistent pruning of the corporate vine. Jim Collins writes,

Most of us lead busy but undisciplined lives. We have ever-expanding “to-do” lists, trying to build momentum by doing, doing, doing—and doing more. And it rarely works. Those who built good-to-great companies, however, made as much use of “stop-doing” lists as to-do lists. They displayed a remarkable discipline to unplug all sorts of extraneous junk. (Collins, 2001, page 139)

What's on your stop-doing list?

TOP 10 WAYS TO USE THIS TOOL

1. Lead by example. As a coach, the mastery of your time is a fundamental skill. You probably work too much, too hard, for too long. Do not expect your people to do something you are not willing to do. You cannot lead people where you have not gone! Take the time to establish **The One-Percent Solution** as a weekly habit in your life.

Top 10 Ways to Use This Tool

2. Land on a day of the week and time of the day a client will have their 30-minute weekly review session. It is important to have a fixed time that will work every week. Establish it as a recurring event in your client's calendar and make sure it gets done. Have your clients fax you their **Weekly Planning Worksheet** every week after their 30-minute planning sessions for four straight weeks. Talk these worksheets through in your coaching sessions and keep them for future reference. Do not move on to a new topic until this fundamental skill is mastered.
3. Begin with your clients' personal priority lists. Explore physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual steps of action that are important to them. Many of these things are obvious habits that a person wants to master but has not made the time to do. Get the top one or two listed in the **Weekly Planning Worksheet**. Don't let your clients get overwhelmed with too many things to do! You will see rapid progress in the use of this tool when your clients start feeling better about themselves with a few manageable weekly steps of action.
4. Move to discussing steps of action for a client's family. I used to avoid this topic and moved right to business, but soon learned that everyone I worked with wanted to be both a better business person and a better family person. They just didn't know the first steps of action to take for the latter of those two. Brainstorm these and, again, land on only one or two for each week.
5. The remaining four levels of the **Weekly Planning Worksheet** are for identifying a client's professional priorities. Jobs break down into three or four key areas. Ironically, most leaders can't tell you what they are. Dig, dig, dig to find them. Then ask, "What are the most important steps of action you can do this week for each of these priorities?" Success is the result of concentrated effort. Get your clients focused on executing these top priorities and get those top priorities scheduled as bog rocks in their calendar.
6. Ask your coaching client to get input from her immediate supervisor in setting these priorities and suggestions regarding the most important steps of action for each. Incorporate these into a client's **Weekly Planning Worksheet**. This also establishes you

- with the client's supervisor, who may also be your economic buyer, as a valuable resource.
7. Land on a time of the day when the five-minute daily reviews will also be completed. It could be at the beginning, middle, or end of the day. Again, get these scheduled as recurring events in your client's calendar and hold them accountable for it. Walk through a typical day and apply the A, B, C, D, E method to everything on your client's list of things to do, or debrief a particularly challenging day with the A, B, C, D, E system. It is amazing the clarity another set of eyes on a person's things-to-do list brings.
 8. Ask your client to teach the **Weekly Planning Worksheet** to someone at work and have her fill out a worksheet, faxing it to you to see. Debrief this encounter in a coaching session and listen to what your client learned in the process. Teaching this to someone else forces a person to think it through one more time and learn it more completely.
 9. For deeper insight into a client's time usage, conduct a time audit. Have your client keep track of what he does in every 15-minute segment of the day for two weeks. Thoroughly analyze how the time was allocated, percentage by percentage, based on the stated priorities. Make the necessary adjustments from your discoveries.
 10. Consider using the self-scoring, online assessment, the *Time Mastery Profile* from Inscape Publishing (www.inscapedublishing.com), which measures 12 specific time usage skills. Create a baseline with an initial assessment and measure your client's progress after 6, 9, and 12 months. Use the Time Mastery Profile Facilitator's report to see which of the 12 skills is most challenging to the organization and address these issues.

Getting Things Done through Others

“One ping-pong ball!” the wild-haired street performer cried out to the crowd. He placed the ping-pong ball in his mouth, popped it up in the air, caught it in his mouth, popped it up in the air, and caught it in his mouth again. We clapped politely.

One of my favorite memories of growing up in the Bay Area is visiting San Francisco. Compared to my suburban sameness, the city pulsed with life, especially the stretch of real estate between Pier 39 and Ghirardelli Square.

One summer evening some friends and I joined thousands of other visitors to the wharf, cooling off in the evening breeze of the bay and enjoying various street performers: The Human Jukebox, The Living Statue, marionettes, magicians, and mimes. We stopped at one particular act crowded in a tiny square where a hundred or so people circled around a makeshift stage.

“Two ping-pong balls!” came the next proclamation. And as he had done previously, the performer put two ping-pong balls in his mouth, popped one in the air, and then the other, catching each in turn, popping them up and catching them again in his mouth two or three more times. We clapped enthusiastically.

“Three ping-pong balls!” he shouted to unbelieving ears. In went the orbs and up they went into the evening sky, landing one by one back in

the mouth of the performer. Then back in the air, back in his mouth, back in the air, and back in his mouth again.

We clapped and cheered wildly.

“Now I will do the most amazing trick ever,” the man with the hair said. And we believed him too. I don’t think any of us could get three ping-pong balls in our mouth, let alone juggle them by spitting them up in the air.

“I will make you all disappear!”

Out came a big hat and a request for money. Pareto would have been proud that day; only a small percentage of those who enjoyed the show put anything in the hat, and the rest moved on to the next oddity.

A BUSINESS CASE FOR GETTING THINGS DONE THROUGH OTHERS

Yes, it’s fun to be applauded by others for performing amazing acts of leadership. It feels good to be held in high regard for our special talents and abilities. But at the end of the show, where has it gotten us? Nowhere. An overwhelming majority of people walk away to watch the next show. A few throw some money at us. And no one stays to tear down the stage, clean up the square, and learn the skills that make us good at what we do.

Herein lies the irony of leadership. We think we are leading when we’re on the stage in front of others. We think we are leading when we are doing things no one else can do. We think we are leading when the applause is loud and the cheers are louder. But leadership is not about the leader. Leadership is about the followers.

As a leader, it is irrelevant what we can do better than anyone else and the accolades we collect. What is relevant is how we motivate others. How we bring them in from the crowd and mobilize them from being passive observers to being active participants. And then, leadership is what happens when we step away from the stage. Does the show keep going? Does performance stay at the highest levels of excellence?

“Getting things done through others is a fundamental leadership skill. Indeed, if you can’t do it, you’re not leading,” declares Larry

A Business Case for Getting Things Done through Others

Bossidy and Ram Charan in *Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done*. (Bossidy and Charan, 2002, page 125)

Leaders typically fall into two categories related to this activity, according to Bossidy and Charan. There are those who smother their people, micromanaging them in such a way that all initiative and creativity is stifled. An associate being led in this way spends more time getting her manager off her back than getting to the task at hand. Others abandon their people in the name of delegation. With this sink-or-swim approach to leadership, their associates receive very little instruction or follow-through. As a result, everyone is disappointed when the outcome does not meet expectations. “Both types,” conclude Bossidy and Charan, “reduce the capabilities of their organizations.”

The smothering approach to delegation, or oversupervision, is an attempt to deliver results by driving people. But driving is not leading and produces high turnover, low morale, and poor performance. The reality of these consequences are often masked by an initial increase in output. A driver will frequently get immediate improvement followed by an inexplicable drop in performance as everyone tires of the tone and transfers out of that department. This leader is then moved laterally within the organization—no one knows what to do with him or doesn’t want to cross him—often repeating the same scenario over and over again.

A leader who reacts to oversupervision by undersupervision, or abandonment, ironically reaps the same results. A lack of communication around expectations breeds frustration as things don’t get done right. Associates feel a distinct lack of leadership while the manager remains in a fog, clinging to the belief that good leaders don’t micromanage their people. When questions and problems are brought to his attention, the leader responds with enthusiastic cheerleading, “I believe in you! You can do it!,” fully committed to a nondirective model of delegation. As the angst due to lack of clarity and accountability grows, so does turnover and disengagement, producing, again, poor performance and low morale.

The drama continues when the leader who undersupervises trades places with the leader who oversupervises, and vice versa. Stung from the effects of abandonment, a previously laissez-faire leader now becomes

GETTING THINGS DONE THROUGH OTHERS

a tyrant, inserting himself into every detail of planning and dominating every discussion. The micromanager, on the other hand, stung perhaps from the results of a recent 360, tries something new as well and backs off his people entirely, providing no direction or accountability. Back and forth the pendulum swings, destroying both personal and organizational capacity along the way.

This is why when you mention the word “delegation” in a business setting, people snicker under their breath. “Delegation . . . yeah . . . right,” they say to themselves. “I tried that and it didn’t work.” But delegation does work when done right. More important, delegation *must* work or we are stuck doing, or redoing, everything ourselves; juggling ping-pong balls, so to speak.

PAR: A NEW APPROACH TO DELEGATION

The secret to getting things done through others is having a system that allows for both freedom and accountability. This system must be able to clarify expectations up front and provide opportunity for input from those involved in completing the task. There must also be flexibility in the system to allow for midcourse corrections, reworking the plans if necessary. That is the system we propose here captured in the acronym PAR.

P—Plan

With business happening at the speed of light, most of what passes for delegation is not delegation at all. It is dumping: “Hey Jan, could you do this for me, please? Thanks!” Jan, eager to get ahead and look good in front of her boss, accepts the job, even though she has no idea what the job entails. The more time goes by, the more frustrated and confused Jan gets, but manages to actually get something done. Unfortunately, the work Jan does in no way resembles what Jan’s boss had in mind, and, instead of giving Jan another chance with better instructions, Jan’s boss takes the job away from her, fiercely determined to never delegate anything again, a least not to Jan!

There is a very simple solution to this problem. Effective delegation begins by making a plan that asks and answers four critical questions:

PAR: A New Approach to Delegation

WHO is going to do **WHAT** by **WHEN** and **HOW (and not how)**? Jan's boss could have easily taken a few minutes to address these questions and co-create a plan with her. It would have saved hours of frustration on Jan's part and eliminated the need for the boss to redo that work.

By asking **WHO**, the specific people related to the project are clearly identified. Other people who could help Jan, in addition to her boss, are listed. Perhaps a small team could be formed to work together on the project.

By asking **WHAT**, the task at hand is defined. So many times what a manager has in mind for a project and what his associate has in mind are two totally different things. This is what happened to Jan. Addressing **WHAT** allows everyone to clearly understand the things that need to get done in very concrete terms. Ironically, most bosses, when they delegate a project, haven't thought through in specific terms what that project is all about. They just need for something to get done. Asking **WHAT** solves this problem.

WHO is going to do **WHAT** seems so elementary, but endless confusion exists in the workplace around these two simple issues.

"I thought you were doing that!" a surprised employee exclaims.

"No, I was assigned this, you were assigned that," comes the reply.

"No, Jan was assigned this. You were supposed to do the other thing."

Have you ever had a conversation like this? A lack of clarity is what caused it.

Added to these first two questions, **WHO** and **WHAT**, is a third question, by **WHEN**? That is, what are the specific dates and deadlines for the project?

"Get it done sometime!" is not good enough because *sometime* will magically become *now* in a matter of days. When *sometime* becomes *now* we drop everything to do it, leaving other things that are perhaps more important undone. Do you see the vicious cycle that emerges when we don't ask the **WHEN** question? Clarity about timing is critical to world-class performance.

WHEN must be asked regarding two things: the ultimate deadline and intermediate deadlines. The ultimate deadline is the date when the project needs to be completed in its entirety. Intermediate deadlines, also

GETTING THINGS DONE THROUGH OTHERS

known as milestones, are simple checkpoints along the way that ensure a project is kept on track. These dates must be achievable; unrealistic deadlines are as bad as no deadlines at all. But when the realism of the time line is established, the targets must be placed in everyone's calendar and adhered to rigorously.

Again, most managers do not think with clarity regarding the **WHEN** of the jobs they delegate. For many, it's not in their natural makeup. "Just do it!" may be okay for Nike, but it's not okay for business. Taking the time to think about timing issues at the start of a project brings amazing clarity to the table and, in the end, produces a better product and results in more effective leadership.

P PLAN	Co-create a PLAN for the task or project, setting clear expectations in writing by answering these four questions:			
	WHO? is going to do	WHAT? by	WHEN? and	HOW? (and not how)

The final planning question is **HOW (and not how)**. Some tasks have certain steps of action that work best in getting them done. Determine up front what they are by asking **HOW**. This list does not need to be exhaustive, but a clear set of best practices at the start of any project ensures its success. Conversely, sometimes there are things that should *not* be done in completing a project. Associates new to a job often don't know what they are; even seasoned veterans can forget. Asking (**and not how**) allows people to recognize these potential pitfalls and avoid them.

Please note that these four questions should be asked and answered by all parties involved in the delegation process. Getting things done through others is a co-creative process. Leaders, however well-intentioned, who come up with a plan in their office and hand it to their associates, will fail.

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- First, they will fail in engaging their associates. The dialogue and discussion around these four questions allows people to own the project and commit to its completion.
- Second, a fully authored plan says subtly, “I know everything there is to know about this. Don’t give me any input.” There is no leader alive who knows everything there is to know. Asking questions right at the start allows for all perspectives to be heard and will uncover issues that may never have been considered. Initiate delegation by having conversations around the four questions, either one on one or in a group. Enjoy rigorous discussion and debate, iron sharpening iron.
- Then write down the answers in a paragraph or two, no more than one page. What you will have at the end of this process is a co-created delegation plan that everyone owns.

Remember the old Fram® oil filter commercial? In it, a gritty mechanic growls, “You can pay me now or you can pay me later.” The point of that commercial was that you can spend a few dollars on a clean oil filter from Fram® now or thousands of dollars on a new engine later. The same is true for effective delegation. You can spend a few minutes establishing a clear plan for a project up front, or you can spend hours fixing it after it is screwed up. The point of the four questions is not to get bogged down in detailed analysis, but to set some basic parameters at the outset of a project. After all, it is so much easier to prevent fires than to put them out.

A—Act with Authority

With a one-paragraph, or no more than a one-page, project plan, those on the receiving end of delegation can take action. Here too, however, some up-front clarity is critical.

First, a person must know the nature of the authority they have to act with. A person may be asked to gather information, taking no action with it. A joint decision then can be made about the information, or a decision will be made by another group entirely, perhaps senior management. Clearly you don’t want someone acting independently

when all they are being asked to do is gather data. This must be communicated up front by identifying this first level of authority: **INFORMATION**.

This authority level is also good for early stages of training, like having a salesperson work on her phone-calling script and bringing it to you before she begins making calls. The associate is free to act within the parameters of the assignment, work on the script, but not free to begin making phone calls. Working on the script is **INFORMATION** only. Again, up-front clarity about this serves both the manager and the associate.

There may be times when you want a person to act, but to check in with you first. This is the authority level of **COLLABORATION**. There is a variety of reasons why this level of authority might be chosen for an assignment. The reason may be that one person is doing one part of a project and another person the other and the only way for it to be completed is by connecting them. Or an associate might be in the intermediate stages of training and you want to stay in touch, like having an associate make 20 calls with her sales script and talking with you briefly afterward about how they went. This is **COLLABORATION**: taking some action, talking about it, and taking some more action.

The third level of authority is **EXECUTION**. Unlike the first two levels of authority, this level says to an associate, "Take action and tell me what you did." This is what most leaders have in mind when they think of delegation, and it is unfortunate. First, the third level of authority should be reserved for those who have the knowledge and experience necessary for independent action. Apart from that foundation, delegation truly feels like dumping, or perhaps a drive-by shooting, where an associate is riddled with a long list of things to do while the manager drives away to the next victim.

Conversely, there are those leaders who do not recognize the knowledge and experience of their associates and fail to release projects at this level of authority. These smothering managers need to recognize that responsibility must be given with authority, and, if a person has proven himself, he must be given the freedom to act with the authority that is appropriate to his experience.

PAR: A New Approach to Delegation

<h1 style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">A</h1> <p style="margin: 0;">ACT with AUTHORITY</p>	<p>Free this person or group to ACT with AUTHORITY within a specified time frame, being available to help if needed.</p>										
	<p>AUTHORITY LEVELS: Information Collaboration Execution</p> <table style="width: 100%; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;">1</td> <td style="width: 25%;">2</td> <td style="width: 25%;">3</td> <td style="width: 25%;">4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>week/month</td> <td>weeks/months</td> <td>weeks/months</td> <td>weeks</td> </tr> </table>				1	2	3	4	week/month	weeks/months	weeks/months
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week/month	weeks/months	weeks/months	weeks								

A second point of clarity in this step is the specific time frame in which a person can act with authority. Here too is where drive-by delegation fails us. Every task that is assigned, even with the authority level of **EXECUTION**, must have a checkpoint where the actions taken are followed up on. The well-worn adage, inspect what you expect, is so rarely followed. All actions should be assigned with established checkpoints when a leader asks, simply and politely, if what was expected actually got done. You may choose a time frame of one, two, three, or four weeks, or a time frame of one, two, or three months. Always, always, set the expectation that all delegated activities will be followed up on, if nothing more than having that person send you an e-mail when it's done.

For urgent tasks or inexperienced associates, the time frame may be within a week or two. For long-term projects assigned to more seasoned professionals, the time frame may be in a month or more. But with every delegated task, part of the initial plan must be, "When will we connect about this again?" This accountability will accelerate performance and create a culture of execution in your organization. Human nature being what it is, these checkpoints are the very thing that stimulates action. That's why April 15 exists, isn't it? If not for that checkpoint, how many of us would really want to spend any time on our taxes?

GETTING THINGS DONE THROUGH OTHERS

R—Review

What do you talk about during these checkpoint meetings? Three things: The past, the present, and the future. First the past, or a person's progress against the plan. How have the **WHO**, or the people assigned with tasks in the plan, made progress related to **WHAT** they were asked to do **WHEN** they were asked to do it? Again, the point of this exercise is to pose simple, direct questions, not with the intent to embarrass or humiliate, but to reconnect regarding the plan.

R REVIEW	Take time to REVIEW execution of the plan by asking three questions, making any necessary midcourse corrections.		
	PROGRESS? The Past	PROBLEMS? The Present	PLANS? The Future

There is a toughness to this kind of leadership that is neither arrogant nor offensive. A toughness that comes from simple follow-through, holding people accountable for the commitments they have made. This sends a ripple effect through an organization. People are used to managers moving on to the next flavor of the month and forgetting what they asked others to do. When a leader actually follows up on things that are asked, amazingly they get done.

“Follow-through is the cornerstone of execution, and every leader who's good at executing follows through religiously,” states *Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done*. “Following through ensures that people are doing the things they committed to do, according to the agreed timetable. It exposes any lack of discipline and connection between ideas and action, and forces the specificity that is essential to

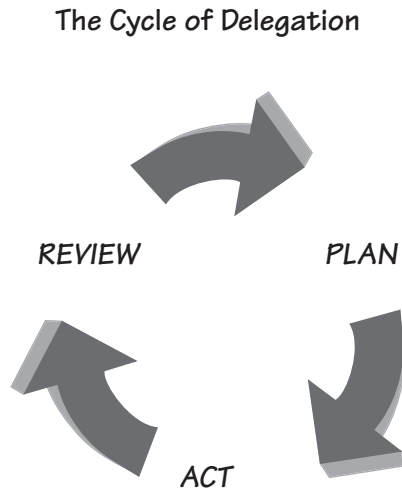
PAR: A New Approach to Delegation

synchronize the moving parts of an organization.” (Bossidy and Charan, 2002, page 127)

Sometimes things happen that prevent a plan from getting done, and that’s okay. It’s why you also discuss the present, or any problems the associate is facing. Planning is a dynamic, not a static, activity that responds to new conditions in the marketplace, deftly making midcourse corrections. This is another reason for checkpoint meetings: to make the changes necessary to the plan to face the demands of reality, which, of course, introduces the third area of discussion for the checkpoint meeting, the future.

How must the **WHO**, **WHAT**, **WHEN**, and **HOW** of the current plan change to fulfill the objective? Changes in the plan may also affect the level of authority in which a person may act and new checkpoints may be set for the next meeting during which the past, the present, and the future are discussed again.

This is the cycle of effective delegation, how to get things done through others. Plan. Act with authority. Review. The result may initiate new plans with new actions that will need to be reviewed, and so the cycle continues.



The PAR Delegation Flow Chart

<p>P PLAN</p>	<p>Co-create a PLAN for the task or project, setting clear expectations in writing by answering these four questions:</p> <p>WHO? WHAT? WHEN? HOW? is going to do by and (and not how)</p>
<p>A ACT with AUTHORITY</p>	<p>Free this person or group to ACT with AUTHORITY within a specified time frame, being available to help if needed.</p> <p>AUTHORITY LEVELS: Information Collaboration Execution</p> <p>1 2 3 4 week/month weeks/months weeks/months weeks</p>
<p>R REVIEW</p>	<p>Take time to REVIEW execution of the plan by asking three questions, making any necessary midcourse corrections.</p> <p>PROGRESS? PROBLEMS? PLANS? The Past The Present The Future</p>

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MORE ON GETTING THINGS DONE THROUGH OTHERS

Four additional disciplines allow us to excel at delegation.

Begin with the WHO in Mind

Great delegation begins with identifying the right people for the job. In other words, don't hand off projects to people in a random fashion; that is what drive-by delegators do. Think about the project and the person: Does it match her gifts and abilities? Is this assignment a good fit? Will it bring greater joy to her work? When talent and task are aligned, there is an effectiveness that goes way beyond mere job completion.

Help Your WHO Become His Best

Many times a person may be the right fit for the job, but he is inexperienced at it. You want to give him more responsibility, but he simply isn't ready for it. For drive-by delegation, this is irrelevant. But leaders who care about their people and the quality of their work, it is a big concern. The mistake we make, however, is not delegating at all to inexperienced people so they don't get overwhelmed, doing everything ourselves and stunting organizational capacity.

The solution to this is two-fold. First, think ahead. Know the projects that need to be done over the course of the next year and prepare your people to do them. Stop leading by crisis and start leading by design. If you slowed down enough to think about it, you could come up with a pretty accurate list of things that need to get done and the people who could be developed to do them. Do that right now.

Second, engage in a process that truly trains the people who work for you. Not sitting them in a classroom for hours on end, but giving them real-world, hands-on training. This kind of training starts with your associate watching you do the job and telling you what she saw. Then you do the job together, each taking a key part of it. Then the associate does the job and you watch, providing evaluation along the way. Then, after following the process completely, your associate does the job on her own. That's getting things done through others.

Track the Things You Delegate

A common delegation mistake is to check off an item on our things-to-do list when we give it to someone else. But let me ask you, when something is delegated, is it done? No, not yet. If you check it off your list, you may never think about it again. That is until 2:00 A.M. the day it's due and you wake up in a cold sweat wondering whether it ever got done. Delegated is not done, so don't check it off. A delegated item stays on my things-to-do list with the person's name I delegated it to in capital letters. I then move the task to the day the person committed to have it completed. Maybe we have a meeting scheduled for that day, or he promised to send me an e-mail about it. Either way, then and only then will that item get cleared: when I know for a fact the other person got it done. Again, I can't tell you how much credibility this will give you as a leader and accountability within your organization.

Another way of doing this is creating a file that has your delegated tasks in them. This is easy to do electronically, by designating a delegation category to a specific task. You *must* review this file daily or follow-through will fall through the cracks. That's why I prefer leaving things on my task list, but others find the file method to work better. Dumpers and drive-by delegators never check on the tasks they assign. A discipline of delegation means effectively tracking the jobs given to others to do and keeping on top of them.

Make Your Checkpoint Meetings Short

It's amazing to me that when we think of having a business meeting that we always think of something that goes on for an hour (or more!). Perhaps that's what you were thinking as you read this chapter and imagined with dread a life of endless meetings. Who wants to delegate anything if it makes us go to more meetings? Here's a tip. When following through on delegated items, go to your associate's office, not your own. Don't sit down. Sitting down will immediately double the length of the meeting. Briefly check on a few items. Thank them for their time and *leave*. If you began your day with these quick little check-ins, you would be completely up to date in less than a half an hour.

Some managers begin their day with a five-minute team check-in meeting. This is not a sit-down meeting. Everyone stands and quickly

More on Getting Things Done through Others

touches base on the tasks of the day—who, what, when, and how—and gets to work. It's quick and efficient. Time for socializing is done at lunch or after work over beer, but not at prime working time, the beginning of the day. Either way, in a group or one on one, following through can be professional, to the point, and, most importantly, brief.

BUSINESS IMPACT STORY: HOW DELEGATION DOUBLED YEAR-END GIVING AT A NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION

Cindy, Paul, Susan, and Jon were recently put in charge of the year-end fundraising drive of a small nonprofit organization. Year-end giving for the organization had eroded significantly, so these four were asked to stop the bleeding. In a group session the campaign was organized and a PLAN was created. A goal for the campaign was set and jobs assigned. Paul and Cindy would write the appeal letter, Susan would work on radio ads, and Jon would take things to the printer and handle the bulk mailing. Each person's assignment had specific dates and deadlines associated with it along with guidelines the organization had established for raising funds—things that should be done and things that should *not* be done.

Susan's authority level, INFORMATION, consisted of her determining the cost of radio advertising so the committee could decide whether it made sense for the campaign. Paul and Cindy's authority level, COLLABORATION, involved them in working on the format and wording of the appeal letter. Jon's authority level, EXECUTION, allowed him to take the completed letter to the printer and have it bulk-mailed. Everyone reported back to the committee in four weeks.

When the group met again, they related their PROGRESS. Each person's job was completed on time, but a PROBLEM emerged. The printer stuffed the envelopes before the ink was dry on the letterhead. Copies that some of the committee members received were smeared and unreadable. So a new PLAN was initiated.

This time, Susan was given the authority level of EXECUTION for placing radio advertising as soon as possible. It not only was affordable but now it was necessary to the success of the campaign with there being only three weeks left in the year. Cindy and Paul again acted in

(Continued)

BUSINESS IMPACT STORY: HOW DELEGATION DOUBLED YEAR-END GIVING AT A NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION *(Continued)*

COLLABORATION, designing a reminder postcard to be sent to the mailing list and making a second appeal for support. Jon now was asked to gather INFORMATION related to the printer's concessions for a new mailer, given the problems of the previous one. He was to bring that information back to the committee. They met the next week and sent out a second mailer.

In two weeks, the end-of-year campaign was over. Giving exceeded the goal and doubled receipts of the previous year. It was concluded that the tipping point for the fundraising effort was the reminder cards and the radio flight, originally done because of a mistake. It was also noted that four people working together on a specific PLAN free to ACT with AUTHORITY and meeting together for regular REVIEW allowed the group to get more done, especially in a last-minute crisis, than one person acting on her own. This is delegation at its very best.

TOP 10 WAYS TO USE THIS TOOL

1. Debrief a delegation gone bad. This may seem an odd way to begin, but most people have at least one story of total delegation disaster. Talk about it from start to finish and determine exactly what went wrong based on the PAR model. Have a good laugh and move on!
2. Most leaders, as much as they dread their long list of things to do, are very attached to it and have a hard time letting go. As crazy as it sounds, we tend to fall in love with our busyness. Start the delegation discussion by honestly, and objectively, talking through each item on your client's list and target those things that must be done though others and begin to delegate them.
3. Take the projects that your client needs to delegate and talk them through the PAR cycle completely. Model the follow-through that makes delegation work by following through on the details of your work together (PAR also works as an effective coaching model). Make midcourse corrections along the way as you interact on the execution of the plan.

Top 10 Ways to Use This Tool

4. In your delegation discussion, help your clients pay special attention to the WHO of their plan. Speak openly and candidly about the match, both in talent and experience, of the person they are planning to delegate to. This is the most important aspect of delegation and yet one that is not well thought through at the start. In the rush of getting stuff off their things-to-do list, make sure your client gives the right stuff to the right people, or delegation will fail.
5. Most leaders know how to conduct only one kind of meeting, an hour-long (or more!) meeting. One secret to getting things done though others is having brief, crisp checkpoints that don't feel like meetings at all. Role-play these kinds of meetings, practice them, and make sure they are an inseparable part of your clients' leadership repertoire.
6. Help your clients land on a delegation tracking system, either electronic or paper. Even something as simple as keeping a daily journal works in this regard. Hold them accountable for using this system for at least 30 days. A delegation tracking system is critical because you can't follow through on the details of delegation if you can't remember what they are. For more information on this topic, check out David Allen's book *Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity*.
7. If training is needed for a person to be on the receiving end of delegation, brainstorm exactly what the process of doing and watching, doing together, watching and doing, and finally doing alone as described earlier will look like for your clients as they work with their associates.
8. If you need a more detailed development of the delegation plan beyond who, what, when, and how, consider using the SMART Goal worksheet presented in this book. Teach your clients or employees how to fill out the worksheet with their associates and how to go over it in their follow-through meetings. If you're really brave and need even more detail, check out Microsoft Project, an in-depth project planning program.
9. Work on getting regular one-on-one meetings scheduled between your clients and their associates. This is the one thing that will improve performance dramatically. In others words, instead

GETTING THINGS DONE THROUGH OTHERS

of waiting for a project to delegate and only meeting with people then, help your clients get into a rhythm of meeting with their people one on one at least once a month. The three steps of progress (the past), problems (the present), and plans (the future) is a perfect way to conduct those meetings. Regular one-on-one meetings is what makes coaching work so well, so too with leading people.

10. For further study explore the principles of Situational Leadership II from the Ken Blanchard Companies (www.kenblanchard.com). In this material, four development levels are outlined based on the mix of one's competence and commitment around a specific goal or task. Strategies for diagnosing a person's development level and leading them to the point of full and complete delegation are fully explained. This is one of the most practical and comprehensive models for working with people.

Making Goals SMART

Goals don't work! That may be heresy for an industry that has at its core helping others set and achieve their goals. But it is true.

If you were flying from New York to Miami but landed in Chicago, it wouldn't matter if you made it there on time and under budget. You would still be in the wrong city. When goal fulfillment is seen as an end in itself and not a means to an end, we eventually land in places that miss our overall objectives. This happens every day in businesses across the country and with coaching engagements that focus solely on goal fulfillment. That's why goals, in and of themselves, don't work, and why we need a better way to set them.

A BUSINESS CASE FOR BETTER GOALS

Goals don't work for the following three reasons.

Goals by Themselves Do Not Provide Context

The Academy Award-winning movie, *Bridge on the River Kwai*, relates the true story of British soldiers in a World War II prisoner-of-war camp. Forced to work on a bridge spanning the Kwai Yai River in the jungles of Burma, the men apply their engineering brilliance designing and building the best bridge in Southeast Asia. Then, in a moment of realization, they understand they just gave the enemy a way to cross from Bangkok to Rangoon and provide supplies critical to winning the

MAKING GOALS SMART

war. The movie ends with Allied forces destroying the bridge and their painstaking work.

Context is critical to goal setting. It is foolish to build a bridge—fulfill one's goal—and lose the war. It is foolish to sell lots and lots of product at the lowest price and not make any money. It is foolish to expand to hundreds of locations and jeopardize the financial health of your entire business. In the name of goal fulfillment, however, all of these things have been done, and more. The cost of this kind of goal fulfillment is very, very high. Like the real estate agent who strives year after year to make the \$10-million club. When he finally sells the piece of property that puts him over the top, he comes home to an empty house and divorce papers.

Goals make great servants, but terrible masters. A goal that is set without understanding the bigger picture of overall business objectives and fundamental priorities can ruin us. That is why context is critical to goal fulfillment. Context tells us where we need to go *first* (Miami or Chicago?) before we get on the plane, roll down the runway, and take off into the sky. Goals by themselves do not provide us with this context and will fail us without it.

Goals Alone Do Not Bring Fulfillment

I had the privilege of coaching one of the best salesmen in a Fortune 500 company. Prior to our coaching he had been the top producer in the entire country three years running, an amazing achievement. In a few short years he had made his company millions of dollars and himself hundreds of thousands.

We began our work together, however, in the middle of his worst year in sales, which followed the three stellar ones. What happened? One of the reasons for his slide was the failure of goal fulfillment alone to bring satisfaction. The drive to produce year after year left him empty and disillusioned. Without a cause greater than making money, this very talented and gifted sales professional hit the wall and was almost lost to a company he loved.

Nietzsche wisely said, "He who has a *why* to live for can bear almost any *how*." A goal gives us the *how*, but without a greater *why* we lose our energy and endurance. With a *how* we have a job; with a *why* we

A Business Case for Better Goals

have a cause. A cause is what ignites our passion and empowers us to act. “The glorious cause” fueled the fire of the revolutionary heroes who founded this country and led them to make the sacrifices that allow us to live in freedom today. A cause separates a soldier from a mere mercenary, and that’s exactly what goal fulfillment turns us into without a deeper cause, corporate mercenaries.

All goals need a context, the overall strategy in which they function, and a cause. There must be a set of underlying values it seeks to serve, a deeper *why* to sustain the *how*. Goals alone do not supply these and do not work without them.

Goals Have No Judge of Talent or Character

I went to college intent on becoming music major. I had excelled in high school in this field playing two instruments and participating in various award-winning bands. I arrived on campus to a rude awakening and became painfully aware of how little musical talent I really had. By the second semester of my freshman year, I dropped all my music classes and got involved in student government. It was there I discovered that I had a unique ability to lead people and speak in front of groups. This is essentially what I have done for a living for the last 30 years or so of my life.

I did not fulfill a very important goal of mine in going to college and could have used a motivational speech or two to rise above my circumstances and press on. But somehow, I knew in my heart that my goal had not been set with an honest appraisal of who I was, and I stumbled onto opportunities that had not even been on the list of things to do with my life.

Goals have no judge of talent. For goals to be our servants and not our master, they must be rooted in reality. They must be based on an understanding of who we are and how we have been made to function, our strengths and weaknesses, and gifts and talents. No amount of positive thinking should unhinge us from the reality of who we are. Apart from this, our goals will destroy us.

Goals have no judge of character, either. Accomplishment alone does not make a person—or an organization—great. Lately the corporate landscape is littered with leaders who fulfilled their goals but lost

MAKING GOALS SMART

their soul. Goals must serve the greater good of society. When they do not, they result in misleadership, another way in which goals do not work.

BETTER GOALS ARE SMART GOALS

In spite of this, I still believe in setting goals. Not goals in general, however, but goals set in a very selective and strategic way.

Consider goal setting as a hammer in the hands of a skilled craftsman. A craftsman does not pull out a hammer at the beginning of a project, like many coaches do at the start of a coaching engagement. A skilled craftsman pulls out the blueprints to look at the overall plans. He cuts, trims, rounds, notches, and sands the wood. Then, and only then, does he pull out a hammer and nail the pieces together into a finished product.

This is the role goal setting plays in an effective coaching engagement. It is best used in the service of assembling various pieces of one's personal and professional life crafted from the blueprint of one's values, strengths, and priorities. In other words, goals must be set in a strategic context with a cause bigger than itself, aligned with one's true gifts and abilities. In short, for goals to work they must be SMART.

Most of us are familiar with the SMART acronym for goal setting: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time bound. But few have given little more than cursory attention to the formula. It is the difference, however, between goals that work and goals that don't.

S—Be Specific

First, a SMART goal is specific. It says exactly what you want to do in clear, concrete terms. This is the fundamental difference between a wish and a goal. Wishes get us nowhere in business, but you would be surprised how many leaders fail at this first, fundamental point. Making a goal SMART forces us to ask, "What is it exactly you want to do?" If the answer is, "I want to increase sales," this is not a goal; it is a wish. "I want a more positive work environment," also fails the

Better Goals are SMART Goals

SMART test. But if you said, “I want to reduce employee turnover by 25 percent,” you now have the beginnings of a SMART goal.

M—Be Measurable

Second, a SMART goal is measurable. Measurement is often inherent in the specifics of a goal, but not always. You may want to increase customer satisfaction, but have no way of measuring it. A survey might work, a focus group, or even increased sales. To be SMART, a goal must land on means of measuring success and be trackable over time. Best Buy has set as one of its key metrics employee satisfaction. Every quarter, a simple 12-question survey goes out to their staff and the results are rigorously reviewed.

Part of the problem of goal setting is that often no metrics exist for important objectives. For instance, how do you measure weight loss if you don't know how much you weigh, or how do you reduce employee turnover if you don't know what your current turnover percentage is? SMART goal setting begins by establishing a baseline and measuring progress from there. We must always ask ourselves, “How will I know when I get there?”

Simply put, what gets measured gets done. I took over a sales force that had collections percentages in the 80s. In other words, only about 80 percent of what was sold was collected in cold, hard cash payment. Together we accepted the challenge of raising it above 95 percent. Over the year, all the salespeople in that department competed with one another to achieve the highest collections percentage. The winner came in at 98.9 percent against the team's average of 96.5 percent. That was SMART goal setting because it was measurable.

A—Be Achievable

You can't lose 50 pounds in 5 days no matter what a supermarket tabloid tells you. Our goals must stretch us, yes, but the stretch must be reasonable and balanced with other priorities. I thought it was reasonable to collect on 95 percent of everything my sales team sold, even though they were skeptical at first. That goal motivated

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them to get better buys and stop taking bad business. But it wasn't the only metric we measured. Total sales and average sales also came into the mix.

Achievability also echoes our earlier discussions of gifts and talent. I remember standing up at my eighth grade graduation and announcing to the bemused crowd that I was going to be a professional basketball player. I am a heavy, 6'1" klutz with no jump shot and a vertical leap of 4 inches, not a very achievable goal. Self-awareness is critically important in setting goals. No amount of "I think I can! I think I can!" was going to get me into the NBA. Self-help motivation without the insight of self-awareness will fail us every time.

Talk with others about the feasibility of your goals. Look at industry standards and reflect on the accomplishments of those who have gone before you. President Kennedy didn't declare in 1961 that we would put a man on the moon out of arrogance and pride. His goal, a great example of SMART at work, was a stretch, but one based on research and reliable information. Read the speech; it's filled with details.

R—Be Relevant

This, too, is an echo of our earlier discussion of context and cause. Relevant goals must be in line with overall business objectives. If the mission is to win the war, don't build a bridge that cuts at cross-purposes with that mission. If your purpose is to be the premier retailer in your market, don't have a fire sale when a discount competitor arrives on the scene. Learn how to establish value in the minds of your customers.

Relevance is key to sustained goal fulfillment. We won't accomplish something over time that we are not internally committed to with all our heart. Again, goals are our servants, not our masters, and must serve the greater purpose of our values and priorities to truly be SMART.

T—Be Time Bound

Finally, if you don't have a deadline you don't have a goal. The specifics of goal setting must answer the question, "By when?" Your answer might be, "I want to reduce employee turnover by 25 percent by the end of our fiscal year, March 2008." The magic date of March 2008

Business Coaching Exercise: The SMART Goal Worksheet

makes this goal time bound and SMART. Kennedy's deadline, "by the end of this decade," was fulfilled in 1969.

Intermediate time targets, called milestones, can also be set for your goal. Milestones keep a person on track with reasonable progress toward the finish line. A salesperson may have a goal of selling \$2.4 million of product in 2008 with \$600,000 milestones in place every quarter. You can schedule milestones on your calendar and measure progress toward your goal, making any midcourse corrections that may be needed along the way.

BUSINESS COACHING EXERCISE: THE SMART GOAL WORKSHEET

Here is a five-step system for setting goals that work.

State Your Goal in One Sentence and Make It SMART

The one-sentence rule forces you to be incredibly focused and state clearly and plainly what you intend to accomplish. This kind of clarity right at the start of the goal-planning process makes it incredibly powerful. Here is an actual statement from a SMART Goal Worksheet of a salesman who increased his sales by 50 percent in six months:

To achieve \$1.8 million of agricultural sales in 2008 by selling \$600K of fertilizer by April, \$600K of fungicide and growth regulator by June, and \$600K of lime, herbicide, and other products by December.

Note how this goal is very specific and measurable, by both amount and product. In analyzing his accounts at the beginning of the year, it became obvious that it was achievable and the dates were set in line with the growing season of his customers. It was also aligned with the overall business objectives of the company he works for and his own family's financial goals.

List the Main Benefits of Achieving This Goal

Fitness experts tell us that we are not to focus on losing weight, a negative outcome, but on gaining health, a positive one. When we place the

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benefits of our goals before us, they become powerful motivators for the process of change. The benefits of this sales professional's SMART goal were:

1. I will feel a great sense of accomplishment of having sold more product than in any other year.
2. I will feel good about the job I am doing for my company, a place I love to work.
3. I will enjoy increased pay through commissions and bonuses.
4. I will set the table for years of repeat business with these customers.

I had a friend who was building his business and wanted to buy a new truck. He didn't want to go into debt for this truck. He wanted to pay cash. So what he did was get a picture of the exact truck he wanted to buy, right down to the color red, and posted it on the wall of his office next to the financial goal he had set for his business. When he hit that goal, he would buy the truck. The picture, a tangible benefit of his goal, acted as a magnet that drew him to its completion.

List the Steps of Action for Achieving This Goal

Here is where the rubber meets the road and, according to my coaching client, the part of the goal-planning process that gave him the most value. We listed step by step what it would take get this goal done. Each step was given a date and a deadline that was then placed into his calendar. As we continued coaching together, I held him accountable for completing these steps of action. As they were met, we celebrated, or if they were missed, we made a midcourse correction and moved on.

Here are some of those steps of action:

1. Update and analyze soil samples of all my customers by February 24.
2. Write up fertilizer blend recommendations based on the soil samples by March 8.
3. Make appointments with all my customers to present recommendations by March 10.
4. Apply first round of dry fertilizer by March 30.
5. Apply second round of liquid fertilizer by April 30.

Business Coaching Exercise: The SMART Goal Worksheet

SMART GOAL WORKSHEET

NAME: BOB JOHNSON		DATE: FEB. 2, 2007	
<i>SMART Goal (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time bound)</i>			
To achieve \$1.8 million of agricultural sales in 2007 by selling \$600K of fertilizer by April, \$600K of fungicide and growth regulator by June, and \$600K of lime, herbicide, and other products by December.			
<i>BENEFITS of Achieving this Goal</i>			
I will feel a great sense of accomplishment of having sold more product than in any other year.			
I will feel good about the job I am doing for my company, a place I love to work.			
I will enjoy increased pay through commissions and bonuses.			
I will set the table for years of repeat business with these customers.			
<i>STEPS of ACTION for Achieving this Goal</i>			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Update and analyze soil samples of all my customers by February 24. 2. Write up fertilizer blend recommendations based on soil samples by March 8. 3. Make appointments with all my customers to present recommendations by March 10. 4. Apply first round of dry fertilizer by March 30. 5. Apply second round of liquid fertilizer by April 30. 			
<i>Possible OBSTACLES</i>		<i>Possible SOLUTIONS</i>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Letting a bottleneck develop by doing all of my own soil sample work. 2. Losing sales due to pricing concerns. 3. Losing sales due to product supply. 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work closely with scouts to help with gathering soil samples. 2. Get pricing strategy set before customers bring it up. 3. Solve problem at management level. 	

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MAKING GOALS SMART

List the Possible Obstacles for the Completion of This Goal

This is a missing link in the goal-planning process, asking oneself the question, “What can go wrong?” If this goal has nothing standing in its way, it would have been done by now. By uncovering as many of these obstacles at the beginning of the goal-planning process, you can address them right from the start so they don’t derail performance. With this salesman we identified these three obstacles:

1. Letting a bottleneck develop by doing all of my own soil sample work.
2. Losing sales due to pricing concerns.
3. Losing sales due to product supply.

Most goal planning omits this critical step. The flush of fresh plans can often lead us to ignore the storm clouds on the horizon. These clouds should not keep us from moving ahead, but realizing they are coming can remind us to bring an umbrella on our trip.

List the Possible Solutions to the Obstacles of This Goal

Having placed the obstacles this sales professional faced on the table, some of which had hindered his goal completion in the past, we began to design solutions. Other staff members were enlisted to help with gathering soil samples, pricing strategies were discussed before customer inquiries came in, and product supply issues—issues that management had no idea existed—were solved immediately.

In setting my fitness goal for this year, I noticed that I kept getting derailed in my weight loss. I would make great progress for a month or two, and slip back to where I was before. I listed backsliding as one of my obstacles and began to think of a solution. The solution I arrived at involved hiring a personal trainer. Not only does he keep me accountable each month for my fitness goals, he has made exercising fun with creative workouts and challenging exercises. I am 25

How Many SMART Goals Should a Person Work on at One Time?

pounds into my 35-pound weight loss goal without backsliding. He even gave me a series of simple things I can do when I travel to feel better and stay in shape. Apart from listing the obstacles to this goal and finding a solution, I am convinced my progress this year will be the same as in the past.

HOW MANY SMART GOALS SHOULD A PERSON WORK ON AT ONE TIME?

In my first year of coaching I was meeting with a new client for the first time. I asked him the typical first-session coaching question, “What goals would you like for us to work on?” He told me that he didn’t believe in goals. That set me back a bit because, at that time, that was the main tool in my coaching toolbox. I mumbled some incredibly inane response like, “If you did believe in goals, what would your goals be?” and stumbled my way through the rest of the session.

To my surprise, however, at our next session this client brought me his goals. Nine pages, single spaced. I was thrilled. Now we had something to work on, I thought. Six months later our time together ended with no significant progress on anything in the nine pages. No wonder this person didn’t believe in goals!

Two years later, again to my surprise, this client hired me again to be his coach. Much wiser, I insisted that we focus our six months together on three things and all three, with their steps of action, had to fit on one page. In five months we got everything done on that page.

How many goals should you have? Less is more. I recommend focusing on two, at the most three, SMART goals at any one time. Beyond that I have observed that a person gets overwhelmed and performance diminishes. At the beginning of this year, I set five goals for myself. Two of them have to do with my business, one has to do with my finances, one with my fitness, and one with my family. At any one time, however, I am actively working on only one or two of those five until they are completed. Then I can move on to the others.

MAKING GOALS SMART

BUSINESS IMPACT STORY: HOW SMART GOALS MAXIMIZE PERFORMANCE AT A LOCAL RADIO STATION

Randy Davison's name will not appear on a list of modern media moguls. He will not share the platform at any time with Rupert Murdoch or Ted Turner, but he is succeeding in this industry in spite of all the odds.

Randy is the general manager of a small, two-station radio group. Since the FCC's deregulation of the radio industry, media giants have purchased every FM station in his market, leaving him as the only stand-alone facility. Yet his team of eight, who have 24 hours of air time to fill like anyone else, makes a growing profit year after year, consistently outperforming the competition.

How? SMART goals.

Every broadcast year begins with Randy taking his team away on a planning retreat. They thoroughly assess the past year and brainstorm the next year, landing on goals for four or five key areas of the business. Then each staff member selects two or three goals from the list in line with their individual gifts and abilities that they are going to be personally responsible for achieving. A SMART Goal Worksheet just like the one shown earlier is filled out by each staff member for each of the goals that are selected.

Randy then conducts regular performance reviews, but not the awkward evaluations that happen in so many other companies. Performance reviews are simple, one-on-one discussions of SMART Goal Worksheets. Randy meets with his team each month and discusses their progress and their challenges, together making any midcourse corrections that are needed and updating the worksheet. Successes are celebrated as a group and new goals are selected from the master list. Using this system, Randy is like a modern-day David taking on a Goliath. In the last fiscal year, his team fulfilled 40 of the 48 goals they set for themselves, success any high-level corporate executive would envy.

But this is not the whole story. Three years ago Randy's team wrote its own mission statement. It reads like no other mission statement I've ever seen. In fact they don't even call it a mission statement. They call it a promise statement. The promise they make is to themselves, their listeners, and their advertisers about the kind of values they believe in and the vision they aspire to achieve. The promise is posted in every room in the studio, and, more importantly, inspires everything they do. This is a very real example of a deeper *why* driving a *how* in a very challenging business marketplace.

TOP 10 WAYS TO USE THIS TOOL

1. Make sure the goals you set with your clients support current business objectives. Ask what they are before you start working on goals and get them in writing. Do not let your clients work at cross-purposes with the companies they serve.
2. Drill down on the specifics of the goal. Most leaders think in generalities, making what they want done wishes, not goals. Work hard on creating a clear, concrete, and concise one-sentence goal statement. Getting this right *first* is half the battle of goal setting and may take two or three revisions.
3. Keep focused on the positive benefits a SMART goal will deliver. This makes the goal personally compelling. Use a tangible object, picture collage, or a prearranged incentive program, like tickets to a sports game, to spur greater motivation.
4. Plan for goal derailment. Something always happens that gets a client off track. Brainstorm those possibilities and make a plan for meeting them. Be prepared for the unexpected, though, and adjust the dates and deadlines of your plan. Midcourse correction is crucial to setting and achieving goals. Repeated midcourse corrections, however, are an indication that something is wrong with the goal. It may not be relevant to your client and she is not telling you, or it may not be aligned with her true talent. Have this deeper discussion when deadlines and metrics keep getting missed. Consider having your client take Gallup's *StrengthsFinder* profile to ensure her talent and tasks are aligned.
5. In team coaching, have the group work as one individual, collaboratively setting three SMART goals for the entire group. Facilitate the brainstorming process and have one or two editors within the group write the final version of the SMART Goal Worksheet that is agreed upon by all.
6. Coordinate your SMART goals by tiering them. One overarching SMART goal, also known as a BHAG (Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal), may be at the top of the tier that branches down into smaller, subordinate SMART goals. Create a visual representation of this by taping SMART Goal Worksheets to a wall in their appropriate order.

MAKING GOALS SMART

7. Use the SMART Goal Worksheet as a way to communicate with your economic buyer. Completed SMART Goal Worksheets are a great way of giving a written report of your coaching progress to the person who is sponsoring your coaching engagement without divulging confidential information. Make sure, however, before you send copies to a supervisor, to get permission from your client to do so.
8. Conduct monthly one-on-one plan-and-review sessions around team members' SMART goals. Look at the past (their progress), the future (their plans), and the present (their problems), related to SMART goal achievement. Make any midcourse corrections and adjust their SMART Goal Worksheet as needed. Work to replace ineffective annual or semiannual employee reviews with these monthly SMART goal plan-and-review sessions.
9. Celebrate completed goals by publicly posting fully executed SMART Goal Worksheets on a "Wall of Fame." Create an incentive program around the completion of SMART goals.
10. As SMART Goals are completed, celebrate and reload. Facilitate the setting of new SMART Goals and the completion of new SMART Goal Worksheets. Always have your people working on two or three SMART goals.

The Power of Positive Praise

Pull out a pen and paper and take this quick quiz:

1. The U.S. Department of Labor recently reported that the number one reason people leave an organization is:
 - A. The pay is not good enough.
 - B. Someone else got a promotion and not them.
 - C. They don't feel appreciated.
 - D. They want better benefits.
2. According to a recent Gallup Poll, what percentage of the American workforce received *no* praise or recognition in the last year?
 - A. 25 percent
 - B. 45 percent
 - C. 65 percent
 - D. 85 percent
3. According to the Gallup Corporation's research of five million employees worldwide, the frequency of praise and recognition in the workplace should be *no less* than:
 - A. One time per day
 - B. One time per week

THE POWER OF POSITIVE PRAISE

- C. One time per month
 - D. One time per quarter
4. Researchers have determined for healthy relationships the perfect ratio of positive comments to negative comments is:
- A. 1 to 1
 - B. 3 to 1
 - C. 5 to 1
 - D. 10 to 1
5. Cigarette smoking has been shown to decrease life expectancy by 5.5 years, but a 2000 Mayo Clinic study showed that positive emotion can increase life expectancy by:
- A. 4 years
 - B. 6 years
 - C. 8 years
 - D. 10 years

To see how you did on this quiz, turn to the end of the chapter for the answers.

A BUSINESS CASE FOR POSITIVE PRAISE

Well, how did you do on the quiz?

The leading reason, by an overwhelming margin, people leave organizations has nothing to do with pay, benefits, or promotion. The leading reason is they do not feel appreciated. This is because 65 percent of the American workforce did not receive any praise or recognition in the last year. It's like we're saying to our employees, "I told you I loved you when I hired you. If that changes, I'll let you know."

Contrast this frequency with the frequency of praise and recognition needed for fully empowered employees. Gallup found that no less than one time per week is the proper frequency for praise and recognition. In fact, when managers achieve this frequency, Gallup

A Business Case for Positive Praise

has documented data that indicates it results in 56 percent higher attainment of customer loyalty, 38 percent higher results in productivity, and 50 percent lower employee turnover. (Smith and Rutigliano, 2003, page 119) What would these numbers do for your company?

Furthermore, the distribution of positive comments to negative ones must be within a five-to-one ratio for workplace relationships to be healthy and whole. That is, there must be five positive comments given for every one negative comment. Amazingly, in 1992, psychologist John Gottman had 15-minute conversations with newly married couples and used the five-to-one ratio to predict whether these marriages would end up in divorce. Ten years later his predictions were 94 percent accurate. (Rath and Clifton, 2004, page 55) Other dramatic benefits come from the fostering of positive emotion. Studies at the Mayo Clinic found that it can increase life expectancy by 10 years, almost twice as much as the 5.5 years smoking a pack a day takes away from your life.

This is so because everyone who works for us has an invisible checking account within his soul. Just like our personal checking account, you can make deposits into and withdrawals from this account. Throughout the course of the year in working with people, in big ways and small ways, we increase the equity in the account we have with them or decrease it. Just like our personal checking account, we bounce checks when there is not enough in the account to cover the withdrawals. This happens relationally when we use and use a person, but fail to give anything back in return. The next request we make, or the next mistake we commit, gets a volatile reaction, the emotional equivalent of a bounced check.

Wise leaders are always investing in the equity of the emotional bank account of the people they lead. They see it as one of their top priorities. They understand the five-to-one ratio and make far more deposits than they do withdrawals. Then, when it is time to make a withdrawal, or they make a mistake because they are human, their checks don't bounce. People receive what they have to say, even if it's bad news, and give them the latitude they need to grow as a person in the job. Positive praise is a key way to do this.

THREE KEYS TO POSITIVE PRAISE

Make It TRUE

The way to start making deposits into your employees' emotional bank account is not by throwing around happy words indiscriminately. This kind of verbal outpouring, however well-meaning, will breed resentment among your people. Praise is praise only if it is true, otherwise it is flattery (a fancy word for lying). This means taking the time to catch people doing things right, not just doing things wrong, which is the modus operandi of most managers.

If I placed a white sheet of poster board in front of you with a dark smudge on it, what would you see? The dark smudge, of course. It wouldn't matter if 95 percent of the poster board was pristine white, you would focus on the smudge. Unfortunately, this is what happens in our working relationships. In fact, the more time we spend with people, the more fixated we get on the 5 percent that is wrong with them than the 95 percent that is right.

Catching people doing things right is primarily a change in focus that seeks to find the good things people are doing and recognize them for that good. It also embraces the process people are going through and not just the end product, which is not waiting for everything to be done right before offering affirmation. Positive praise understands that progress toward the ultimate goal can be affirmed and will fan the flame of accomplishment along the way.

Is the smudge irrelevant on the poster board? No. Especially if that smudge is seen every day by your customers. Deal with the smudge unapologetically, but in a climate where enough deposits have been made so this withdrawal won't bounce a check.

Make It SPECIFIC

"Hey, you did a great job!" is really an empty accolade. It says nothing and means nothing. Perhaps we say it with the best of intentions, but the words miss their mark. The reason? They are not specific and only specific praise has power.

Consider this alternative, "Hey, you did a great job with that cus-

Three Keys to Positive Praise

tomers. When he came into the store, he was hotter than a pistol. I really admire how you kept your cool and were able to give him what he wants. Again, good job!” What is the difference? You state in very clear and concrete terms what this great job looks like and affirm it. The carrot and the stick have proven to be poor motivators in the workplace because they do not move people from within. Positive input, encouragement, and genuine appreciation, however, communicate value and worth from the inside out and bring a sense of energy and strength to both the giver and the receiver. When provided on a regular basis, work becomes a place people enjoy coming to instead of just putting in their time.

An additional benefit of catching people doing things right is being able to affect behavior. Like a magnet over shavings, praise will pull out the true metal in the pile and motivate people to do those actions again and again and again. You can't very easily punish a killer whale, but with a regular system of positive reinforcement they have been trained to achieve the most amazing feats. “When good performance is followed by something positive,” Ken Blanchard writes in his book on this very subject *Whale Done!*, “people naturally want to continue that behavior.” (Blanchard, 2002, page 35)

Make It PERSONALIZED

If you were in Japan, you would use yen. If you were in Venezuela, you would use bolivars. If you were in Germany, it would be the euro, and in the United States, the dollar. Different places, different currency. And it is only that currency that is accepted in those places. Different people have different currency as well. This is the reason for personalized praise.

Some people are terribly embarrassed by being spoken about in public, others thrive on it. Some people read every note, card, and letter you send them; others toss all written communication aside, preferring to be spoken to face to face. Some people want their workplace to be about business only and never talk about their private life at work; others post the pictures of every family member and their pets inside their cubicle. Again, different people have different currency and if you are

going to be effective in making deposits in their life, they must be made in the currency they trade in. Praise must be personalized.

TWO DON'TS IN DELIVERING POSITIVE PRAISE

As you are being true, specific, and personalized with your praise, there are two mistakes to avoid. The first mistake is following praise with correction. This is a common practice and a misinterpretation of the five positive comments to one positive comment ratio. The thinking goes that if you need to correct someone, compliment him first so he can accept your correction. But for the person receiving this one-two punch, it makes praise hollow, manipulative, and fraught with danger. What it will also do is make people wary of you, anxious when you are praising because they are not sure if the other shoe of correction is going to drop. Not exactly the tone of trust you are trying to set with your people.

The point of the five-to-one ratio is the kind of climate you are creating so that when you need to correct someone she can receive it. Giving correction when appropriate is an inseparable part of effective leadership, but do it honestly and plainly. No positioning or spin. The advice I was given once was: Stand up, speak up, and shut up.

A second don't is similar to the first, though not as devastating. It's the "keep up the good work" mistake and goes like this: You deliver a piece of positive praise, and, instead of just ending there, you feel compelled to give a challenge to the person you are praising. As if the affirmation will somehow motivate this person to do poorer work rather than better work, so a challenge must be made to keep it up. Does this actually make sense? Then why do we do it?

I remember being contracted to give a series of training sessions to managers on a Saturday. Because it was the company's busy season and they wanted to get this training done, they asked their people to do it outside of their workweek on one of their two days off. Amazingly, everyone was game, and at the beginning of our first session the vice president of the division called in to the training class and thanked everyone for their sacrifice. He praised these leaders for their commit-

The Affirmation Matrix and Weekly Register

ment to the company and for the results they had achieved so far in the year. You could see the people in the room rise in their seats and swell with pride. Then the vice president ended his call with these words, "Now, get better!"

Wham, the oxygen was sucked out of the room. It was like he had said to them that everything they had done was not enough and they must do more or he would not be satisfied. Resist the temptation to tag on to the positive words you give people a challenge to keep it up. It's unnecessary and ineffective. It's like going to the ATM machine, putting \$200 into your account and then withdrawing \$200. That's useless and doesn't get you anywhere. Praise others truthfully, specifically, and personally with no additional agenda items and no strings attached.

BUSINESS COACHING EXERCISE: THE AFFIRMATION MATRIX AND WEEKLY REGISTER

Here are two exercises that work together to achieve this objective:

The Affirmation Matrix

Take an 8½" × 11" blank sheet of paper and hold it up in portrait view. Fold this sheet in half from the top to the bottom. Then fold it in half again from top to bottom. Now from the left to the right fold the paper in half and open your sheet up. If you followed these instructions to the letter, you will have an 8½" × 11" sheet of paper with 8 squares, four running down the left half and four running down the right half of the paper.

Take out a pen and write in the upper left square the word **spoken** and in the square immediately to the right of this square write the word **written**. Move one row down and repeat this process writing the word **public** on the left and the word **private** on the right. Move one more row down on your paper and write the word **expected** on the left and the word **unexpected** on the right. Finally in the last row of squares write the word **professional** on the left and **personal** on the right.

THE POWER OF POSITIVE PRAISE

You should now have a sheet of paper that looks like this:

<i>spoken</i>	<i>written</i>
<i>public</i>	<i>private</i>
<i>expected</i>	<i>unexpected</i>
<i>professional</i>	<i>personal</i>

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The Affirmation Matrix and Weekly Register

You are now ready to use this matrix to personalize praise. Combine items on the left with items on the right. There are over 20 statistical combinations for you to play with. For instance:

1. *Spoken, public, expected, professional*: Praise given to a sales associate at a team meeting highlighting the specific things that person did in winning the latest sales contest.

Change this a little bit, however, and you have:

2. *Written, public, expected, professional*: A distribution e-mail sent out to everyone in the division praising this salesperson for the specific things he did to win the latest sales contest.

Change it some more and you have:

3. *Written, private, expected, professional*: A handwritten card sent to this salesperson genuinely thanking her for the specific things she did to win the latest sales contest with a \$50 gift card included (**also unexpected**).

How would you do the next two?

4. *Spoken, Private, Unexpected, Professional*: _____

5. *Written, Private, Unexpected, Personal*: _____

Don't wait for the conclusion of a sales contest to do this, however. Remember the once-a-week ratio? Make public praise a regular part of your weekly staff meetings and private praise a habit in one-on-one conversations. Thank people for the work they do (professional) and

the kind of person they are (personal). Remember birthdays and Administrative Professionals Day (expected, personal, and professional) and silly days like Saint Patrick's Day (you know, thanking the people who bring in all the *green* that makes your company run!).

"I don't have time to coddle my people like this!" one leader blurted out to me in a coaching session. I asked him to look at it this way, "If you knew for a fact that if you invested one dollar in a venture, you would receive two in return, would you do it?"

"Of course!" was his reply. "Who wouldn't?" That is exactly what Benjamin Schneider, Professor at the University of Maryland, discovered. In operations as diverse as bank branches, call centers, insurance companies, and hospitals, for every 1 percent increase in positive climate there was a 2 percent increase in profit. (Goleman, 2002, page 15) This is what positive praise does within an organization, a pretty good return on investment!

You will notice a gift is included with the praise being given in some of the earlier-mentioned examples. This is a great way to add impact to the words you are trying to say, especially if the gift is the right kind of currency for the recipient. The gift doesn't have to be something big, either. I had an employee who grew up in New York and missed salt bagels, a favorite on the East Coast. Whenever I was in a bagel shop with salt bagels, I bought one for her and brought it back to the office thanking her for her hard work.

A common mistake, however, is to give a gift without words. This is a great opportunity missed. A gift without words may not have any framework of understanding for the person receiving it. Furthermore, a gift without words teaches nothing. How can a person repeat what you are praising if they don't know what it is? If you give flowers, take the time to write a note of appreciation to go with it. When the flowers have long since passed away, the card may be kept for years. If you buy a gift certificate, put it in a card with a written note. Words and actions make a powerful pairing.

One of my coaching clients shared with me the story of the greatest day of his professional life. He had crushed his sales number one year and won the highest award in his division. At an end-of-the-year banquet, he was brought on stage and cheered by his peers. Then his manager said this, "Everyone knows this is a very hard job to do and none

The Affirmation Matrix and Weekly Register

of us could do without the support and sacrifice of our spouse.” This brilliant boss had the salesperson’s wife come on the platform and she received a standing ovation (spoken, public, expected and unexpected, professional and personal). To this day he still chokes up a bit telling the story. This is the power of positive praise!

The Weekly Affirmation Register

How do we make this behavior a regular part of our life and leadership? Here is a simple worksheet to fill out every week for the next six weeks. Place the names of the people who directly report to you down the left column and a brief description of what they do to the right of

Weekly Affirmation Register

TEAM MEMBER	CORE RESPONSIBILITIES	M	T	W	T	F
1.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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their names. Then place a check mark for the days in the week that you gave them specific, personalized praise, being careful not to drop below the one-time-a-week metric. Use this worksheet until the habit of positive praise has become your own. Once a quarter, use the worksheet again to check up on yourself to see whether you are on track. Have others in your organization use it to master this habit themselves.

The first time I used this register I noticed there was an engineer who worked for me who I consistently failed to affirm. He was the most difficult person on my staff and made his feelings known about me, which weren't very positive, to anyone who would listen. I responded by avoiding him, which, of course, made the problem worse. So I made a choice to be the bigger person and went out of my way to find something he did right every week and tell him how much I appreciated it. No miracles happened. We didn't become the best of friends. But tensions definitely eased and our working relationship improved measurably. When he left our company to take another job, he thanked me for being one of the best bosses he had ever worked for.

POSITIVE PRAISE DOES NOT WORK WHEN . . .

As important, and as powerful, as positive praise is, there is one thing it is not: a cure-all. Effective leadership is not as easy as taking a simple positivity pill or waving a magic wand at people. Positive praise must complement other tools in a leader's toolbox and work together with them to get the job done. Stated in another way, positive praise does not work when the following conditions exist.

Positive Praise Does Not Work When You're Looking for a Quick Fix

Imagine turning 65 years old and deciding for the first time in your life to start saving for retirement. How much money will you be able to set aside? Financial experts would all agree: not much. The way to save for retirement is little by little, month by month, over the course of years. Interest compounds and equity builds, not by one heroic act of savings, but by hundreds of small investments.

When we as leaders realize that we have set a negative tone for our team and make the commitment to delivering positive praise on a regular

Positive Praise Does Not Work When . . .

basis, we must view it as a long-term investment. One great act of affirmation, at a team meeting or a year-end banquet, will go only so far. Like starting to save for retirement at 65, a quick-fix approach to praise does not build up the kind of equity that is needed to be effective with people. This is true for any leadership behavior, not just this one. Great leadership is a cloth with many, many threads of action woven consistently over time.

The good news is that you can get started immediately and make a real difference. And although the emotional bank account of many of your people might be overdrawn, you will be surprised at how quickly you can bring it back into balance again. Relationships and people are very resilient and respond well when their leaders make a genuine, consistent effort to do the right thing.

Positive Praise Does Not Work When You Need to Apologize First

We've all experienced this. A person clearly crosses the line and offends us. You know it. She knows it. And everyone else knows it too. But instead of coming to us and saying she's sorry, this person treats us differently. She's sugary sweet and sickeningly nice, never mentioning a word about the offense.

Positive praise will not work when an apology needs to be made first. In fact, just the opposite will happen. Praise will be seen as hollow and manipulative, just another withdrawal in a long list of withdrawals, and cowardly avoidance of the real heart of the issue.

If you've made an honest mistake, or if you've really blown it with another person, just admit it. Apologize and move on. Don't cover up the issue like a fresh coat of paint on rotten wood, pretending everything will be okay. Everything won't be okay. That's not the way paint, or praise, works. Say you're sorry. Own your mistake, openly, honestly, and humbly.

Positive Praise Will Not Work When It's the Only Communication Tool You Use

An interesting corollary to the five positive comments to every one negative comment study is that there is an upper limit to this ratio. Researchers found that when positive comments to negative comments

exceeded 10 to 1, workplace productivity significantly decreased. (Rath and Clifton, 2004, page 57) In other words, you can praise too much and be out of the five-to-one balance, never delivering other important kinds of communication.

Praise creates a climate where people feel empowered, but it is not the only thing that does. Empowerment also occurs when we instruct, explain, discuss, debate, question, challenge, and correct. Yes, some of these things will make withdrawals—actually most of them will—but that’s okay. When we make enough deposits with our people, the relationship will be fine. Equity exists for a reason. Effective leaders learn how to leverage it to help others be their very best.

Positive Praise Will Not Work When Talent Is Misaligned to Task

In the book *Whale Done!*, referred to earlier, Ken Blanchard describes how orca whales at Sea World in San Diego are taught how to do amazing stunts with positive reinforcement alone. His thesis, and it is a good one, is that what works for animals also works for human beings. But ask yourself for a minute, “What if the trainer was trying to teach a killer whale how to fly? Or how to ride a horse? What then would be the impact of positive reinforcement?”

“That’s ridiculous,” you say, “whales don’t fly and they certainly don’t ride horses!” And that is the point.

Positive praise works best when you are praising a person for a job that’s right for them. If you praise and praise and praise and see no increase in performance, you may not have a praise problem. You may have a fit problem. And no amount of praise will fix a fit problem. In fact, when people who were made to swim are being forced to fly, increased praise makes them feel guiltier for not really doing any better. The best course of action for this challenge is using the tools in Chapter 9, “The Sixth Suitcase,” to align talent to task to help this person find the right seat on the bus. Then praise will be appropriate to the person and the job that best suits them.

Positive Praise Does Not Work When . . .

BUSINESS IMPACT STORY: HOW POSITIVE PRAISE HELPED IN THE TURNAROUND OF A FAILING SMALL BUSINESS

I had just taken over the company, a small group of radio stations, and we were cash-starved. Owing to the poor management of those who had preceded us, creditors were knocking at our door on a daily basis and paychecks were often one to two weeks late. A new surprise—not the good kind like an IRS agent paying us a visit asking for unpaid withholding taxes—seemed to pop up at every turn as sales swooned. Yet, amazingly, morale was high. The staff understood the reasons why we had these problems, and, to a man (actually seven men and two women), were committed to helping solve them. At our first staff retreat, held at a hotel whose rooms we bartered, I presented an award that through the years has become one of the most coveted awards to receive in our company.

In preparing for the retreat, I thought of the people who had worked extra hard to get us back on track. One person came to mind who had in the month before really gone the extra mile. She worked extra long hours, took on extra responsibility, and shown an extraordinarily high level of commitment to our recovery. A well-known proverb came to mind, “If someone asks you to go with him one mile, go with him two.” I was inspired! I took an old pair of my wife’s sandals, spray-painted them gold, and glued them to a wood plaque covered in red velvet I found in the garage. The next day I made the presentation. I recounted the incredible things this person had done and presented her with the Golden Sandals.

All right, I know what you’re thinking. This is the corniest story you have ever heard. And I would agree with you, except here’s what happened next. The Golden Sandals began to take on a life of their own. At our social events every six months or so, each recipient of the Golden Sandals was given a chance to pass them on to someone else in the company who, like her, had gone the extra mile. In doing so, she had to say why this person earned the award and what was appreciated about this person. People would stand up, both men and women, and start talking with tears rolling down their cheeks as they shared what another person on our staff team meant to them. The recipient would take the award, display it proudly in his work area, and give it away with the same reverence with which it had been received.

(Continued)

BUSINESS IMPACT STORY: HOW POSITIVE PRAISE HELPED IN THE
TURNAROUND OF A FAILING SMALL BUSINESS *(Continued)*

When our financial turnaround was nearly complete, a vendor approached us who had our same company name. They wanted exclusive national rights to its identity and paid us to select a new moniker. The staff met again on a retreat and landed on this in honor of the Golden Sandals: Extra Mile Media. At one of our events, as a complete surprise, a staff member gave a typically touching Golden Sandals speech and gave the award to me. I felt my throat tighten and thought to myself, "This is a stupid pair of sandals my wife never wore and a block of wood I found in the garage!" But it really was more than that. It was sincerity, gratitude, and appreciation expressed openly by my peers worth more than any paycheck. That is the power of positive praise.

TOP 10 WAYS TO USE THIS TOOL

1. When presenting this tool, always use the paper-folding exercise. It gets a person involved in learning, not just listening passively. It also arouses their curiosity and helps them own the principle. I have had clients actually tape this piece of paper to the wall so they could keep it on the top of their mind throughout the week. Help your clients think through the "currency" of how each of their people like to be praised. That is, what is the best combination of written, spoken, public, private, expected, unexpected, professional, and personal for each team member?
2. For the first few weeks of using the **Weekly Affirmation Register**, have your clients fax you their sheet at the end of the week for four to six weeks. Talk through each encounter. Reflect on what was done, how it went, how it was received, and any improvements that could be made. This is a new skill; take the time to let your client learn it.
3. Inevitably there will be someone on the **Weekly Affirmation Register** that will be the most difficult to praise and the easiest person to avoid. Talk through the relationship specifically and

Top 10 Ways to Use This Tool

design a strategy for how to best make deposits in this person's emotional bank account. Be realistic. Not everyone in the workplace is willing to be positive and productive. Leaders must make sure, however, they have done everything in their power to reach out to this person.

4. Sadly, struggling managers have often burned many bridges with their people. They have many, many more debits than credits in their people's emotional bank account. These eleventh-hour situations often come to coaches and you can help them "get out of debt" by making positive emotional deposits. Again, do it with realism. Because of the past, team members will distrust these initial efforts at affirmation, but, as a person perseveres in this habit, the ledger will come into balance and followership will increase.
5. A leader can use the **Weekly Affirmation Register** to manage up as well. That is thinking through how to praise the boss and the boss's boss. Have your client place her boss on the list. When the words being spoken or written are true and the spirit in which they are shared sincere, this will be received as genuine appreciation for someone who rarely receives any.
6. Ask your client to teach the **Affirmation Matrix** to someone at work and have that person fill out a **Weekly Affirmation Register**, faxing it to you to see. Debrief this encounter in a coaching session and listen to what your client learned in the process. Teaching this to someone else forces a person to think it through one more time and learn it more completely.
7. Encourage your clients to put the birthdays and work anniversary dates of every one of their direct reports in their calendar. Have them buy a set of cards and handwrite notes of affirmation for these special days. This is extremely doable! Ten direct reports with one birthday and one anniversary in the year amounts to fewer than two cards every month.
8. Designate a Wall of Fame in the office or workplace where people can publicly post their praise of others, letters of recognition from satisfied customers, achieved goals, newspaper clippings of personal accomplishments, whatever.

THE POWER OF POSITIVE PRAISE

9. Teach the **Affirmation Matrix** to teams and use it as a team-building exercise so that it can become part of their relating to one another. Put team members' names in a hat and have them draw names out one by one, delivering words of positive praise to the person they pick. Explore what an appropriate peer-given award might be for this group, like the Golden Sandals mentioned earlier.
10. For deeper insight into a client's use of positive praise, use the Gallup Corporation's free, online *Positive Impact Profile* that accompanies the book *How Full is Your Bucket?* A person can go back to this profile again and again, measuring the growth in his ability in this area.

Here are the answers to the opening quiz:

1. C, 2. C, 3. B, 4. C, 5. D

Making Feedback Effective

There are moments and then there are moments.

There are moments that pass us by with hardly a second thought, and moments that remain in our mind forever. One of the barely remembered moments for me happens on the airport shuttle bus traveling from the long-term parking lot to the terminal. I invariably ask myself, “Did I lock my car?” I can never remember.

I do remember, however, at the age of five being picked up by my mother from school and taken to the doctor’s office. Burned in my mind is the scene in the waiting room as we walked through the door. A deathly silence hung in the air. One woman sat in her chair crying. An old-fashioned, console TV with dark wood cabinetry was on one side of the room as every eye watched in horror the news of President John F. Kennedy’s assassination. It was November 22, 1963.

When my mom took me back to school, she told me to tell the principal that the president had been shot. These were the days when there wasn’t a TV in every classroom and instant Internet news was decades away. I remember staring up at that tall man and having him say to me, “That’s not a very funny joke. Now go back to class!” (which may give you a bit of insight into the kind of student I was). I also remember the same tall man apologizing to me at the end of the day.

There are moments and then there are moments.

MAKING FEEDBACK EFFECTIVE

There are conversations and there are conversations. There are conversations that pass us by with hardly a second thought, like what's the weather going to be like today and who won the ball game last night? And there are conversations that echo in our mind forever. These are the conversations that we play back in our mind word for word and, even years later, they give us the same queasy feeling in our gut.

VitalSmarts, an organizational consulting firm, has identified this second kind of conversation as a "crucial conversation" and defines it in their book, *Crucial Conversations*, as "a discussion between two or more people where the stakes are high, opinions vary, and emotions run strong." (Patterson, et al., 2002, page 3) In other words, a crucial conversation, as opposed to a casual conversation, is about something that really matters. Not only does it really matter, but everyone seems to have a different opinion on the subject and holds on to that opinion with passion.

A BUSINESS CASE FOR MAKING FEEDBACK EFFECTIVE

It is in this context that many of our leaders—and ourselves as coaches—are compelled to give feedback. And we feel caught. If we speak up and give the feedback needed, it may add to the intensity of emotion and escalate an already difficult discussion. If we don't speak up, a critically important issue may be left unaddressed. Here the primal instincts of fight or flight sabotage effective feedback. We either attack and defend, driving others away with our feedback, or we avoid and withdraw, offering no input at all on important issues. Neither option works.

What we need to apply to the feedback process is the genius of *AND*. Choosing neither the fight nor flight alternatives, but approaching difficult discussions with a commitment to being both safe AND sound. Being safe is creating the context for effective feedback by controlling our emotions and attending to the needs of the relationship in being careful how we say things. Being sound is delivering the content of effective feedback by focusing on the issue at hand and making sure that what we say is honest and truthful.

Being both safe and sound is needed in full measure for feedback to be effective. If we are safe only, we lapse into accommodation. Accom-

A Business Case for Making Feedback Effective

modating leaders fail to address issues important to the performance of the organization and loses all credibility with their associates. If we are sound only, we will find ourselves in constant confrontation. This kind of leader may experience short-term results as associates comply with his demands, but compliance never produces world-class results. At the end of the day the leader fails to deliver as everyone tires of his tone.

BEING SAFE	BEING SOUND
Creating the CONTEXT of feedback	Delivering the CONTENT of feedback
HOW we deliver feedback	WHAT we say when we deliver feedback
Focus is on the relationship	Focus is on the issue at hand
Only being safe results in ACCOMMODATION (Avoid, withdraw, flight)	Only being sound results in CONFRONTATION (Attack, defend, fight)

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Managers who find themselves needing to give feedback to help an associate grow can use this safe and sound approach to increase their effectiveness as leaders. Coaches working with their clients can use being safe and sound to increase their impact when a client needs the honest, candid perspective of another. You can even—or especially—manage up with feedback, offering vital input to supervisors for the overall health of an organization. Being safe and sound is being honest, but without the scorched-earth approach so many people take with honesty. It is being honest with heart, caring as much for the people involved in the problem as with the issue at hand.

Crucial Conversations, the book referred to earlier, declares, “Our research has shown that strong relationships, careers, organizations, and communities all draw from the same source of power—the ability to talk openly about high-stakes, emotional, controversial topics. . . . So

here's the audacious claim. Master your crucial conversations and you'll kick-start your career, strengthen your relationships, and improve your health. As you and others master high-stakes discussions, you'll also vitalize your organization and your community." (Patterson, et al., 2002, page 9)

BUSINESS COACHING TOOL: MAKING FEEDBACK EFFECTIVE

Sean Burns is an executive coach, professional speaker, and founder of Leadership Development Team, LLC. Together with coaching collaborator Ann Johnston of Partners in Leadership, LLC, Sean has designed an approach to effective feedback that brilliantly incorporates the principles of being safe and sound. This approach has three sequential tracks to travel on: Setup, Delivery, and Assess Impact.

EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK STAGE ONE: SETUP

Preparing for feedback, and not just "shooting from the hip," is critical to its effectiveness. With all due respect to Malcolm Gladwell, this is not a time to blink; it is a time to think. And think clearly. First, think about the timing of the feedback. For feedback to be effective, it must be given at a time when it can best be received, and that's not when emotions are running high or close to the completion of an event. Sean tells this story:

When I first became head coach at Santa Clara University, I wanted to share as much information with my players as I could and help them improve as fast as possible. Most of the time they appreciated my efforts, but sometimes my exuberance backfired on me. I had to learn when the right time and the wrong time was to share feedback.

John was an intense competitor, a guy I loved to coach. He improved tremendously as he became more aggressive, constantly adding dimensions to his game. During his junior year at Santa Clara, he had an opportunity to show how far he had come as a player. In a big match, John was pitted against a contemporary of his who had always been ranked far ahead of him when they were growing up (one year the other player had been number five in his section while John was number sixty). John

Effective Feedback Stage One: Setup

was ready, though. He went in with a great game plan: Attack his opponent's backhand, take the approach shot early, and get to the net. John executed the plan to perfection for a set and a half, getting ahead six–love, three–love, and was on the verge of a major upset. Then doubt crept into his mind. Gradually, the momentum turned and the match slipped away. John lost in a close third set.

Being an enthusiastic and caring coach, I wanted to help John feel better and give him a few ideas on how he could have closed out that match. While he sat on the bench, frustrated and dejected, I approached him. I told him how proud I was that he competed so hard. I also emphasized that for much of the match he had demonstrated how far his game had come and that his hard work was paying dividends. John just looked at me blankly. I kept talking. I told him that his original plan of taking the ball early and attacking his opponent's backhand seemed to work well and that it would have been interesting to see what would have happened if he kept doing that. John then gave me a vicious stare and stormed off the court.

“What happened?” I asked myself. I was just trying to help him learn. I gave him feedback in a caring, supportive way and only a few things to work on. I thought John really wanted improve.

The next day John came to me and told me that after a match, especially after a loss, he does not want to hear any feedback, positive or negative. If it is something reinforcing, or positive, he is not going to be able to hear it in the emotion of the moment. If it is something developmental, or something that might be viewed as negative, he is going to be even more upset. That was a great lesson for me: When emotions are running high, hold off on feedback. There will be plenty of time for it later. I have tried to use this lesson in my work in the business arena as well.

When the timing is right, it is important to receive permission to deliver feedback. If you're not sure, just ask, “Is this a good time?” Words must be welcomed to be received. Again, simply asking a question is a good way to approach this—“May I share something with you?” In a coaching relationship, as a business coach or a coaching leader, agreements can be reached up front about how a person likes to receive feedback, and when. Well-functioning teams establish a charter that grants permission for all team members around giving and receiving feedback. Fundamentally, feedback is

MAKING FEEDBACK EFFECTIVE

not effective when it's force-fed; getting permission ensures that you will be heard.

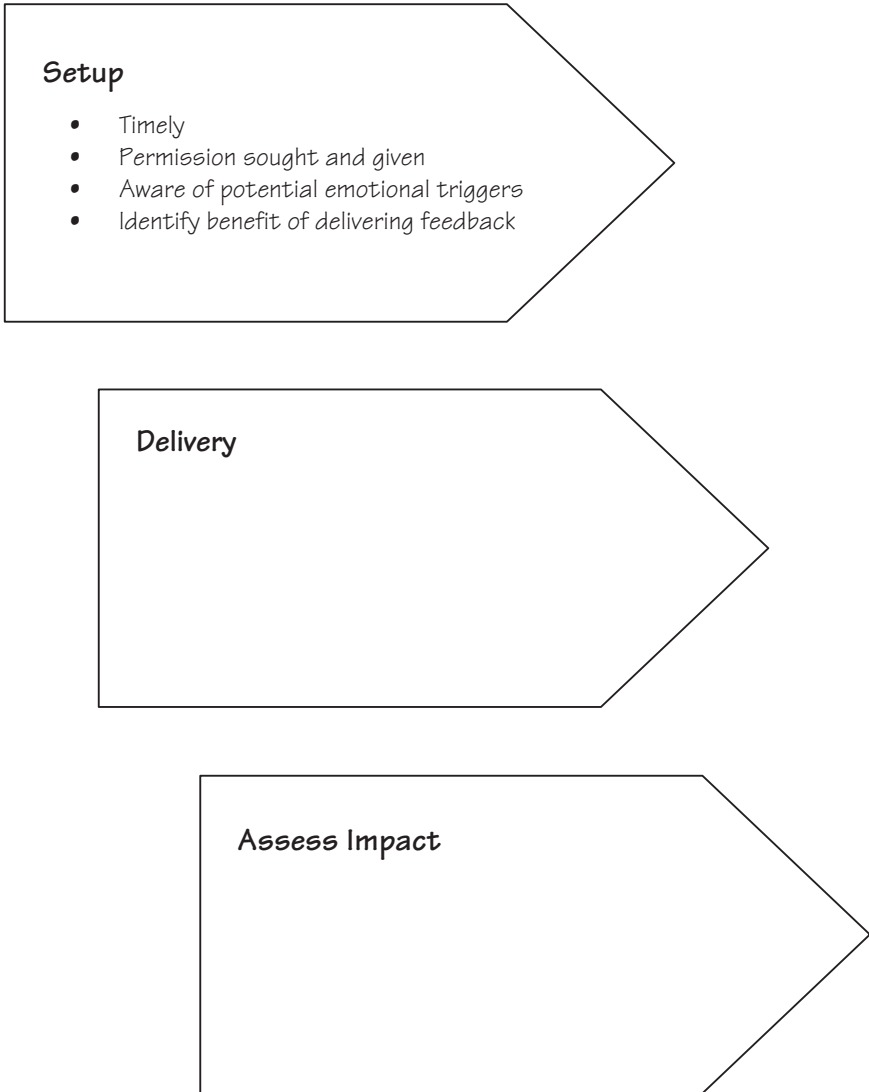
Preparing to give feedback and not shooting from the hip also requires understanding as many perspectives as possible around the issue. Make sure the point you seek to make is not your favorite ax to grind, but a real, substantive issue shared by many. As coaches, we do this through 360-degree assessments or 360-degree interviews. Team leaders do this by polling the opinion of team members. It is critical, however, that you are not the only person who shares the opinion of the feedback being considered but that it is something that is seen by as many perspectives as possible.

The next step in preparing for effective feedback is being aware of your emotional triggers and internal motivations. Here is again where we must think and not blink. Certain buzzwords have a way of setting us off, or a roll of the eyes—that may be just the adjustment of a contact lens—may rub us the wrong way. Being aware of these emotions and not letting them hijack us in a crucial conversation is critical, as is being aware that as human beings all that we can see are another's external actions, not their internal intentions. We get into trouble when we try to interpret those actions and draw conclusions regarding their intentions. In other words, give people the benefit of the doubt, observe actions without recrimination, and don't jump to conclusions regarding them. In doing so, you first are creating safety within yourself and laying the groundwork for effective communication.

Also be aware of your own motivation in giving feedback. Are you truly trying to be helpful or are you seeking attention? Are you trying to look better than the person you are addressing, or are you trying to undermine an initiative you never agreed with in the first place? Only you know what your true motivations are, and if they are not pure, your feedback will be taken as manipulative, and consequently not be effective. Again, this is where we should think and not blink. Feedback is only effective when it is given from a desire to serve the organization, not your own career. College coaching legend John Robinson followed this rule: "I never criticize players unless they are first convinced of my unconditional confidence in their ability."

Effective Feedback Stage One: Setup

Effective Feedback Model



Finally, prepare for giving feedback by focusing on the benefit it will bring. Seek to state in one clear, simple sentence what contribution the input you are offering will bring. If you can't do this, don't give feedback. It will help no one and backfire on you. Ask yourself, "Am I part of the problem or am I part of the solution?" If you are neither, get out of the way.

EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK STAGE TWO: DELIVERY

After you've completed the steps in Setup for effective feedback, it is now time to speak. Here is what it takes to deliver feedback in an effective manner. First, speak from your own perspective. Feedback should be firsthand, that is, stated in the first person. What do you believe? What have you experienced? Don't hide behind others or quote sources not present. Speak from your own perspective. Starting the conversation with words like, "This is my opinion . . ." or "From my perspective . . ." can help you get started on the right track.

Next, share your observations. The focus here, again, is on actions and not intentions. In the *New York Times* best-selling business book, *Difficult Conversations*, the authors of the Harvard Negotiation Project refer to a ladder with four rungs. The first rung is **available information**. The second rung is our **observation** of available information. The third rung is our **interpretation** of the information based on our observation, and the fourth rung is the **conclusions** we reach based on our interpretation. "In difficult conversations," the authors conclude, "too often we trade only conclusions back and forth, without stepping down to where most of the real action is: the information." (Stone, Patton, Heen, 2000, page 30)

For example, pretend my wife and I go to a friend's wedding. She raves afterward at how beautiful the bride's dress was and I laugh at how the best man almost fainted. I may not have noticed the bride's dress at all and she may not have noticed the best man swaying back and forth during the ceremony. If someone were to talk to us separately, they might conclude that we weren't even at the same event. That is the power of interpretation and conclusion. So here is where Delivery, track two of effective feedback, begins: offering our personal observation of available information without conclusion or interpretation. Do this in a neutral way with an honest desire to create greater understanding between two human beings.

If feedback needed is around an issue that hurt you in some way, the next step in being effective in delivering feedback is to simply explain the impact of these actions on you. If you were holding a nail that I was trying to hit with a hammer, and I missed the nail and hit your thumb,

Effective Feedback Stage Two: Delivery

Effective Feedback Model

Setup

- Timely
- Permission sought and given
- Aware of potential emotional triggers
- Identify benefit of delivering feedback

Delivery

- *Speak from your own perspective*
- *Share your specific observations*
- *Explain the impact of the behavior on you*
- *Allow silence and time to reflect*
- *Encourage clarifying questions*

Assess Impact

it would hurt. Did I intend to hit your thumb? No. But I did anyway. Impact and intent are two separate issues. You can speak to me about what I did to hurt you without concluding that I did it on purpose. In fact, if you want to prevent me from hitting your thumb again and hurting you even more, you **must** speak with me about it. Effective feedback does not shrink from telling another person how his or her actions made an impact, neither does it assume, however, that those actions were intentional.

Having shared your feedback in this way, it is now time to let the other person reflect on what you said. Don't rush on to a new topic. Just wait and let the other person break the silence. This may be a few seconds or a few days, but you must wait. Force-feeding feedback and insisting that people process it on your timetable does not work. Give people the space they need to think through what you have said. If another meeting needs to be set to follow up on the discussion, set it. Don't let this be a delay or denial tactic, however; be true to the issue and make sure that a follow-up meeting actually happens.

Finally, turn the feedback table around and encourage clarifying questions. Let them ask you about what you said. Have a question or two handy to prime the pump and make this offering of input a true collaborative experience. Don't, under any circumstances, state your case and walk out the door. As entertaining as that is in movies and sitcoms, it destroys relationships and will make your feedback null and void. Again, take the time to respond to clarifying questions that will build bridges to greater understanding.

One of Sean's clients masterfully applied these first and second feedback stages to her supervisors, a very tricky thing to do. Sean tells her story:

Aby worked for a marketing firm where she was a consultant. In the contracting phase of our coaching, Aby and I discussed how each of us prefers to deliver and receive feedback. I presented the feedback tracks outlined in this chapter. Aby explained that she preferred for me to be direct with her because she trusted that I had her best interests at heart. She further explained that giving candid feedback had always been a

Effective Feedback Stage Two: Delivery

challenge for her and asked that we spend some time working on that skill. So we did.

On one particular occasion Aby had a perfect opportunity to use her newfound skill with her supervisors. Without consulting their employees, the partners of Aby's company did some restructuring. They "promoted" Aby and a few other consultants to vice president. While the partners expected the new VPs to be grateful, the consultants were not pleased. The title was nice, but roles and responsibilities did not really change and compensation would actually decrease. Understandably, Aby felt uncomfortable about approaching the managing partners because they had been so enthusiastic about awarding the promotions. On the other hand, she felt manipulated by them because they would be keeping more of the money that she earned. Aby felt stuck, like many leaders who need to provide feedback upward to supervisors who sign their paychecks.

Aby felt strongly that a candid conversation with the partners would help her understand the partners' motivations behind their decision and keep herself from making assumptions about their intentions. But how would she actually do it? This situation was a great opportunity to apply the steps of the first two feedback tracks we had been working on. Armed with these insights, she set up a meeting.

When Aby arrived for the meeting, she was greeted with cheery smiles. The first question asked was, "How are you adjusting to your new role?" Aby resisted the temptation to soften her message and retreat into safety and accommodation. She replied, "Actually, that is what I am here to talk to you about."

Aby carefully explained that she was uncertain about how to react to the promotion. While the title was appealing, the loss of income was a concern. Moreover, she added, the fact that neither Aby nor her new fellow VPs were consulted prior to the move was frustrating. Aby noticed the crestfallen look on the faces of the two partners and felt badly, but continued calmly, "I want to be excited about being a vice president, but I need some clarity and understanding about your decision and the position you want me to fulfill."

For Aby, this was a tense moment. She had a strong desire to please her bosses and wanted to make them feel better. But she restrained herself and let her words linger. After some silence, one of the partners said, "Thank you for voicing your concerns. We heard that there were some grumblings about a move that we believed would be very popular.

MAKING FEEDBACK EFFECTIVE

You are the first person to articulate those frustrations. Apparently we were not as clear about our intentions and long-term plans for the VP position.” They then proceeded to explain what prompted the decision—unexpected growth of the firm—and the long-term roles, responsibilities, and benefits of the new position.

Both partners apologized for not being as clear as they needed to be. They had been extremely busy managing business affairs of the company. They promised to meet with all the new VPs that week to explain the move in greater detail. Before Aby left the office, she thanked them for taking the time to meet with her and for making her feel much more comfortable about approaching them in the future.

EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK STAGE THREE: ASSESS IMPACT

In following up with feedback we make sure that the message delivered is clearly understood and that appropriate steps of action are being taken. The point of asking clarifying questions, the last step in the Delivery stage, is to ensure the content of our communication is heard and understood. The point of this first step of the third stage, ensuring the message is clear, is not asking for agreement but for mutual understanding. We are, in a sense, sitting down at a table with another person and placing our message on it. If we come to the table with too strong a voice, it will shut some people down and others will walk away. If, however, we come with a desire for mutual understanding, all parties at the table become willing to participate in open dialogue. The desire for open dialogue exists in each of the three tracks, but when we stay committed to it even after we have said what we needed to say, others sense that it is not a false pretense to get our own way. They then become more open to what we have to say.

The second step in assessing impact is letting the recipient of feedback decide whether the feedback is valid. Effective feedback is like giving a gift with a gift receipt. A person can take that gift and make it her own, or return it unused. It is her choice. Ironically, this gives feedback its power, an ironclad commitment to not force-feed it to others, but to let them receive it and embrace it for themselves. In

Effective Feedback Stage Three: Assess Impact

this, as with many things in life, the way up is down. The openhandedness of this step actually gives people a choice to own what you have to say, for “a man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still.”

The next step in this stage is to validate the feedback through the perspective of others. Self-validation sometimes leaves us wondering if a matter is really true, while talking with others nails down in our mind with greater clarity exactly what the issue is. This is done as simply as breezing in to an associate’s office and asking what he thinks about a matter or taking time in a team meeting to completely discuss a matter.

Action must be the end result of effective feedback and this next step in this stage is figuring out new ways of doing things. A coach may brainstorm with a client possible solutions to a problem, choose one, and hold a client accountable for taking it. A manager may help an associate discover a new way of completing a project and set dates and deadlines for its completion. Even in managing up, the questions can be asked honestly and humbly, “What can we do differently?” Answering questions like this allows a person to articulate new learnings or behaviors. The very act of vocalizing our new discoveries to another person strengthens our resolve to take them and empowers us to act.

Finally, we close the feedback loop by following up on the specific commitments made in the previous step. This is central to the work of business coaching and the accountability that accelerates performance. Any long-term relationship can have this dynamic, however, not just a coaching relationship. According to research from the American Society for Training and Development, making a commitment to another person to take a certain course of action makes that action 65 percent probable. Having a specific accountability appointment with a person regarding that same action increases its probability by nearly half to 95 percent. We also close the feedback loop by getting feedback on our feedback. This means taking the time to find out how the process worked for the other person, what we could improve on how we give feedback, and how a person would like for us to speak to her differently in the future about important issues.

Effective Feedback Model

Setup

- Timely
- Permission sought and given
- Aware of potential emotional triggers
- Identify benefit of delivering feedback

Delivery

- Speak from your own perspective
- Share your specific observations
- Explain the impact of the behavior on you
- Allow silence and time to reflect
- Encourage clarifying questions

Assess Impact

- Ensure message is clear
- Give time for recipient to consider if the feedback is valid
- Explore options or remedies
- Articulate expected behaviors
- Close feedback loop

Sean trains his clients in each stage of the feedback process. Together they practice this skill with made-up situations, then with situations from the past or the present where a client needed to give feedback and held back, or gave feedback that was harsh and demanding. This role-playing exercise, while at times awkward, lets a person practice the new skill in a safe environment. A client then goes

Effective Feedback Stage Three: Assess Impact

and uses the three stages in real life and debriefs the experience with Sean afterward, celebrating what he did right and learning from what he did wrong. Finally, Sean asks his clients to teach the three stages to one other person, closing the learning loop. Along the way, Sean models how to deliver effective feedback in real time as he interacts with his clients so they learn from him firsthand what effective feedback looks like.

BUSINESS IMPACT STORY: HOW EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK TRANSFORMED A FRUSTRATING COACHING ENGAGEMENT

Sean relates this story about the impact of effective feedback in a coaching relationship:

Last year I worked with a client, Katherine, from a large tech company. She was very well-respected in her organization as a terrific producer. She had been recently promoted to a leadership position in the company. Our coaching engagement was focused on helping her transition from a producer to a leader. In our initial meeting, she shared her frustration that she had many solid, innovative proposals that she was having difficulties getting accepted. In her opinion, these proposals were much stronger than many others that the company had acted on. She wanted to improve her powers of persuasion.

At the outset of any coaching relationship, I try to get insights from several sources about how a client operates to see where we should focus our attention. I read job reviews and conduct interviews with many of the people the client works with: bosses, peers, subordinates, and clients. In Katherine's case, one theme consistently appeared: She did not listen very well. She had her own agenda and could be very stubborn about it. When I shared this feedback, all of which Katherine had heard during her annual performance evaluations, she shrugged off the criticism.

Regarding one comment, she replied, "I can tell by the wording that is Elliot. He and I are up for the same promotion; obviously he doesn't want me to get it, so he made up that complaint." Another comment was also disregarded: "Jennifer said that. She works for me and I didn't give her the assignment she really wanted. Other people were more qualified.

(Continued)

BUSINESS IMPACT STORY: HOW EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK TRANSFORMED A FRUSTRATING COACHING ENGAGEMENT *(Continued)*

She's just trying to get back at me." Clearly, from her perspective, none of the remarks had any merit.

We were very early in our coaching relationship, so rather than argue with Katherine, I made a mental note about this listening challenge. After two sessions, however, her inability (or unwillingness) to listen became very apparent in our work together. Though she was an engaging person and excited to share ideas in our meetings, Katherine's exuberance often led her to interrupt me. After the third interruption in the first 10 minutes of our third conversation, I decided that it was a good opportunity to bring immediacy to the coaching conversation and comment on what was happening now, in this room. If I could share my experience of Katherine's interrupting me, devoid of any perceived ulterior motives, perhaps she would hear the feedback better.

Having already heard several perspectives about this issue, I only needed to get her permission and set up the feedback appropriately. I asked Katherine if she minded my sharing something that I had noticed. She said that she was happy to hear what I had to say. I asked her if she knew that she had just interrupted me before I finished my last sentence.

She was surprised, "No, I didn't interrupt you! I thought you had finished speaking. You made a good point and it made me think of something I wanted to share with you." I explained that she actually had interrupted me. I said that it appeared that she was listening, but I didn't have the chance to finish my thought and that interruption made me think that she was not interested in my final point. She quickly apologized.

This was a great opportunity for me to explain that this was not the first time she had interrupted me. In fact, I recounted that it had happened three times already today and several times in our previous meetings. I explained that we both bring all of ourselves to these meetings. I act in the coaching sessions very much as I would outside, just like she does.

"Is it possible," I asked, "that you might interrupt some of your colleagues at work without knowing it, just like it happened a minute ago?" She took a minute to think about that likelihood and responded that it was possible. I ventured to ask if that could contribute to the feedback she had received about her listening skills. She said she was not sure, but it was worth considering.

Top 10 Ways to Use This Tool

This conversation seemed to be a true revelation for Katherine. She was genuinely excited about gaining this insight. How ironic, considering how many times she had heard similar feedback in the past. She was either not ready to hear it or did not like the way it was delivered. To clarify, she asked questions about the other times she had interrupted and how she might have missed the points I had been trying to make.

The next step was to brainstorm about what to do about this tendency to interrupt. Being a driven producer, Katherine wanted to commit to ending this habit immediately. I tried to rein her in and help her see that there was considerable value in her simply gaining an awareness of how frequently and under what circumstances these interruptions happen. After a discussion on how she would do that, our meeting was over.

The following Wednesday we met again. Katherine was giddy with excitement. She rushed to tell me, "Sean, you're not going to believe it: I counted how many times I interrupted people after our meeting last week. By noon on Friday I had already interrupted people twenty-two times." She was thrilled with her discovery and continued, "I stopped counting after that because I realized how often it was happening. I learned so much about myself. Now I want to learn how to stop doing it."

Katherine worked hard at improving her level of curiosity. She learned how to wait for a lengthy pause in the conversation or to ask other people if they had more to add. Her listening skills improved and people who avoided important conversations with her before made efforts to connect with her again. Continued growth in this area will be crucial, but Katherine has gained awareness and is getting much better at listening.

Sean earned his MBA in 2005 from Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland, and is an ICF-credentialed executive coach, speaker, and trainer, certified through the Hudson Institute in Santa Barbara. He works with executives and entrepreneurs on leadership, communication, and team building. Numbered among his clients are: Ford Motor Company, ConAgra Foods, Franklin Templeton Investments, and Philips Electronics. For nearly a decade before this, Sean served as the men's tennis coach at Santa Clara University. Having earned a world ranking as a player on the professional tennis circuit, Sean took over a struggling university program and produced eight winning seasons in nine years. As the four-time West Coast Conference Coach of the Year, Sean led his team to national rankings in each of his last three campaigns. Sean utilizes his experience in coaching athletics to motivate and inspire his clients to grow and excel.

TOP 10 WAYS TO USE THIS TOOL

1. Dissect a feedback session gone bad. Choose an experience where you gave feedback or someone gave feedback to you that did not go well. Review each of steps in the three feedback stages and determine exactly where it went wrong and how those mistakes could have been prevented.
2. Identify three common communication scenarios in your clients' life and role-play using the three feedback tracks in them. Practice using the steps of effective feedback until you and your clients are completely comfortable implementing them.
3. Choose one real-life crucial conversation your client needs to conduct and practice having that conversation, even writing a script for the conversation based on the steps of the feedback tracks. Help your client pick a day and a time to deliver this feedback and debrief the experience in a coaching session. What went well? What could have gone better?
4. Before delivering a piece of feedback, help your client summarize the intended outcome in 25 words or less. This exercise brings incredible clarity to the feedback process. Then ask, "Does it matter?" If it does, move on. If it doesn't, drop it. Not every issue in an organization needs to be addressed. Wisdom in corporate life often lies in knowing what to pursue and what to let go.
5. Help your clients teach the three feedback stages to another person or to their team. Not only will this experience reinforce learning, but it will also increase their public accountability for staying true to the process.
6. In a small group setting it is very effective to practice delivering feedback with real-life communication scenarios. I have used conversations between a salesperson and an administrative assistant, between a customer service rep and an irate customer, or between two dueling managers to practice feedback in a small group setting. Break the team into two groups and have one group show everyone how to deliver feedback *wrong*, violating every point in the process. This is a lot of fun and gets people laughing. Then have the other group do it *right*. Switch groups,

Top 10 Ways to Use This Tool

have the group that did it wrong do it right and vice versa, and switch scenarios.

7. E-mail is a common way feedback is being given today, and it rarely works. That is because e-mail does not allow for the first two conditions for effective feedback: making it timely and seeking permission. Talk through your clients' use of e-mail in crucial conversations and draw up a set of personalized guidelines around this issue. Help them have the same discussion with their team and establish team protocols for the use of e-mail in sensitive situations.
8. By nature, some of us tend to be more safe in a crucial conversation and settle for accommodation. Others of us tend to be more sound and pursue confrontation. Neither alternative works on its own. Help your clients identify which style they tend to bring to the feedback process and develop effective strategies to be both safe *and* sound in it.
9. For more help on assessing your clients' approach to delivering feedback, have them take the *Style Under Stress Test* at www.vital-smarts.com. This is a free, self-scoring assessment provided online by the people who wrote the book *Crucial Conversations*. Results will pinpoint the exact challenges your clients have in conducting crucial conversations and will direct you to the chapters of the book that are the greatest help in addressing them.
10. For a very modest investment consider using the *Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument*. This fully validated profile is available from CPP, the company that administers the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*. This instrument helps a person discover the specific style they bring to conflict and how to use other styles that might be more effective, given the demands of the situation. CPP has both individual and team profiles that you can use without certification. You can even buy a complete conflict mode workshop from them with PowerPoint slides and handouts to add to your menu of services.

A New Twist on SWOT

Socrates believed an unexamined life was not worth living. Honest self-evaluation can be a powerful tool to help you quickly and deeply understand your areas of strength and weakness while helping you take advantage of opportunities and stay aware of threats.

A classic tool for accomplishing this is a SWOT Analysis. SWOT, which stands for **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats, can be used on an individual basis, but is most powerful when used by a group of people to evaluate a business or team.

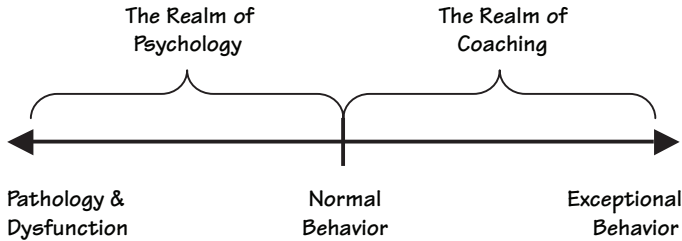
A BUSINESS CASE FOR SWOT

There has been much written about focusing on strengths in the psychology and, more recently, business literature. Since Freud, the field of psychology has been built on the medical model. When I (Stephen) was teaching psychopathology in a graduate psychology program, many students were frustrated to learn the traditional textbook definition of “normal” was “the absence of pathology.” In other words, anyone who doesn’t exhibit signs of abnormal behavior is considered in psychological terms to be “normal.” Many leaders define their teams in the same way—if the team is not fighting, they are fine.

One of the many problems with that approach is how self-limiting it can be. Just because a team, or small business, is getting along does not mean they are performing at their optimal level. As a former mental

A NEW TWIST ON SWOT

health therapist, I've had many people ask me what the difference is between psychology and coaching. Here's a helpful illustration:



Fundamentally, the work of a psychologist is to take someone from pathology and dysfunction and return him to normality. The work of a coach is to take someone who is normal and help her become exceptional. Isn't this a similar goal of a strong leader or manager—to take the team he has been given and help them maximize their potential?

In the mid 1990s, a growing number of psychologists began to speak out about the inherent limitations of the medical/pathology model. They introduced a "strengths-based approach" that much of our current leadership literature is based on. Martin Seligman, Ph.D., former president of the American Psychological Association, has promoted this new model extensively in his best-selling works *Learned Optimism* (1998) and *Authentic Happiness* (2004). He found numerous examples of people who were more satisfied and happy, both personally and professionally, when they were able to work in a position that emphasized their strengths rather than their weaknesses.

The SWOT tool does exactly that. It helps us focus on our strengths, the current capabilities our people possess to get the job done. It also looks at the strengths that exist in the marketplace, or external opportunities. By focusing on these keys, we move from monitoring the absence of pathology and dysfunction to discovering the person's performance and potential.

However, we know that weaknesses exist and they won't go away if we ignore them. Without becoming obsessed with them, a SWOT analysis takes an internal assessment of reality. Threats also exist to any business, and they, too, must be honestly addressed. So the SWOT

A Business Case for SWOT

assessment gives place to looking at these current and future challenges outside of one's internal world. In this way, you are able to take an accurate snapshot of your business at any time. Here is how this picture of reality should be framed:

	INTERNAL REALITY	EXTERNAL REALITY
<i>Positive</i>	<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Opportunities</i>
<i>Negative</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>	<i>Threats</i>

This SWOT exercise is simple in its process, yet profound in its results. Great leaders and great coaches help others look at reality both in the present and the future with a clear view of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. As you go through this analysis, give yourself enough time to carefully consider each question. Some of the questions may be more applicable to managers, others to business owners and executives, and still others to teams. Feel free to adapt the questions to your specific situation.

Strengths

1. What do clients and outside partners say is your top strength?

2. What do you currently do better than anyone else?

A NEW TWIST ON SWOT

3. What were your motivating factors and influences in starting this business or taking a leadership role?

4. What achievements have you found the most satisfaction in doing?

5. To what do you attribute your current level of success?

6. How do you measure success? What does success look like to you?

7. What are the top five reasons a client should buy from you and not from your competitors?

A Business Case for SWOT

8. What are the top five reasons a company should hire or promote you?

9. What are two real-life examples where you or your team showed creativity and ingenuity?

10. What are two real-life examples where you or your team demonstrated critical thinking and were open-minded to trying new ways?

Weaknesses

1. What are two or three areas your staff or team members complain about the most?

A NEW TWIST ON SWOT

2. What are two or three areas your clients or customers complain about the most?

3. Of the following areas, which ones do you do the poorest in: customer follow-up, timely billings, marketing, sales, being detail oriented, customer satisfaction, empowering team members to make decisions, and so forth?

4. What does your competition do better than you do?

5. Which areas do you, your employees, or partners procrastinate the most on?

6. How do you position your company in comparison to your competitors? (The cheapest, most expensive, generalist, specialist, small, big, focused, diverse, and so on.)

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7. If you could change three things about your company, what would you change? What would you change first? Why?

Opportunities

1. Who are the people who already have a relationship with your potential clients? How can you start to build a relationship with them?

2. What are you doing to position your company as being on the cutting edge as a leader in the industry?

3. How could you better use the media to position yourself and your company as experts?

4. How could you take full advantage of:
- Changes in technology (for example, online social networking web sites, blogs, autoresponders, e-commerce, outsourcing)

A NEW TWIST ON SWOT

- *Changes to the marketplace, both locally and nationally*
- *Changes in government policy related to your field*
- *Changes in social patterns, population movement, changing demographics, lifestyle changes, and so on*
- *Changes in buying cycles and needs (faster turnaround time, lower prices, more selection, better quality, customization requests, and so on)*

Threats

1. *What are the five greatest obstacles your company or team currently face?*

2. *How does rapidly changing technology affect your business model?*

3. *What are the current trends in your industry?*

4. *How does the economy affect your business for good or bad?*

A Business Case for SWOT

5. What are you currently doing to identify, train, and retain your top employees?

6. What would happen if your top three people were hired away by your most aggressive competitor?

7. How long would it take you to be up and running if your company was robbed or your building burned down?

8. What is the worst-case scenario you fear the most?

9. How can you better prepare to minimize the damage this would cause if it ever came true?

QUESTIONS FOR DEEPER SWOT ANALYSIS

The following four questions are best used after you have already answered the earlier questions because they are based on comparing and contrasting two areas of the SWOT grid to determine different strategies needed for success.

1. How can your current strengths be leveraged to take advantage of developing opportunities? What are the strengths you will need to develop in the next 12 to 24 months to better position yourself or your company to profit from and quickly take advantage of new opportunities as they arise? **This is called an S-O analysis, the upper tier of the SWOT grid of Strengths and Opportunities.**

2. What specific ways can your strengths be used to counteract potential threats? How can you create an environment such that your team's creative thinking, ingenuity, and exceptional follow-through can flourish and not be diluted by perceived or real threats? **This is called an S-T analysis, a cross tier of the SWOT grid of Strengths and Threats.**

Questions for Deeper SWOT Analysis

3. How can your weaknesses be overcome to tap into developing opportunities? What additional opportunities could you benefit from if you didn't have these weaknesses? What are two ways you could use delegation, outsourcing, or technology to minimize or eliminate your weaknesses? **This is called a W-O analysis, a cross tier of the SWOT grid of Weaknesses and Opportunities.**

4. Can you change your weaknesses by adding to or changing your team so that you can quickly counteract real threats? How does your team decide whether something is a real threat versus a perceived threat? How can you empower your team to take decisive action, instead of being paralyzed, in the face of a real threat? **This is called a W-T analysis, the bottom tier of the SWOT grid of Weaknesses and Threats.**

BUSINESS IMPACT STORY: LAW FIRM AVOIDS IMPLOSION USING SWOT

In my company, The Rainmaker Institute (www.TheRainmakerInstitute.com), we have coached, trained, and consulted with more than 6,000 attorneys from hundreds of small law firms across the country. Like most service professionals, attorneys are very good at being technicians; they know the *practice* of law, but very few understand the *business* of law. I have used the SWOT tool dozens of times with my clients and found it to be very helpful in presenting them with insight into how they can build on their strengths, what kinds of people they need to hire next to better take advantage of opportunities, and to assist them in creating a plan for success. Below is a typical case study inspired by my work with three of my recent law firm clients.

The “Smith Law Firm” (not their real name) is located in Los Angeles and focuses on general business litigation and commercial real estate transactions. They have 5 partners and 15 associate attorneys. Bob, the founder of the firm and the biggest rainmaker, is getting ready to retire next year. Revenues have been steady, but most new work is brought in by Bob and one other partner, a litigation attorney with poor interpersonal skills.

In working with the firm, I had all of the partners and two of the associates work through the questions at a one-day retreat. Here’s an overview of what they found.

Strengths of the Firm Were Easy to List:

- The founder of the firm is well recognized and respected in the community. He has been selected as a “California Super Lawyer” every year for the last five years, he regularly speaks at industry events, and is cited in local newspapers as an expert.
- The firm had a good diversity of practice areas that allowed for a wide variety of clientele and cushioned them against any sudden economic downturns.
- Overall, the firm had a great win-loss record and their top litigator was excellent in the courtroom.
- The firm’s revenues have increased by at least 10 percent every year for the last six years.
- This pattern of growth was a great recruitment tool to capture the attention of bright young associates, but even that wasn’t enough,

Questions for Deeper SWOT Analysis

because many of the larger firms had suddenly increased new associate pay by 10 to 15 percent in the past year.

Their Major Weaknesses Were:

- Bob and the litigator were really the only lawyers well known in the industry, and most attorneys outside the firm didn't even like the litigator. The firm would face a crisis in significantly fewer referrals when Bob retired in 12 months.
- When talking to the news media about elevating a few partners, signs of infighting began to occur because everyone wanted to be recognized as the next "Super Lawyer."
- Who the next managing partner would be after Bob left was a big question. The litigator has already stated at several partner meetings that he is the natural choice because of how much money he brings in to the firm each year. He also, not so quietly, insinuated that he might leave the firm if he is not chosen. The other three partners have had closed meetings where some said they would leave if he is given the top position.
- With the increased competition in the industry, the sales cycle with new clients was growing longer and it was becoming increasingly difficult to land the most lucrative deals.
- Many of the partners are over 60 (an increasing occurrence in law firms) and have a difficult time connecting with young business owners. The partners can name several potential clients they had lost to other firms in the last few months that have younger partners.

Opportunities Abound for This Firm:

- Bob needs to start introducing other partners to his media contacts and getting them some coverage. He needs to start deferring to them when the media calls asking for a comment.
- Bob needs to immediately start taking on fewer cases so that he can spend more time with other partners introducing them to his referral sources and build the relationship bridge between them.
- A full-blown effort is needed to cross-train younger attorneys with stronger interpersonal skills in the art and science of litigation to offset the harshness of their primary litigator.

(Continued)

BUSINESS IMPACT STORY: LAW FIRM AVOIDS IMPLOSION USING SWOT

(Continued)

- With the transition of leadership there was a prime opportunity to put a fresh face on the firm, to attract younger, faster-growing companies, and entrepreneurs who wanted to work with an experienced attorney, but didn't want to pay the high fees the most senior partners demanded.
- At this point, most new clients coming into the firm were doing so because of well-formed relationships with the founder. The firm has the chance to branch out and try different methods of marketing such as: speaking and giving seminars, public relations, networking at trade association events, and online marketing.

Threats to Their Success:

- Professional jealousy is a hallmark among many lawyers. Bob would naturally spend more of his time introducing certain partners to his media contacts and referral sources. This would inevitably cause some jealousy among the partners not so introduced.
- Credibility is the foundation of success for most professional service firms. The founder was the key to the law firm's credibility and the firm would have to move fast to start gaining more credibility in the community by: publishing articles, building an online presence, speaking at industry events, and seeking out media attention.
- If the firm does not start on the plan soon enough they would find themselves staring down the barrel of the proverbial gun and run out of time for Bob to make all the necessary introductions to ensure a continuity of referrals.
- Bob may feel left out and may unconsciously sabotage the plan by refusing to involve other partners in the cases of his best clients or by not helping enough partners build relationships with his top referral sources.

Even though many of the partners found these statements rather obvious, it was powerful for them to lay everything on the table and discuss the possibilities openly. In the course of a day we were able to outline most of the major issues and develop a game plan for the firm based on the Deeper Analysis Questions. Like all game plans, the result depends on follow through, which is where business coaches or leaders can be worth their weight in gold.

TOP 10 WAYS TO USE THIS TOOL

1. As a business coach or consultant, the SWOT Analysis tool can be a powerful way to start off your relationship. Go through each question with the client or leadership team to help them gain a clear understanding of their current situation. This tool can be used to help clarify goals, create a game plan, outline key roles and objectives, create a better team, and assign the right people to specific tasks and responsibilities.
2. As a speaker or trainer, have your people break up into small groups, either by practice area, client focus, or department, and guide them through each step. After each section, have every group give a three-to-five-minute presentation on what they found. Switch up the teams before you go into the “Deeper Analysis Questions” section. End the training session with each team discussing its 90-day action plan.
3. Have your client, team, or department focus on how delegation, outsourcing, and technology can be better used to showcase their strengths, overcome their weaknesses, tap into new opportunities, and uncover hidden threats. Many times, people become too focused on only the skills and people in front of them instead of using creative problem solving.
4. As an internal coach, use this tool every year with every major department and leadership team as part of your strategic planning process. This can help you:
 - Uncover new trends (both positive and negative)
 - Talk about what’s going wrong (a common mistake in business is talking only about what’s going right)
 - Discuss what additional training the team needs to stay on track
 - Think strategically about recruiting new talent
 - Determine where to allocate time and money for new initiatives
5. Managers, executives, and leaders have a tendency to either gloss over problems or focus only on problems. Either one discourages their teams. Using the SWOT analysis will lend balance to your planning sessions, alternately emphasizing the positive and the negative.

A NEW TWIST ON SWOT

6. Schedule a planning retreat with your leadership team using the SWOT tool. Divide into teams and have each team tackle one of the four areas. Bring the team together for mini problem-solving presentations and have other members analyze their solutions.
7. Go to www.authentic happiness.com, Martin Seligman's web site. It offers a wide variety of free assessments and questionnaires to help you determine your natural strengths and abilities.
8. Use the SWOT tool to create a profile of the perfect job candidate. Specifically look for someone who fills the gaps in your current team. Do not make the mistake of surrounding yourself with people just like you. People who are too much like you not only often have your same strengths, but also your same weaknesses.
9. As an external coach, put together a half-day or full-day retreat. You can offer to take firms through the SWOT process for a flat fee. Having an outsider act as a guide, facilitator, and coach can be very powerful because of her objective perspective. We recommend charging \$2,000–\$10,000, depending on your market, because of the preretreat work you will have to do. Armed with this in-depth information, propose an ongoing coaching and consulting program to help them maximize their strengths and discover how to tap into new opportunities as they arise. Internal coaches could use a similar approach.
10. Offer a home study course or self-study program that people can purchase from your web site that includes a series of downloadable audio programs, worksheets, group teleseminars, and some limited coaching sessions from you. This can be a great entry point into a small business or start-up.

The Life Leadership Dashboard

Mae Owens of Winter Park, Florida, a suburb of Orlando, woke up to her worst nightmare. What she described as “a strange swishing noise” and then a “ploop,” Mrs. Owens watched from her window as a sycamore tree in the lot next to her house plummeted into the earth. Then went her yard, her driveway, and five cars—one of them a brand new Porsche 928—all like the sycamore tree, straight into the ground.

Not knowing what else to do, Mae Owens called the police. Imagine being on the other end of that call, “No, officer, my car wasn’t stolen. It disappeared!”

All officials could do is cordon off the area as hundreds of sightseers came to watch this void in the earth grow to 340 feet across and 100 feet deep. Ultimately it swallowed Mae Owens’s house, half of a six-lane highway, the municipal swimming pool across the street, and three local businesses.

Geologists refer to this phenomenon as a sinkhole. Sinkholes develop in times of drought, as underground caverns, usually full of groundwater, are drained dry. What are left are dangerous gaps in the earth’s ability to support anything that is aboveground. When the weight of roads, buildings, and businesses press down, the earth literally caves in. As urban sprawl makes its way through Florida and other densely populated states, sinkholes are becoming a common occurrence.

Leaders can be caught in the collapse of a sinkhole as well. When responsibility grows in our external world, the groundwater of our internal world can dry up. If nothing is done to fill this void below the surface, collapse is inevitable. A leadership sinkhole shows itself with nagging health problems, painful relationship breakdowns, a torrid affair, or long periods of unexplained ineffectiveness. All of these occur, as with physical sinkholes, at great cost to both individuals and organizations.

A BUSINESS CASE FOR LIFE AND LEADERSHIP

In their insightful book, *Resonant Leadership*, emotional intelligence researchers Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee refer to this as the Sacrifice Syndrome. Leaders face stress of all kinds in their external world: the responsibility of their position; the press of people problems; crises, both large and small, that occur every day. Like the heat of the desert sun, the intensity of these demands can drain our soul.

“But we are leaders!” we tell ourselves when we feel empty inside. Leaders don’t give up easily. Leaders work hard at what they do. So we throw ourselves into our work even more, like developers who keep building in dangerous terrain. After all, leaders sacrifice to get things done!

“Paradoxically, it is our effectiveness that contributes to the Sacrifice Syndrome,” *Resonant Leadership* explains. “It goes like this: In the process of giving of ourselves, we give too much, leading us to ultimately become ineffective. Over time and unchecked, the physical and emotional toll limits our ability to sustain high performance.” (Boyatzis and McKee, 2005, page 41)

Are you giving too much as a leader? In other words, has the structure of your external world risen to such an extent that the resources of your internal world are being drained dry? If that is the case, it is just a matter of time before a collapse occurs. Just like a sinkhole, when your groundwater dries up, there is not enough strength inside of you to support pressing demands. Here are 10 questions to ask yourself as a leader:

1. Do you have trouble falling asleep at night or wake up wide awake in the middle of the night?

A Business Case for Life and Leadership

2. Do you no longer talk about your problems, or anything of significance, with your spouse?
3. Do you feel that no one understands how much work you have to do, or even cares?
4. Are you working harder than ever but getting poorer results?
5. Do you have less time to do things you really enjoy? Or do you never do them any more?
6. Do you react to events with numbness? Or with over-the-top emotion?
7. Do you drink way more than you used to? Take painkillers, sleeping pills, or antacids way more than you used to?
8. Did your last truly creative idea occur years ago and you can't remember what it was?
9. Do you no longer go to church or a place of worship for quiet meditation?
10. Do you fantasize about what it would take to escape the life you're in?

How many yeses did you give to these questions? If more than three or four, you may be slipping into a sinkhole. What is the solution? The solution is to understand the demands that leadership places on us and instead of shrinking from them, seeking to replenish the resources of our internal world to meet those demands. As responsibilities grow in our external world, we must be attentive to the way those responsibilities affect us below the surface, within our soul. Through the regular practice of personal renewal we can avoid the tragedy of physical or emotional collapse.

“Sustainable, effective leadership occurs only when the experiences of the sacrifice and stress of leadership are interchanged with those of renewal,” advises *Resonant Leadership*. “Turning renewal into a habit or way of life usually means waking up to the realities of our current life and deliberately engaging in intentional change and personal transformation.” (Boyatzis and McKee, 2005, page 63)

The benefits of this approach to life and leadership are huge. Not only does a person avoid the destruction of a sinkhole, she also dramatically increases her performance and productivity. Just like the dashboard of your car, whose gauges can tell you the state of your engine,

they can also do much more than that. They give you valuable information on how to operate your car to its greatest potential. That is where this tool finds its greatest impact.

This is the point of Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz's book *The Power of Full Engagement*. There is power in engagement, full engagement with all aspects of our lives. This engagement, like gas in our tank, drives us to great performance. Here's how they put it: "Our first leadership challenge is to answer this question, 'How should I spend my energy in a way that is consistent with my deepest values?' The consequence of living our lives at warp speed is that we rarely take the time to reflect on what we value most deeply or to keep these priorities front and center. . . . Connecting to a deep set of values and creating a compelling vision fuels a uniquely high-octane source of energy for change." (Loehr and Schwartz, 2003, pages 15, 16)

Here is the bottom line for your organization: When you address the needs of both life and leadership with your people, you will have better leaders because your leaders are better people. You will also have better business results because, at the end of the day, business is driven by people. And better people drive better business results. As Wall Street tires of merely a few good quarters of financial returns, better people also deliver long-term results because their leadership success is sustained for years, even decades at a time, unaffected by the damage of sinkholes, and fueled by the power of full engagement.

BUSINESS COACHING TOOL: THE LIFE LEADERSHIP DASHBOARD

The first step of recovery from the Sacrifice Syndrome is understanding exactly how you are related to it. Dr. Doug McKinley has developed a powerful coaching tool to help you and your clients do just that. Dr. McKinley began working with entrepreneurs and executives as a professional coach in 2000. As a psychologist, he founded McKinley Consulting Group because he wanted to work in the field of leadership development with an emphasis on corporate wellness. In 2003, he expanded McKinley Consulting Group by inviting other coaches and leadership consultants to join him in pursuing corporate wellness and

Five Life Tasks

leadership development opportunities. Doug and his associates use the Life Leadership Dashboard as part of a two-day, one-on-one Leadership DNA Retreat. The dashboard is both simple and profound. It overviews a client's completion of five life tasks and asks five probing questions related to each of the five tasks.

FIVE LIFE TASKS

Renowned psychologist Alfred Adler identified five life tasks that all human beings seek to accomplish; that is, five areas hard-wired in our soul, critical to our feeling a complete sense of satisfaction and fulfillment. Some of these tasks exist in our internal world below the surface, and some of these tasks exist in our external world above the surface. Like a car firing on fewer than all of its cylinders, most of us function well in only one or two of these tasks. Sustained success, however, requires that we maximize our performance in all five of these areas. This is truly the role of a dashboard, to give us readings on our performance in critical areas related to the trip. Here are the five life tasks:

1. **The Work Task.**

Human beings have an intense desire to make a contribution to the world through what they do. This work task is the effort we make to discover our individual contribution and to use our unique gifts, talents, and abilities. The work task experiences its greatest fulfillment when we are able to use our unique ability to make a living. This task usually consumes the greatest amount of time in our life, but not always. It is often the place where we receive the greatest amount of recognition and reward.

2. **The Love Task.**

The love task is our desire to couple with another person. This desire for a significant, exclusive relationship is almost insatiable and drives us to seek intimacy and love with another human being. Regardless of the difficulties of marriage, we tend to throw ourselves into this task so that we may feel loved in a personal way. Without having success in this area of our life, we will experience a deep void.

3. The Social Task.

In addition to seeking love from a spouse, we also yearn for a sense of belonging with the people around us. The social task is our collective desire for connectedness that is only fulfilled through a network of family and friends. Despite occasional times of isolation, human beings need meaningful affiliation with others and become dysfunctional without it. We are socially embedded creatures wired to experience community.

4. The Self Task.

This task reflects the quest we have to know and care for ourselves. All aspects of personal and professional development that are important to us are encompassed in this task. This includes physical fitness, intellectual learning, outdoor recreation, and individual hobbies. The relationship we have with ourselves is as important as any other relationship we have. To enjoy a strong, satisfying life we must attend to this task in significant and meaningful ways.

5. The Spiritual Task.

This task reflects our inner awareness of a power greater than ourselves, and our connection to a deeper purpose and meaning in the world. Many people turn to religion to fulfill this task, some to social action, others to meditation. All qualify as pursuing our spiritual task. This task allows us not only to be successful in our work and relationships, but also to understand and make peace with our place in the universe.

FIVE QUESTIONS FOR EACH TASK

Having established each of the five life tasks, the Life Leadership Dashboard then asks five questions of each task for a total of 25 questions. Each of the five questions is exactly the same for each task, but may receive dramatically different responses. Here are the five questions:

QUESTION ONE: Convictions

What do you want more of in this life task? Or, what do you want less of? This question pulls at our innate desire for a better tomorrow. Each

Five Questions for Each Task

of us longs to improve in these areas in some way, or eliminate something that is inhibiting our growth. What is it? What is your vision for a preferred future in this life task?

QUESTION TWO: Capabilities

What does current reality in this area look like? What is going well, however small in size? What is your natural ability in completing a specific life task? What strengths do you bring to the table in this area? Uncovering these capabilities identifies the resources clients can leverage to affect change in a specific area.

QUESTION THREE: Constraints

What holds you back? What is getting in the way of your completing a life task? What has blocked you in the past and prevented you from making positive improvements in your life? This question is designed to identify the walls that get in the way of success and allows clients to design strategies to climb them. Working on a plan with clients without taking an honest look at obstacles that can get in the way of completing the plan does a great disservice to them. That is why the constraint question exists.

QUESTION FOUR: Community

Who is going to help you get things done in each of your life tasks? This is a critically important question. No sustained change occurs outside of relationship. It is the context of relationship—a coach, a counselor, a friend, a spouse—that provides the support and accountability needed for increased performance. Who is going to help you achieve your goals, especially when they get hard to do? How will they help you do that?

QUESTION FIVE: Conduct

What are the specific steps of action you will take to sustain change in this area of your life? This question realizes that all goals need habits—specific, repeated actions done without exception—to support them. Answering the conduct question identifies the specific behaviors that will lead to desired change.

THE LIFE LEADERSHIP DASHBOARD

These five questions and the five life tasks intersect in the following dashboard example:

The Life Leadership DASHBOARD

THE WORK TASK	
Convictions What is your preferred future?	I want to be able to sell my business and do freelance work.
Capabilities What is your current reality?	I have a high-value, current bid from a potential buyer.
Constraints What is holding you back?	It's hard to let go of 30 years of my own blood, sweat, and tears.
Community Who can help you?	My coach and a friend from college.
Conduct What are your steps of action?	Start the negotiation process ASAP.
THE LOVE TASK	
Convictions What is your preferred future?	I need to address issues in my marriage. I desire more intimacy in this relationship.
Capabilities What is your current reality?	We have 27 years together and lots of history.
Constraints What is holding you back?	It seems that both of us have given up and don't have romantic feelings for each other any more.
Community Who can help you?	A good marriage counselor.
Conduct What are your steps of action?	Start marriage counseling and talk with my wife about my concerns.

Five Questions for Each Task

THE SOCIAL TASK	
Convictions What is your preferred future?	I want to spend more time with my current friends and develop one close, deep friendship.
Capabilities What is your current reality?	I know a lot of people, so I have lots of options.
Constraints What is holding you back?	I don't really know how to get close to people, especially other guys.
Community Who can help you?	Not sure. Maybe Tom L.
Conduct What are your steps of action?	Call Tom L. and spend some time together.
THE SELF TASK	
Convictions What is your preferred future?	I want to be more self-aware, less judgmental of myself, and take better care of my body.
Capabilities What is your current reality?	I don't have much to build on here. I am basically starting from scratch.
Constraints What is holding you back?	Self-awareness has never been something I do well!
Community Who can help you?	Use a personal trainer at my athletic club.
Conduct What are your steps of action?	Get a physical exam. Begin to work out. Get started on a better eating plan.
	<i>(Continued)</i>

The Life Leadership DASHBOARD *(Continued)*

THE SPIRITUAL TASK	
Convictions What is your preferred future?	I have no idea. I seem to be void of any life purpose and would like to develop one.
Capabilities What is your current reality?	Again, I have no idea and am at a loss about this.
Constraints What is holding you back?	I have not done this because I could never find the time.
Community Who can help you?	My coach.
Conduct What are your steps of action?	Begin working with my coach on exploring themes for my life purpose.

Looking over the entire dashboard you may be able to see repeated themes, or threads woven throughout the entire tapestry of a person’s life and leadership. What themes do you see above? A key coaching skill is finding these threads and pulling on them. But instead of someone’s life unraveling, just the opposite occurs. It gets better! In this way, by working on one or two key themes, you can affect every aspect of a person’s life.

BUSINESS IMPACT STORY: HOW THE LIFE LEADERSHIP DASHBOARD TRANSFORMED THE CAREER OF A DRIVEN EXECUTIVE

Dr. McKinley shares this story from his coaching practice:

John started coaching with me to explore opportunities to advance his career. He was the president of a company owned by a parent corporation that owned several other companies as well. He had a decade of success with this company and was restless for change. He hired me to do a

Five Questions for Each Task

Leadership DNA Retreat with him. He was extremely motivated to do this work and paid for the retreat out of his own pocket because he wasn't sure his boss would approve dollars spent on "personal development."

As we began our first day together, John was convinced he would be able to drive the process to a quick and effective conclusion and, frankly, "blow me away" with his impressive talent. To his surprise the process took another path. John had never sat with another person and discussed in depth the way he thought about life, work, and success. Early in the first day he began to notice he was tapping into a different kind of energy. As we moved through the day, John was making discoveries that were both encouraging and provocative. This does not always happen on the first day of a DNA retreat, but his life themes were like low-hanging fruit that someone just needed to pick and let him do the rest.

The real breakthrough, however, came on the second day when I introduced the Life Leadership Dashboard. Frankly, no one in his corporate experience had ever been interested in anything about his life outside of work. He had been very, very successful, yet his private life did not follow a similar trajectory. As we discussed the five life tasks, he began to realize how many personal resources he had neglected. It never occurred to him that his love and social task had anything to do with work performance. He had always been told to keep work life and personal life separate and followed that dictum completely. His real awakening occurred in our discussion of completing the self task and the spiritual task. John admitted that he was a fairly shallow person and, for the most part, lived to earn money and gain status. Although he knew nothing else, he was embarrassed to admit this to me.

We completed the Life Leadership Dashboard and designed action steps based on the five questions. In each task we addressed significant themes that would require intentional action. He committed to the process thoroughly. We did six months of follow-up coaching using the dashboard as the structure for our coaching agenda. The results were rapid and beyond his expectations. Here are just a few:

- John addressed explosive marital issues, sought counseling, and saved his marriage from imminent divorce to lifelong sustainability. This transformation came through very sacrificial work with both a therapist and his wife.

(Continued)

BUSINESS IMPACT STORY: HOW THE LIFE LEADERSHIP DASHBOARD TRANSFORMED THE CAREER OF A DRIVEN EXECUTIVE (*Continued*)

- John made significant changes in his leadership style at work. He began asking empathetic questions of his management team at least one time each week. Through this question-asking practice, he shifted from being a domineering leader to becoming a relational leader. This resulted in increased performance and higher levels of employee engagement.
- His boss, the owner of the parent corporation, recognized a change in John and initiated discussions about his leading another company within the organization. This company would serve as the flagship for all the others in the corporation. Within a year, John was promoted to this new role, moved across the country with his much-happier wife, and was earning significantly higher income.
- The transformation that encouraged me the most, however, was John's personal outlook on himself and his future. He changed from being a cynical, authoritarian leader to an optimistic, relational leader. Don't misunderstand me, he was still as tough-minded and determined as ever, but he was now able to relax and enjoy the human side of leadership as well. He became, as a result, a more confident leader and a more decent human being.

No tool makes a transformation like this happen. What is so great about the Life Leadership Dashboard, though, is that it provides a structure for all aspects of one's life to be explored and gives clients the choice to live and lead in a more complete and satisfying way. At the end of the day, John did the hard work of change, but the dashboard got him headed in the right direction.

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Dr. McKinley and McKinley Consulting Group focus on healthcare leadership development. McKinley Consulting Group is a leadership consultancy that partners with hospitals and other healthcare organizations to leverage leadership capital into meaningful results using leadership consulting, executive coaching, and training programs. The advantage is in developing leadership teams from the inside out rather than transactional learning models.

TOP 10 WAYS TO USE THIS TOOL

1. It is important with any tool, but especially this one, to use it yourself *before* using it with anyone else. Take yourself on a one-day retreat or work with another coach to guide yourself through each of the life tasks and the five questions related to them. Set your steps of action and experience the “power of full engagement” in your life.
2. Consider implementing the methodology that Dr. McKinley uses with his clients as a way to initiate your coaching engagements: a one-on-one retreat. Instead of taking a few months to get to the heart of issues at hand, you will uncover them right at the start and begin immediately working on relevant goals. Better yet, hire Doug and experience the process yourself. At McKinley Consulting Group he has taken more than 100 leaders through a one-on-one Leadership DNA Retreat.
3. Consider using the Life Leadership Dashboard as an intake tool. Either in one extended session, or over the course of the first month of sessions, use the dashboard to conduct the Dialogue and Discovery Phase of the coaching flow cycle (See Chapter Eleven, “Using the 10 Tools”). Based on the answers given to the 25 questions, you can then set relevant objectives for the coaching engagement.
4. A great way to add more detail to the final question, Conduct: What are your steps of action?, is to use **The SMART Goal Worksheet**. (See Chapter Four, “Making Goals SMART”). This worksheet helps develop clarity on the measurable goal being pursued and the specific steps of action needed to achieve it. It also asks about possible obstacles and the solutions to overcoming those obstacles before they derail your progress. A client then would have five SMART goals they are working on, one for each area of his life.
5. The dashboard also works well in team settings, especially during a multiday retreat. As a coach, you can facilitate a small group of leaders processing these principles. Set the stage by developing the business case presented in this chapter and defining each of the five life tasks. Then ask the five questions for each

- life task, letting participants respond in writing for each task and sharing with team members their conclusions. Pair participants as peer coaches for follow-up to this retreat, having them hold each other accountable for goals set.
6. An overview of the five life tasks and questioning in one specific task makes for a great introduction to the process of coaching. Many coaches use a tool like this in giving a prospect a free coaching consultation. By presenting the five tasks, you get a chance to explain the philosophical foundation of your work; and by picking one task to ask the five questions, you get to demonstrate in a live setting the dynamics of coaching. Then ask, “What would it be worth to you to complete this work for every area of your life?” This is a powerful way to promote your coaching services!
 7. The Weekly Planning Cycle in Chapter Three, “The One-Percent Solution” has a similar approach with specific application to daily living and strategic time management. The Weekly Planning Cycle could be adapted to fit the five life tasks of this chapter and be used as a follow-up tool to the Life Leadership Dashboard presented here.
 8. For further research into life task theory, check out the work of Dr. Alfred Adler. Google “Alfred Adler life tasks” and you’ll find plenty of information. Early in his practice, he maintained that there were three life tasks—work, love, and social—but he later expanded the number to the five presented in this chapter, adding self and spiritual. A more popular treatment of the five-task theory can be found in the book *Living the Life You Were Meant to Live* by strategic planning consultant Tom Paterson.
 9. As you can tell from the depth of this chapter, a coach could spend at least one month of coaching around each one of the life tasks, asking questions, probing, setting goals, and holding clients accountable for doing them. Or a coach could begin a coaching engagement with an intensive one-on-one retreat and provide six months of coaching follow-up. For most of us, this is a huge paradigm shift, but Tom Paterson has developed an entire coaching process around these life tasks centered on using this exact methodology. Check it out at www.summitlifestrategies.com.

Top 10 Ways to Use This Tool

10. A free online assessment you can use with your clients around the Self and Spiritual Task is available at www.lgeperformance.com. This 26-question questionnaire measures a person's physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual energy at work and was written by the authors of *The Power of Full Engagement* mentioned earlier in this chapter. While not in perfect parallel with the five life tasks, it is a great tool to get discussion started around it and delivers results in a percentage format. A more complete printout and a 360-degree assessment on physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual engagement are also available for purchase.

The Sixth Suitcase

Life is always moving. As days turn into weeks and weeks into years, the journey continues for us all in one direction or another. Each traveler has in his possession these suitcases for the trip:

- The Work Suitcase, or our achievements
- The School Suitcase, or our education and training
- The Personality Suitcase, or our temperament
- The Interests Suitcase, or our tastes and hobbies
- The Values Suitcase, or our character

There is a sixth suitcase, however, that is crucial to effective use of the first five. “When you don’t understand what’s in your sixth suitcase,” John Bradley writes in *Discovering Your Natural Talents*, “you will almost certainly step into the trap of establishing your ambitions based only on your first five suitcases.” (Bradley and Carty, 1991, page 32) As important as excelling at work and school and understanding one’s values and personality are, without unlocking our sixth suitcase, all those pursuits will end in frustration.

Our sixth suitcase contains the natural gifts and talents we were born with. It is the unique mix of innate strengths each of us possesses that allows us to excel at certain activities. It is the unique ability of the paramedic who, when most people panic at the sound of sirens and

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the sight of blood, controls the crisis with amazing calm and provides critical care like the whole thing is happening in slow motion. It is the artist who hears the sounds of a musical work—melody, harmony, and rhythm—perfectly composed his head. Writing the complex combination of notes down on paper is almost secondary, and, in some cases, even a bother. But in the end, it is a masterpiece. And it is the business owner who knows deep in her gut that a certain product will dominate the competition and is willing to risk everything to bring it to market. She succeeds because of her unique ability to sense and meet the needs of her customers.

Unlike the other suitcases, the sixth suitcase comes already full and our life's work is to unlock its potential and unleash its power. In other words, clearly identifying our true talent—that set of natural abilities we possess and use instinctively—and aligning them with what we do every day is a lifelong process. Ironically, we are often so close to these abilities—they are instinctive, after all—that we don't see them for what they are and tend to spend our life fixing our weaknesses, not leveraging our strengths. The result is unspectacular results, unfulfilling careers, and a life unlived to the fullest. It is, then, one of the highest callings of the professional coach and business leader to help people unlock their sixth suitcase.

A BUSINESS CASE FOR THE SIXTH SUITCASE

Alignment seems like such a passive word and empowerment is so passé, but the process we are describing is making sure the tasks we perform are matched with the talents we possess. That is the key that unlocks our sixth suitcase. The greater the match, the greater the benefits. Here are a few.

BENEFIT ONE: Energy

When a wheel is out of alignment, the tires wear unevenly and faster than normal. Ultimately the tire wears out and needs to be replaced. When we go to work day in and day out and do things that don't come naturally to us, we wear out as well. The effort needed to work in an

A Business Case for the Sixth Suitcase

area that is not our true talent creates a drain of energy that is demoralizing. Contrast this with the exhilaration from working on something that comes to us naturally. We look up at the clock and are amazed at how much time has flown by and keep working in spite of the late hour. Still energized, still motivated, and still enthused. I am convinced that much of the clock-watching that takes place in business today is the result of people who are not doing what they do best. Their wheel is out of alignment and they can't wait to get off the road.

I had a coaching client who was struggling in this area. He trudged home from work every day and collapsed on the couch sleeping the evening away in front of the TV. He would then wake up and go to bed, repeating the same process again the next day. He was going to make an appointment with his doctor, which I urged him to do, when we got to talking about how his job had evolved over the years. He first came to the company as a field man, spending a lot of time out of the office. He worked in the agricultural industry, so his days consisted of being outside in the field with farmers. He loved it!

In fact, he loved it so much and did so well, that he was promoted to be—you guessed it—a manager. The management role was much different from the field man's. It required him to be mostly indoors, in meetings, and away from the growers he loved working with and had a natural talent for. Another significant part of management was the paperwork. His industry has enormous amounts of compliance forms to fill out for the government and the days when these had to be completed were the most taxing to him.

When he came back from the doctor's with nothing physically wrong, we began to rearrange his work life. He hired an assistant who had a natural talent for paperwork (these people do exist!) and began to teach her how to complete the volumes of government forms that landed on his desk. Meetings were taken out of the office and into the open air with growers and field men working together to solve problems. After a few weeks of this arrangement, this executive began to be revitalized and came into work early for the first time in years excited to start his day. He was amazed when the afternoon rolled around and he hadn't looked at his watch once. The alignment of talent to task taps a deep reservoir of energy that empowers us in our work.

BENEFIT TWO: Excellence

In my coaching engagement with this executive, I learned about the amazing development of precision agriculture. Precision agriculture applies the latest technology to farming by dividing a field into small segments and taking soil samples from each segment. The results of these soil samples are entered into a computer and when a tractor is in the field delivering herbicides, pesticides, and fertilizer the server talks to a satellite that talks to the applicator being pulled by a tractor. Based on soil sample results, chemical mixtures are adjusted to the exact needs of individual segments while the applicator is in the field. Incredible!

When agronomists started using precision agriculture, they assumed these advanced techniques would make growers more money by bringing less producing parts of their fields to yield levels that the best-producing parts of their fields had. What actually happened surprised them. Yes, less producing parts of a grower's field produced more crop by having a customized mixture of chemicals applied, but just a little bit. The greatest increase, however, came in good soils. When they measured the harvest yields of their best soil, they went off the chart.

This lesson must not be lost on those of us in business. We can spend an incredible amount of time and money fixing people's weaknesses and helping them get a little better at them. But if we develop their strengths, we will get spectacular results. Or, in the words of Marcus Buckingham and Donald Clifton in *Now, Discover Your Strengths*, we will experience "consistent, near-perfect performance." (Buckingham and Clifton, 2001, page 25) What we love to do, we also do well. And when we do something well and invest our time and energy in pursuing it, we have the ability to deliver extraordinary yields time after time.

Is weakness, then, irrelevant? No. Even the poorest producing soils benefit from precision agriculture. But improving weakness is not where we will find our best results. Aligning talent to task means analyzing all that we do and making sure that 80 percent of it is in the area of our true talent. All jobs have aspects about them that are distasteful to us, but when those aspects get beyond 20 percent, we will find ourselves in an unfruitful situation, working more and more for less and less and hating it. The key to sustained individual success is maximiz-

A Business Case for the Sixth Suitcase

ing our strengths and managing around our weaknesses within the 80/20 window.

BENEFIT THREE: Engagement

In 1960, Douglas McGregor published a groundbreaking book titled *The Human Side of Enterprise*. In it, he posed a concept, radical at the time, about employee engagement, dubbed Theory X and Theory Y. Theory X stated that people disliked work and needed to be controlled and threatened before they gave their best effort, or any effort at all. Theory Y stated just the opposite. McGregor believed that work could be an extension of oneself where employees would give themselves to it with all their effort, energy, and creativity.

Nearly 50 years later, McGregor's observations are as relevant today as in the 1960s. Theory X management represents outdated command-and-control structures that view people as interchangeable parts, not as unique individuals. Companies with this approach to people have staggering employee turnover and worker disengagement. You sense it when you call customer service and an apathetic voice answers at the other end, and you see it in plunging profits. The cost of employee disengagement is estimated to be at \$1 trillion per year, almost 10 percent of our nation's Gross Domestic Product.

Theory Y is not about holding hands and singing Kumbaya, however. It is about empowerment. Rallying around a cause that is owned by all and treating people like individuals. Wise leaders play chess, not checkers. The pieces in a game of checkers all are the same. They follow the same rules and move in exactly the same way. Chess is a different story. Each piece is different with movements that are unique to them. Chess masters, and wise leaders, view each individual as unique and work with that uniqueness to win. Helping people identify their true talent and aligning what they do with it is more than a feel-good workplace philosophy. It is a serious business strategy that elevates both individual and organizational performance to its highest levels.

BENEFIT FOUR: Enjoyment

The last benefit of aligning talent to task is a simple, personal one. Work will be fun again. It is much more fun to go to work and be fully

engaged rather than to watch a slowly ticking clock. It is much more fun to be full of energy and good at what you do, delivering consistent near-perfect performance. Quite simply, when you do what you love, you will love what you do.

Beyond this face value observation, though, there is a more complex neurological framework. When we use our true talent, because of how our brain works, our neurons fire along well-developed channels and it feels good. A pleasurable, biochemical reaction takes place in our body. We pump our fist in the air and shout, at least to ourselves, “Yes!” This is as it should be. When we work in the 80/20 window, that feeling is a daily experience, which results in a satisfying, productive career.

FOUR BUSINESS COACHING EXERCISES: UNLOCKING YOUR SIXTH SUITCASE

The material presented here for professional coaches and business leaders is a series of four exercises designed to help identify a person’s set of natural talents, and use that understanding as a filter for working with greater effectiveness. There are other great tools that can be used in addition to the exercises that follow. For example, John Bradley, author of *Discovering Your Natural Talents*, has an extensive assessment called the IDAK Career Match, and the Gallup Corporation has a free assessment called the *StrengthsFinder Profile* that comes with every copy of *Now, Discover Your Strengths*. Here, however, is our approach.

EXERCISE ONE: 10 Letters

Because our talents are instinctive to us, things we do naturally without even thinking, we often do not have the best perspective on what they are. What we take for granted is seen by others as special and unique. We are going to enlist that perspective to identify your true talent.

Select 10 people who know you well. Make sure these are people you trust and will tell you the truth. Some may be from your profes-

Four Business Coaching Exercises: Unlocking Your Sixth Suitcase

sional life and some from your personal life. A mix of both will be best. Send each this letter:

Dear Friend,

I am doing a project with my coach to help me identify my natural talent and unique ability. I have chosen you as someone who knows me well and whose opinion I trust and respect. Would you please take a few minutes to answer these questions for me? What do you see as my true talents and natural strengths? When you see me express myself, both verbally and nonverbally, how do I do it best? What is the unique way in which I build relationships and how do you see me solve problems? Do you have any concrete examples of these observations?

You and a group of nine other individuals have been asked these questions and I would appreciate your candid input. My coach and I will be discussing the results in three weeks. Could you please return your answers to him by Friday, August 19 via e-mail to bill@leadersbiplink.net? Thank you.

Sincerely,

This is an easy letter to send via e-mail, but it would also be wise to follow it up with a phone call or a visit to make it more heartfelt. You are asking these people to take time out of their busy day to give you some thoughtful input. That is a special gift; treat it as such. Having conducted dozens of these letter campaigns, I am always amazed at how people take this charge seriously and offer profound, personal insight. Nevertheless, people are busy and may need a gentle reminder or two to get it done on time.

EXERCISE TWO: 10 Experiences

While you are waiting for your 10 letters to arrive, there is an exercise that you can do to complement the input you will receive from others. Reflect on your life since high school. What have been the 10 most enjoyable experiences in your life since that time? Again, as with the letter recipients mentioned earlier, don't focus solely on professional experiences or on personal experiences. Select a mix of those things that you found the most joy in doing.

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Experience # 1: _____

Experience # 2: _____

Experience # 3: _____

Experience # 4: _____

Experience # 5: _____

Experience # 6: _____

Experience # 7: _____

Experience # 8: _____

Experience # 9: _____

Experience # 10: _____

Look over this list and reflect deeply on it. What common themes emerge? In what ways did you best express yourself, both verbally and nonverbally, in these experiences? What is the unique way in which you built relationships in them? How did you solve problems? If functioning according to your innate strengths causes your brain to fire along neural pathways that make you feel good, a key to discovering your true talent will be in reflecting on enjoyable experiences and their component parts. What are your conclusions? This exercise is best done over two weeks, devoting week one to selecting the top 10 experiences and week two to finding their common themes.

10 Letters and 10 Experiences Intersect

When you have received all your letters, read them through over and over again. Look for repeated themes and shared ideas. Key words and

Four Business Coaching Exercises: Unlocking Your Sixth Suitcase

phrases will emerge throughout the letters about your true talent, the unique ways in which you express yourself, how you build relationships, and how you solve problems. Cross-reference these insights from your friends with the observations you wrote down from reflecting on your top 10 experiences. The combination of your internal reflections and the external observations of others provide for you great insight into your true talent. What themes emerge? Identify four to six words or phrases that rise to the top of the list:

One: _____

Two: _____

Three: _____

Four: _____

Five: _____

Six: _____

Using your letters, your reflections, and even a dictionary, expand on these top four to six words or phrases with a 25-words-or-less personal definition of each.

Definition One: _____

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Definition Two: _____

Definition Three: _____

Definition Four: _____

Definition Five: _____

Definition Six: _____

Now synthesize your personalized definitions into one 25- to 50-word Sixth Suitcase Statement.

Four Business Coaching Exercises: Unlocking Your Sixth Suitcase

EXAMPLE:

I grow people with words and am a catalyst for positive change. With passion and purpose I empower teams to achieve the highest levels of performance. I see issues with a fresh perspective, synthesizing diverse ideas into an integrated whole and communicating them in a fun, interactive way.

Your First Draft

Select three or four people who know you well and whose opinion you trust, perhaps some of those who were part of your 10-letter campaign, and share your Sixth Suitcase Statement with them. Get their input on your statement—additions, subtractions, and deletions—and make any changes needed to it.

Your Second Draft

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Now put your Sixth Suitcase Statement away for two weeks.

When you pull it out again, finalize your 25- to 50-word paragraph and put it somewhere prominent in your home or office. **These are the contents of your Sixth Suitcase.**

Your Final Draft

EXERCISE THREE: Activity Inventory

Having identified your true talent, it is now time to work your 80/20 window. In others words, the contents of your Sixth Suitcase now need to be a filter for everything that you do. Again, here are the steps:

STEP ONE: On the lines on the opposite page, list everything you do during the course of an average month at your job. Be as comprehensive as possible, like answering e-mail, completing requisition forms, coordinating vendors, conducting meetings, and so forth. Leave the square next to each item blank for now.

Four Business Coaching Exercises: Unlocking Your Sixth Suitcase

Activity Inventory

1		26		
2		27		
3		28		
4		29		
5		30		
6		31		
7		32		
8		33		
9		34		
10		35		
11		36		
12		37		
13		38		
14		39		
15		40		
16		41		
17		42		
18		43		
19		44		
20		45		
21		46		
22		47		
23		48		
24		49		
25		50		

STEP TWO: Return to the **Activity Inventory** and sift everything you do through the filter of your Sixth Suitcase. Do this by coding each activity with the letter/color that follows in the square you left blank immediately to the right of the listed activity.

R for RED

This is an activity that is *not* your true talent as defined by your Sixth Suitcase. **Red means STOP doing these things.** They are sapping your energy, stealing your joy, and—be honest with yourself—you’re really not good at them. Let someone else who is good at them use her talent to get them done, or eliminate them entirely.

“Discover what you don’t like doing and stop doing it,” Marcus Buckingham counsels in his brilliant book, *The One Thing You Need to Know*, a follow-up to *Now, Discover Your Strengths*. “In this sense, success is less about accumulating and more about editing. The metaphor here is not building, but sculpting, in that sustained success is caused not by what you add on, but by what you have the discipline to cut away.” (Buckingham, 2005, page 218)

Y for YELLOW

This is an activity you may be good at, may enjoy doing, or may be required of you personally, but is *not* your true talent as defined by your Sixth Suitcase. **Yellow means CAUTION.** Just like driving through an intersection, you can stop, that is, not do the activity, or go. If you choose to go, however, do so quickly and efficiently. Yes, it’s okay to do some of these things, but these activities can easily fill your days and keep you from functioning in your area of strength, where your greatest contribution to the organization will be. To work in the 80/20 window no more than 10 of the 50 activities listed earlier can be coded yellow.

G for GREEN

This is an activity that is directly in line with what you do best, your true talent. **Green means GO.** Your goal should be to adjust your work activities so that 80 percent of everything you do is a direct ex-

Four Business Coaching Exercises: Unlocking Your Sixth Suitcase

tension of your natural strength as defined by your Sixth Suitcase, which would mean 40 of the 50 activities listed earlier are green activities. Sharpen your strength by training around it and volunteer for projects that allow you to grow in it. Recognize that saying no to the items coded red in your **Activity Inventory** is saying yes to greater joy, energy, and effectiveness.

STEP THREE: Make a list of the steps of action you need to take to delegate or eliminate the activities you coded red on your inventory, to minimize the activities you coded yellow on your inventory, and to maximize the activities you coded green on your inventory. Give each step of action a date with a deadline.

EXERCISE FOUR: Weakness Workarounds

Again, the key to unlocking our sixth suitcase is maximizing our strengths and managing around our weaknesses. So far, however, we have only focused on the first part of that equation. In our enthusiasm to deploy our strengths, we must not ignore our weaknesses. There are often things in a job that we must do that are not in the area of our true talent. To be successful, we must find a way to do these tasks that meets a baseline standard of excellence. Now that you are aligning talent to task, how are you going to execute the remaining 20 percent so that it doesn't undermine the great work you are doing?

Now, Discover Your Strengths offers four strategies:

1. **Get a little better at it.** That's all you may need. Even poorly producing soils improve with precision agriculture, and a little bit of improvement is all that the job may need. Make a game out of getting better and reward yourself for small successes.
2. **Design a support system.** I am always making lists. Not because I am incredibly organized, but incredibly forgetful. Others force themselves to count to 10 before offering an opinion in a small group to moderate their speaking gift. Whatever crutch works for you, use it!
3. **Find a work partner.** That is, develop a human support system with whom you can job share or tag team on a project.

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4. **Stop doing it.** Leadership guru Peter Drucker has said that he never met an executive who couldn't cut 25 percent of the items on his things-to-do list without it affecting his performance in any way. Reread the comments under **R for Red** and simply consider not doing these things.

What are your areas of weaknesses and the workarounds you will use from the strategies mentioned earlier to keep them from undermining the rest of your work? List them here:

Weakness One and Its Workaround: _____

Weakness Two and Its Workaround: _____

Weakness Three and Its Workaround: _____

Weakness Four and Its Workaround: _____

BUSINESS IMPACT STORY: HOW A SMALL MARKET BASEBALL TEAM
COMPETES AGAINST BIG BUDGETS AND BIGGER STARS AND WINS

The Oakland Athletics compete in professional baseball with a significant disadvantage. In 2002, the New York Yankees, a major market baseball team, had a payroll of \$126 million, and the Oakland A's, a small-market club, spent less than a third of that. Yet, in 2002, the A's and the Yankees won exactly the same number of baseball games, 103.

In 2001, Oakland spent \$34 million on player personnel and won 102 regular season games, the second-most in baseball, and in 2000 they spent \$26 million and won 91 games, making the playoffs both years. The Yankees won 95 and 87 games in each of those years, respectively, and spent over \$200 million. Over the past few years, the Oakland Athletics have spent less than a half-million dollars per win, while the richest teams in baseball spent nearly six times that much.

How do they compete against such daunting monetary odds?

They have learned how to deploy their strengths and rigorously align talent to task. Michael Lewis explains in his best-selling book, *Moneyball*, that the Oakland Athletics evaluate their players differently from the rest of the league. When baseball started paying players exorbitant sums of money for hitting home runs, the A's looked for undervalued players with discipline at the plate. They looked for hitters who worked pitchers deep into the count, tiring them over the course of the game. They also looked for batters who were willing to take walks to get on base, instead of trying to hit home runs. The result was more runs, more wins, and a smaller payroll.

What the Athletics also found out is that this discipline at the plate was not something they could teach. They tried and tried to pound into the heads of their young recruits to take their time at the plate and work the pitcher deep into the count. But most kept on swatting at the ball like it was a fly. There was, however, the kind of hitter who had an innate sense of the strike zone and an ability to work each fraction of it. This is what Oakland looked for in a hitter. Michael Lewis writes that the A's found "That the ability to control the strike zone was the greatest indicator of future success. That the number of walks a hitter drew was the greatest indicator of whether he understood how to control the strike zone." (Lewis, 2004, page 33)

(Continued)

BUSINESS IMPACT STORY: HOW A SMALL MARKET BASEBALL TEAM
COMPETES AGAINST BIG BUDGETS AND BIGGER STARS AND WINS

(Continued)

What does this mean for business? First, it means that it doesn't require loads of money to compete at the highest levels. We tend to think in business that money will solve all our problems, and the lack of it causes them. Nothing could be further from the truth. David, with five rocks and a slingshot, defeated Goliath, who was bigger and better funded than David was. Those of us who compete against world-class competition with budgets that are laughed at, like David was, should take courage. Winning is first a function of the size of our heart, not our wallet.

But the next important lesson is this: Align talent to task. Identify the strengths that are required for the things you need to get done and find people with the innate ability to do those things. Who are the people on your team with the innate ability to see the strike zone, or to greet new customers, or to handle sales objections, or to read spreadsheets? Deploy their strengths to do these jobs. There are those who love to meet people and look forward to every new opportunity, while it simply exhausts others. There are people who find objections, and sales resistance in general, motivating. It energizes them where it withers others. And there are people who can decode every dollar and every cent in every cell of a spreadsheet and bring it all together in beautiful balance.

Each one of these jobs, and dozens like them, require a natural, instinctive ability to excel at them. The results you seek in your life and the life of your organization—your wins, if you will—will come when the tasks that need to be done are matched with your talent and the talent of your people. The results you seek will come through a proper deployment of strength, not the fixing of weaknesses. The wise counsel of Jim Collins in *Good to Great* is this: Get the right people on the bus and get them into the right seats on that bus.

TOP 10 WAYS TO USE THIS TOOL

1. An executive often hires a coach to increase his effectiveness. The solution he is usually looking for is how to do more in less time, but the solution this tool offers is how to do less. Explain how the 80/20 window actually increases effectiveness and reset expectations around red-, yellow-, and green-light activities.

Top 10 Ways to Use This Tool

2. Think through all the tasks your coaching client completes in the course of a given month with the **Activity Inventory** and filter them through the grid of their Sixth Suitcase. It is hard to do this without an outside perspective because we are too close to the things we do. In initial discussions, leave nothing off the table for delegation and elimination. Nothing! Target items that make the final list for delegation and elimination one by one, incrementally making these changes.
3. Specifically define what the 80/20 window looks like for your client and set a date and deadline to get there. List the intermediate steps, put them in your planners, and keep your client accountable for hitting them.
4. Rarely do career changes need to be made as a result of this tool, but sometimes they do. A client's Sixth Suitcase statement is a key element in finding the right job, either within the same organization she is working in or outside of it. Have her use it as a magnet to draw her to her perfect job, or adjust the job she has to be her perfect job.
5. For deeper insight into a client's time usage related to his talent, conduct a time audit. Have your client keep track of what he does in every 15-minute segment of the day for at least two weeks. Thoroughly analyze how that time was spent, percentage by percentage, based on red-, yellow-, and green-light activities. Make the necessary changes from your discoveries.
6. Encourage your client to manage up with his strengths and weaknesses; that is, to share the Sixth Suitcase statement with the direct supervisor and get input on it. Encourage the same for weakness workarounds.
7. If your client leads a team, have each member of the team complete the *StrengthsFinder* profile from the book *Now, Discover Your Strengths*. As a team-building activity, put each team member's top five strengths from their *StrengthsFinder* profile into a spreadsheet and explore the differences and similarities as a group. Tasks could be reassigned based on these strengths and weaknesses workarounds distributed throughout the team. The very best leaders play chess, not checkers, with their people, treating each of them as unique individuals, not interchangeable parts.

THE SIXTH SUITCASE

8. Help create a hiring profile for the jobs your client may need to fill, based on the list of talents the very best people at that specific job possess. Brainstorm a list of open-ended questions to help uncover the presence of a talent match with candidate interviews. Create a task-and-talent profile for each of the job openings that need to be filled. Look for innate ability in the candidates who match the job that needs to be done. A bad hire will cost your company one and a half times the annual salary of this position, so choose wisely and align talent to task at the very start. Wait to hire until you have a fit.
9. For a deeper understanding of your talent, take the free online assessment *StrengthsFinder* that comes with every copy of *Now, Discover Your Strengths*. Compare the definitions of your Signature Themes from the profile with your Sixth Suitcase statement. For sales professionals, use the sales version of *Now, Discover Your Strengths* called *Discover Your Sales Strengths* by Benson Smith and Tony Rutigliano. It also comes with a free *StrengthsFinder* profile and material adapted specifically for the sales context. Chapter 9, “So You Want to Be Sales Manager?” is a must-read for any seller considering a move to management.
10. For a more in-depth analysis of a person’s talent, especially when a career change may be needed, consider using the more extensive IDAK Career Match assessment from the IDAK Group, or get the latest edition of *What Color is Your Parachute?*, by Richard Bolles.

What Color Is Your Team?

Whenever I am asked to speak on the subject of teamwork, I begin with a game. Our family loves word games, and anagrams is one of our favorites. Anagrams is played by taking a word or phrase and rearranging the letters to form other words. No slang, no proper nouns, no abbreviations, and no words fewer than three letters.

On a flip chart I write the words *One Audacious Claim* and shout, “Go!” Each person has 60 seconds to write down as many words as they can. Stirring the competitive fires a bit, I offer a prize to the winner and demand the audience not cheat. At the end of 60 seconds, people in the room have formed their words, some as few as five or six and others as many as 15 or 16.

Then I put everyone in groups of four, have them choose a recorder, and repeat the process again with the same three words. At the end of 60 seconds these small groups have come up with 30, 40, and even 50 words from *One Audacious Claim*. We list the very real lessons on teamwork that we have all just experienced:

- Some people are good at word games; others are not. The team made that weakness irrelevant.
- Everyone brought a unique perspective to the group, even the non-word people. Each contributed a different set of words to the list.
- When group members shared their words, other words came to mind that no one had thought of by working alone.

WHAT COLOR IS YOUR TEAM?

- It is easier to reward individual achievement with a single prize. How do you reward four winners with a group prize?
- And the most telling, groups working together outperform individuals working alone.

That is the assertion of the One Audacious Claim made about teams by the brilliant Patrick Lencioni in *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*:

Not finance. Not strategy. Not technology. It is teamwork that remains the ultimate competitive advantage, both because it is so powerful and so rare. A friend of mine, the founder of a company that grew to a billion dollars in annual revenue, best expressed the power of teamwork when he once told me, “If you could get all the people in an organization rowing in the same direction, you could dominate any industry, in any market, against any competition, any time.” (Lencioni, 2002, page 7)

A BUSINESS CASE FOR TEAM

The business case for TEAM can be expressed in a single word, *synergy*. Synergy means that the sum of the whole is greater than its individual parts. While superstars may grab headlines, teams working together win championships. When Mark McGwire shattered baseball’s single season home run record in 1998, his team missed the playoffs. When Barry Bonds broke the record again in 2001, his team, too, was out of postseason play. Michael Jordan did not start winning basketball championships, or even more than three playoff games, until the Bulls assembled a team around him of Scotty Pippen, Horace Grant, Steve Kerr, and others.

Teamwork affects more than word games and sporting events. Businesses have discovered the power of people working together. Based on decades of consulting in the field of organizational performance, Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith state in their best-selling book *The Wisdom of Teams*:

We believe that teams—real teams, not just groups that management calls *teams*—should be the basic unit of performance for most organizations, regardless of size. In any situation requiring the real-time combination of multiple skills, experiences, and judgments, a team inevitably gets

What Is a TEAM?

better results than a collection of individuals operating within combined job roles and responsibilities. (Katzenbach and Smith, 1993, page 15)

Note, however, this qualification, it is “real teams, not just groups that management calls *teams* . . .” that get these results. So many teams are teams in name only, not dynamic, effective work groups. If I put a BMW medallion on a Pinto, that won’t make it an expensive European sports car. Neither does calling a group a team make it a team. A team is a small group of 3 to 12 people working together in the following four ways.

WHAT IS A TEAM?

T—Trusting Relationships

The first dynamic that makes a team a team is the quality of relationships that exist among its members. Real teams know one another well and trust one another explicitly. This takes place over time as each member, in his own unique way, connects with the other members of the group and finds them to be people they respect and professionals they believe in. This cannot be forced, or the power of teamwork will be nullified right from the start.

What many teams do, instead of investing the time needed to build this unity of spirit, is settle for unity’s evil twin: uniformity. Uniformity looks a lot like unity, the pleasant smiles, nodding heads, and comforting platitudes. But it is fake and will not stand the test of time. Like a dysfunctional family that looks nice and sweet on their Christmas card, but never talks about their problems, team members locked in the grips of uniformity all remain silent when critical issues need to be addressed. One needs to look no further than the Challenger tragedy, when seven astronauts lost their lives, to see the disastrous results of uniformity on vivid display. Many engineers knew about the faulty O-rings that caused the explosive fuel leakage, but no one did anything about it in NASA’s culture in the 1980s of silent uniformity.

Unity, real unity, is forged through the rigors of discussion, dialogue, and even debate. No issue is off the table with teams that trust one another. Team members are open about their mistakes and weaknesses, they ask for help when they need it, and receive input from others without being defensive. People who experience this kind of teamwork find

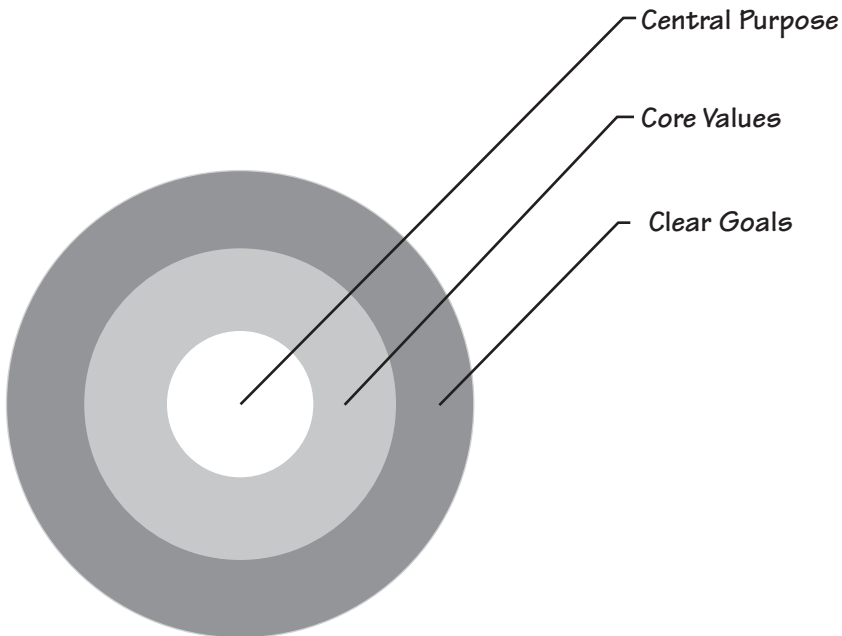
WHAT COLOR IS YOUR TEAM?

that it is the most invigorating group experience they have known. It calls out the very best in them and produces the very best through them.

E—Established Purpose, Values, and Goals

The second dynamic of a fully functioning team is the formation of purpose, values, and goals. A fully functioning team knows where it is going, why it exists, and how it is going to get there. Every pilot who takes an airplane into the sky, commercial or private, files a flight plan. The flight plan clearly states where that plane is going, how long they intend to be in the air, and where and when they are going to land. You can't take off without one. Yet many of the groups of people we call teams do not do this. It's like they say to the tower, "Well, we're going to go up in the air, fly around a bit, and see what happens."

Dynamic teams do not do this. They define their central purpose: that is what they are doing as a group. Along with that purpose they identify the core values of the group, or the *why* of their *what*. Then with those two in place they set clear goals to measure their progress. I call this the Team Target, and it looks like this:



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If you were on a team that managed Habitat for Humanity in my state, your purpose might be to provide affordable housing for children and their families in Oregon. That purpose statement would be strengthened by adding a core value to it like this: To bring dignity and self-respect to the children and families of Oregon by providing affordable housing. Your team target would be complete, however, with a clear goal in it: To bring dignity and self-respect to children and their families by providing 200 affordable housing units in the state of Oregon by the end of the year. This is a perfect team target: a central purpose with a core value and a clear goal.

Do things happen that can take you off course from your plan? Certainly. No one can perfectly predict the weather or the future. Pilots recognize this and are always making midcourse corrections as they fly. Dynamic teams do the same by using their flight plan to get them in the air, executing against it along the way, and making changes when needed to get them to their intended destination.

A—Active Participation by All the Members of the Group

The third dynamic of effective teams addresses how group members function when they are together. Two A's actually come into play here, All the members of the group Actively participating in discussion, decision making, and doing what the group has set out to accomplish. Please note that this is not Equal participation. That too would spell the word, but wrongly, TEEM. Not everyone in a small group will be equally experienced, equally educated, or equally talented for a particular project. As a result, the ball, if you will, does not need to be passed around to everyone every time. But for a team to be a team, everyone must have a part of the action for which he is best suited; one dribbling, one passing, one shooting, and one rebounding, for example.

In every anagram game played when I speak on teamwork, there is a verbal superstar who can list more words than anyone else. Never, though, has that superstar formed more words than a group of four in the second round. But when the superstar joins a group, that team inevitably has the most words in the room. This is an example of Active Participation versus Equal Participation. In the jobs that teams are asked to do, there will always be those who excel at them, but everyone

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can have a part of the action adding to the whole in such a way that it is greater than any individual could do on her own.

Here are some questions to ask about your team along these lines. When you are discussing issues, does everyone have a chance to say what's on his mind? When a decision is made, is everyone polled for her perspective before the decision is made? When jobs are assigned, does everyone have a significant part of the project? These are just a few of the ways active participation by all the members of the group is assured.

M—Mutual Accountability

Who's the leader of your team? Don't answer too quickly because that's a trick question. Yes, most every team has a formal leader. But teams will get only so far when they depend too much on this formal leader. Teams that truly perform at the highest level of effectiveness have broken free of their dependence on a formal leader and function in a zone of mutual accountability, each team member taking responsibility for the performance of the team as seriously as if he alone were the formal leader. In fact, if you were a fly on the wall at the meeting of a team that has grown to this point, you would not be able to tell who really was the formal leader of the group.

Competitive bicycle racing has a word for this dynamic: paceline. A paceline occurs when cyclists ride in straight-line formation with a rider in the lead and the rest drafting off him. That lead position takes the most effort, but after a few miles the point rider slips into the back of the line and another cyclist leads the group. In this way the paceline shares leadership, conserves the energy of all, and delivers better performance. Teams with mutual accountability experience the same as the answer to the question, "Who's the leader of your team?" becomes irrelevant.

The evidence of a business paceline is when the leadership of team meetings is shared with others, perhaps even rotated throughout the group. It takes root when discussions evolve naturally without the leader saying, "Okay, next item" and when everyone takes responsibility for moving a meeting along and keeping it on track. It grows when every member of the group, not just the formal leader, takes the initiative for encouraging the other members, remembering special days like birthdays and anniversaries, and celebrating achievements. And it

The Life Cycle of a TEAM

reaches its peak when a formal leader does not need to drive execution of the jobs assigned to team members, but each person does what he has been asked to do because he doesn't want to let the group down, not just the formal leader.

THE LIFE CYCLE OF A TEAM

Teams pass through four stages of development as they go from a collection of individuals to a fully cohesive, functioning group. Understanding these stages and applying the right leadership strategies is absolutely critical to team success. Group development expert R. B. Lacoursiere first referred to these stages in the book *The Life Cycle of Groups: Group Development Stage Theory*. The general outline of his study has been summarized with the words Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing. Ken Blanchard, author of the wildly popular *One Minute Manager*, identifies these stages as Orientation, Dissatisfaction, Integration, and Production. For our discussion, we refer to them in a more primal sense with these four colors: red, blue, yellow, and green.

The RED Team

CHARACTERISTICS This newly formed team is excited and ready to go. That's why they resemble the color red. They are eager to take on the job ahead, even though they may not really know what that job entails. Relationships are new and people are polite and optimistic. Hidden under this optimism may also be an undercurrent of caution, another reason for the color red. New team members may not know what are acceptable behaviors and may not understand how they will fit in with the other members of the group. Other questions like, "How much time will this take? Will I be able to do what is being asked of me? Will the project actually get done?" may lie just below the surface. Morale is moderate to high, but productivity is low because the team hasn't actually accomplished anything yet.

LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES Red Teams need the formal leader to set the stage in a strong and decisive fashion. This direction, though, has a

WHAT COLOR IS YOUR TEAM?

specific objective: orientation. The purpose of the group should be explained and some of its initial goals set. Time should be allowed for team members to begin to get to know one another and important questions asked and answered. Many of those questions, however, will be raised in one-off conversations because some team members are not yet comfortable bringing them up in front of the group. I have learned that Red Teams can benefit from an early win, a simple goal that can be easily accomplished. It gives the group momentum and a good start to their work.

The BLUE Team

CHARACTERISTICS As teams continue to work together there is an inevitable drop in morale. A gap between expectations and reality emerges and the people that seemed so warm and friendly in your first few meetings are beginning to get on your nerves. The warm glow of an early win has worn off and the ongoing work of the group is beginning to get tiresome. More aggressive team members try to assert control over the team, even challenging the formal leader, and a conflict or two has arisen that makes everyone feel distinctly uncomfortable. The team is blue. Morale is low. Productivity is also low. Some teams even destroy themselves at this stage or sit in a perpetual state of dysfunction.

LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES This is where the real work of team leadership takes place. Conflict must not be shut down, as difficult as that is. Team members must be able to freely speak their mind and first attempts at that are not always pretty. Neither fight nor flight reactions serve us well, but staying engaged with the discussion provides both safety—high concern for the relationship—and soundness—high concern for the issues at hand. Being both safe and sound provides a context for the dissatisfaction of the Blue Team to reach resolution. The formal leader **MUST** model these behaviors or the rest of the team will not embrace them.

This is where I begin dialogue around the team's values and the way it wants its meetings conducted, drawing out the opinions of the quieter members of the group. I also start using what I call a spotter, a team member deputized to assist in leading team meetings, keeping the

The Life Cycle of a TEAM

group on track and helping resolve any disputes that may arise. The spotter may be the same person at every meeting or it could rotate through the group. This may also be the time when others decide this is not the team for them. That's okay. Personality assessments, like DiSC or the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, can also be helpful in deepening mutual understanding. This is not the time, however, for leaders to wilt. It takes strong, courageous men and women to take a team through this tunnel to the light at the end.

The YELLOW Team

CHARACTERISTICS Teams that learn how to fight fair and respect the differences of their fellow members become a Yellow Team. Like the sun beginning to shine after a rainstorm, morale begins to climb, and with it, productivity. Meetings start becoming enjoyable, even something to look forward to. People start thinking in terms of we instead of I and the group begins to thrive. But this is a Yellow Team and not a Green Team, so caution, too, is in the air. Stinging from the conflict of the previous stage, team members may not speak their mind on important issues, preferring to keep the peace. Groupthink, another word for the evil twin of uniformity, may develop in the name of unity, and bad decisions could undermine the performance of the group. Warring personalities may not have achieved a lasting peace, just a cease-fire.

LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES Leaders of a Yellow Team should congratulate themselves for surviving the blues and breathe a sigh of relief. But important work remains. Team leadership at this stage can start being shared even with the formal leader being absent from some meetings so that the team can find its own voice. The team must be "mined for conflict" as Patrick Lencioni puts it. Mining for conflict is where the team leader digs down below the surface of an issue to uncover a person's real thoughts and feelings. Polling is another important facilitation technique where each member is asked for a 1-to-10 rating on an issue. They are also asked to explain their rating and what could be done to make it one or two points higher. It is important in this stage that the formal leader isn't the only one using these techniques. A team will never grow out of this stage unless team members initiate these activi-

WHAT COLOR IS YOUR TEAM?

ties for themselves. A formal leader must give permission for this to be done, even asking members to do so in one-off conversations.

The GREEN Team

CHARACTERISTICS This is the payoff. Green Teams get it done. Morale is high and so is productivity. There is a sense of pride and excitement in being part of something great. Openness and honesty rule the day as decisions are routinely made based on the rigor of discussion, dialogue, and debate. The paeline is in full force as members draft off the strength of others and offer the same strength in return. Goals have been set—big, challenging goals—and met, with bigger, more challenging goals taking their place as team members, who didn't get along at first, become close personal friends.

LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES Formal team leadership at this point should be fully shared with members of the group. In some cases at this stage, leaders can step out of the group and let someone else lead it while they move on to other things, visiting the team occasionally. Be on guard for boredom, however, and meet it head on, challenging the team to take on new goals. But nothing in business remains static and your successful team may have key members recruited by other teams and new members join the group. With these changes, a team may unavoidably regress one or two stages, requiring the leader to adopt different strategies for the new development level.

BUSINESS COACHING EXERCISE: WHAT COLOR IS YOUR TEAM?

We have developed a simple survey to identify the specific development stage of your team and select the strategies that are needed to help it succeed. What follows is a questionnaire that an individual team leader or the entire group can complete. The first score sheet tabulates the score of an individual participant; the second the scores for the group. Start by completing the survey, then tabulating your scores on the score sheet that is right for your situation. Then answer the five questions that follow this exercise to put the lesson learned into practice.

Business Coaching Exercise: What Color Is Your TEAM?

TEAM Survey

Select the statement in each of the four areas that follow that BEST matches what takes place on your team.

T—Trusting Relationships

- A. Team members are just getting to know one another and are hesitant to express themselves openly. Their relationships are polite and friendly, but a bit cautious.
- B. Team members are getting to know one another better, but there is not yet much sense of unity among them. Stronger individuals speak their mind and others withdraw in silence. There is little mutual understanding.
- C. Team members encourage and support one another more and more and have worked through many of their differences. The group is learning how to listen and communicate with one another, but is hesitant to give negative feedback.
- D. Team members enjoy an openness and honesty with one another that is invigorating. Differences of opinion are freely and openly discussed, even on issues that are regarded as uncomfortable, and no one takes offense or senses rejection for what they express.

E—Established Purpose, Values, and Goals

- A. The team has a growing sense of why it exists and how it will go about getting its work done. Some important goals have even been accomplished, which has brought a feeling of fulfillment and accomplishment to the group.
- B. The team has a clear sense of direction and an intuitive feel of how to go about getting its work done. Goals are set on a regular basis and followed to completion.
- C. The team is just beginning to understand why it exists and how they are going to go about doing their jobs. Goals are unclear, but hopes are high for great things to come.
- D. The team often forgets why it exists and someone has to keep reminding them. Team members disagree about how things should be done and pursue goals that move the group in opposite directions.

(Continued)

WHAT COLOR IS YOUR TEAM?

TEAM Survey (Continued)

A—Active Participation by All the Members of the Group

- A. Team conversations consist of a few individuals dominating the discussion and other members of the group, who don't necessarily agree with the opinions being expressed, remaining silent. The formal leader often has to step in and make a final decision.
- B. Team conversations consist of most everyone having a say on the issues at hand with a handful of key people making the final decision for the group.
- C. Team conversations consist of free and open discussion where everyone has an opportunity to speak his/her mind. A final decision is usually made when the group reaches consensus on an issue.
- D. Team conversations consist of the formal leader giving direction, mostly one-way, and the team listening and following his/her instructions.

M—Mutual Accountability

- A. All the members of the team feel responsible for the leadership of the group with jobs shared equally among them, so much so that an outsider might not be able to tell who the formal leader of the team is.
- B. The formal leader sets the direction for the team and is the person who makes sure everything gets done in the group. The group would fall apart without this leader.
- C. Stronger members of the group are asserting themselves, seeking more responsibility and leadership, but the formal leader works as hard as ever helping the team succeed.
- D. Leadership is beginning to be shared among the group and others are assuming key responsibilities for the team's success. The formal leader, however, still has a prominent presence on the team.

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Business Coaching Exercise: What Color Is Your TEAM?

Individual TEAM Survey Scoring Sheet

Circle the number next to the letter you selected on the survey that BEST describes what takes place on your team.				
T—TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS				
A-1	B-2	C-3	D-4	
E—ESTABLISHED PURPOSE, VALUES, AND GOALS				
A-3	B-4	C-1	D-2	
A—ACTIVE PARTICIPATION BY ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE GROUP				
A-2	B-3	C-4	D-1	
M—MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY				
A-4	B-1	C-2	D-3	
Place each of the four numbers from the scoring sheet underneath the appropriate letter of TEAM in the next table and total the numbers to the right. Find the description of your team that matches the range of totals listed on the left.				
T	E	A	M	TOTAL
4-6	RED An Emerging Team		Your team may be forming or just beginning to work together. This starting stage feels awkward—new people, new information, and new tasks—but you are optimistic about the possibility of what lies ahead.	
<i>(Continued)</i>				

WHAT COLOR IS YOUR TEAM?

Individual TEAM Survey Scoring Sheet *(Continued)*

T	E	A	M	TOTAL
7-10	BLUE <i>A Growing Team</i>		<i>You're beyond that awkward starting stage of being nice and polite and are beginning to get some things done. But you seem to clash with one another more than you would like and progress on projects comes slowly.</i>	
10-13	YELLOW <i>A Working Team</i>		<i>You have worked together for a while and weathered some storms. Your group has celebrated its share of victories, but your relationships seem tentative at times and you feel like you could really get more done.</i>	
14-16	GREEN A Highly Productive Team		<i>You are a seasoned group of professionals that has faced many battles together and won most of them. In the process you have become good friends. Cherish your teamwork and stay focused as a group.</i>	

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Business Coaching Exercise: What Color Is Your TEAM?

Group TEAM Survey Scoring Sheet

Participant Tabulation						
Place a mark by the letter circled for each TEAM item on participants' survey sheets. Total the marks for each letter.						
T—TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS						
A	B	C	D			
E—ESTABLISHED PURPOSE, VALUES, AND GOALS						
A	B	C	D			
A—ACTIVE PARTICIPATION BY ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE GROUP						
A	B	C	D			
M—MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY						
A	B	C	D			
Aggregate Scoring						
Multiply the total number of participants' marks in each letter on the Group Team Scoring Sheet by the number corresponding to each letter in the following table and enter it in the box. Total each multiplied number to the right and divide that total by the number of survey participants and record it in the box marked AVERAGE.						
T—TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS						
A-1	B-2	C-3	D-4	TOTAL	Divide the TOTAL by the number of participants to enter AVERAGE.	AVERAGE

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WHAT COLOR IS YOUR TEAM?

Group TEAM Survey Scoring Sheet *(Continued)*

E—ESTABLISHED PURPOSE, VALUES, AND GOALS						
A-3	B-4	C-1	D-2	TOTAL	Divide the TOTAL by the number of respondents to enter AVERAGE.	AVERAGE
A—ACTIVE PARTICIPATION BY ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE GROUP						
A-2	B-3	C-4	D-1	TOTAL	Divide the TOTAL by the number of respondents to enter AVERAGE.	AVERAGE
M—MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY						
A-4	B-1	C-2	D-3	TOTAL	Divide the TOTAL by the number of respondents to enter AVERAGE.	AVERAGE

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Business Coaching Exercise: What Color Is Your TEAM?

Place each of the four AVERAGE numbers from the preceding table underneath the appropriate letter for TEAM in the following table and total the numbers to the right. Find the description of your team that matches the range of totals listed on the left.

T	E	A	M	TOTAL
4-6	RED An Emerging Team		Your team may be forming or just beginning to work together. This starting stage feels awkward—new people, new information, and new tasks—but you are optimistic about the possibility of what lies ahead.	
7-10	BLUE A Growing Team		You're beyond that awkward starting stage of being nice and polite and are beginning to get some things done. But you seem to clash with one another more than you would like and progress on projects comes slowly.	
10-13	YELLOW A Working Team		You have worked together for a while and weathered some storms. Your group has celebrated its share of victories, but your relationships seem tentative at times and you feel like you could really get more done.	
14-16	GREEN A Highly Productive Team		You are a seasoned group of professionals that has faced many battles together and won most of them. In the process you have become good friends. Cherish your teamwork and stay focused as a group.	

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WHAT COLOR IS YOUR TEAM?

1. Based on your individual or group TEAM score, what color is your team? _____

2. Reread the description of the specific team stage that matches the color of your team. Which characteristics specifically describe your group? _____

3. What strategies do you need to implement to move your team to the next stage of development? _____

4. According to the numerical scores on your survey(s), list the four elements of your team's TEAM from the highest to the lowest.

1- _____ Score: _____

2- _____ Score: _____

3- _____ Score: _____

4- _____ Score: _____

What does this ranking say about your team? _____

5. Who can you enlist to help you with the actions you need to take to grow your team? What will you ask them to do? _____

Business Coaching Exercise: What Color Is Your TEAM?

BUSINESS IMPACT STORY: HOW BRILLIANT TEAM LEADERSHIP SAVED A NATION WRACKED BY CIVIL WAR

Abraham Lincoln was 52 years old when he sought the presidency of the United States. He hadn't held public office for 12 years, and that was only a two-year stint in the House of Representatives. He had failed, not once but twice, in his bid to be elected a U.S. senator from the state of Illinois. In the weeks leading up to the 1860 Republican National Convention, Lincoln was not the party's first choice, or their second or third choice either. That was the distinction of William Seward, Salmon Chase, and Edward Bates. Each one a skilled, experienced, political veteran, Seward, Chase, and Bates were all passed over as Lincoln, a party outsider, was nominated on the second ballot.

A virtual unknown to the nation, Lincoln was a compromise candidate calculated to keep the country from civil war. He was not well received at first. "The conduct of the Republican Party in this nomination is [a] remarkable indication of small intellect, growing smaller. They pass over," wrote the *New York Herald*, "statesmen and able men, and they take up a fourth-rate lecturer, who cannot speak good grammar."

But Abraham Lincoln surprised the pundits of his day and won the White House with a narrow victory over all three of his opponents. An even greater surprise followed when Lincoln formed his cabinet. Lincoln named his rivals Seward to be his secretary of state, Chase to be his secretary of the treasury, and Bates to be his attorney general, offering the remaining top posts to former Democrats. This inner circle of our sixteenth President bitterly bickered with one another, nursed petty differences, and constantly competed for the spotlight. One member, Salmon Chase, even conducted a secret campaign for the presidency against Lincoln as he ran for his second term of office. But these men were amazingly talented, the best and brightest of their time, and together with Lincoln led our country through some of its most difficult days: the secession of the South and a bloody civil war.

Then, of course, came the tragic assassination. It was originally planned as a triple homicide of the secretary of state, the vice president, and the president at exactly 10:15 on the evening of April 14, 1865. The only assassin who succeeded, however, was John Wilkes Booth. The outpouring of grief for the president was great, but none greater than

(Continued)

WHAT COLOR IS YOUR TEAM?

BUSINESS IMPACT STORY: HOW BRILLIANT TEAM LEADERSHIP SAVED A NATION WRACKED BY CIVIL WAR *(Continued)*

from those who were once the powerful competitors of this legendary figure. The grizzled Edward Stanton, Lincoln's indomitable secretary of war, was unable to control his tears for weeks.

Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Doris Kearns Goodwin concludes in *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, "None felt the absence of Lincoln more keenly than the members of his cabinet, the remarkable group of rivals whom Lincoln had brought into his official family. They had fiercely opposed one another and often contested their chief on important questions, but, as Seward remarked, 'a Cabinet which should agree at once on every question would be no better or safer than one counselor.' By calling these men to his side, Lincoln had afforded them an opportunity to exercise their talents to the fullest and to share in the labor and the glory of the struggle that would reunite and transform their country and secure their own places in posterity." (Goodwin, 2005, page 747) This is team leadership at its very best!

TOP 10 WAYS TO USE THIS TOOL

1. When coaching team leaders, first have them fill out the TEAM Survey and tabulate the Individual TEAM Scoring Sheet. What color is this person's team from his perspective? What strategies are needed to help it grow to the next stage of development?
2. Consider having each team member anonymously submit to you their TEAM Surveys and tabulate the Group TEAM Scoring Sheet. Present the results to your coaching client and compare these results with his own perspective of the team's development. Create an action plan based on the strategies that match the team's development and set a date six months in the future to resurvey the team and measure their progress.
3. Help your client pick a person who can act as a spotter for the group. A team spotter helps keep meetings on track and assists in facilitating team interaction. At the end of a meeting the spot-

Top 10 Ways to Use This Tool

ter takes the floor and polls everyone in the group regarding the quality of the meeting. This does not have to be a permanent position, and can rotate around the group. Debrief the use of a spotter early and work out all the kinks.

4. Consider using DiSC or the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator as a way of helping a team leader with self-awareness and team members with a deeper understanding of the other members of the group. This can be facilitated in both individual and group coaching sessions and will achieve the T in TEAM, trusting relationships.
5. Request to observe your client live in a team meeting and use your observations to deepen your coaching interactions. You will not participate in the meeting in any way; you will be there just to watch and listen. There is no substitute for first-hand experience of the leadership of your client.
6. Help your client develop team-meeting agendas a month in advance and be fully prepared for those meetings. Most business meetings are thrown together at the last minute and accomplish very little. Preplanning allows leaders to get the most out of their meetings and gives others enough time to be involved in the process of leading them.
7. Role-play mining for conflict and polling with your client and help her practice these important team facilitation techniques in a safe environment. Debrief her first attempts with the team and work on improving these skills.
8. For a deeper understanding of team meetings, read with your client *Death by Meeting* by Patrick Lencioni. Help implement the four kinds of team meetings presented there: the daily check-in, the weekly tactical, the monthly strategic, and the quarterly off-site review.
9. In promoting your team coaching services to a prospective client, use this formula developed by the 3M Corporation. One hour of a business meeting costs a company the average salary of the people in the room divided by 1000 and multiplied by the number of participants. For instance, a meeting with 10 participants and an average salary of \$80,000 costs a company \$800 per hour. The point is not to have your prospective client stop

WHAT COLOR IS YOUR TEAM?

having meetings, but to use you to get more out of every meeting. Your help for this company will certainly cost less than \$800 per hour!

10. To help a team communicate better, consider using the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument from CPP, Inc. This is a very simple and affordable tool with sound statistical validation that identifies five distinct ways of handling conflict that all team members use. It has both an individual and group component and is available at www.cpp.com.

Using the 10 Tools

When you buy a computer there are two kinds of software bundled with it, system software and application software. Recently released Windows Vista is system software, as is Apple's OS X and Linux. These programs, known as the operating system (or OS for short), provide the platform for all other programs to run on your computer. Application software is different. Application software allows you to do specific tasks, like creating documents, designing spreadsheets, surfing the Internet, or listening to music. These applications are what make your computer so incredibly useful, but they depend on the operating system to run effectively.

The purpose of this book is *not* to provide you with an operating system for coaching. There are great coaching schools for internal and external coaches, managers, and executives alike to learn the fundamentals of coaching. The purpose of this book is to provide the business coach and coaching leader powerful application tools. Each of the applications presented here allows you to take your core coaching skills and use them to get certain jobs done: building teams, casting vision, mastering priorities, receiving feedback. Use this Toolkit like you use your computer. With the operating system firmly in place, ask, "What am I trying to accomplish?" and select the application that will work best for the end in mind.

A few weeks ago, however, I took my computer into the shop. My programs were running slowly and it wasn't working as well as I wanted it to. The technician gave my computer a tune-up, which

cleaned out a lot of useless stuff that was slowing down my operating system. Anyone who has read the dreaded words on their monitor, FATAL ERROR, knows how important it is to clean up the operating system so applications can run as effectively as possible. So here are, from our perspective, six coaching essentials that form its operating system. Review these six items, and the self-scoring survey, as a way to tune up your practice so that the tools presented in this book will operate as effectively as possible.

ASKING QUESTIONS

The operating system of coaching begins by asking great questions. Sir John Whitmore, one of the founding fathers of the current coaching movement, began his work in the sports world as a tennis instructor. Frustrated with repeatedly urging his students to “keep their eye on the ball” with little effect, he developed a set of questions like, “Which way is the ball spinning as it comes toward you?” and “How high is the ball as it crosses the net?” (Whitmore, 2002, page 45) To answer these questions a player must have his eye on the ball, but much more than that. These questions force a player to think more completely about the situation and to embrace the game of tennis at a more fundamental level. In the end you have a better player and better results.

Effective, purposeful questions in the arena of life and leadership achieve the same results. They awaken our awareness and create an environment of self-directed learning. They force us to think for ourselves and take responsibility for our actions. This is the central skill of coaching and its first, fundamental objective: to facilitate self-discovery. “The skill of the coach,” states *Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done*, “is the art of questioning. Asking incisive questions forces people to think, to discover, to search for themselves.” (Bossidy and Charan, 2002, page 74)

On a scale of 1–10, as a coach, I ask powerful, thought-provoking questions that allow my clients to truly think for themselves:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

ACTIVE LISTENING

It is not enough to ask good questions; the answers to those questions must be listened to and heard. Great coaches actively listen with their entire being: ears, eyes, mind, and heart, feeling what a client feels in the circumstances in which they find themselves. So many of our conversations are a collection of disconnected monologues void of any real understanding. Effective coaches, however, set their monologue aside and truly and deeply seek first to understand. “It is impossible to overemphasize the immense need humans have to be really listened to, to be taken seriously, to be understood. Listen to all the conversations of our world, between nations as well as those between couples. They are for the most part dialogues of the deaf,” declares Swiss psychiatrist Dr. Paul Tournier.

Listening then takes an extra step of reflecting back what has been heard. It is one thing to think something, and another to say it. And quite another to have someone repeat it back to you. My wife occasionally repeats back to me something I thought I said to her and I am amazed. “I really said that?” I’ll ask. Bringing a person’s thoughts and words full circle so they may be fully considered is part of the listening process and a fundamental element of a coach’s operating system.

Another part of the listening process in coaching is the strategic use of silence—not filling all the gaps in the conversation with words, but allowing the wheels to turn and, again, allowing our clients to think for themselves. This can be very uncomfortable for those who are new to the coaching role. We feel compelled to talk, but very often a client needs our silence and not our words, space to think, pause, and reflect. John Whitmore writes in *Coaching for Performance*: “Obsession with our own thoughts and opinions and the compulsion to talk, particularly if

On a scale of 1–10, as a coach, I listen to my clients with my entire being, at times even being completely silent so they are able to work through their own thoughts:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

one is placed in any kind of advisory role, is strong. It has been said that since we were given two ears and one mouth, we should listen twice as much as we speak. Perhaps the hardest thing a coach has to learn to do is shut up.” (Whitmore, 2002, page 49)

ACTION PLANNING

Great coaches are incurable activists. That is, they are all about getting things done. Principles must become practices, and strategies must become steps of action that affect every day of every week. Mary Beth O’Neill in *Executive Coaching with Backbone and Heart* describes effective coaching as “having a results orientation to a leader’s problem. To lose sight of outcomes is to waste the time, money, and energy of the leader.” (O’Neill, 2000, page 7) This is why my personal definition of coaching involves two words that begin with the letter *r*: Coaching is a professional, collaborative **relationship** committed to delivering real-world **results**.

The temptation in a coaching engagement is to land too much on the relationship side of the equation by being satisfied with asking questions and listening only. Although this is core to coaching, it is not enough. An effective coach’s operating system helps clients decide what they are going to do in clear, concrete, measurable ways. At the beginning of a coaching engagement, objectives are formed that guide the relationship. Throughout the engagement, specific steps of action are taken to execute on these established objectives. At the end of the coaching term, the engagement is reviewed against the objectives. Bottom line: Real business coaching gets things done. End of discussion.

On a scale of 1–10, as a coach, I have clear, established objectives for every coaching engagement and specific measurements to determine their success:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Providing Accountability

PROVIDING ACCOUNTABILITY

“Inspect what you expect” is a well-recognized and rarely followed business imperative. Coaching delivers on that imperative by not just making plans, but following through on those plans. Human beings are by nature great starters; coaches help them become great finishers. The American Society for Training and Development conducted a research project into the probability of an individual’s completing a goal based on the actions they take related to it. Here are their findings. On the left column is the action taken related to the presentation of a new idea and on the right column the probability of completion of that idea.

ACTION TAKEN	PROBABILITY OF COMPLETION
1. If you hear an idea.	10%
2. If you consciously decide to adopt an idea.	25%
3. If you decide when to act on the idea.	40%
4. If you design a plan to act on the idea.	50%
5. If you commit to another person to act on the plan.	65%
6. If you have a specific accountability appointment with the person to whom you made your commitment.	95%

Clearly, as accountability increases, so does the probability of completion, the greatest percentage leap being from action five, making a commitment to another person, to action six, having a specific accountability appointment with another person. Coaches who provide this accountability deliver significant return on investment for their services. A friend of mine, a coach-based strategist in Washington, D.C., defines the process of accountability this way: “Coaching is helping people do what they already want to do.”

In other words, the operating system of coaching has an edge to it.

USING THE 10 TOOLS

Week after week, appointment after appointment, the coach skillfully reviews the commitments made by the clients and by so doing helps them fulfill their best intentions. Accountability accelerates performance, and accountability makes coaching work because it closes that gap between what we know and what we do. In this way, coaching can be the most challenging training program your clients will ever experience.

On a scale of 1–10, as a coach, I unapologetically hold my clients accountable for fulfilling their best intentions:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

GIVING AFFIRMATION

Mark Twain once quipped, “I can live for two months on a good compliment.” It is the coach’s job to fuel the fire of clients’ passion by highlighting what they are doing well and keeping it in the forefront of their mind. Peter Block refers to this as appreciative inquiry, an approach to problem solving that asks, “What’s going right around here?”

The first coach who worked with me years ago was absolutely masterful at doing this. After every coaching conversation, I felt an incredible sense of encouragement and strength because he was able to identify, in spite of the challenges I was facing, what I was doing right and reminded me of those things over and over again. It gave me the energy I needed to address less positive issues. The power of positive praise discussed in an earlier chapter outlines the very real business impact of affirmation. Coaches get a chance to model this principle every time they meet with their clients. Just make sure it’s not fluff. Coaching has been accused in this regard of serving to its clients a diet of sugary-sweet sentimentality. In many cases these accusations are true. Make your use of affirmation real food—in-depth content—not cotton candy.

On a scale of 1–10, as a coach, I am able to identify in each session specific, concrete positive actions my client has taken and affirm them in a personalized way:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Advising (with Caution)

ADVISING (WITH CAUTION)

“Just tell me what to do!” is a common refrain many coaches hear. A good coach knows when to refuse that request, and when a person is genuinely stuck needing to hear the perspective of another. Coaching is not content-neutral, but it is content-careful. There is a time to provide counsel, but I have found myself too quick to give advice when a client’s wrestling with an issue may sow the seeds of self-reliance.

In a situation like this, there is a technique that should be part of every coach’s operating system. The technique is called partner brainstorming. Partner brainstorming is co-creating a list of options between a client and a coach. One item is placed on the list by the coach, the next item by the client, or vice versa. This helps a client who is genuinely stuck by involving the coach with idea generation, but alternating the contribution keeps the client participating as well. At the end of this exercise, a client has a list of options from which to choose, not the solitary opinion of a coach.

Coaching is not a weekly pep talk given by an expert. Please read that line again—coaching is not a weekly pep talk given by an expert! It is a professional, collaborative relationship. This model must be maintained even when advice is needed and is never violated when the advice is outside of a coach’s area of expertise, as with legal or medical issues.

On a scale of 1 – 10, as a coach, I give my opinion only when I sense my client is stuck, and then only as one of a multiple of options that can be taken:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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How did you do on the survey? What were your highest scores? What were your lowest? Consider giving this survey to a few trusted clients to tune up your operating system. Identify areas that need sharpening and consider hiring a coach yourself to work with you on them.

THE COACHING FLOW CYCLE

A coaching engagement, from start to finish, goes through four specific phases. The tools presented in this book are designed to help you with each phase of this flow cycle.

PHASE ONE: Connecting and Contracting

Coaching begins with a connection of some kind through a referral, a speaking opportunity, or consulting project. In one way or another, a prospect hears about your services as a business coach and wants to talk with you. What happens next? The best coaches use the power of live demonstration to make the most of the connection. Consider this example from the book *Samurai Selling* by Chuck Laughlin and Karen Sage:

When Chuck was a teenager, he sold furnace cleanings during a summer break. People don't worry much about their furnace during the summer, so he and a team of six other teenagers had their work cut out for them as they went from door to door explaining their service. The boys sold a lot of cleanings, but they also made a list of all the homeowners that had a coal furnace that didn't buy a cleaning.

At the end of the summer a samurai salesman from the company's headquarters drove up in a long Cadillac and called on every homeowner with a coal furnace who had not purchased a cleaning. The man made a presentation on the kind of work his company did and the value of a clean furnace. Then he capped it off with a demo. He opened a jar of soot, poured a bit of it onto his hand, lit a match, and dropped the lit match into his hand. As the fire blazed on top of the soot, the salesman said calmly, "You'll notice that the soot is insulating my hand. That's what's happening in your furnace. Soot—like you have built up in your furnace—is a good insulator. That means that most of the heat from the coal you're burning is going up the flue and not getting into your home. Once we've cleaned your furnace, you'll be getting all the heat you're paying for!" He made almost every sale. (Laughlin and Sage, 1993, pages 110, 111)

How do you light a coaching fire for your prospects? Use one of the tools in this book in a live demonstration. Go through the values exercise in Chapter 1 and ask, "What would it be worth for you to have someone help you live these values consistently?" Fill out a SMART

The Coaching Flow Cycle

Goal Worksheet or conduct the positive praise exercise. Demonstrate in a very real, compelling way exactly what coaching is all about. Instead of selling your coaching services, you will actually be delivering a bite-sized chunk of value that a person can choose to have more of if they like. Have you ever tried to open a bag and eat just one potato chip? Pretty hard, isn't it? Give your prospects a tantalizing taste of what coaching can do for them and wait for them to ask for more.

Most coaches then have as part of their operating system a set of policies and practices they share with the prospect. They ask for an intake form to be completed and have their clients sign a coaching agreement that outlines the parameters of the engagement. This is what we mean by contracting. Often the first month's payment, or a deposit of some kind, is also collected. Because I do most of my coaching in the corporate world, I avoid the legal department like the plague. Instead of an official contract, I have a series of expectations that I ask a person to initial and fax back to me along with basic contact information. This is what initiates my coaching engagements. Here is a copy of that document.

Executive Coaching with Leadership Link, Inc.

Executive Coaching is a formal, collaborative relationship between an experienced executive coach, Bill Zipp, President of Leadership Link, Inc., and an executive leader focused on increasing this leader's effectiveness and performance.

Executive Coaching expectations:

Executive Coaching is initiated when an executive leader or his/her manager is seeking a more intensive development opportunity and the expectations of Executive Coaching on this sheet have been read and agreed upon. **Please check off and initial each item faxing this sheet to the number below along with your information form.**

- Initial coaching sessions are spent interviewing both the executive leader, her direct supervisor or governing board, and other important parties, if desired. Based on these interviews, objectives for the coaching engagement are identified and agreed upon.

(Continued)

Executive Coaching with Leadership Link, Inc. *(Continued)*

- ❑ Once the coaching objectives have been completed and agreed upon, coaching sessions take place three times per month for a minimum of six months. Each session lasts 45–60 minutes and will be conducted face to face or over the phone. Live coaching observation and team facilitation is available for an additional investment.
- ❑ In addition to weekly sessions, fieldwork may be assigned and other learning tools that are aligned with the agreed-upon coaching objectives may be employed, such as the Leadership Circle Profile, the Time Mastery Profile, the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, the LBA II, or the StrengthsFinder Profile, at the client's expense.
- ❑ While the specific details of coaching conversations are strictly confidential, the executive leader's direct supervisor or governing board can be apprised of progress related to the agreed-upon coaching objectives throughout the coaching process.
- ❑ The monthly fee for Executive Coaching begins with initial interviews and is billed in advance to the appropriate account. The six-month minimum commitment may be paid up front in its entirety with a 10 percent discount. Executive Coaching engagements that exceed six months are conducted on a month-to-month basis upon approval. Payment is to be received within 30 days of billing. A 30-day advance notice is required for the termination of a coaching engagement.
- ❑ Cancellation of a session without a 24-hour notice may result in the forfeiting of a session for that week. In almost all cases, alternative times can be arranged, but advance notice of this is needed.
- ❑ During the coaching engagement, Bill is available by phone, **541-752-LEAD**, or by e-mail, **Bill@leadershiplink.net**. If you leave a voice mail or send an e-mail, Bill will seek to answer either within 24 hours.
- ❑ Bill is committed 100 percent to the success of his clients and their organizations and will communicate openly and honestly with them. He will be fully prepared and punctual for all coaching sessions and asks for his clients to be the same.

The Coaching Flow Cycle

PHASE TWO: Dialogue and Discovery

Here is where the coaching relationship begins in earnest. In **Dialogue and Discovery**, a coach seeks to learn everything about the client's business context and the challenges he or she is facing. The organizational structure is laid out and team members are enumerated. What clients like about their job and what they dislike are discussed. Their business background is explored, and, although the relationship is new, many clients freely talk about their personal background as well. If you are coaching in a corporate context, you may want to interview a client's supervisor and key members of their team to get a third-party perspective on their leadership.

The goal of this phase is to establish a set of coaching objectives that will define the engagement. This is the backbone of your work together. Apart from a set of clear objectives, your coaching sessions will not have the focus critical to execution and could devolve into a series of very expensive conversations.

There are two approaches to setting objectives in a coaching engagement, also referred to as a coaching focus. Marshall Goldsmith has developed a system for working with executives that identifies up front a behavioral habit, or a *tic* as he calls it, that is getting in the way of their success. Once identified, the coach works with the executive to eliminate that habit. Marshall works with "People who do one annoying thing repeatedly on the job—and don't realize that this small flaw may sabotage their otherwise golden career. . . . My job is to help them—to identify a personal habit that's annoying their co-workers and to help them eliminate it so that they retain their value to the organization." (Goldsmith, 2007, pages 9, 10)

The great gift this approach gives to its clients is simplicity, one clear focus in the midst of a mountain of things to do. But there are coaching engagements where I have found that a single coaching focus was overly simplistic. In other words, there was no *tic* but a cluster of interrelated issues that all had to be addressed. For instance, I had a client who needed to spend more time developing his people but had a communication style that was harsh and abrupt. If I helped him schedule his time better to meet with his people but

USING THE 10 TOOLS

didn't help him communicate better, I would have actually helped him find more time to alienate his people. Not exactly the results I wanted. Or if I worked on his communication style, but gave him no help with his time, I would have succeeded only in adding more items to an already long list of things to do. Added to these challenges was the fact that this client was almost incapable of delegating important tasks to others. Coaching him how to delegate projects would significantly affect the use of his time, but without being able to talk to his team in a more respectful manner, delegation would be useless.

Here were three interrelated problems that needed to be addressed: time mastery, interpersonal communication, and getting things done through others. In this situation I felt that focusing on just one of them would not deliver the best possible coaching results. That is why I took a cluster approach to setting the focus of this coaching engagement, landing on three objectives for our time together. We then began working on them in concert. Please note that these were not three random objectives: The issues were interrelated, and we still had a crystal-clear focus. However, that focus was on a set of issues that existed in a system where each affected the other.

To help distinguish between these two approaches, I have called one behavioral-objective setting and the other developmental-objective setting. Both have their strengths and weaknesses, and both are appropriate for differing situations. Here is a summary of each.

	BEHAVIORAL	DEVELOPMENTAL
Focus	One key habit or detrimental leadership behavior	A set of interrelated issues that each affects the other
Strength	Clarity and simplicity	Addressing issues within a system

The Coaching Flow Cycle

	BEHAVIORAL	DEVELOPMENTAL
<i>Weakness</i>	<i>Could be overly simplistic and miss other factors that contribute to a leader's success</i>	<i>Could unnecessarily clutter the engagement and make things more complicated than they really are</i>
<i>Will really work when ...</i>	<i>You sense a leader has a solid, professional foundation that he simply needs help applying</i>	<i>You sense a leader has gaps in his development and greater professional growth is needed</i>

With either approach this Toolkit is a valuable resource. Once an objective, or set of objectives, are identified, select the tool that best develops the actions that will deliver the desired outcomes and use that tool over and over again.

Finally, some coaches choose to conduct **Dialogue and Discovery** in one extended intake session that may extend three to four hours. I prefer to use my first two or three sessions and let a client use the in-between time to reflect. Tools that work well in this phase are the ones that have assessment aspects to them like the Life Leadership Dashboard, the SWOT grid, or the True TEAM survey. A lot of coaches use a 360-degree assessment and this is the place they use it. These are becoming, however, overused (and a bit resented), and I prefer personal interviews with supervisors and direct reports if a 360-degree perspective is needed.

Here is a worksheet I use to onboard new clients. This worksheet summarizes basic steps of action that need to be completed for both Phase One and Phase Two.

FAST TRACK
Executive Coaching On-Boarding Process

CLIENT: _____ **DATE:** _____

SUPERVISOR/SPONSOR: _____

- Executive Coaching Expectations and Information sheets sent to client and/or supervisor.
- Executive Coaching Expectations sheet returned initialed.
- Executive Coaching Information sheet returned completed.
- Direct supervisor and/or coaching sponsor interviewed.
- Initial coaching client interviewed (first appointment).
- First month's billing sent.
- First draft of executive coaching objectives completed.
- Supervisor and/or coaching sponsor give input on coaching objectives.
- First three months of coaching appointments set.
- Final draft of coaching focus and objectives completed (second or third appointment).
- Assessment completion (if needed).
- Early win: _____

- First month's payment received.

The Coaching Flow Cycle

One final comment on the use of an early win listed in this worksheet. People often come into a coaching engagement a bit skeptical about what it can really do for them, especially if those engagements have been prescribed by upper management. I like to find something simple and meaningful to get done right away. Like a football team marching down the field and getting a touchdown the first time they touch the ball, it gives the coaching relationship real momentum and energizes everything you do afterward. Some of the tools in this book are quick-and-easy applications that can have an immediate impact. Use them to build momentum. Yes, the changes you are seeking to achieve in your coaching work are for the long term, but a good first drive can get coaching started on the right foot. Ideally you want an early win to align with the objectives you are identifying, but sometimes they do not. The point, however, is that some engagements need a shot in the arm to get them started right.

PHASE THREE: Engagement and Implementation

Phase One may be completed in one or two pre-coaching sessions, marketing meetings where you vividly demonstrate the value of coaching and reach an agreement on working together. Phase Two should be completed in the first month of coaching, in one supersession or over the course of your first two or three sessions. Then work begins on each objective.

This is where the Toolkit has its greatest value. Pick a tool that will help you and your client reach the outcome of a specific objective. Take time explaining the tool and then experiment with it in a session. Completion of the tool may be given as fieldwork and reviewed at repeated sessions. Finally, to close the learning loop, ask your client to teach that tool to one or two other people and debrief the experience. Here's how I have done this for the Weekly Planning Worksheet.

Session One: Introduce the Weekly Planning Worksheet, its principles, and its business impact. Complete for the week to come steps of action for the first two sections of the Weekly Planning Worksheet: *Myself and My Family*.

USING THE 10 TOOLS

Session Two: Review the week's developments of the first two sections of the Weekly Planning Worksheet and the principles behind the tool. Complete the first two sections of the Weekly Planning Worksheet again for the week to come and discuss the priority areas of the next three or four sections of the Weekly Planning Worksheet.

Session Three: Review the week's developments of the first two sections of the Weekly Planning Worksheet. Complete all the sections of the Weekly Planning Worksheet for the week to come with their specific steps of action.

Session Four: Review the week's developments of all the sections of the Weekly Planning Worksheet. Adjust priority areas, if needed. Complete all the sections of the Weekly Planning Worksheet for the week to come. Select someone for your client to teach the Weekly Planning Worksheet to and role-play the interaction.

Session Five: Debrief the client's teaching of the Weekly Planning Worksheet. Review the week's developments of all the sections of the Weekly Planning Worksheet. Have your client complete the Weekly Planning Worksheet for the week to come on their own and fax it to you. Select someone else for your client to teach the Weekly Planning Worksheet to and role-play the interaction.

Session Six: Debrief the client's second teaching of the Weekly Planning Worksheet. Review the week's developments of all the sections of the Weekly Planning Worksheet. Have your client complete the Weekly Planning Worksheet for the week to come on her own and fax it to you. Talk through a typical day's list of things to do and rigorously apply the A, D, C, D, E method to them.

If you meet three times a month with your clients, as I do, here are two months of sessions with this tool. When you move on to another objective, keep having your client fax his completed worksheet to you as a point of accountability.

In the course of Phase Three, issues will inevitably come up that are not part of your established objectives. I once had a client's top salesman get arrested just before our session. It makes no sense to push ahead with your predetermined agenda when a situation like this occurs. Deal with

The Coaching Flow Cycle

pressing issues as they arise. That's the great thing about coaching: It is extremely nimble and able to adjust to the needs of the moment. However, if every session presents a new crisis, perhaps you're not working on the right objectives. Revisit your objectives and reevaluate them.

The reevaluation of coaching objectives is good for another reason: midcourse correction. Often at the beginning of a coaching engagement a client has no idea where to focus, but once you get started gains a clearer picture. Be willing to drop one objective and add another as the engagement unfolds. I like to include a client's supervisor or sponsor in this review process and get his perspective on how things are going. This can be a bit tricky. You don't want to violate confidentiality, but neither do you want to hear just one side of the story. Gather as much feedback as you can from all perspectives. Better yet, ask for a day of live observation where you are like a fly on the wall in your client's world to just observe her in action. I have seen within minutes in a live setting what eluded me for hours in one-on-one sessions.

PHASE FOUR: Closure or Recontracting

Many coaching engagements have a predetermined ending point at 6, 9, or 12 months. I used to resist this kind of deadline, believing that a coaching engagement needed to end when the objectives were completed, but now I think just the opposite. In establishing the coaching contract, a clear ending point gives both coach and client a deadline that brings rigor to their work. If, at the end of that time, the objectives have not been completed, the contract can be renegotiated with a new deadline. That's what I have called here recontracting. Ongoing coaching with no set expectations for completion or measurement for success, however, is a very expensive proposition and is, in my opinion, giving coaching a black eye in the business community.

In the closure of a coaching engagement, the tools in this book can also be of help. For instance, I have worked with a client to complete a SMART Goal Worksheet that addressed his activities for the first three months after coaching. A delegation plan for a future project could also be designed, using the PAR Delegation Flow Chart. I have set an appointment six months into the future for a group to retake the TEAM survey to measure their progress or to redo their SWOT.

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My favorite closure exercise, though, is a simple letter. I have clients write themselves a letter of what they would like their life and leadership to look like six months after coaching. Then I hold on to the letter and mail it to them in six months. Knowing that letter is coming, not from me but from themselves, is a powerful motivator for staying on track. The point of all these activities is that coaching doesn't stop after coaching sessions stop. A good coach locks in learning and makes it a permanent part of a person's life.

In 2002, Nortel Network's Leadership Edge program engaged MetrixGlobal to determine the business benefits and return on investment from an executive coaching program. The results, reported in *Coaching for Extraordinary Results*, were astounding. Coaching produced a 529 percent return on investment. When combined with the financial benefits of employee retention, the overall return on investment of coaching jumped to 788 percent. (Mitsch, et al., 2002, page 19)

Clearly this is good news for those of us seeking to serve our people in a greater way in these days of reduced training budgets and heightened financial accountability. To do this, though, we must make sure our operating system, the core skills of coaching practice, is functioning at their very best. In addition, the tools of coaching, the applications presented in this book, when used effectively, make your coaching that much more powerful as you seek to serve others in the decades ahead.

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CHAPTER ONE: DEVELOPING A LEADERSHIP VISION

Circle 10 words or phrases from the list below that you would say are your top 10 values.

Core Values Master List

Abundance	Authenticity	Harmony
Achievement	Balance	Well-Being
Acceptance	Commitment	Honesty
Contentment	Care for others	Humor
Competence	Order	Dependability
Quality	Courage	Kindness
Effectiveness	Creativity	Knowledge
Diversity	Empathy	Loyalty
Fun	Excellence	Openness
Innovation	Fairness	Passion
Fitness	Faith	Perseverance
Gratitude	Family	Respect for others
Simplicity	Freedom	Responsibility
Peace	Friendship	Security
Self-Respect	Generosity	Serenity
Success	Peace	Service to others
Wisdom	Independence	Spirituality
Discipline	Cooperation	Love
Equality	Stability	Winning
Teamwork	Self-Control	Joy

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Return to the 10 words or phrases you circled from this list and cross out six of them, leaving four that you would say are your core values. Write out a personal definition of each:

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VALUE #1: _____

VALUE #2: _____

VALUE #3: _____

VALUE #4: _____

Cast Your Vision Based on Your Values

1. What would your organization or department look like if you consistently led people based on the four values you have chosen? How do you see people working together, treating one another, serving the customer, and communicating differently because of them?
2. Write this vision for your organization down on a sheet of paper. Be very, very concrete and specific.
3. How does your current leadership style and behavior *support* the values and vision you have for the future of the organization?
4. How does your current leadership style and behavior *detract* from the values and vision you have for the future of the organization?

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5. What are three specific steps of action you can take in the next 30 days to more fully implement your values and vision? How will you know if these steps are working? Who will hold you accountable for taking them?

Check Your Vision with Current Reality

Choose three people whom you trust to tell you the truth. Share with them your final four values and the personalized definitions you have written. Also share your vision for how you intend to live out your values within the organization. Then ask for feedback. How are you currently doing this? How are you not doing this? Where do you need to grow to ensure that you are true to what matters most to you? This is a powerful exercise that people take very seriously and will give you great positive affirmation and caring, constructive input for your life and leadership.

CHAPTER TWO: THE ONE-PERCENT SOLUTION

The Weekly Planning Worksheet

PRIORITIES	THIS WEEK'S STEPS OF ACTION
<i>Area One</i>	
<i>Area Two</i>	
<i>Area Three</i>	
<i>Area Four</i>	
<i>Area Five</i>	
<i>Area Six</i>	

CHAPTER THREE: GETTING THINGS DONE THROUGH OTHERS

The PAR Delegation Flow Chart

<p>P PLAN</p>	<p>Co-create a PLAN for the task or project, setting clear expectations in writing by answering these four questions:</p> <p>WHO? WHAT? WHEN? HOW? is going to do by and (and not how)</p>
<p>A ACT with AUTHORITY</p>	<p>Free this person or group to ACT with AUTHORITY within a specified time frame, being available to help if needed.</p> <p>AUTHORITY LEVELS: Information Collaboration Execution</p> <p>1 2 3 4 week/month weeks/months weeks/months weeks</p>
<p>R REVIEW</p>	<p>Take time to REVIEW execution of the plan by asking three questions, making any necessary midcourse corrections.</p> <p>PROGRESS? PROBLEMS? PLANS? The Past The Present The Future</p>

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CHAPTER FOUR: MAKING GOALS SMART
SMART GOAL WORKSHEET

NAME:		DATE:	
<i>SMART Goal (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time bound)</i>			
<i>BENEFITS of Achieving this Goal</i>			
<i>STEPS of ACTION for Achieving this Goal</i>			
1. 2. 3. 4. 5.			
<i>Possible OBSTACLES</i>		<i>Possible SOLUTIONS</i>	
1.		1.	
2.		2.	
3.		3.	

CHAPTER FIVE: THE POWER OF POSITIVE PRAISE

The Affirmation Matrix

spoken	written
public	private
expected	unexpected
professional	personal

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Weekly Affirmation Register

TEAM MEMBER	CORE RESPONSIBILITIES	M	T	W	T	F
1.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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CHAPTER SIX: MAKING FEEDBACK EFFECTIVE

Feedback

Setup

- Timely
- Permission sought and given
- Aware of potential emotional triggers
- Identify benefit of delivering feedback

Delivery

- Speak from your own perspective
- Share your specific observations
- Explain the impact of the behavior on you
- Allow silence and time to reflect
- Encourage clarifying questions

Assess Impact

- Ensure message is clear
- Give time for recipient to consider if the feedback is valid
- Explore options or remedies
- Articulate expected behaviors
- Close feedback loop

CHAPTER SEVEN: A NEW TWIST ON SWOT

	INTERNAL REALITY	EXTERNAL REALITY
Positive	Strengths	Opportunities
Negative	Weaknesses	Threats

Strengths

1. What do clients and outside partners say is your top strength?

2. What do you currently do better than anyone else?

3. What were your motivating factors and influences in starting this business or taking a leadership role?

4. What achievements have you found the most satisfaction in doing?

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5. To what do you attribute your current level of success?

6. How do you measure success? What does success look like to you?

7. What are the top five reasons a client should buy from you and not from your competitors?

8. What are the top five reasons a company should hire or promote you?

9. What are two real-life examples where you or your team showed creativity and ingenuity?

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10. What are two real-life examples where you or your team demonstrated critical thinking and were open-minded to trying new ways?

Weaknesses

1. What are two or three areas your staff or team members complain about the most?

2. What are two or three areas your clients or customers complain about the most?

3. Of the following areas, which ones do you do the poorest in: customer follow-up, timely billings, marketing, sales, being detail oriented, customer satisfaction, empowering team members to make decisions, and so forth?

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4. What does your competition do better than you do?

5. Which areas do you, your employees, or partners procrastinate the most on?

6. How do you position your company in comparison to your competitors? (The cheapest, most expensive, generalist, specialist, small, big, focused, diverse, and so on.)

7. If you could change three things about your company, what would you change? What would you change first? Why?

Opportunities

1. Who are the people who already have a relationship with your potential clients? How can you start to build a relationship with them?

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2. What are you doing to position your company as being on the cutting edge as a leader in the industry?

3. How could you better use the media to position yourself and your company as experts?

4. How could you take full advantage of:

- Changes in technology (for example, online social networking web sites, blogs, autoresponders, e-commerce, outsourcing)
- Changes to the marketplace, both locally and nationally
- Changes in government policy related to your field
- Changes in social patterns, population movement, changing demographics, lifestyle changes, and so on
- Changes in buying cycles and needs (faster turnaround time, lower prices, more selection, better quality, customization requests, and so on)

Threats

1. What are the five greatest obstacles your company or team currently face?

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2. How does rapidly changing technology affect your business model?

3. What are the current trends in your industry?

4. How does the economy affect your business for good or bad?

5. What are you currently doing to identify, train, and retain your top employees?

6. What would happen if your top three people were hired away by your most aggressive competitor?

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7. How long would it take you to be up and running if your company was robbed or your building burned down?

8. What is the worst-case scenario you fear the most?

9. How can you better prepare to minimize the damage this would cause if it ever came true?

QUESTIONS FOR DEEPER SWOT ANALYSIS

The following four questions are best used after you have already answered the earlier questions because they are based on comparing and contrasting two areas of the SWOT grid to determine different strategies needed for success.

1. How can your current strengths be leveraged to take advantage of developing opportunities? What are the strengths you will need to develop in the next 12 to 24 months to better position yourself or your company to profit from and quickly take advantage of new opportunities as they arise? **This is called an S-O analysis, the upper tier of the SWOT grid of Strengths and Opportunities.**

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2. What specific ways can your strengths be used to counteract potential threats? How can you create an environment such that your team's creative thinking, ingenuity, and exceptional follow-through can flourish and not be diluted by perceived or real threats? **This is called an S-T analysis, a cross tier of the SWOT grid of Strengths and Threats.**

3. How can your weaknesses be overcome to tap into developing opportunities? What additional opportunities could you benefit from if you didn't have these weaknesses? What are two ways you could use delegation, outsourcing, or technology to minimize or eliminate your weaknesses? **This is called a W-O analysis, a cross tier of the SWOT grid of Weaknesses and Opportunities.**

4. Can you change your weaknesses by adding to or changing your team so that you can quickly counteract real threats? How does your team decide whether something is a real threat versus a perceived threat? How can you empower your team to take decisive action, instead of being paralyzed, in the face of a real threat? **This is called a W-T analysis, the bottom tier of the SWOT grid of Weaknesses and Threats.**

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE LIFE LEADERSHIP DASHBOARD

The Life Leadership DASHBOARD

THE WORK TASK	
Convictions What is your preferred future?	
Capabilities What is your current reality?	
Constraints What is holding you back?	
Community Who can help you?	
Conduct What are your steps of action?	
THE LOVE TASK	
Convictions What is your preferred future?	
Capabilities What is your current reality?	
Constraints What is holding you back?	
Community Who can help you?	
Conduct What are your steps of action?	

(Continued)

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THE SOCIAL TASK	
<p>Convictions What is your preferred future?</p>	
<p>Capabilities What is your current reality?</p>	
<p>Constraints What is holding you back?</p>	
<p>Community Who can help you?</p>	
<p>Conduct What are your steps of action?</p>	
THE SELF TASK	
<p>Convictions What is your preferred future?</p>	
<p>Capabilities What is your current reality?</p>	
<p>Constraints What is holding you back?</p>	
<p>Community Who can help you?</p>	
<p>Conduct What are your steps of action?</p>	

The Life Leadership DASHBOARD *(Continued)*

THE SPIRITUAL TASK	
Convictions What is your preferred future?	
Capabilities What is your current reality?	
Constraints What is holding you back?	
Community Who can help you?	
Conduct What are your steps of action?	

CHAPTER NINE: THE SIXTH SUITCASE

The Activity Inventory

STEP ONE: On the lines on the opposite page, list everything you do during the course of an average month at your job. Be as comprehensive as possible, like answering e-mail, completing requisition forms, coordinating vendors, conducting meetings, and so forth. Leave the square next to each item blank for now.

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Activity Inventory

1			26		
2			27		
3			28		
4			29		
5			30		
6			31		
7			32		
8			33		
9			34		
10			35		
11			36		
12			37		
13			38		
14			39		
15			40		
16			41		
17			42		
18			43		
19			44		
20			45		
21			46		
22			47		
23			48		
24			49		
25			50		

STEP TWO: Return to the **Activity Inventory** and sift everything you do through the filter of your Sixth Suitcase. Do this by coding each activity with the letter/color that follows in the square you left blank immediately to the right of the listed activity.

R for RED

This is an activity that is *not* your true talent as defined by your Sixth Suitcase. **Red means STOP doing these things.** They are sapping your energy, stealing your joy, and—be honest with yourself—you’re really not good at them. Let someone else who is good at them use her talent to get them done, or eliminate them entirely.

“Discover what you don’t like doing and stop doing it,” Marcus Buckingham counsels in his brilliant book, *The One Thing You Need to Know*, a follow-up to *Now, Discover Your Strengths*. “In this sense, success is less about accumulating and more about editing. The metaphor here is not building, but sculpting, in that sustained success is caused not by what you add on, but by what you have the discipline to cut away.” (Buckingham, 2005, page 25)

Y for YELLOW

This is an activity you may be good at, may enjoy doing, or may be required of you personally, but is *not* your true talent as defined by your Sixth Suitcase. **Yellow means CAUTION.** Just like driving through an intersection, you can stop, that is, not do the activity, or go. If you choose to go, however, do so quickly and efficiently. Yes, it’s okay to do some of these things, but these activities can easily fill your days and keep you from functioning in your area of strength, where your greatest contribution to the organization will be. To work in the 80/20 window no more than 10 of the 50 activities listed earlier can be coded yellow.

G for GREEN

This is an activity that is directly in line with what you do best, your true talent. **Green means GO.** Your goal should be to adjust your work activities so that 80 percent of everything you do is a direct ex-

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tension of your natural strength as defined by your Sixth Suitcase, which would mean 40 of the 50 activities listed earlier are green activities. Sharpen your strength by training around it and volunteer for projects that allow you to grow in it. Recognize that saying no to the items coded red in your **Activity Inventory** is saying yes to greater joy, energy, and effectiveness.

STEP THREE: Make a list of the steps of action you need to take to delegate or eliminate the activities you coded red on your inventory, to minimize the activities you coded yellow on your inventory, and to maximize the activities you coded green on your inventory. Give each step of action a date with a deadline.

CHAPTER TEN: WHAT COLOR IS YOUR TEAM?

TEAM Survey

Select the statement in each of the four areas that follow that BEST matches what takes place on your team.

T—Trusting Relationships

- A. Team members are just getting to know one another and are hesitant to express themselves openly. Their relationships are polite and friendly, but a bit cautious.
- B. Team members are getting to know one another better, but there is not yet much sense of unity among them. Stronger individuals speak their mind and others withdraw in silence. There is little mutual understanding.
- C. Team members encourage and support one another more and more and have worked through many of their differences. The group is learning how to listen and communicate with one another, but is hesitant to give negative feedback.
- D. Team members enjoy an openness and honesty with one another that is invigorating. Differences of opinion are freely and openly discussed, even on issues that are regarded as uncomfortable, and no one takes offense or senses rejection for what they express.

E—Established Purpose, Values, and Goals

- A. The team has a growing sense of why it exists and how it will go about getting its work done. Some important goals have even been accomplished, which has brought a feeling of fulfillment and accomplishment to the group.
- B. The team has a clear sense of direction and an intuitive feel of how to go about getting its work done. Goals are set on a regular basis and followed to completion.
- C. The team is just beginning to understand why it exists and how they are going to go about doing their jobs. Goals are unclear, but hopes are high for great things to come.
- D. The team often forgets why it exists and someone has to keep reminding them. Team members disagree about how things should be done and pursue goals that move the group in opposite directions.

(Continued)

TEAM Survey (*Continued*)

A—Active Participation by All the Members of the Group

- A. Team conversations consist of a few individuals dominating the discussion and other members of the group, who don't necessarily agree with the opinions being expressed, remaining silent. The formal leader often has to step in and make a final decision.
- B. Team conversations consist of most everyone having a say on the issues at hand with a handful of key people making the final decision for the group.
- C. Team conversations consist of free and open discussion where everyone has an opportunity to speak his/her mind. A final decision is usually made when the group reaches consensus on an issue.
- D. Team conversations consist of the formal leader giving direction, mostly one-way, and the team listening and following his/her instructions.

M—Mutual Accountability

- A. All the members of the team feel responsible for the leadership of the group with jobs shared equally among them, so much so that an outsider might not be able to tell who the formal leader of the team is.
- B. The formal leader sets the direction for the team and is the person who makes sure everything gets done in the group. The group would fall apart without this leader.
- C. Stronger members of the group are asserting themselves, seeking more responsibility and leadership, but the formal leader works as hard as ever helping the team succeed.
- D. Leadership is beginning to be shared among the group and others are assuming key responsibilities for the team's success. The formal leader, however, still has a prominent presence on the team.

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Individual TEAM Survey Scoring Sheet

Circle the number next to the letter you selected on the survey that BEST describes what takes place on your team.				
T—TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS				
A-1	B-2	C-3	D-4	
E—ESTABLISHED PURPOSE, VALUES, AND GOALS				
A-3	B-4	C-1	D-2	
A—ACTIVE PARTICIPATION BY ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE GROUP				
A-2	B-3	C-4	D-1	
M—MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY				
A-4	B-1	C-2	D-3	
Place each of the four numbers from the scoring sheet underneath the appropriate letter of TEAM in the next table and total the numbers to the right. Find the description of your team that matches the range of totals listed on the left.				
T	E	A	M	TOTAL
4-6	RED An Emerging Team		Your team may be forming or just beginning to work together. This starting stage feels awkward—new people, new information, and new tasks—but you are optimistic about the possibility of what lies ahead.	
<i>(Continued)</i>				

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Individual TEAM Survey Scoring Sheet *(Continued)*

T	E	A	M	TOTAL
7-10	BLUE <i>A Growing Team</i>		<i>You're beyond that awkward starting stage of being nice and polite and are beginning to get some things done. But you seem to clash with one another more than you would like and progress on projects comes slowly.</i>	
10-13	YELLOW <i>A Working Team</i>		<i>You have worked together for a while and weathered some storms. Your group has celebrated its share of victories, but your relationships seem tentative at times and you feel like you could really get more done.</i>	
14-16	GREEN A Highly Productive Team		<i>You are a seasoned group of professionals that has faced many battles together and won most of them. In the process you have become good friends. Cherish your teamwork and stay focused as a group.</i>	

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Group TEAM Survey Scoring Sheet

<p><i>Participant Tabulation</i></p> <p>Place a mark by the letter circled for each TEAM item on participants' survey sheets. Total the marks for each letter.</p>						
T—TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS						
A	B	C	D			
E—ESTABLISHED PURPOSE, VALUES, AND GOALS						
A	B	C	D			
A—ACTIVE PARTICIPATION BY ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE GROUP						
A	B	C	D			
M—MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY						
A	B	C	D			
<p><i>Aggregate Scoring</i></p> <p>Multiply the total number of participants' marks in each letter on the Group Team Scoring Sheet by the number corresponding to each letter in the following table and enter it in the box. Total each multiplied number to the right and divide that total by the number of survey participants and record it in the box marked AVERAGE.</p>						
T—TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS						
A-1	B-2	C-3	D-4	TOTAL	Divide the TOTAL by the number of participants to enter AVERAGE.	AVERAGE

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Group TEAM Survey Scoring Sheet *(Continued)*

E—ESTABLISHED PURPOSE, VALUES, AND GOALS						
A-3	B-4	C-1	D-2	TOTAL	Divide the TOTAL by the number of respondents to enter AVERAGE.	AVERAGE
A—ACTIVE PARTICIPATION BY ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE GROUP						
A-2	B-3	C-4	D-1	TOTAL	Divide the TOTAL by the number of respondents to enter AVERAGE.	AVERAGE
M—MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY						
A-4	B-1	C-2	D-3	TOTAL	Divide the TOTAL by the number of respondents to enter AVERAGE.	AVERAGE

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Place each of the four AVERAGE numbers from the preceding table underneath the appropriate letter for TEAM in the following table and total the numbers to the right. Find the description of your team that matches the range of totals listed on the left.

T	E	A	M	TOTAL
4–6	RED An Emerging Team		Your team may be forming or just beginning to work together. This starting stage feels awkward—new people, new information, and new tasks—but you are optimistic about the possibility of what lies ahead.	
7–10	BLUE A Growing Team		You're beyond that awkward starting stage of being nice and polite and are beginning to get some things done. But you seem to clash with one another more than you would like and progress on projects comes slowly.	
10–13	YELLOW A Working Team		You have worked together for a while and weathered some storms. Your group has celebrated its share of victories, but your relationships seem tentative at times and you feel like you could really get more done.	
14–16	GREEN A Highly Productive Team		You are a seasoned group of professionals that has faced many battles together and won most of them. In the process you have become good friends. Cherish your teamwork and stay focused as a group.	

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1. Based on your individual or group TEAM score, what color is your team? _____
2. Reread the description of the specific team stage that matches the color of your team. Which characteristics specifically describe your group? _____

3. What strategies do you need to implement to move your team to the next stage of development? _____

4. According to the numerical scores on your survey(s), list the four elements of your team's TEAM from the highest to the lowest.

1- _____ Score: _____
2- _____ Score: _____
3- _____ Score: _____
4- _____ Score: _____

What does this ranking say about your team? _____

5. Who can you enlist to help you with the actions you need to take to grow your team? What will you ask them to do? _____

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