

SPECIAL SECTION

CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT THAT UNLEASHES 360-DEGREE LEADERS

If you are the top leader in your organization, then I want to spend a few moments with you in this special section. Many leaders in the middle of organizations are highly frustrated. They have great desire to lead and succeed; yet their leaders are often a greater hindrance than help to them. More than two-thirds of the people who leave their jobs do so because of an ineffective or incompetent leader. People don't leave their company—they leave their leader.

As a top leader, you have the power the way nobody else does to create a positive leadership culture where potential leaders flourish. If you create that environment, then people with leadership potential will learn, gain experience, and come into their own. They will become the kind of 360-Degree Leaders who make an organization great.

If you're willing to work at making your organization a place where leaders lead and do it well, you'll need to shift your focus from

leading the people and the organization, to . . .
 leading the people, finding leaders, and leading the organization, to . . .
 leading the people, developing the leaders, and leading the organization, to . . .
 leading and empowering the leaders while they lead the organization, to . . .
 serving the leaders as they lead the organization.

Depending on where you're starting from, that process may take several years, and it may be a tough climb. But think of the alternative. Where will your organization be in five years if you don't raise up leaders in an environment that unleashes 360-Degree Leaders?

THE LEADER'S DAILY DOZEN

If you're ready to revolutionize your organization, then I want to encourage you to start the process by adopting what I call the "Leader's Daily Dozen." Every morning when you get up and get ready to lead your organization, make a commitment to these twelve power-unleashing activities.

1. PLACE A HIGH VALUE ON PEOPLE

The first shift for turning your organization into a leader-friendly environment must occur inside of you. You only commit yourself to things you value. And fundamentally, if you don't value people, you will never create a culture that develops leaders.

Most top leaders focus on two things: the vision and the bottom line. The vision is what usually excites us most, and taking care of the bottom line keeps us in business. But between the vision and the bottom line are all the people in your organization. What's ironic is that if you ignore the people and only pay attention to these other two things, you will lose the people and the vision (and probably the bottom line). But if you focus on the people, you have the potential to win the people, the vision, and the bottom line.

When Jim Collins studied great companies and came to discover and define what he called level five leaders, he noticed that these excellent leaders didn't take the credit for their organization's accomplishments. In fact, they were incredibly humble and gave the credit to their people. Without a doubt, level five leaders place a high value on people.

Many companies say they value their people and their customers. Those are trendy things to say, but talk is cheap. If you want to know whether this is a value in your organization, then talk to people who know your organization well but don't work for it. What would they say? Their answers would probably give you the most accurate picture.

But you know your own heart better than anyone else. It all starts with you. You need to ask yourself: *Do I place a high value on people?*

2. COMMIT RESOURCES TO DEVELOP PEOPLE

Once when I was flying to Dallas with Zig Ziglar, he asked if I ever received letters from people thanking me. When I acknowledged that I did, he asked, "When you get those letters, what do people thank you for?" I had never really thought about that before, but the answer was clear. People almost always said thanks for a book I had written or some other resource I had produced.

"It's the same for me," Zig said. "Isn't that interesting? You and I are known for our speaking, but that's not what prompts people to write."

I've done a lot of speaking over the past thirty-five years. I love doing it, and I do think it has value. Events are great for creating lots of energy and enthusiasm, but if you want to facilitate growth, you need resources. They are better for development because they are process oriented. You can take them with you. You can refer back to them. You can dig into the meat and skip the fluff—and you can go at your own pace.

Once when I was teaching leaders at a large corporation, one of the event's organizers stated from the platform that people were their organization's most appreciable asset. I applauded his sentiment, but I also expanded on it for the leaders in the room. His statement is true only if you develop those people.

It takes a lot of effort to develop leaders. The first question a top leader usually asks is, "What is it going to cost?" My answer is, "Whatever amount it costs, it won't be as high as the cost of not developing your people."

Once again, I have a question for you. Ask yourself, *Am I committed to providing resources for leadership development?*

3. PLACE A HIGH VALUE ON LEADERSHIP

People who run a one-person business may not have to worry about leadership. But for people who lead organizations, leadership is always an issue. Anytime you have two or more people working together, leadership comes into play. In some organizations, all the emphasis is placed on effort, and leadership isn't even on people's radar. What a mistake.

All good leaders recognize the importance of leadership and place a high value on it. I love what General Tommy Franks said about the ultimate leaders in the middle of the military—the sergeants:

The months in the desert had reinforced my longstanding conviction that sergeants really were the backbone of the Army. The average trooper depends on NCOs for leadership by personal example. I thought of Sam Long and Scag, of Staff Sergeant Kittle—they had been examples of what a sergeant should be. If a non-commissioned officer is dedicated to his troops, the squad or section will have hard, realistic training, hot food when it's available, and the chance to take an occasional shower. If a sergeant is indifferent to the needs of his soldiers, their performance will suffer, and their lives might be wasted. A smart officer works hard to develop good NCOs.¹

The American military understands the value of leadership and always places a high value on it. If you value leadership, leaders will emerge to add value to the organization.

This time the question to ask yourself is very simple: *Do I place a high value on leadership in my organization?*

4. LOOK FOR POTENTIAL LEADERS

If leadership is on your radar and you value it, you will continually be on the lookout for potential leaders. Several years ago I did a lesson for one of my leadership development tape clubs that taught leaders what to look for in potential leaders. It was called “Searching for Eagles,” and for many years it was our most requested lesson. These are the top ten characteristics of “eagles”:

- They make things happen.
- They see opportunities.
- They influence the opinions and actions of others.
- They add value to you.
- They draw winners to them.
- They equip other eagles to lead.
- They provide ideas that help the organization.
- They possess an uncommonly great attitude.
- They live up to their commitments.
- They show fierce loyalty to the organization and the leader.

As you begin to search for potential leaders, look for people who possess these qualities. Meanwhile, ask yourself: *Am I continually looking for potential leaders?*

5. KNOW AND RESPECT YOUR PEOPLE

As you find leaders and develop them, you will get to know them better as individuals. I want to encourage you to use the guidelines in the “Walk Slowly Through the Halls” chapter to enhance that process. But there are also other characteristics that are common to all leaders that you should keep in mind as you take them through the development process.

- People want to see results.
- People want to be effective—they want to do what they do well.
- People want to be in the picture.

- People want to be appreciated.
- People want to be a part of the celebration.

As you select people to develop, work to strike a balance between these universal desires and the individual needs of your people. Try to tailor the development process for each individual as much as you can. To do that, continually ask yourself, *Do I know and respect my people?*

6. PROVIDE YOUR PEOPLE WITH LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES

It is impossible to learn leadership without actually leading. After all, leadership is action. One of the places where many top leaders miss developmental opportunities comes in what we delegate. Our natural tendency is to give others tasks to perform rather than leadership functions to fulfill. We need to make a shift. If we don't delegate leadership—with authority as well as accountability—our people will never gain the experience they need to lead well.

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The question you must ask yourself is, *Am I providing my people with leadership experiences?*

7. REWARD LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

Taking initiative is such an important part of leadership. The best leaders are proactive. They make things happen. Most top leaders are initiators, but that doesn't mean that every top leader feels comfortable when others use their initiative. Just because they trust their own instincts doesn't mean they trust the instincts of their people.

It's true that emerging leaders often want to take the lead before they are really ready to. But potential leaders can only become full-fledged leaders if they are allowed to develop and use their initiative. So what's the solution? Good timing! If you rush the timing, you short-circuit the growth process. If you hold leaders back when they're ready to move, you stunt their growth.

One of the things that can help you navigate the timing issue is recognizing whether your mind-set is one of scarcity or abundance. If you believe that the world has only a limited amount of resources, a finite number of opportunities, and so forth, then you may be reluctant to let your leaders take risks—because

you may think that the organization will not be able to recover from mistakes. On the other hand, if you believe opportunities are unlimited, that resources are renewable and unlimited, you will be more willing to take risks. You will not doubt your ability to recover.

How are you doing in this area? Ask yourself, *Do I reward leadership initiative?*

8. PROVIDE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT WHERE PEOPLE ASK QUESTIONS, SHARE IDEAS, AND TAKE RISKS

Pulitzer prize-winning historian Garry Wills said, “Leaders have a say in what they are being led to. A leader who neglects that soon finds himself without followers.” It takes secure leaders at the top to let the leaders working for them be full participants in the organization's leadership process. If leaders in the middle question them, they don't take it personally. When they share ideas, the top leaders cannot afford to feel threatened. When people lower than they are in the organization want to take risks, they need to be willing to give them room to succeed or fail.

Leadership by its very nature challenges. It challenges out-of-date ideas. It challenges old ways of doing things. It challenges the status quo. Never forget that what gets rewarded gets done. If you reward complacency, you will get complacency from your leaders in the middle. But if you can remain secure and let them find new ways of doing things—ways that are better than yours—the organization will move forward more quickly.

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—GARRY WILLS

Instead of trying to be Mr. Answerman or Ms. Fix-it, when your leaders start coming into their own, move more into the background. Try taking on the role of wise counselor and chief encourager. Welcome the desire of your best leaders to innovate and improve the organization. After all, I think you'll agree that a win for the organization is a win for you.

So what role are you playing in your organization? Are you “the expert,” or are you more of an advisor and advocate? Ask yourself, *Am I providing an environment where people can ask questions, share ideas, and take risks?*

9. GROW WITH YOUR PEOPLE

I've talked to a lot of top leaders during my career, and I've detected a number of different attitudes toward growth. Here's how I would summarize them:

- I have already grown.
- I want my people to grow.
- I'm dedicated to helping my people grow.
- I want to grow along with my people.

Guess which attitude fosters an organization where people are growing?

When people in an organization see the top leader growing, it changes the culture of the organization. It immediately removes many barriers between the top leader and the rest of the people, putting you on the same level with them, which makes the top leader much more human and accessible. It also sends a clear message to everyone: make growth a priority.

So the question I want you to ask yourself is very simple: *Am I growing with my people?*

10. DRAW PEOPLE WITH HIGH POTENTIAL INTO YOUR INNER CIRCLE

When Mark Sanborn, author of *The Fred Factor*, spoke at one of our leadership events, he made a remark that really stuck with me: "It's better to have a group of deer led by a lion than a group of lions led by a deer." Why? Because even if you have a group of deer, if they are led by a lion, they will act like a pride of lions. Isn't that a great analogy? It's really true. When people spend time with someone and are directed by them, they learn to think the way that person thinks and do what that person does. Their performance starts to rise according to the capability of their leader.

When I was working on *Developing the Leaders Around You*, I often took an informal poll at conferences to find out how people came to be leaders. I asked if they became leaders (a) because they were given a position; (b) because there was a crisis in the organization; or (c) because they had been mentored. More than 80 percent indicated that they were leaders because someone had mentored them in leadership—had taken them through the process.

The best way to develop high-caliber leaders is to have them mentored by a high-caliber leader. If you lead your organization, you are probably the best (or at least one of the best) leader in the organization. If you are not already doing so, you need to handpick the people with the greatest potential, invite them into

your inner circle, and mentor them. It doesn't matter if you do it with one or with a dozen, whether you work one-on-one or in a group setting. The main thing is that you need to be giving your best to your best people.

Are you doing that? What is your answer to the question, *Am I drawing people with potential into my inner circle?*

11. COMMIT YOURSELF TO DEVELOPING A LEADERSHIP TEAM

When I started out as a leader, I tried to do everything myself. Until I was about age forty, I thought I could do it all. After my fortieth birthday, I finally realized that if I didn't develop other leaders, my potential was only a fraction of what it could be. So for the next decade, developing people into good leaders was my focus. But even that has its limitations. I realize now that to reach the highest level of leadership, I must continually develop leadership teams.

Let's face it. No one does everything well. I can't do it all—can you? I wrote the *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, which contains every leadership principle I know based on a lifetime of learning and leading. I can't do all of the twenty-one laws well. So I need help.

You do too. If you want your organization to reach its potential, if you want it to go from good to great (or even average to good), you need to develop a team of leaders, people who can fill in each others' gaps, people who challenge and sharpen each other. If we try to do it all ourselves, we will never get beyond the glass ceiling of our own leadership limitations.

How are you in this area? Ask yourself, *Am I committed to developing a leadership team?*

12. UNLEASH YOUR LEADERS TO LEAD

As leaders, if we feel any uncertainty or insecurity about the leadership development process, it is usually not related to the training we give. The uncertainty we feel comes when we contemplate releasing our leaders to lead. It is not dissimilar to what parents feel with their kids. My children are grown and have families of their own, but when they were teenagers, the hardest thing for my wife and me was releasing them to go their own way and make their own decisions. It is scary, but if you don't let them try out their wings, they will never learn to fly.

As I have grown older, I have come to think of myself as a lid lifter. That is my main function as an organizational leader. If I can lift the leadership lids for the members of my team, then I am doing my job. The more barriers I remove for my people, the more likely they are to rise up to their potential. And what's

really great is that when the top leaders are lid lifters for the leaders in the middle, then those leaders become load lifters for the ones at the top.

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So here is the last question. Ask yourself, *Am I unleashing my leaders to lead?*

If you become dedicated to developing and releasing 360-Degree Leaders, your organization will change—and so will your life. I've found that leaders who go from leading alone to successfully developing 360-Degree Leaders go through three stages:

STAGE 1: THE LONELINESS OF LEADING—"I am the only leader." When you are the one leader, you really have to personally lead everything.

STAGE 2: THE LIFTING OF A LEADER—"I'm one of only a few leaders." When you begin leading and developing other leaders, then you lead only some of the more important things.

STAGE 3: THE LEGACY OF A LEADER—"I'm only one of many leaders." When you develop 360-Degree Leaders, then you lead only a very few strategic things.

That's the situation Tom Mullins finds himself in at this point in his career. Tom is the senior pastor of Christ Fellowship, a very large congregation in West Palm Beach, Florida. Tom was the founding pastor of his church, so when he first started, he did everything. If a task was to be accomplished, if a goal was to be met, if a program was to be started, Tom had to lead it personally.

But Tom is an outstanding leader. He had no desire to go it alone, to be Mr. Answerman. As the organization grew, Tom dedicated himself not only to helping people but also to developing leaders. The more leaders he developed, the less time he needed to be on the front lines. For years, Tom has been developing and empowering 360-Degree Leaders to lead.

Today, more than ten thousand people attend his church every weekend. There are hundreds of programs and activities going on every week. The church is highly active in the community, building houses for the poor and feeding people. They are constantly reaching out to others. And where is Tom? He's in the middle of it all, coaching, advising, and encouraging. That's where he now leads from most of the time. Rarely is he the top leader in any endeavor anymore. Tom said he is more fulfilled by seeing others succeed—whether it's teaching

on the platform or leading the team—than he is by taking the point position. The organization is succeeding beyond his wildest dreams as a result.

Isn't that what we all want as leaders—for our people and our organizations to succeed? Legendary Chinese philosopher Lao-Tzu said, "A leader is best when the people barely know he exists." That's what the best leaders do—help others succeed. They lead, empower, and then get out of the way. If you create an environment that develops 360-Degree Leaders, that is what you will someday be able to do.