

SECTION III

THE PRINCIPLES 360-DEGREE LEADERS PRACTICE TO LEAD UP

“Follow me, I’m right behind you.”

If you are trying to make an impact from the middle of an organization, then you probably relate to the myths and challenges outlined in the previous two sections of the book. More than likely you have to deal with one or more of them every day. So how do you make the best of your situation while overcoming the challenges and avoiding the myths? You develop the ability to be a 360-Degree Leader by learning to lead up (with your leader), lead across (with your colleagues), and lead down (with your followers). Each of these draws on different principles and requires different skills.

*“If you want to get ahead, leading up is much better than
kissing up.”*
—DAN REILAND

Leading up is the 360-Degree Leader’s greatest challenge. Most leaders want to lead, not be led. But most leaders also want to have value added to them. If you take the approach of wanting to add value to those above you, you have the best chance of influencing them. Dan Reiland said as we talked over ideas for this book: “If you want to get ahead, leading up is much better than kissing up.”

In the fall of 2004, I got a glimpse of a world that was totally new to me. At “Exchange,” an event for executives that I host every year, I invited the attendees to experience a presentation by noted Boston Philharmonic conductor Benjamin Zander along with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. It was an interactive leadership experience where we got to sit in among the musicians of the

orchestra as they rehearsed, and the conductor gave us insights into communication, leadership, and followership within a world-class team of artists. It was incredible.

That experience prompted me to read the book Zander wrote with his wife, Rosamund Stone Zander, called *The Art of Possibility*. In it, they tell a story that wonderfully illustrates the value of leading up and how it can add value to a leader and an organization. Benjamin Zander wrote:

One of the most supremely gifted and accomplished artists I have known sat for decades as a modest member of the viola section of one of America’s leading orchestras. Eugene Lehner had been the violist of the legendary Kolisch Quartet, and had coached the distinguished Juilliard String Quartet as well as innumerable other ensembles . . . How often I have consulted him on thorny points of interpretation—to have the scales removed from my eyes by his incandescent insight into the music!¹

Zander went on to say that he wondered if any of the other conductors—who have a notorious reputation for being egoists—had consulted him and drawn on his immense knowledge and experience as an artist and leader. Following is Lehner’s response:

One day, during my very first year playing with the orchestra, I remember an occasion when Koussevitsky was conducting a Bach piece and he seemed to be having some difficulty getting the results he wanted—it simply wasn’t going right. Fortunately, his friend, the great French pedagogue and conductor Nadia Boulanger, happened to be in town and sitting in on the rehearsal, so Koussevitsky took the opportunity to extricate himself from an awkward and embarrassing situation by calling out to her, “Nadia, please, will you come up here and conduct? I want to go to the back of the hall to see how it sounds.” Mademoiselle Boulanger stepped up, made a few comments to the musicians, and conducted the orchestra through the passage without a hitch. Ever since that time, in every rehearsal, I have been waiting for the conductor to say, “Lehrer, you come up here and conduct, I want to go to the back of the hall to hear how it sounds.” It is now forty-three years since this happened, and it is less and less likely that I will be asked.²

I’m sure you don’t want to wait forty-three years for an opportunity to lead up. You want to be a person of influence beginning today.

Influencing your leader isn’t something you can make happen in a day. In fact, since you have no control over the people above you on the organizational chart, they may refuse to be influenced by you or anyone under their authority. So there’s a possibility that you may never be able to lead up with them. But you can greatly increase the odds of success if you practice the principles in this section of the book. Your underlying strategy should be to support your leader,

add value to the organization, and distinguish yourself from the rest of the pack by doing your work with excellence. If you do these things consistently, then in time the leader above you may learn to trust you, rely on you, and look to you for advice. With each step, your influence will increase, and you will have more and more opportunities to lead up.

Lead-Up Principle #1

LEAD YOURSELF EXCEPTIONALLY WELL

Every now and then at a conference, sharp young kids will come up to me and tell me how much they want to become great leaders and how hard they're working to learn and grow. But then they'll lament, "I don't have anyone to lead yet."

My response is to tell them, "Lead yourself. That's where it all starts. Besides, if you wouldn't follow yourself, why should anyone else?"

Have you ever worked with people who didn't lead themselves well? Worse, have you ever worked for people in leadership positions who couldn't lead themselves? What do they do other than set a bad example? They're like the crow in a fable I once read. The crow was sitting in a tree, doing nothing all day. A small rabbit saw the crow and asked him, "Can I also sit like you and do nothing all day long?"

"Sure," answered the crow, "why not?" So the rabbit sat on the ground below the crow, following his example. All of a sudden a fox appeared, pounced on the rabbit, and ate him.

The tongue-in-cheek moral of the story is that if you're going to sit around doing nothing all day, you had better be sitting very high up. But if you are down where the action is, you can't afford to be sitting around doing nothing. The key to leading yourself well is to learn self-management. I have observed that most people put too much emphasis on decision making and too little on decision managing. As a result, they lack focus, discipline, intentionality, and purpose.

I believe this so firmly that I wrote an entire book on it called *Today Matters*. The thesis of the book is that successful people make right decisions early and manage those decisions daily. We often think that self-leadership is about

making good decisions every day, when the reality is that we need to make a few critical decisions in major areas of life and then manage those decisions day to day.

Here's a classic example of what I mean. Have you ever made a New Year's resolution to exercise? You probably already believe that exercise is important. Making a decision to do it isn't that hard, but managing that decision—and following through—is much more difficult. Let's say, for example, that you sign up for a health club membership the first week of January. When you sign on, you're excited. But the first time you show up at the gym, there's a mob of people. There are so many cars that police are directing traffic. You drive around for fifteen minutes, and finally find a parking place—four blocks away. But that's okay; you're there for exercise anyway, so you walk to the gym.

Then when you get inside the building, you have to wait to even get into the locker room to change. But you think, *That's okay. I want to get into shape. This is going to be great.* You think that until you finally get dressed and discover all the machines are being used. Once again you have to wait. Finally, you get on a machine—it's not the one you really wanted, but hey, you'll take it—and you exercise for twenty minutes. When you see the line for the shower, you decide to skip it, take your clothes, and just change at home.

The key to leading yourself well is to learn self-management.

On your way out, you see the manager of the club, and you decide to complain about the crowds. She says, "Don't worry about it. Come back in three weeks, and you can have the closest parking place and your choice of machines. Because by then, 98 percent of the people who signed up will have dropped out!"

It's one thing to decide to exercise. It's another to actually follow through with it. As everyone else drops out, you will have to decide whether you will quit like everyone else or if you will stick with it. And that takes self-management.

Nothing will make a better impression on your leader than your ability to manage yourself. If your leader must continually expend energy managing you, then you will be perceived as someone who drains time and energy. If you manage yourself well, however, your boss will see you as someone who maximizes opportunities and leverages personal strengths. That will make you someone your leader turns to when the heat is on.

WHAT A LEADER MUST SELF-MANAGE

In *Today Matters* I reference the dozen things that people who desire to be successful should do. But here I want to focus on leadership alone.

So if you want to gain credibility with your boss and others, focus on taking care of business in these seven areas:

1. MANAGE YOUR EMOTIONS

I once heard that people with emotional problems are 144 percent more likely to have auto accidents than those who don't have them. The same study evidently found that one out of five victims of fatal accidents had been in a quarrel with another person in the six hours preceding the accident.

It's important for everybody to manage emotions. Nobody likes to spend time around an emotional time bomb who may "go off" at any moment. But it's especially critical for leaders to control their emotions because whatever they do affects many other people.

Good leaders know when to display emotions and when to delay them. Sometimes they show them so that their people can feel what they're feeling. It stirs them up. Is that manipulative? I don't think so, as long as the leaders are doing it for the good of the team and not for their own gain. Because leaders see more than others and ahead of others, they often experience the emotions first. By letting the team know what you're feeling, you're helping them to see what you're seeing.

Good leaders know when to display emotions and when to delay them.

Other times leaders have to hold their feelings in check. In his book *American Soldier*, Gen. Tommy Franks wrote about a devastating incident that occurred in Vietnam when he was a junior officer and the example that was set for him in this area by Lt. Col. Eric Antilla, who put the men he commanded ahead of his own emotional needs:

I studied Eric Antilla's eyes. I knew he was gripped by anguish, but he never let it show. We were at war; he was commanding troops in combat. And his quiet resolve in meeting this catastrophe gave us all strength. In an hour he would grieve, but now he stood rock solid. In war, it is necessary that commanders be able to delay their emotions until they can afford them.¹

When I say that leaders should delay their emotions, I'm not suggesting that they deny them or bury them. The bottom line in managing your emotions is

that you should put others—not yourself—first in how you handle and process them. Whether you delay or display your emotions should not be for your own gratification. You should ask yourself, *What does the team need?* not, *What will make me feel better?*

2. MANAGE YOUR TIME

Time management issues are especially tough for people in the middle. Leaders at the top can delegate. Workers at the bottom usually punch a time clock. They get paid an hourly wage, and they do what they can while they're on the clock. Middle leaders, meanwhile, feel the Tension Challenge, and they are encouraged—and are often expected—to put in long hours to get work done.

Time is valuable. Psychiatrist and author M. Scott Peck said, “Until you value yourself, you won't value your time. Until you value your time, you will not do anything with it.” In *What to Do Between Birth and Death* (Wm. Morrow & Co., 1992), Charles Spezzano says that people don't pay for things with money; they pay for them with time. If you say to yourself, *In five years, I'll have put enough away to buy that vacation house*, then what you are really saying is that the house will cost you five years—one-twelfth of your adult life. “The phrase *spending your time* is not a metaphor,” said Spezzano. “It's how life works.”

“Until you value yourself, you won't value your time.”
—M. SCOTT PECK

Instead of thinking about what you do and what you buy in terms of money, instead think about them in terms of time. Think about it. What is worth spending your life on? Seeing your work in that light just may change the way you manage your time.

3. MANAGE YOUR PRIORITIES

The best 360-Degree Leaders are generalists. They know a lot about a lot of things. They often have no choice because of the Multi-Hat Challenge. But at the same time, the old proverb is true: If you chase two rabbits, both will escape.

What is a leader in the middle to do? Since you are not the top leader, you don't have control over your list of responsibilities or your schedule. You should still try to get yourself to the point where you can manage your priorities and focus your time in this way:

80 percent of the time—work where you are strongest

15 percent of the time—work where you are learning
5 percent of the time—work in other necessary areas

This may not be easy to achieve, but it is what you should strive for. If you have people working for you, try to give them the things you aren't good at but they are. Or if possible, trade some duties with your colleagues so that each of you is playing to your strength. Remember, the only way to move up from the middle is to gradually shift from generalist to specialist, from someone who does many things well to someone who focuses on a few things she does exceptionally well.

The secret to making the shift is often discipline. In *Good to Great*, Jim Collins wrote:

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 build the good-to-great companies, however, made as much use of “stop doing” lists as the “to do” lists. They displayed a remarkable amount of discipline to unplug all sorts of extraneous junk.²

You must be ruthless in your judgment of what you should not do. Just because you like doing something doesn't mean it should stay on your to-do list. If it is a strength, do it. If it helps you grow, do it. If your leader says you must handle it personally, do it. Anything else is a candidate for your “stop doing” list.

4. MANAGE YOUR ENERGY

Some people have to ration their energy so that they don't run out. Up until a few years ago, that wasn't me. When people asked me how I got so much done, my answer was always, “High energy, low IQ.” From the time I was a kid, I was always on the go. I was six years old before I realized my name wasn't “Settle Down.”

Now that I'm fifty-eight, I do have to pay attention to my energy level. In *Thinking for a Change*, I shared one of my strategies for managing my energy. When I look at my calendar every morning, I ask myself, *What is the main event?* That is the one thing to which I cannot afford to give anything less than my best. That one thing can be for my family, my employees, a friend, my publisher, the sponsor of a speaking engagement, or my writing time. I always make sure I have the energy to do it with focus and excellence.

The greatest enemy of good thinking is busyness.

Even people with high energy can have that energy sucked right out of them under difficult circumstances. I've observed that leaders in the middle of an organization often have to deal with what I call “the ABCs energy-drain.”

Activity Without Direction—doing things that don't seem to matter
Burden Without Action—not being able to do things that really matter
Conflict Without Resolution—not being able to deal with what's the matter

If you find that you are in an organization where you often must deal with these ABCs, then you will have to work extra hard to manage your energy well. Either that or you need to look for a new place to work.

5. MANAGE YOUR THINKING

Poet and novelist James Joyce said, “Your mind will give back to you exactly what you put into it.” The greatest enemy of good thinking is busyness. And middle leaders are usually the busiest people in an organization. If you find that the pace of life is too demanding for you to stop and think during your workday, then get into the habit of jotting down the three or four things that need good mental processing or planning that you can't stop to think about. Then carve out some time later when you can give those items some good think-time. That may be thirty minutes at home the same day, or you may want to keep a running list for a whole week and then take a couple of hours on Saturday. Just don't let the list get so long that it disheartens or intimidates you.

I encouraged readers in *Thinking for a Change* to have a place to think, and I wrote about the “thinking chair” I have in my office. I don't use that chair for anything else other than my think-time. I've discovered since the book's publication that I didn't explain clearly enough how to correctly use the thinking chair. People at conferences told me that they sat in their own thinking chairs and nothing happened. I explain to them that I don't sit in that thinking chair without an agenda, just hoping that a good idea hits me. What I usually do is think about the things I've jotted down because I couldn't think about them during a busy day. I take the list to my chair, put it in front of me, and give each item as much think-time as it needs. Sometimes I'm evaluating a decision I've already made. Sometimes I'm thinking through a decision I will have to make. Sometimes I'm developing a strategy. Other times I'm trying to be creative in fleshing out an idea.

A minute of thinking is often more valuable than an hour of talk or unplanned work.

I want to encourage you to try managing your thinking in this way. If you've never done it before, you will be amazed by the payoff. And know this: 1 minute > 1 hour. A minute of thinking is often more valuable than an hour of talk or unplanned work.

6. MANAGE YOUR WORDS

Legendary basketball coach John Wooden said, "Show me what you can do, don't just tell me what you can do." I think just about every leader has said—or at least thought—those words at some time or another when dealing with an employee. Leaders value action. And if they are going to stop what they're doing long enough to listen, the words they hear need to have value. Make them count.

In *The Forbes Scrapbook of Thoughts on the Business Life* (Triumph Books, 1995), Emile de Girardin is quoted as saying, "The power of words is immense. A well-chosen word has often sufficed to stop a flying army, to change defeat into victory, and to save an empire." If you wish to make sure that your words carry weight, then weigh them well. The good news is that if you manage your thinking and take advantage of focused think-time, you will probably see improvement in the area of managing your words too.

David McKinley, a 360-Degree Leader in a large organization in Plano, Texas, told me a story about something that happened in his first job after graduate school. He was preparing to make an important call on someone, and he decided that he should ask the top leader to go with him. When they got there, David, in his enthusiasm, just wouldn't stop talking. He didn't give his leader a chance to do anything but watch until the very end of their visit.

As they returned to the car, David's boss told him, "I might as well have stayed at the office." He went on to explain how his presence was superfluous. David told me, "I learned a huge lesson that day about staying 'in bounds' when I was with the senior leader. His honest counsel and correction strengthened our relationship and has served me well throughout my life." If you have something worthwhile to say, say it briefly and well. If you don't, sometimes the best thing to do is remain silent.

7. MANAGE YOUR PERSONAL LIFE

You can do everything right at work and manage yourself well there, but if your personal life is a mess, it will eventually turn everything else sour. What would it profit a leader to climb to the top of the organizational chart but to lose a marriage or alienate the children? As someone who spent many years counseling people, I can tell you, no career success is worth it.

Success is having those closest to me love and respect me the most.

For years one of my definitions of *success* has been this: having those closest to me love and respect me the most. That is what is most important. I want the love and respect of my wife, my children, and my grandchildren before I want the respect of anyone I work with. Don't get me wrong. I want the people who work with me to respect me too, but not at the expense of my family. If I blow managing myself at home, then the negative impact will spill over into every area of my life, including work.

If you want to lead up, you must always lead yourself first. If you can't, you have no credibility. I've found the following to be true:

If I can't lead myself, others won't follow me.
 If I can't lead myself, others won't respect me.
 If I can't lead myself, others won't partner with me.

That applies whether the influence you desire to exert is on the people above you, beside you, or below you. The better you are at making sure you're doing what you should be doing, the better chance you have for making an impact on others.

Lead-Up Principle #2

LIGHTEN YOUR LEADER'S LOAD

You've probably heard the saying, "Pass the buck," meaning to duck ownership or shirk responsibility. One source says that the expression comes from when card games were played in the old West, and a Buck knife was used to indicate who was to deal the cards next. If someone didn't want to deal, he could pass the Buck.

When Harry Truman was president of the United States, he used to keep a sign on his desk that said, "The Buck Stops Here." By that he meant that no matter how many people might avoid taking responsibility up and down the chain of command, he would take responsibility. In an address at the National War College on December 19, 1952, Truman said, "You know, it's easy for the Monday morning quarterback to say what the coach should have done, after the game is over. But when the decision is up before you—and on my desk I have a motto which says 'The Buck Stops Here'—the decision has to be made." On another occasion he said, "The president—whoever he is—has to decide. He can't pass the buck to anybody. No one else can do the deciding for him. That's his job."¹

Responsibility weighs heavily on leaders. The higher they are in an organization, the heavier the responsibility. As president of the United States, Truman carried the weight of the entire nation on his shoulders. Leaders can give up many things. They can delegate many things. The one thing that the top leader can never let go of is final responsibility.

HOW LIFTING YOUR LEADER LIFTS YOU

As an employee, you can do one of two things for your leader. You can make the load lighter, or you can make it heavier. It's similar to the Elevator Principle in *Winning with People*: "We can lift people up or take people down in our

relationships." If you help lift the load, then you help your leader succeed. When the boss succeeds, the organization succeeds. Conversely, it is almost impossible for you to win if your boss fails.

Leaders can give up many things. They can delegate many things. The one thing that the top leader can never let go of is final responsibility.

I should mention that motives do matter when it comes to lifting your leader's load. I'm recommending that you lift up, not suck up. That's not to say that people who are nice to the boss and hope it helps their careers have bad motives or poor character. They have just misplaced their energies. And a good leader can tell the difference between someone who really wants to help and someone who is trying to curry favor.

There are many positive benefits that can come from helping to lift your leader's load. Following are a few of those benefits.

LIFTING SHOWS YOU ARE A TEAM PLAYER

When I think of the consummate team player, I think of Kirk Nowery, the president of Injoy Stewardship Services. When Kirk first began with ISS, he was one of our "road warriors." He consulted with churches and also presented information about ISS and its services to pastors and their lay leaders. But every time I saw Kirk, he used to ask me the same question: "John, is there anything I can do for you?" It was his way of letting me know that he was a team player, willing to do whatever it took for ISS to succeed. Now that Kirk is running the company, he still asks me that question whenever we meet. And if I ask him to do anything, whether it's to accomplish a big company goal or help me with something personal, he completes the task with excellence.

LIFTING SHOWS GRATITUDE FOR BEING ON THE TEAM

A Chinese proverb says, "Those who drink the water must remember those who dug the well." Gratitude is one of the most attractive of all personal attributes; sometimes I think it is one of the least practiced. But I have to say that the people I work with are not remiss in this area. I find them to be very grateful. They continually show their gratitude by lifting my load and taking things off of my shoulders; and because they take good care of me, I try to take good care of them.

LIFTING MAKES YOU PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER

In February 2005, a few members of the EQUIP staff, several volunteer leadership trainers, and some current and potential donors made a trip to Europe to launch the Million Leaders Mandate there. It was an amazing experience as we met with national leaders in the United Kingdom, Germany, Ukraine, and Russia.

When you help someone bigger than you, it makes you part of something bigger.

We covered a lot of territory in ten days. Often we flew into a country in the morning, took in some sights in the afternoon, and met with key leaders in the evening or the next day. As we rushed from place to place and traveled together on buses from airport to hotel to meeting hall, Doug Carter, the vice president of EQUIP, continually reminded everyone of the vision of EQUIP and the Million Leaders Mandate—to train and equip a million people on six continents for spiritual leadership.

Doug is a good leader. He was reminding us that what we were doing was a part of something bigger than the events of the moment. It's the truth that when you help someone bigger than you, it makes you part of something bigger. Doesn't just about everyone desire to be part of something significant? There is also another benefit to being part of something bigger; it makes you bigger. You cannot contribute to something significant without being changed. If you want to be better than you are, become part of something bigger than you are.

LIFTING GETS YOU NOTICED

When you lift people up, they can't help but notice it. Even if others aren't aware of what you're doing, the person being lifted is. Of course, lifting others isn't meant to be a one-time occurrence. You can't add value to people by helping them once. It needs to be an ongoing process if you want the value you add to come back to you.

HOW OFTEN YOU LIFT	HOW THE LEADER RESPONDS
Once or twice	"Thanks."
Many times	"I need you."
Continually	"Let me help you."

If you continually help others, then others will eventually want to help you. Even if the leader you work for never turns around to lift you up in return,

someone who has seen you doing that lifting will extend a hand to you. Just remember: *It's not how heavy the load is. It's how you carry it.*

LIFTING INCREASES YOUR VALUE AND INFLUENCE

Do you have a friend or family member who always makes things better for you, who seems to add value to you every time you are together? If you do, I bet that person has a special place in your heart. Likewise, load lifters have a special place in the hearts of their leaders.

From the perspective of the top leader, the question that must be asked is, "Am I better off with them on the team?" That's really the bottom line for a leader. If you make your leaders feel that they are better off because you are part of the team, then your value goes up, and so does your influence. I ask myself that question about two years after hiring someone. I'm naturally optimistic, so it takes that long for my enthusiasm for them to be tempered enough for me to look at their performance realistically. Other leaders could perhaps make a fair assessment sooner than that, though I also recommend that pessimists wait two years (to get over their skepticism).

The lift you give for the leader often leads to the leader lifting you.

When you lift a leader's load, your load certainly gets heavier. You're taking on more when leading in the middle is already difficult. Know, however, that the lift you give for the leader often leads to the leader lifting you.

HOW TO LIFT YOUR LEADER'S LOAD

As you read about the various ways that lifting your leader's load can help you, perhaps several ways you could help came to mind. I recommend that you go with your instincts. But just in case you aren't sure of where to begin, please allow me to give you several suggestions.

1. DO YOUR OWN JOB WELL FIRST

Hall of Fame baseball player Willie Mays said, "It isn't hard to be good from time to time in sports. What's tough is being good every day." When you are good every day, you do the first important step in lifting your leader's load—you prevent him from having to lift yours.

I once had an employee who continually told me that he wanted to help me. At first, I thought, *What a great attitude!* But then I began to notice something. Despite his constant requests to help, he never seemed to get his own work done. After seeing that this was a pattern, I sat him down and told him that the best way he could help me was to do his job. But guess what? He kept asking to help me but didn't follow through and get his own job done. I finally concluded that what he wanted was to spend time with me, not help me. In time, I had to let him go.

2. WHEN YOU FIND A PROBLEM, PROVIDE A SOLUTION

I love the *Peanuts* comic strip in which Lucy walks up to Charlie Brown, who is leaning against a wall with his head in his hands. She looks at him and says, "Discouraged again, eh, Charlie Brown?"

"You know what your trouble is?" she asks when he doesn't respond. "The whole trouble with you is that you are you!"

"It isn't hard to be good from time to time in sports. What's tough is being good every day."
—WILLIE MAYS

"Well, what in the world can I do about that?" he responds in exasperation. Lucy answers, "I don't pretend to be able to give advice. I merely point out the trouble."

Load lifters don't follow the path of Lucy. They are more like Henry Ford, who said, "Don't find a fault; find a remedy."

In an organization I led many years ago, I seemed to have a whole bunch of "Lucys" working for me, who seemed to continually dump problems on my desk and then go away to look for more problems. I instituted a rule. Anyone who brought a problem to me wanting help with it had to also come up with three potential solutions before coming to see me. Did I do that because I didn't want to help them? No, I did it because I wanted them to learn to help themselves. They quickly became creative and resourceful. As time went by, they needed less help and became better decision makers and leaders.

3. TELL LEADERS WHAT THEY NEED TO HEAR, NOT WHAT THEY WANT TO HEAR

Because of their intuition, good leaders often see more than others see, and they see things before others do. Why? Because they see everything from a

leadership bias. But if the organization they lead gets large, they often lose their edge. They become disconnected. What is the remedy to this problem? They ask the people in their inner circle to see things for them.

"Very few big executives want to be surrounded by 'yes' men."
—BURTON BIGELOW

Most good leaders want the perspective of people they trust. Sales expert Burton Bigelow said, "Very few big executives want to be surrounded by 'yes' men. Their greatest weakness often is the fact that 'yes' men build up around the executive a wall of fiction, when what the executive wants most of all is plain facts."

One of the ways to become a person whom leaders trust is to tell them the truth. One of the biggest load lifters in my life is Linda Eggers, my assistant. Every time I meet with Linda, I ask her to keep me on track. And believe me, I trust her in everything. Having Linda work with me is like possessing an extra brain!

Early on in our working relationship, I asked Linda to always be up front with me when it came to bad news. I didn't want her to talk around issues or try to spare my feelings. If I'm going to get bad news, I want it straight and right away. My promise to Linda, in return, was to never shoot the messenger. If you were to talk to Linda, I believe she would confirm that I have kept that promise.

If you've never spoken up to your leaders and told them what they need to hear, then it will take courage. As World War II general and later president Dwight D. Eisenhower said, "A bold heart is half the battle." But if you are willing to speak up, you can help your leaders and yourself. Start small and be diplomatic. If your leader is receptive, become more frank over time. If you get to the point where your leader is not only willing to hear from you but actually wants your perspective, then remember this: Your job is to be a funnel, not a filter. Be careful to convey information without "spinning" it. Good leaders want the truth—even if it hurts.

4. GO THE SECOND MILE

Motivational sales expert Zig Ziglar said, "There are no traffic jams on the extra mile." When you do more than is asked, you will certainly stand out from the crowd. When you have a whatever-it-takes attitude related to helping the organization, then you can emerge as a go-to player. (I address this in greater depth in Chapter 8 of this section.) People who emerge from the crowd often

become members of a leader's inner circle. Leaders expect more from their inner circle. They come to expect a second-mile mind-set from them. They expect extra effort, extra responsibility, and extra thinking. But the good leaders also give extra in return.

"There are no traffic jams on the extra mile."
—ZIG ZIGLAR

5. STAND UP FOR YOUR LEADER WHENEVER YOU CAN

Helping your leaders means supporting them and standing up for them whenever you can. Former army general and U.S. secretary of state Colin Powell said, "When we are debating an issue, loyalty means giving me your honest opinion, whether you think I'll like it or not. Disagreement, at this stage, stimulates me. But once a decision has been made, the debate ends. From that point on, loyalty means executing the decision as if it were your own."

6. STAND IN FOR YOUR LEADER WHENEVER YOU CAN

Every employee in an organization is a representative of that organization. And individuals at all levels also represent the leaders they work for. Accordingly, they can choose to step up and stand in for their leaders, representing them well and serving the organization.

Years ago, I used to tell new leaders I hired that every person in our organization walked around with two buckets. One bucket contained water, and the other gasoline. As leaders, they would continually come across small fires, and they could pour water or gasoline on a fire. It was their choice.

7. ASK YOUR LEADER HOW YOU CAN LIFT THE LOAD

It's good to anticipate what your leader may need or want. It's even better to come right out and ask. If you are doing your own job and doing it well, chances are your leader will be glad to tell you how you can help.

Over the years as I have worked as a consultant and speaker, I have discovered that there are two approaches that people in those industries take. One type of consultant walks into an organization and says, "Here's what I know; sit down and listen." Another says, "What do I need to know? We'll work on this together." Likewise, some speakers arrive at an engagement with the idea that it's their

moment to be in the spotlight, and they are quick to tell you what you can do to help them. Other speakers recognize that it's their moment to add value to the leader who invited them.

As I have grown in maturity and experience, I have tried to become like the communicators in that second group. Like many leaders early in their lives, I started out focusing on myself. But in time I came to recognize that when I am invited to speak, I am there to serve the leaders who invited me. I want to add value to them, to lift their load if I can. To do that, I ask them three things:

- "Can I say something that you *have said* before to give you another voice?"
- "Can I say something that you *would like to say but can't*, to give you a needed voice?"
- "Can I say something that you *haven't said yet* to give you the first voice?"

Most of the time, the good leaders say yes to those requests. They are always thinking ahead, thinking about where to take the organization and how they will get there. When someone asks how he can help, they are delighted. All it takes is for someone to ask.

Lead-Up Principle #3

BE WILLING TO DO WHAT OTHERS WON'T

*Successful people do the things that
unsuccessful people are unwilling to do.*

—JOHN C. MAXWELL

It's said that an aid group in South Africa once wrote to missionary and explorer David Livingstone asking, "Have you found a good road to where you are? If so, we want to know how to send other men to join you."

Livingstone replied, "If you have men who will come only if they know there is a good road, I don't want them. I want men who will come even if there is no road at all." That's what top leaders want from the people working for them: they want individuals who are willing to do what others won't.

*Few things gain the appreciation of a top leader more quickly
than an employee with a whatever-it-takes attitude.*

Few things gain the appreciation of a top leader more quickly than an employee with a whatever-it-takes attitude. That is what 360-Degree Leaders must have. They must be willing and able to think outside of their job description, to be willing to tackle the kinds of jobs that others are too proud or too frightened to take on. These things are what often elevate 360-Degree Leaders above their peers. And remember, being noticed is one of the first steps to influencing the person above you.

WHAT IT MEANS TO DO WHAT OTHERS WON'T

Perhaps you already possess a whatever-it-takes mind-set, and if a task is honest, ethical, and beneficial, you're willing to take it on. If so, good for you!

Now all you need is to know how to direct that attitude into action so that you're doing the things that will make the greatest impact and create influence with others. Here are the top ten things I recommend you do to be a 360-Degree Leader who leads up:

1. 360-DEGREE LEADERS TAKE THE TOUGH JOBS

The ability to accomplish difficult tasks earns others' respect very quickly. In *Developing the Leader Within You*, I point out that one of the quickest ways to gain leadership is problem solving.

Problems continually occur at work, at home, and in life in general. My observation is that people don't like problems, weary of them quickly, and will do almost anything to get away from them. This climate makes others place the reins of leadership into your hands—if you are willing and able to either tackle their problems or train them to solve them. Your problem-solving skills will always be needed because people always have problems.¹

*You learn resiliency and tenacity during tough assignments,
not easy ones. When tough choices have to be made and results
are difficult to achieve, leaders are forged.*

Not only does taking on tough jobs earn you respect, but it also helps you become a better leader. You learn resiliency and tenacity during tough assignments, not easy ones. When tough choices have to be made and results are difficult to achieve, leaders are forged.

2. 360-DEGREE LEADERS PAY THEIR DUES

Former U.S. senator Sam Nunn said, "You have to pay the price. You will find that everything in life exacts a price, and you will have to decide whether the price is worth the prize." To become a 360-Degree Leader, you will have to pay a price. You will have to give up other opportunities in order to lead. You will have to sacrifice some personal goals for the sake of others. You will have to get out of your comfort zone and do things you've never done before. You will have to keep learning and growing when you don't feel like it. You will have to repeatedly put others ahead of yourself. And if you desire to be a really good leader, you will have to do these things without fanfare or complaint. But remember, as NFL legend George Halas said, "Nobody who ever gave their best ever regretted it."

3. 360-DEGREE LEADERS WORK IN OBSCURITY

I think very highly of the importance of leadership. I guess that's obvious for a guy whose motto is "Everything rises and falls on leadership." Occasionally someone will ask me about how ego fits into the leadership equation. They'll want to know what keeps a leader from having a huge ego. I think the answer lies in each leader's pathway to leadership. If people paid their dues and gave their best in obscurity, ego is usually not a problem.

One of my favorite examples of this occurred in the life of Moses in the Old Testament. Though born a Hebrew, he lived a life of privilege in the palace of Egypt until he was forty years old. But after killing an Egyptian, he was exiled to the desert for forty years. There God used him as a shepherd and father, and after four decades of faithful service in obscurity, Moses was called to leadership. Scripture says by that time he was the most humble man in the world. Bill Purvis, the senior pastor of a large church in Columbus, Georgia, said, "If you do what you can, with what you have, where you are, then God won't leave you where you are, and He will increase what you have."

English novelist and poet Emily Bronte said, "If I could I would always work in silence and obscurity, and let my efforts be known by their results." Not everyone wants to be out of the spotlight as she did. But it's important for a leader to learn to work in obscurity because it is a test of personal integrity. The key is being willing to do something because it matters, not because it will get you noticed.

4. 360-DEGREE LEADERS SUCCEED WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

People working at the bottom of an organization usually have no choice concerning whom they work with. As a result, they often have to work with difficult people. In contrast, people at the top almost never have to work with difficult people because they get to choose who they work with. If someone they work with becomes difficult, they often let that person go or move him or her out.

For leaders in the middle, the road is different. They have some choice in the matter, but not complete control. They may not be able to get rid of difficult people, but they can often avoid working with them. But good leaders—ones who learn to lead up, across, and down—find a way to succeed with people who are hard to work with. Why do they do it? Because it benefits the organization. How do they do it? They work at finding common ground and connect with them. And instead of putting these difficult people in their place, they try to put themselves in their place.

*You don't have the right to put the organization on the line . . .
If you are going to take a risk, you need to put yourself on the
line.*

5. 360-DEGREE LEADERS PUT THEMSELVES ON THE LINE

I mentioned previously that if you want to lead up, you must distinguish yourself from your colleagues. How do you do that, especially while paying your dues or working in obscurity? One way is to take a risk. You cannot play it safe and stand out at the same time.

Here's the tricky thing about taking risks in the middle of the organization. You should never be casual about risking what's not yours. I call that "betting with other people's money." You don't have the right to put the organization on the line. Nor would it be right for you to create high risk for others in the organization. If you are going to take a risk, you need to put *yourself* on the line. Play it smart, but don't play it safe.

6. 360-DEGREE LEADERS ADMIT FAULTS BUT NEVER MAKE EXCUSES

It's easier to move from failure to success than from excuses to success. And you will have greater credibility with your leader if you admit your shortcomings and refrain from making excuses. I guarantee that. Of course, that doesn't mean you don't need to produce results. Baseball coach and tutor McDonald Valentine said, "The higher the level you play, the less they accept excuses."

*It's easier to move from failure to success than from excuses to
success.*

The middle of the organization is a good place to discover your identity and work things out. You can discover your leadership strengths there. If you fall short in an area, you can work to overcome your mistakes. If you keep falling short in the same way, you may learn how to overcome an obstacle, or you may discover an area of weakness where you will need to collaborate with others. But no matter what, don't make excuses. Steven Brown, president of the Fortune Group, summed up this issue: "Essentially there are two actions in life: Performance and excuses. Make a decision as to which you will accept from yourself."

7. 360-DEGREE LEADERS DO MORE THAN EXPECTED

Expectations are high for people at the top. And, unfortunately, in many organizations the expectations for people at the bottom are low. But expectations are mixed in the middle. So if you do more than is expected of you, you stand out, and often there can be wonderful, serendipitous results.

When Chris Hodges, a senior pastor who is a donor and volunteer trainer with EQUIP, was working as a staff member at a large church in Baton Rouge, his boss, Larry Stockstill, had the opportunity to become the host of a live television show. Chris had no responsibilities related to the show, and was, in fact, rather low in the organization's hierarchy. But he knew that the show was important to Larry, so Chris took it upon himself to go down to the studio to see the first taping. As it turned out, he was the only staff member to do so.

There was great excitement in the studio as the hour of the first broadcast approached. That excitement quickly turned to panic when the guest who was scheduled to appear on the show called in to say he was having a problem getting there. The guest wasn't worried, because he thought they could just start the taping later. What he didn't realize was that the show was scheduled to go on the air live!

In that moment, Larry looked around, saw Chris, and said, "You're going to be my guest today." The crew scrambled, put a microphone on Chris, slapped some makeup on his face, and sat him down in the chair next to Larry. Then to Chris's great shock, when the lights turned on and the cameras started rolling, Larry introduced Chris as his cohort.

Chris ended up being on that show with Larry every week for two and a half years. The experience changed him forever. Not only did it build his relationship with his leader, but it also made him well-known in the community. More importantly, he learned to think on his feet and become a better communicator, skills that serve him well every day of his life. And it all happened because he decided to do more than was expected of him.

8. 360-DEGREE LEADERS ARE THE FIRST TO STEP UP AND HELP

In *25 Ways to Win with People*, I point out that being the first to help others is a great way to make them feel like a million bucks. It lets them know you care. The kind of influence you gain from helping a peer is also gained with your leader when you step up and help others. Haven't you found the following to be true?

- The first person to volunteer is a hero and is given the "10" treatment.
- The second person is considered a helper and viewed as only slightly above average.
- The third person, along with everyone after, is seen as a follower and is ignored.

It doesn't matter whom you're helping, whether it's your boss, a peer, or someone working for you. When you help someone on the team, you help the whole team. And when you help the team, you're helping your leaders. And that gives them reasons to notice and appreciate you.

9. 360-DEGREE LEADERS PERFORM TASKS THAT ARE "NOT THEIR JOB"

Few things are more frustrating for a leader than having someone refuse to do a task because it is "not his job." (In moments like those, most of the top leaders I know are tempted to invite such people to be without a job altogether!) Good leaders don't think in those terms. They understand the Law of the Big Picture from *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*: "The goal is more important than the role."

A 360-Degree Leader's goal is to get the job done, to fulfill the vision of the organization and its leader. That often means doing whatever it takes. As a leader "moves up," that more often takes the form of hiring someone to get it done, but leaders in the middle often don't have that option. So instead, they jump in and get it done themselves.

10. 360-DEGREE LEADERS TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES

I recently saw a cartoon where a dad is reading a book to his little boy at bedtime. The title on the cover of the book says, *The Story of Job*, and the boy has only one question for his father: "Why didn't he sue someone?"

Isn't that the way a lot of people think these days? Their knee-jerk reaction to adversity is to blame someone else. That's not the case with 360-Degree Leaders. They take hold of their responsibilities and follow through with them 100 percent.

Lack of responsibility can be a deal breaker when it comes to the people who work for me. When my employees don't get the job done, certainly I become disappointed. But I'm willing to work with them to help them improve—if they

are taking responsibility for themselves. I know they will work at getting better if they take ownership and have teachable spirits. We have no starting point for improvement, however, if they don't get the job done and they fail to take responsibility. In such cases, it's time to move on and find someone else to take their place.

J. C. Penney said, "Unless you are willing to drench yourself in your work beyond the capacity of the average man, you are just not cut out for positions at the top." I'd say that you're not cut out for leadership in the middle either! People who want to be effective are willing to do what others won't. And because of that, their leaders are willing to resource them, promote them, and be influenced by them.

Lead-Up Principle #4

DO MORE THAN MANAGE—LEAD!

People sometimes ask me to explain the difference between management and leadership. Here's my take on it in a nutshell: Managers work with processes—leaders work with people. Both are necessary to make an organization run smoothly, but they have different functions.

To understand what I mean, think about some of the things that must happen on a military ship for it to function properly. The ship must be navigated, fueled, and supplied. It has various weapons systems that must be kept in good working order. The routine maintenance on a ship is endless, and there are dozens of processes related to the personnel onboard the ship.

All of these are processes that must be overseen. There are procedures that must be followed, schedules that must be created, inventories that must be maintained. These things will never happen without people to manage them. And if they are not managed, the ship will never be capable of fulfilling its purpose.

So what is the role of leaders? Leaders lead the people who manage the processes. If all the work in an organization were performed by machines, and the processes were monitored and controlled by computers, that organization wouldn't need any leaders. But *people* do the work and manage the processes, and people don't function like machines. They have feelings. They think. They have problems, hopes, and dreams. Though people can be managed, they would much rather be led. And when they are led, they perform at a much higher level.

I have yet to meet a good leader who wasn't also a good manager. They begin by managing themselves well. Once they do that well, they learn how to manage within their area of expertise. Then they add to that the skills needed to work

with and influence others. They learn to understand the dynamics of leadership. As Tom Mullins said, "Leaders must be good managers, but most managers are not necessarily good leaders."

"Leaders must be good managers, but most managers are not necessarily good leaders."
—TOM MULLINS

Leadership is more than management. Leadership is:

- People more than projects
- Movement more than maintenance
- Art more than science
- Intuition more than formula
- Vision more than procedure
- Risk more than caution
- Action more than reaction
- Relationships more than rules
- Who you are more than what you do

If you want to influence others, then you must learn to lead.

MOVING BEYOND MANAGEMENT

If you are already good at doing your work and managing processes, you're on the road toward leadership. But to move beyond management to leadership, you need to broaden your mind-set and begin thinking like a leader. If you are already leading well, then use this as a checklist to see where you need to keep growing.

I. LEADERS THINK LONGER TERM

Many people in organizations don't look ahead. They're like the person who said, "My department has a short-range plan and a long-range plan. Our short-range plan is to stay afloat long enough to start working on our long-range plan." But 360-Degree Leaders focus on more than just the task at hand and see more than just the current moment. They look ahead, whether it be a few hours, a few days, or a few years.

By necessity, managers often have to live in the moment. They are working to keep everything running smoothly. Someone once pointed out that managers are people who do things right, while leaders are people who do the right thing. In other words, leaders have a responsibility to make sure the right things are being done so that the organization will thrive tomorrow as well as today.

Most people evaluate events in their lives according to how they will be personally affected. Leaders think within a broader context.

That requires long-term thinking. While good managers may keep the production line working at low cost and peak efficiency, it would be of no value if that production line was still churning out rotary telephones!

2. LEADERS SEE WITHIN THE LARGER CONTEXT

Most people evaluate events in their lives according to how they will be personally affected. Leaders think within a broader context. They start by asking themselves, *How will this impact my people?* But then they also look at how something will impact those above and beside them. They try to see everything in terms of the entire organization and beyond.

Effective leaders know the answers to the following questions:

- How do I fit in my area or department?
- How do all the departments fit into the organization?
- Where does our organization fit in the market?
- How is our market related to other industries and the economy?

And as industries in our economy become more global, many good leaders are thinking even more broadly!

You don't have to become a global economist to lead effectively from the middle of your organization. The point is that 360-Degree Leaders see their area as part of the larger process and understand how the pieces of the larger puzzle fit together. If you desire to be a better leader, then broaden your thinking and work at seeing things from a larger perspective.

3. LEADERS PUSH BOUNDARIES

People are trained to follow rules from the time they are kids: *Stand in line. Do your homework. Put your hand up to ask a question.* Most rules are good because they keep us from living in chaos. And most processes are governed by rules. You drop a brick from a second-story window, and you know it's going to fall to the ground. You forget to place the order for office supplies, and you run out of staples. It's simple cause and effect.

Managers often rely on rules to make sure the processes they oversee stay on track. In fact, self-management, which I discussed in Principle #1 of this section, is basically having the discipline to follow through with the rules you set for yourself. But to move beyond management, you have to learn to think outside the box.

Leaders push boundaries. They desire to find a better way. They want to make improvements. They like to see progress. All these things mean making changes, retiring old rules, inventing new procedures. Leaders are constantly asking, "Why do we do it this way?" and saying, "Let's try this." Leaders want to take new territory, and that means crossing boundaries.

4. LEADERS PUT THE EMPHASIS ON INTANGIBLES

The things that people can manage are usually tangible and measurable. They provide concrete evidence. You can logically evaluate them before making decisions.

Leadership is really a game of intangibles. What could be more intangible than influence? Leaders deal with things like morale, motivation, momentum, emotions, attitudes, atmosphere, and timing. How do you measure timing before you do something? How do you put your finger on momentum? It's all very intuitive. To gauge such things, you have to read between the lines. Leaders have to become comfortable—more than that, confident—dealing with such things.

Many times the problems leaders face in organizations are not the real problems. For example, let's say a department is \$100,000 over budget at the end of the quarter. Their problem isn't a money problem. The deficit is only evidence of the problem. The real problem may be the morale of the sales force, or the timing of a product launch, or the attitude of the department's leader. A leader needs to learn to focus on such things.

I love the way retired army general Tommy Franks has disciplined himself to look at intangibles and get ready for them. Every day of his career since February 23, 1988, he has approached his work by looking ahead for the day. In the morning, he places a blank three-by-five card near his calendar and writes on

one side of it the date and the words "The biggest challenges I may face today." Beneath it he writes the five most important problems he might face. On the back of the card, he writes, "Opportunities that may appear today," and lists those.

Franks said, "Every morning since that Thursday in February 1988, I noted the 'Challenges and Opportunities' that might occur on that day. More than five thousand cards later, I still do. The card itself isn't important; preparing myself for each day definitely is."¹

5. LEADERS LEARN TO RELY ON INTUITION

How do leaders learn to work with intangibles? They learn to rely on their intuition. I love what psychologist Joyce Brothers said, "Trust your hunches. They're usually based on facts filed away just below the conscious level." The more you focus your attention on intangibles instead of tangibles, on principles instead of practices, the more information you will be filing away for future use, and the sharper your intuition will become. Intuition alone may not be enough to go on, but you should never ignore your intuition.

"Trust your hunches. They're usually based on facts filed away just below the conscious level."
—JOYCE BROTHERS

Business professor, consultant, and leadership guru Warren Bennis said, "A part of whole-brain thinking includes learning to trust what Emerson called the 'blessed impulse,' the hunch, the vision that shows you in a flash the absolutely right thing to do. Everyone has these visions; leaders learn to trust them."

6. LEADERS INVEST POWER IN OTHERS

Management is often about control. Managers have to control costs, control quality, control efficiency. That's one reason why some good managers have a difficult time making the paradigm shift to leadership. Leading isn't about controlling; it's about releasing.

Good leaders give their power away. They look for good people, and they invest in them to the point where they can be released and empowered to perform. That process is not smooth. It is often messy, and it cannot be controlled. The better the leaders, the more delighted they are to see members of

the team finding their own new ways to get things done. And in the case of the best leaders . . . if some of the people outshine the leaders who empowered them, then all the better.

7. LEADERS SEE THEMSELVES AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

Psychologist and author Charles Garfield said:

Peak performers . . . do not see accomplishments as a fixed state, nor as a safe haven in which the individual is moored, completed, finished. Not once have I heard a peak performer speak of an end to challenge, excitement, curiosity, and wonder. Quite the contrary. One of the most engaging characteristics is an infectious talent for moving into the future; generating new challenges, living with a sense of "more work to be done."²

The same things can be said of leaders. They don't want things to stay the same. They desire innovation. They love new challenges. They want more than just seeing progress—they want to help make it happen.

Leadership is a moving target, and it always will be. If you desire to become a better leader, get comfortable with change. And if you want to lead up, learn to think like a leader. Think people, think progress, and think intangibles.

Lead-Up Principle #5

INVEST IN RELATIONAL CHEMISTRY

All good leadership is based on relationships. People won't go along with you if they can't get along with you. That's true whether you are leading up, across, or down. The key to developing chemistry with your leaders is to develop relationships with them. If you can learn to adapt to your boss's personality while still being yourself and maintaining your integrity, you will be able to lead up.

I often teach leaders that it is their job to connect with the people they lead. In an ideal world, that's the way it should be. The reality is that some leaders do little to connect with the people they lead. As a 360-Degree Leader, you must take it upon yourself to connect not only with the people you lead, but also with the person who leads you. If you want to lead up, you must take the responsibility to connect up. Here's how to get started.

People won't go along with you if they can't get along with you.

1. LISTEN TO YOUR LEADER'S HEARTBEAT

Just as a doctor listens to someone's heartbeat to know that person's physical condition, you need to listen to your leader's heartbeat to understand what makes him or her tick. That may mean paying attention in informal settings, such as during hallway conversations, at lunch, or in the meeting that often occurs informally before or after a meeting. If you know your leader well and feel the relationship is solid, you may want to be more direct and ask questions about what really matters to him or her on an emotional level.

If you're not sure what to look for, focus on these three areas:

- What makes them laugh? These are the things that give a person great joy.

- What makes them cry? This is what touches a person's heart at a deep emotional level.
- What makes them sing? These are the things that bring deep fulfillment.

All people have dreams, issues, or causes that connect with them. Those things are like the keys to their lives. Think about it from your own point of view for a moment. Are you aware of the things that touch you on a deep emotional level? What are the signs that they "connect" for you? Do you see those signs in your leader? Look for them, and you will likely find them.

Many leaders are very wary about letting the people who work for them see the keys to their heart because they feel it makes them vulnerable. So don't approach it casually, and never treat the subject flippantly. To do so would be a violation of trust. And never try to "turn the key" manipulatively for personal gain.

2. KNOW YOUR LEADER'S PRIORITIES

The heartbeat of leaders is what they love to do. The priorities of leaders are what they have to do—and by that I mean more than just their to-do lists. All leaders have duties that they must complete or they will fail in fulfilling their responsibility. It's the short list that your boss's boss would say is do-or-die for that position. Make it your goal to learn what those priorities are. The better acquainted you are with those duties or objectives, the better you will understand and communicate with your leader.

3. CATCH YOUR LEADER'S ENTHUSIASM

It's much easier to work with someone when you share an enthusiasm. When you and a friend are excited about something, such as a common hobby, don't you often lose track of time when you're engaged in it? You can spend hours talking about it and never grow tired. If you can catch your leader's enthusiasm, it will have a similarly energizing effect. And it will create a bond between you and your leader. If you can share in that enthusiasm, you will pass it on because you will not be able to contain it.

4. SUPPORT YOUR LEADER'S VISION

When top leaders hear others articulate the vision they have cast for the organization, their hearts sing. It's very rewarding. It represents a kind of tipping

point, to use the words of author Malcolm Gladwell. It indicates a level of ownership by others in the organization that bodes well for the fulfillment of the vision.

Leaders in the middle of the organization who are champions for the vision become elevated in the estimation of a top leader. They get it. They're on board. And they have great value. Each time another person in the organization embraces the vision and passes it on, it's like giving the vision "fresh legs." In other words, when the vision gets handed off, the next person is able to run with it.

Each time another person in the organization embraces the vision and passes it on, it's like giving the vision "fresh legs."

You should never underestimate the power of a verbal endorsement of the vision by a person with influence. The same kind of power can be seen in the business world. For example, I've observed that with most books, the sales that occur during the first six months are due to the marketing, distribution, and promotion done by the publisher (and sometimes the author). After that, the sales are almost entirely a result of word of mouth. If people like the book, they talk about it with others. They are, in essence, passing on the vision of the author and testifying to the value of the book.

As a leader in the middle, if you are unsure about the vision of your leader, then talk to him. Ask questions. Once you think you understand it, quote it back to your leader in situations where it's appropriate to make sure you're in alignment. If you've got it right, you will be able to see it in your leader's face. Then start passing it on to the people in your sphere of influence. It will be good for the organization, your people, your leader, and you. Promote your leader's dreams, and he will promote you.

Promote your leader's dreams, and he will promote you.

5. CONNECT WITH YOUR LEADER'S INTERESTS

One of the keys to building relational chemistry is knowing and connecting with the interests of your leader. Have you identified the pet projects that your leader really cares about at work? If so, that's good, but how about her interests outside of work? Can you name them?

It's important to know enough about your leader to be able to relate to him as an individual beyond the job. If your boss is a golfer, you may want to take

up the game—or at least learn some things about it. If he collects rare books or porcelain, then spend some time on the Internet finding out about those hobbies. If she builds fine furniture on the weekends, then subscribe to a woodworking magazine. You don't have to take up the hobby yourself or become an expert. Just learn enough to relate to your boss and talk intelligently about the subject.

Leaders sometimes feel isolated and find themselves wondering, *Does anyone else understand?* Though you may not be able to understand your leader's work situation, you can at least understand him or her on some level. When leaders feeling isolated experience a genuine connection with someone “under” them, they often find it very rewarding. And if you feel isolated in the middle, that connection just might be rewarding for you too.

6. UNDERSTAND YOUR LEADER'S PERSONALITY

Two staff members were discussing the president of their company, and one of them said, “You know, you can't help liking the guy.”

To which the other replied, “Yeah, if you don't, he fires you.”

Leaders are used to having others accommodate their personalities. As you lead down from the middle of the organization, don't you expect others to conform to your personality? I don't mean that in an unreasonable or spiteful way—not that you would fire someone who didn't like you, as in the joke. If you are simply being yourself, you expect the people who work *for* you to work *with* you. But when you are trying to lead up, you are the one who must conform to your leader's personality. It's a rare great leader who conforms down to the people who work for him.

It's wise to understand your leader's style and how your personality type interacts with his. If you study some of the materials designed to reveal personality, such as DISC, Myers-Briggs, and Littauer's Personality Plus, you will gain greater insight into the way your leader thinks and works. Most of the time, personality opposites get along well as long as their values and goals are similar. Choleric work well with phlegmatics; sanguines and melancholics appreciate each other's strengths. Trouble can come when people with like personality types come together. If you find that your personality is similar to your boss's, then remember that you're the one who has to be flexible. That can be a challenge if yours is not a flexible personality type!

7. EARN YOUR LEADER'S TRUST

When you take time to invest in relational chemistry with your leader, the eventual result will be trust—in other words, relational currency. For years I've

taught the concept of relational “change in your pocket.” When you do things that add to the relationship, you increase the change in your pocket. When you do negative things, you spend that change. If you keep dropping the ball—professionally or personally—you harm the relationship, and you can eventually spend all the change and bankrupt the relationship.

People with a lot of history who have invested in relational chemistry build up a lot of change. As a result, the relationship can weather many problems or mistakes. For example, Doug Carter, the vice president of EQUIP, is constantly directing me to potential donors for the organization. Doug and I have a lot of relational chemistry. I've known him for a long time, we have worked together for years, and he is an absolute all-star at his job. When he is occasionally mistaken in his assessment of people and asks me to spend a lot of time with someone who is ultimately uninterested in EQUIP, it doesn't harm our relationship; Doug has a tremendous amount of relational currency “in the bank” with me.

“Loyalty publicly results in leverage privately.”

—ANDY STANLEY

Andy Stanley, who is a fantastic 360-Degree Leader, said, “Loyalty publicly results in leverage privately.” If you earn your leader's trust over time by giving him public support, then you will gain change with him privately. And you will have opportunities to lead up.

8. LEARN TO WORK WITH YOUR LEADER'S WEAKNESSES

Sales expert and author Les Giblin said, “You can't make the other fellow feel important in your presence if you secretly feel that he is a nobody.” Likewise, you can't build a positive relationship with your boss if you secretly disrespect him because of his weaknesses. Since everybody has blind spots and weak areas, why not learn to work with them? Try to focus on the positives, and work around the negatives. To do anything else will only hurt you.

9. RESPECT YOUR LEADER'S FAMILY

I'm almost reluctant to introduce the concept of family in the context of leading up with someone at work, but I think it bears mentioning. If you do all of the other things I have recommended, but your boss's spouse doesn't like or trust you, the relationship between the two of you will always be strained. You, of course, have no real control over this. The best you can do is to be kind and

respectful to your boss's family members and try to connect with them in an appropriate way. Just be aware that if you sense key members of your boss's family don't like you, even though it may be through no fault of your own, it may lessen your influence and maybe even hinder your career.

The thesis of *Winning with People* is that people can usually trace their successes and failures to the relationships in their lives. The same is true when it comes to leadership. The quality of the relationship you have with your leader will impact your success or failure. It is certainly worth investing in.

Lead-Up Principle #6

BE PREPARED EVERY TIME YOU TAKE YOUR LEADER'S TIME

As I write this chapter, on my desk is a recent issue of *Time* magazine with an article about Bill Gates and the Xbox 360 gaming system that Microsoft has been working on. I'm not a video-game player, so that doesn't hold much personal interest for me. The opening sentences of the article about Gates caught my attention, however, because they highlighted the importance of a leader's time.

Bill Gates' time is valuable. There are Microsoft employees who wait their whole career to be alone with Gates for 45 minutes. As the richest man in the world and, arguably, the greatest philanthropist in history, at any given moment Gates could and probably should be off feeding the hungry or curing some horrible disease.¹

Every leader values time. British essayist William Hazlitt wrote, "As we advance in life, we acquire a keener sense of the value of time. Nothing else, indeed, seems of any consequence; and we become misers in this respect." But what makes the time of Gates, a fairly young man, valuable is that he is a leader who could be using his time to do things that can change the lives of thousands of people.

For all leaders, time is precious. Time is the one commodity that cannot be increased, no matter what a leader does. And it is the necessary component for the leader to do anything. For that reason, you must always be prepared when you take any of your leader's time. Though you may have latitude in how you spend your employees' or peers' time, when dealing with those above you, the amount of time you can spend is limited. If you desire to lead up, you need to act accordingly.

Hopefully, you won't have to wait an entire career to have a few minutes of your leader's time, as some people apparently must at Microsoft. But whether

you have unlimited access to your boss or you only get a few minutes on rare occasions, you need to follow the same guidelines.

1. INVEST 10X

You show your value when you show that you value your leader's time. The best way to do that is to spend ten minutes preparing for every minute that you expect to meet. Management author Charles C. Gibbons confirmed this when he advised, "One of the best ways to save time is to think and plan ahead; five minutes of thinking can often save an hour of work."

In *Today Matters*, I wrote about the lunch I had with John Wooden, legendary former coach of the UCLA Bruins basketball team. Before I went, I spent hours preparing.

"One of the best ways to save time is to think and plan ahead; five minutes of thinking can often save an hour of work."

Let me say one more thing about preparing before taking your leader's time. Most top leaders are good decision makers. (If they're not, they rarely get the opportunity to lead from the top of the organization.) But many of the times they are unable to make decisions, it is because they don't have enough information. I know that's true with me. When my assistant cannot get a quick answer from me on an issue, it's usually because she hasn't done enough homework on the front end. That's not to say that it happens very often. Linda is awesome, and 99 percent of the time she doesn't even ask me a question until she's put in the groundwork. She easily invests ten times, putting in ten minutes of preparation for every minute of my time.

The less relational connection you have with your leaders, the more time you ought to put in on the front end preparing. The less your leaders know about you, the smaller the window of time you have to prove yourself. But if you prepare well, chances are you will get other opportunities. British prime minister Benjamin Disraeli said, "The secret of success in life is for a man to be ready for his time when it comes."

2. DON'T MAKE YOUR BOSS THINK FOR YOU

Not all bosses make themselves inaccessible. As a leader, you may have an open-door policy that makes it easy for the people you lead to come to you when they need to ask questions. But have you ever had an employee who seemed to ask questions constantly without ever taking the time to think for himself? It can be very frustrating, can't it?

In a question-and-answer session, Jack Welch talked about how important it is for someone starting out to be a good thinker. He said it's one of the things that distinguishes a person from the rest of the people on the same level.

Leaders in the middle should ask questions of their bosses only when they cannot answer those questions. Here's how leaders at the top think when they receive questions from leaders in the middle:

- *If they ask questions because they can't think, then we're in trouble.*
- *If they ask questions because they're lazy, then they are in trouble.*
- *If they ask questions so that everyone can move faster, then we're headed for success.*

While bad questions have a negative impact, good questions actually do several positive things: They clarify objectives; they speed up the process of completion; and they stimulate good thinking. All of these things will benefit the organization and help you stand out in a positive way with your leader.

3. BRING SOMETHING TO THE TABLE

For years I have used the expression "bring something to the table" to describe a person's ability to contribute to a conversation or to add value to others at a meeting. Not everyone does that. In life, some people always want to be the "guest." Wherever they go, they are there to be served, to have their needs met, to be the recipient. Because they possess that attitude, they never bring anything to the table for anyone else. After a while, that can really wear out the person who is always playing host.

People who become 360-Degree Leaders don't work that way. They have a totally different mind-set. They are constantly looking for ways to bring something to the table for their leaders, their peers, and their employees—whether it's resources, ideas, or opportunities. They recognize the wisdom found in the proverb: "A gift opens the way for the giver and ushers him into the presence of the great."²

As the leader of an organization, I am always looking for people who bring something to the table in the area of ideas. If they can be creative and generate ideas, that's great. But I also highly value people who are constructive, who take an idea that someone puts on the table and make it better. Often the difference between a good idea and a great idea is the value added to it during the collaborative thinking process.

Some leaders aren't very tactful when it comes to letting others know that they are not adding value to them in the way they would desire. Several years ago I toured Hearst Castle, the home of media magnate William Randolph Hearst in San Simeon, California. Hearst was well-known for the celebrity guests he invited to his estate. But once he became bored with a guest, he let him know it was time for him to go. The guests who were being asked to leave would find a note in their room at bedtime saying that it had been nice to have them as a visitor.

If you always try to bring something of value to the table when you meet with your boss, you may be able to avoid a similar fate at work. If you don't, at the end of the day you just may get a note from the boss. Only yours will be a pink slip.

4. WHEN ASKED TO SPEAK, DON'T WING IT

I admire people who can think on their feet and handle tough situations, but I have little respect for people who don't prepare. I've found that the first time a person wings it, people usually cannot tell, but by the third or fourth meeting when a person talks without thinking, everybody knows it. Why? Because it all starts to sound the same. If people have little professional depth, they use everything they know as they wing it. The next time they try it, you hear the same kinds of things you heard the last time. After a while, they lose all credibility.

Former world championship boxer Joe Frazier said, "You can map out a fight plan or a life plan. But when the action starts, you're down to your reflexes. That's where your roadwork shows. If you cheated on that in the dark of the morning, you're getting found out now under the bright lights."³ If you don't put in the work, you always eventually get found out.

5. LEARN TO SPEAK YOUR BOSS'S LANGUAGE

When Charlie Wetzel, my writer, and I first started working together back in 1994, I spent a good deal of time working with him to help him understand how I think and learn how I speak. Charlie already had his master's degree in English and was a good writer, but he wasn't yet on my wavelength. The first thing I did was get him recordings of the first one hundred lessons on leadership I taught so that he got a better feel for my communication.

Next, I took him on the road with me when I was speaking. After a presentation when we were on the plane or at dinner, I would ask him to identify what parts of the session connected with the audience and where he thought

the high points were. We would discuss it so that I could sense whether he was getting it. I would also occasionally pass along a bunch of quotes and illustrations to him and ask him to mark what he thought were the good ones. Then we would compare notes.

All of the things I did with Charlie were to help him learn to speak my language. That was critical if he was to write for me, but it's also important for any employee, and especially important for 360-Degree Leaders in the middle of an organization. Learning their boss's language will help them not only to communicate with their boss, but also to communicate with others on behalf of their boss. The goal isn't to become a yes man, but to be able to connect.

6. GET TO THE BOTTOM LINE

Playwright Victor Hugo said, "Short as life is, we make it still shorter by the careless waste of time." I haven't met a good leader yet who didn't want to get quickly to the bottom line. Why? Because they want results. Their motto is, "Never mind about the delivery; just show me the baby."

When you first begin working with a leader, you may need to spend some time giving insight into the process by which you came to a decision. Early on in the relationship, you have to earn your credibility. But as time goes by and the relationship builds, just get to the point. Just because you possess all the data needed to explain what you're doing doesn't mean you need to share it. If your leader wants more detail or wants to know about the process you used, she can ask you for it.

7. GIVE A RETURN ON YOUR LEADER'S INVESTMENT

When you are continually prepared every time you take your leader's time, there is a good chance that he will begin to see the time he spends with you as an investment. And nothing is as rewarding to leaders who invest in others as seeing a positive return on what they give.

One mid-level leader I interviewed said that every year he writes a list of everything his leader taught him the previous year and gives that list to him. He explained, "[It's] to document my appreciation and let him know his input was valuable and resulting in growth. I have learned that when I am open about my growth and learning, people are willing to invest more into my growth and learning."

I mentor about half a dozen people drawing on my thirty-plus years of leadership experience. One of the people I love spending time with is Courtney McBath, pastor of a church in Norfolk, Virginia. Every time I meet with him,

in one way or another he says:

Here's what you said the last time we met.
Here's what I learned.
Here's what I did.
Did I do it right?
Can I ask you more questions?

How can a leader not love that?

Recently I received the following e-mail from Courtney:

Dr. Maxwell,

You've often commented that the greatest joy of a leader/teacher is seeing their students utilizing what they've learned. Last night I had the honor of speaking in a large, orthodox Jewish synagogue for their Sabbath celebration. I was the first African-American Christian man to ever do so and it was a tremendous experience and success. An older Jewish couple told me they wished I could go to their seminaries and teach their young rabbis how to communicate!

Your investment in me has taught me so much about how to cross cultural, religious, and social boundaries and communicate truth to all people. God was glorified last night and you were a significant part of it all. Thank you for being my leader and friend.

I love you dearly, and I'm not just a better leader, I'm a better man because of you.

Thanks,
Courtney

Not only is Courtney always prepared every time he takes my time, but he also takes the counsel I give him and runs with it! What a delight he is to spend time with. And let me tell you something. Because he is so good, when he speaks, I listen. He is leading up, and ours is a relationship where we add value to each other, and that's what 360-Degree Leadership is really all about.

Lead-Up Principle #7

KNOW WHEN TO PUSH AND WHEN TO BACK OFF

*Make hay when the sun shines—that's smart;
Go fishing during the harvest—that's stupid.*
—PROVERBS 10:5, THE MESSAGE

In February of 2005, I visited Kiev, Ukraine, to conduct a leadership seminar, visit and teach at Europe's largest church, and launch the Million Leaders Mandate for EQUIP in that country. One of the exciting things I got to do while I was there was walk down the main street just a few blocks from our hotel to the city's Independence Square, site of the Orange Revolution that had occurred just three months before we visited.

As we walked down the wide boulevard, which was closed to vehicular traffic that afternoon, our guide, Tatiana, told us about how the people reacted to the news of the bogus election results that were threatening to keep the government-supported candidate, Viktor Yanukovich, in power. Common people began flooding the downtown area, and they staged peaceful protests in the square. They created a tent city right on the boulevard where we were walking, and they refused to leave until the government relented and ordered a new and fair election.

Later in our visit, I talked to Steve Weber, EQUIP's country coordinator for Ukraine, about the extraordinary events that occurred in Kiev and led to the election of reformer Viktor Yushchenko as the nation's president. In years past, such a demonstration would have been crushed, and that could have been the case in this instance, were it not for the behavior of the common people of Ukraine. Following is Steve's summary of the events.

The Orange Revolution was an incredible moment in the history of the Ukrainian people. The masses gathered, not knowing for sure what they would encounter in the city's center . . . Momentum built as multitudes of people came out to not only see but also to participate in the protest. The student organizations held their ground and hundreds decided to pitch tents till the truth was acknowledged. So in the freezing weather, the true heart of Ukraine came alive . . .

The kindness and goodwill expressed during the revolution was fresh and something never previously experienced by most Ukrainians. Normal citizens pouring out their practical support for the protesters was unprecedented. Water, food, hot drinks, winter boots, coats, and much more were flooding the city center. This attitude was almost unheard of in the past. "Give to others? Why? I have needs too" has been the norm—but on that square a better nation was being reborn in the hearts of the people. Even people who came from other cities to support the government-backed candidate couldn't stand against the momentum of the revolution. Upon arrival, they were met with friendliness and generosity from their countrymen that they hadn't expected. Could this really be their Ukraine? Would it be possible to live in a country where all people are valued, respected? . . . People were simply believing, hoping, and longing for a better country.

The government-supported candidate was heavily endorsed by the current regime, and their intimidations backfired . . . The nation woke up and said, "Enough! We don't want to live in that kind of country any longer," and their cries were heard.

The consciousness of the nation stirred and the people voted for change . . . The true Ukrainian soul was lifted out of the mire of corruption to a place of dignity and freedom, and the country looks to the future with reclaimed hope.

The common people of Ukraine—those at the bottom of society—led up and took their entire nation with them. And they chose a unique time in history to do it, a time when they could push because of the advances in modern communication. Steve told me, "At the beginning, the national television stations refused to even acknowledge the mass protest going on. But soon they could ignore it no longer, for news was getting around their false ploys. They didn't consider the new day of technology and communication."

The Ukrainian people influenced each other, the government that was attempting to manipulate them and the political process, and even the opposition leader, Victor Yushchenko. After the new elections were over, during his victory speech, Yushchenko wisely acknowledged the leadership of the people and actually bowed to them in respect and thanks.

WHEN SHOULD I PUSH FORWARD?

Timing is critically important to leadership. If the people of Ukraine had not recognized that it was time to push for honest elections, they would probably still be living under the same corrupt government led by Yanukovich. And if

they had tried to push free elections thirty years ago while under communist rule, they likely would have been crushed. To be successful, you have to know when to push and when to back off.

When it comes to gaining influence with your boss, timing is equally important. Poet Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "There are but ten minutes in the life of a pear when it is perfect to eat." It's wise to wait for the right moment to speak up. A great idea at the wrong time will be received just the same as a bad idea. Of course, there are times when you must speak up, even if the timing doesn't seem ideal. The trick is knowing which is which.

Here are four questions you can ask to help determine if it is time to push:

1. DO I KNOW SOMETHING MY BOSS DOESN'T BUT NEEDS TO?

Every leader in the middle of an organization knows things that the boss doesn't. Not only is that normal, but it's also good. There are times when you may know something your boss doesn't, but you need to communicate it to her because it can hurt the organization or her.

"There are but ten minutes in the life of a pear when it is perfect to eat."
—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

My brother Larry, who is an excellent leader and very successful businessman, tells his staff that he needs to be informed in two kinds of situations: when there is a great problem or when there is a great opportunity. He wants to know about great problems because of their potential to negatively impact the organization. And he wants to know about the great opportunities for a similar reason—they can also impact the organization, but in a positive direction. Either way, he wants to be involved in how the organization and its leaders will address those situations.

How do you know whether you need to bring something to your boss? I know of only two ways to go about figuring that out. You can ask specific questions up front, requesting that your leader spell out when you should bring him in, as Larry has done. Or you can play it by ear and find out by trial and error, using your best judgment and continuing to communicate until the issues are identified.

2. IS TIME RUNNING OUT?

There's an old saying, "Better one word in time than two afterward." If that was true in ages past, it is even more applicable today in our fast-paced society where information and markets move so quickly.

Constantine Nicandros, president of Conoco, said, "The competitive marketplace is strewn with good ideas whose time came and went because inadequate attention was given to moving rapidly and hitting an open window of opportunity. The same marketplace is strewn with broken glass of windows of opportunities hit after they were slammed shut."

If waiting will make it impossible for your organization to seize an opportunity, take a risk and push forward. Your leader can always choose not to take your advice, but no leader wants to hear, "You know, I thought that might happen" after it's too late. Give your leader the chance to decide.

3. ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES AT RISK?

When your leader entrusts you with tasks, you have a responsibility to follow through and get them done. If you are having difficulty with that, most leaders I know would rather know about it and have an opportunity to help you accomplish them than see you work all by yourself but fail.

This is an issue I've had to work on with Charlie Wetzel. Most of the time Charlie is an all-star. In eleven years of working together, we've completed more than thirty books. One of Charlie's weaknesses is that he is slow to ask for help. If he's facing a problem as he's writing, he'll work too long trying to solve it himself instead of picking up the phone and asking me to lend him a hand. His intentions are good; he wants to lighten my load. And he has a very strong sense of responsibility. (It's one of his strengths according to the self-assessment created by the Gallup Organization.) But that sense of responsibility can also work against him. I don't want him to be perfect; I want us to be effective.

4. CAN I HELP MY BOSS WIN?

Successful leaders make the right move at the right moment with the right motive. There will be times when you recognize opportunities for your leader to win that she doesn't see. When that is the case, it's time to push forward. How do you know what your boss considers a win? Go back to what you learned when you discovered your leader's heartbeat and priorities. If you see a way for her to accomplish something related to one of those, you can be sure she will consider it a win.

WHEN SHOULD I BACK OFF?

Knowing when to push is important, since you want to initiate to create wins or avoid losses. Possibly more important is knowing when to back off. Leaders may not always be aware of a missed opportunity because you failed to push, but they will definitely notice if you ought to back off but don't. If you push your boss inappropriately too often, your boss might push you right out the door.

Successful leaders make the right move at the right moment with the right motive.

If you're not sure whether it's time to back off, ask these six questions:

1. AM I PROMOTING MY OWN PERSONAL AGENDA?

From the perspective of leaders at the top, organizations have two kinds of leaders in the middle: those who ask, "What can you do for me?" and those who ask, "What can I do for you?" The first are trying to ride their leaders—and any colleagues or employees they find useful—to the top. The second are trying to carry their organization—along with its leaders and others they can help—to the top.

Just as there are sometimes selfish leaders at the top of an organization, which I described in the Frustration Challenge, there are also selfish leaders in the middle. They see everything in light of their personal agenda instead of their professional responsibilities.

In contrast, 360-Degree Leaders back off if they realize that they are beginning to promote their own agenda instead of what's good for the organization. Not only that, but they are willing to sacrifice their own resources for the greater good of the organization when necessary.

2. HAVE I ALREADY MADE MY POINT?

Investment expert Warren Buffet said, "Sometimes it's not how hard you row the boat. It's how fast the stream is going." Whenever you're dealing with your leader, you need to pay attention to the flow of the stream.

It is very important to learn to communicate your point of view clearly to your leader. It is your responsibility to communicate what you know and give your perspective on an issue. But it's one thing to communicate and another to coerce your leader. The choice your leader makes is not your responsibility. Besides, if you have made your point clearly, you are unlikely to help your cause

by continuing to hammer away at it with your leader. President Dwight D. Eisenhower said, "You do not lead by hitting people over the head—that's assault, not leadership." If you keep repeating yourself after your point's been made, you're just trying to get your own way.

"Sometimes it's not how hard you row the boat. It's how fast the stream is going."
—WARREN BUFFET

David Branker, the executive director of a large organization, said that he had a hard time learning the lesson of when to back off, but it paid dividends in his leadership. He said:

Learning to back off once you've made your point can make the most foolish person appear wise. When I was a rookie leader I had a tough time learning this. My boss at the time became more and more infuriated [with me when I didn't back off] especially when she disagreed with my point of view and could not understand why I wasn't dropping the issue. I was helped in this issue by a gracious colleague who was much more seasoned in leadership at the time. He said, "I will cue you when you need to drop an issue by simply looking down." Thanks to him and his creative idea, I learned to read when an issue needed to be dropped for a more opportune time.

The next time you are in a meeting with your boss, pay attention to the way you handle the presentation of your point of view. Do you state it clearly as a contribution to the discussion? Or do you hammer away at it to try to "win"? Trying to win your point at all costs with your boss can be like trying to do the same with your spouse. Even if you win, you lose.

3. MUST EVERYONE BUT ME TAKE THE RISK?

As I've already mentioned, it's easier to risk someone else's resources than your own. And if you keep pushing when you don't share in the risk, you will inevitably alienate the people who must shoulder the risk. People don't want to enter a partnership with someone when they have all the risk and their partner has none.

People don't want to enter a partnership with someone when they have all the risk and their partner has none.

Leaders in the middle who distinguish themselves usually do so because they have “skin in the game.” If they are willing to risk their resources, opportunities, and success, then they win the respect of their leaders.

4. DOES THE ATMOSPHERE SAY “NO”?

Kathie Wheat, a former employee who worked for Walt Disney World right out of college, said that Disney employees are trained to be sensitive to the emotional atmosphere and dynamics of the guests in their parks. One of the things they teach employees is to never approach a family that is arguing. That makes good sense.

Effective 360-Degree Leaders are like weather forecasters. They are able to read the atmosphere of their workplaces—and especially of their bosses. Take a look at this “weather chart” for leaders in the middle of an organization.

FORECAST	OUTLOOK	ACTION
Sunny	Visibility is clear and the sun is shining	Move forward
Foggy weather conditions	No way to read	Wait for the fog to lift
Partly cloudy	Sunny one minute, cloudy the next	Wait for the right moment
Rainy	Steady rain but no thunder or lightning	Move only in an emergency
Thunderstorms	Lightning could strike anywhere	Wait for the storm to pass
Hurricane	Gale force winds, damage is unavoidable	Run for cover

Obviously I’m having a little fun with this, but it really is important that you read what’s going on around you and pay attention to your boss’s mood. Don’t let a great idea get rained on because you picked the wrong day to introduce it.

5. IS THE TIMING RIGHT ONLY FOR ME?

Emperor Hadrian said, “To be right too soon is to be wrong.” Let’s face it. Leaders in the middle can be in a tough spot when it comes to timing. People at the top often get to choose the timing for what they do. It may not be as simple as saying, “Let’s go,” because they do have to prepare the people to move. But they get to decide when the timing is right. On the other hand, people at the bottom have little choice concerning when to go. They either keep up or get left behind.

Effective 360-Degree Leaders are like weather forecasters. They are able to read the atmosphere of their workplaces.

When Titus was emperor of Rome, he had the coins of the empire struck with the image of a dolphin curled around an anchor. At the time, the dolphin was considered the swiftest and most playful of marine animals. The anchor represented steadiness and unchanging conviction. Together they symbolized the balance between initiative and wisdom, progress and caution. A family crest years later used the same symbol with the motto *festina lente*, meaning “hasten slowly.”

That’s what 360-Degree Leaders must do. They must hasten slowly. If the timing is right for everyone, then move forward. But if it is right only for them, they should back off and move more slowly.

6. DOES MY REQUEST EXCEED OUR RELATIONSHIP?

One of my favorite stories from the Old Testament is the story of Esther. It’s a tremendous lesson in leadership. When Xerxes was ruler of Persia, one day he summoned his queen, Vashti, but she refused to come, which was unthinkable in those times. As a result, Xerxes stripped her of her position and prohibited her from ever seeing him again. Meanwhile, he sought to find someone else to take her place, and after a long and elaborate process, Esther, a Hebrew, became his queen.

All was well until a member of Xerxes’ court convinced the ruler to let him have all the Jews in the kingdom executed. Esther faced a dilemma. Though her life probably would have been spared, could she stand by and watch her fellow Hebrews die? If she approached Xerxes to ask him to spare her countrymen when he didn’t wish to see her, he could order her to be executed. Her relationship with Xerxes was tenuous, and she knew it. If her request exceeded that relationship, she was doomed.

In the end, with faith and courage, Esther approached the king, her request was granted, and the Jews were spared. It was a great challenge for this leader in the middle, but she was successful in leading up.

Leaders in the middle of an organization don’t have a lot of authority, and they don’t hold a lot of cards. Often their only “ace” is the relationship they have with the leaders above them. They must play that ace carefully. If they push and their request exceeds the relationship, they are asking for their ace to be trumped.

You can tell a lot about the character and motives of people in the middle of an organization by watching when they push and when they back off. My wife, Margaret, and I enjoy visiting presidential libraries. Recently, while visiting the George H. W. Bush museum, we read a story about the actions of Vice President George H. W. Bush the day President Ronald Reagan was shot in 1981. Bush said that when he got the news, the enormity of the incident came upon him, and right then he prayed for the president.

Since Reagan was in surgery, Bush was really the acting executive of the country, but he deliberately backed off to make sure that he didn’t appear to challenge or displace the president. For example, when Bush went to the White House, he refused to land on the south lawn, because by tradition only the president lands there. And at seven o’clock that night when Bush presided over an emergency cabinet meeting, he sat in his normal seat, not in the president’s.

Reagan, of course, recovered and resumed his duties, and also went on to be reelected as president in 1984. Bush was content to stay in the background, serving his leader and his country—until the time was right and the American people elected him their leader.

Lead-Up Principle #8

BECOME A GO-TO PLAYER

If you found yourself in a situation at work where you were on a deadline and trying to finish a project that was critical for the success of the organization, and then suddenly, with almost no time left, you were handed another critical task that had to be completed at the same time, what would you do? In this case, let's assume that delaying the deadline beyond today was not a possibility. It's do or die. How do you respond? If you're like most good leaders, you hand one of the tasks to a go-to player.

The Law of the Catalyst in *The 17 Indisputable Laws of Teamwork* states that winning teams have players who make things happen. That's always true—whether in sports, business, government, or some other arena. Those team members who can make things happen are their go-to players. They demonstrate consistent competence, responsibility, and dependability.

If that is what you do in a crunch—or would do if you trusted one of your players to consistently deliver—then why would *your* leaders do any differently? They wouldn't. All leaders are looking for people who can step up and make a difference when it matters. When they find such people, they come to rely on them and are inevitably influenced by them.

GO-TO PLAYERS PRODUCE WHEN . . .

Few things elevate a person above his peers the way becoming a go-to player does. Everyone admires go-to players and looks to them when the heat is on—not only their leaders, but also their followers and peers. When I think of go-to players, I mean people who always produce.

1. GO-TO PLAYERS PRODUCE WHEN THE PRESSURE'S ON

There are many different kinds of people in the workplace, and you can measure them according to what they do for the organization:

WHAT THEY DO	KIND OF PLAYER
Never deliver	Detrimental
Sometimes deliver	Average
Always deliver when in their comfort zone	Valuable
Always deliver regardless of the situation	Invaluable

Go-to players are the people who find a way to make things happen no matter what. They don't have to be in familiar surroundings. They don't have to be in their comfort zones. The circumstances don't have to be fair or favorable. The pressure doesn't hinder them either. In fact, if anything, the more pressure there is, the better they like it. They always produce when the heat is on.

Go-to players are the people who find a way to make things happen no matter what. They don't have to be in familiar surroundings. They don't have to be in their comfort zones.

2. GO-TO PLAYERS PRODUCE WHEN THE RESOURCES ARE FEW

In 2004 when *Today Matters* came out and I was frequently being asked to speak on the subject, I was once booked to do back-to-back sessions in Little Rock, Arkansas. After the first session, the site ran out of books. When the leader of the organization I was speaking for found out, he mobilized some of his people and sent them out to all the bookstores in town to buy more copies of the book so that his people could have access to them right after my second speaking session. I think he ended up buying every copy in town.

The thing I loved about it was that he wanted his people to benefit from the book, and he knew that if he didn't have it there after I spoke, they probably wouldn't get a copy. So he made it happen—even though he had to buy the books at full retail and resell them for that same amount. It took a lot of effort and provided no financial return. What a leader!

3. GO-TO PLAYERS PRODUCE WHEN THE MOMENTUM IS LOW

Organizations have only three kinds of people when it comes to momentum. There are momentum breakers—people who sabotage the leader or organization and actually sap momentum as a result. These people have terrible attitudes and represent the bottom 10 percent of the organization. (At General Electric, Jack

Welch made it his goal every year to identify and fire these people.) The second group is comprised of the momentum takers—people who merely take things as they come. They neither create nor diminish momentum; they simply flow with it. These people represent the middle 80 percent.

The final group is the momentum makers—the people who move things forward and create momentum. These are the leaders in the organization and comprise the top 10 percent. These momentum makers make progress. They overcome obstacles. They help move others along. They actually create energy in the organization when the rest of the team is feeling tired or discouraged.

4. GO-TO PLAYERS PRODUCE WHEN THE LOAD IS HEAVY

Good employees always have the desire to be helpful to their leaders. I've worked with many of them over the years. I always appreciate it when someone who works with me says, "I've finished my work. Can I do something for you?" But there is another level of play that some go-to players reach, and you can see it in their ability to carry a heavy load anytime their leader needs it. They don't help the leader with a heavy load only when theirs is light. They do it anytime their leader's load is heavy.

Linda Eggers, Tim Elmore, and Dan Reiland are examples of heavy load lifters for me. For years, when I've been pressed, they've taken tasks from me and completed them with excellence. Dan Reiland is so incredible at this that he continues to do it even now—and he doesn't even work for me anymore. He does it as a friend.

If you have the willingness and capacity to lift the load of your leaders when they need it, you will have influence with them.

The keys to becoming this kind of player are availability and responsibility. Being a heavy load lifter is really an attitude issue, not a position issue. If you have the willingness and capacity to lift the load of your leaders when they need it, you will have influence with them.

5. GO-TO PLAYERS PRODUCE WHEN THE LEADER IS ABSENT

The greatest opportunity for a leader in the middle of an organization to distinguish himself is when the leader is absent. It is at those times that a leadership vacuum exists, and leaders can rise up to fill it. True, when leaders

know they will be absent, they usually designate a leader to stand in for them. But even then, there are still opportunities for people to step up, take responsibility, and shine.

If you step forward to lead when there is a leadership vacuum, you may have a very good chance of distinguishing yourself. You should also know, however, that when people step up to fill that vacuum, it almost always exposes their true colors. If their motives are good, and they desire to lead for the good of the organization, it will show through. If they are attempting a power grab for personal gain and their own advancement, that will show through too.

6. GO-TO PLAYERS PRODUCE WHEN THE TIME IS LIMITED

I love a sign I saw at a small business called “The 57 Rules to Deliver the Goods.” Beneath the title it read:

Rule 1: Deliver the Goods

Rule 2: The Other 56 Don't Matter

That's the philosophy of go-to players. They deliver no matter how tough the situation is.

As I was working on this chapter, Rod Loy told me a story about when he was a leader in the middle of an organization. At a large meeting, his leader announced a new program that he said was in place. Roy listened with interest, because he had not been aware of it. It sounded great, but then his leader announced that Rod would be leading the program, and anyone who was interested in it could talk to him about it after the meeting.

Rod had not been informed of his role in this program, but that didn't matter. During the rest of the meeting while his leader spoke, Rod quickly sketched out the design and action plan for the program. When the meeting was over and people approached him, he communicated his plan and launched it. Rod said it may not have been his best work, but it was good work under the circumstances. It created a win for the organization, preserved his leader's credibility, and served the people well.

You may never find yourself in the kind of situation Rod did. But if you adopt the positive attitude and tenacity of a go-to player, and take every opportunity to make things happen, you will probably perform as he did under similar circumstances. If you do, your leader will come to rely on you, and the people we rely on increase their influence and credibility every day we work with them.

Lead-Up Principle #9

BE BETTER TOMORROW THAN YOU ARE TODAY

A turkey was chatting with a bull. “I would love to be able to get to the top of that tree,” sighed the turkey, “but I haven’t got the energy.”

“Well,” replied the bull, “why don’t you nibble on some of my droppings? They’re packed with nutrients.”

The turkey pecked at a lump of dung and found that it actually gave him enough strength to reach the lowest branch of the tree. The next day, after eating some more dung, he reached the second branch. Finally after a fourth night, there he was proudly perched at the top of the tree. But he was promptly spotted by a hunter, who shot him down out of the tree.

The moral of the story: BS might get you to the top, but it won’t keep you there.

HOW GROWTH HELPS YOU LEAD UP

I’ve met a lot of people who have destination disease. They think that they have “arrived” by obtaining a specific position or getting to a certain level in an organization. When they get to that desired place, they stop striving to grow or improve. What a waste of potential!

There’s certainly nothing wrong with the desire to progress in your career, but never try to “arrive.” Instead, intend your journey to be open-ended. Most people have no idea how far they can go in life. They aim way too low. I know I did when I first started out, but my life began changing when I stopped setting goals for *where* I wanted to be and started setting the course for *who* I wanted to be. I have discovered for others and me that the key to personal development is being more *growth* oriented than *goal* oriented.

The key to personal development is being more growth oriented than goal oriented.

There is no downside to making growth your goal. If you keep learning, you will be better tomorrow than you are today, and that can do so many things for you.

THE BETTER YOU ARE, THE MORE PEOPLE LISTEN

If you had an interest in cooking, with whom would you rather spend an hour—Mario Batali (chef, cookbook author, owner of Babbo Ristorante e Enoteca and other restaurants in New York City, and host of two shows on the Food Network) or your neighbor who loves to cook and actually does it “every once in a while”? Or if you were a leadership student, as I am, would you rather spend that hour with the president of the United States or with the person who runs the local convenience store? It’s no contest. Why? Because you respect most and can learn best from the person with great competence and experience.

Competence is a key to credibility, and credibility is the key to influencing others. If people respect you, they will listen to you. President Abraham Lincoln said, “I don’t think much of a man who is not wiser today than he was yesterday.” By focusing on growth, you become wiser each day.

THE BETTER YOU ARE, THE GREATER YOUR VALUE TODAY

If you were to plant fruit and nut trees in your yard, when could you expect to start harvesting from them? Would you be surprised to learn that you had to wait years—three to seven years for fruit, five to fifteen years for nuts? If you want a tree to produce, first you have to let it grow. The more the tree has grown and has created strong roots that can sustain it, the more it can produce. The more it can produce, the greater its value.

People are not all that different. The more they grow, the more valuable they are because they can produce more. In fact, it’s said that a tree keeps growing as long as it is living. I would love to live in such a way that the same could be said for me—“he kept growing until the day he died.”

I love this quote from Elbert Hubbard: “If what you did yesterday still looks big to you, you haven’t done much today.” If you look back at past accomplishments, and they don’t look small to you now, then you haven’t grown very much

since you completed them. If you look back at a job you did years ago, and you don’t think you could do it better now, then you’re not improving in that area of your life.

If you’re not moving forward as a learner, then you are moving backward as a leader.

If you are not continually growing, then it is probably damaging your leadership ability. Warren Bennis and Bert Nanus, authors of *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge*, said, “It is the capacity to develop and improve their skills that distinguishes leaders from followers.”¹ If you’re not moving forward as a learner, then you are moving backward as a leader.

THE BETTER YOU ARE, THE GREATER YOUR POTENTIAL FOR TOMORROW

Who are the hardest people to teach? The people who have never tried to learn. Getting them to accept a new idea is like trying to transplant a tomato plant into concrete. Even if you could get it to go into the ground, you know it isn’t going to survive anyway. The more you learn and grow, the greater your capacity to keep learning. And that makes your potential greater and your value for tomorrow higher.

Indian reformer Mahatma Gandhi said, “The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world’s problems.” That is how great our potential is. All we have to do is keep fighting to learn more, grow more, become more.

One leader I interviewed for this book told me that when he was in his first job, his boss would sit him down after he made a mistake and talk it through with him. Every time before he left one of those meetings, his boss asked, “Did you learn something from this?” and he would ask him to explain. At the time, this young leader thought his boss was being pretty tough on him. But as he progressed through his career, he discovered that many of his successes could be traced back to practices he adopted as a result of those talks. It made a huge positive impact on him because it kept making him better.

If you want to influence the people who are ahead of you in the organization—and keep influencing them—then you need to keep getting better. An investment in your growth is an investment in your ability, your adaptability, and your promotability. No matter how much it costs you to keep growing and learning, the cost of doing nothing is greater.

HOW TO BECOME BETTER TOMORROW

Founding father Ben Franklin said, “By improving yourself, the world is made better. Be not afraid of growing too slowly. Be afraid only of standing still. Forget your mistakes, but remember what they taught you.” So how do you become better tomorrow? By becoming better today. The secret of your success can be found in your daily agenda. Here is what I suggest you do to keep growing and leading up:

1. LEARN YOUR CRAFT TODAY

On a wall in the office of a huge tree farm hangs a sign. It says, “The best time to plant a tree is twenty-five years ago. The second best time is today.” There is no time like the present to become an expert at your craft. Maybe you wish you had started earlier. Or maybe you wish you had found a better teacher or mentor years ago. None of that matters. Looking back and lamenting will not help you move forward.

A friend of the poet Longfellow asked the secret of his continued interest in life. Pointing to a nearby apple tree, Longfellow said, “The purpose of that apple tree is to grow a little new wood each year. That is what I plan to do.” The friend would have found a similar sentiment in one of Longfellow’s poems:

Not enjoyment and not sorrow
Is our destined end or way;
But to act that each tomorrow
Find us further than today.²

You may not be where you’re supposed to be. You may not be what you want to be. You don’t have to be what you used to be. And you don’t have to ever arrive. You just need to learn to be the best you can be right now. As Napoleon Hill said, “You can’t change where you started, but you can change the direction you are going. It’s not what you are going to do, but it’s what you are doing now that counts.”

“You can’t change where you started, but you can change the direction you are going. It’s not what you are going to do, but it’s what you are doing now that counts.”

—NAPOLEON HILL

2. TALK YOUR CRAFT TODAY

Once you reach a degree of proficiency in your craft, then one of the best things you can do for yourself is talk your craft with others on the same and higher levels than you. Many people do this naturally. Guitarists talk about guitars. Parents talk about raising children. Golfers talk about golf. They do so because it’s enjoyable, it fuels their passion, it teaches them new skills and insights, and it prepares them to take action.

Talking to peers is wonderful, but if you don’t also make an effort to strategically talk your craft with those ahead of you in experience and skill, then you’re really missing learning opportunities. Douglas Randlett meets regularly with a group of retired multimillionaires so that he can learn from them. Before he retired, Major League Baseball player Tony Gwynn was known to talk hitting with anybody who had knowledge about it. Every time he saw Ted Williams, they talked hitting.

I enjoy talking about leadership with good leaders all the time. In fact, I make it a point to schedule a learning lunch with someone I admire at least six times a year. Before I go, I study up on them by reading their books, studying their lessons, listening to their speeches, or whatever else I need to do. My goal is to learn enough about them and their “sweet spot” to ask the right questions. If I do that, then I can learn from their strengths. But that’s not my ultimate goal. My goal is to learn what I can transfer from their strength zones to mine. That’s where my growth will come from—not from what they’re doing. I have to apply what I learn to my situation.

The secret to a great interview is listening. It is the bridge between learning about them and learning about you. And that’s your objective.

3. PRACTICE YOUR CRAFT TODAY

William Osler, the physician who wrote *The Principles and Practice of Medicine* in 1892, once told a group of medical students:

Banish the future. Live only for the hour and its allotted work. Think not of the amount to be accomplished, the difficulties to be overcome, or the end to be attained, but set earnestly at the little task at your elbow, letting that be sufficient for the day; for surely our plain duty is, as Carlyle says, “Not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand.”

The only way to improve is to practice your craft until you know it inside and out. At first, you do what you know to do. The more you practice your craft, the more you know. But as you do more, you will also discover more about what

you ought to do differently. At that point you have a decision to make: Will you do what you have always done, or will you try to do more of what you think you should do? The only way you improve is to get out of your comfort zone and try new things.

People often ask me, “How can I grow my business?” or, “How can I make my department better?” The answer is for you personally to grow. The only way to grow your organization is to grow the leaders who run it. By making yourself better, you make others better. Retired General Electric CEO Jack Welch said, “Before you are a leader, success is all about growing yourself. When you become a leader, success is all about growing others.”³ And the time to start is today.

Section III Review

The Principles 360-Degree Leaders Need to Lead Up

Before you begin to learn what it takes to lead across, review the nine principles you need to master in order to lead up:

1. Lead yourself exceptionally well.
2. Lighten your leader's load.
3. Be willing to do what others won't.
4. Do more than manage—lead!
5. Invest in relational chemistry.
6. Be prepared every time you take your leader's time.
7. Know when to push and when to back off.
8. Become a go-to player.
9. Be better tomorrow than you are today.

How well are you doing those nine things? If you're not sure where you stand, take the 360-Degree Leadership assessment, offered free of charge to people who have purchased this book. For more information, go to 360DegreeLeader.com.