zero to something

LEADERSHIP

WORKBOOK

ARNIE STREBE

WITH

JEREMIAH GARDNER

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1) Who and what do I lead or aspire to lead?

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4) How can I balance humility and confidence more effectively?

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6) Who are the leaders I like to follow? Who has helped me succeed the most? Who has gotten the most out of me?

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9) How would others (i.e. spouse, friends, colleagues, employees, etc.) assess my effectiveness in leading myself – both personally and professionally?

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12) To what or whom do I owe my current leadership approach or philosophy?

13) What value do I see in the discipline of planning or using a structured approach to tackling problems?

14) What tools do I currently use, if any, to assess my leadership situation?

15) Why is it important to me to be an effective leader?

Results: *The consequence of a particular action, operation, or course; outcome.*

Reflective Questions

1   How do I demonstrate the value I add to my organization?

2)   Do the people I lead have a process in place to demonstrate how they add value to the organization?

3)   What results am I responsible for?

4)   Do the people I lead know what results they are responsible for?

5)   Are the results I produce today going to be acceptable a year from now? If not, what's my plan?

6)   Have I created and communicated a clear vision?

7)   Have I created and communicated clear goals? Are they SMART?

8) Do I have one or more detailed plans for achieving our goals? Do the plans clearly indicate how goals are to be achieved, where, and by whom?

9) Have I established methods and channels for "pulling" back the information I "push" out? What are they?

10) Do I relentlessly communicate as much as possible to my team and all other stakeholders? What are my methods? What do I need to communicate more and/or more often?

11) Am I a vision- and goal-oriented person in my own personal life? Do my work associates see that?

12) How can I provide the Bottom Line Up Front (BLUF) when assigning work so that everyone understands "why?"

13) What fun, visual ways can I measure progress toward goals and final results?

14) What results do I measure? Do I use the QQCT framework? Should I?

15) How do I go about finding solutions to problems? Do I wait for solutions to emerge, or do I proactively seek solutions? Do I need a process?

Reality: *That which exists objectively, and in fact.*

Reflective Questions

1) Do I seek input and opinions from others? How so? Do I allow those views to influence my perception of reality? Do I do it enough?

2) What leadership strengths and weaknesses do I possess, in my own mind? In the mind of others? How do the two compare and contrast? Am I being honest with myself?

3) Am I leading, floating or following?

4) Are my leadership capabilities keeping up with the pace of change?

5) What do I need to do to develop into the leader I want to be and the leader my organization needs me to be? Do I have a plan?

6) Do I have the right people in the right places to achieve success for themselves and the organization? Am I being honest about their capabilities or lack thereof? What changes do I need to make?

7) Am I working for the right company or organization? Are its values and mission compatible with my own? Am I able to be passionate about my work? If not, are there changes I should be seeking to make internally, or is it time to move on?

8) When assessing my situation using the Leadership SOPs, do I make sure each of my assessments are realistic?

   a. Are the desired **results** realistic? Is it realistic to expect that I or we will get the job done?

   b. Am I being realistic about the **reality** check(s) itself? In other words, am I being objective in my determinations and not biased in a way that drives pre-determined conclusions?

   c. Is it realistic to expect that we can accomplish the desired results with the **resources** available?

d.Are the organization's **rules** realistic? Can I accomplish what I need to accomplish professionally within the existing rules? Are my rules realistic? Can the team accomplish what it needs under those rules?

e.Are the **roles** that I am to play or fulfill realistic? Can I realistically expect those who report to me to understand and fulfill their roles? Can I realistically expect everyone who is **responsible** for action items to accomplish their jobs?

f.Are the **relationships** I have established going to realistically help me accomplish what I need to accomplish? Is it realistic to expect that the people who have to work together will do so in a healthy, supportive and **respectful** manner?

g.Am I taking realistic **risks** that push our achievements? Am I being too conservative or perhaps risking too much?

h.Is it realistic to expect that those on the project will be **relentless** in their pursuit of getting the job done? What may test their **resolve**?

i.Is my **recovery** plan realistic? Have I made it realistically possible for myself and others to avoid burnout and achieve optimal work/life balance?

j.Am I providing realistic **recognition** to my employees, going overboard, or perhaps expecting too much before I'm willing to offer it up?

k.Am I realistic when I do my **reflective thinking**, or do I gloss over key obstacles that impact our efforts and results?

9) In what ways can I *determine* reality, rather than wait for it to set in?

10) How can I go about making reality checks one of my leadership habits?

Resources: *Supplies that can be readily drawn upon when needed.*

Reflective Questions

1) What resources are available to me internally and externally?   (e.g. Information Services, Research and Development, Human Resources, Finance, Legal, and external consultants, etc.)

2) What are my current resource needs in terms of Time, Equipment, Facilities, People and Money?

 a.**Time** - Do I have enough time to accomplish the objective or goal? What can I accomplish in the time provided? What are my priorities given the amount of time available?

b.**Equipment** - Is my equipment usable? Do I have the right equipment for the job? If I invested in new equipment, would it be a wise investment? Do I have access to additional or different equipment, internally or externally?

c.**Facilities** - Are the facilities adequate? Will our facilities attract the right kind of people to my team, project, event or organization? Will they attract the customers we need to be successful? Are our facilities clean, and do they present the right professional image? Are there additional or different facilities we could use, internally or externally?

d.**People** - Are the right people in the right positions? Are they inspired and motivated to get the job done? Are they being trained and developed for success? Are they being properly educated? Is their performance planned? Do they understand the rules, roles and responsibilities, and are those things clearly defined? Do they communicate often among each other, and do they communicate the right messages? Are they receiving clear, proper and frequent communication from above? Are they being recognized for their contributions? Do they have the resources they need to get the job done? Are they aware of all the resources available to them? Are they helpful to each other? Do they have support and assistance from leadership? What is my role, as leader, in all of these "people" topics, and am I fulfilling my role? Am I aware of and utilizing all available people, both internal and external to the organization?

e.**Money** - Do I have the funding needed to accomplish the objective(s) or goal(s)? Am I making the right investments at the right time?

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3) In what ways do I demonstrate that people are my most valuable resource?

4) What are the rules I need to follow in securing resources?

5) How can others' roles support my resource needs?

6) How can I build healthy and supportive relationships that will help me and my team acquire the resources needed to fulfill our responsibilities and expected results?

7) During or after projects, do I reflect on how the resources I secured could have been used more effectively?

8) Do I make sure that I can realistically accomplish what I need to accomplish with the available resources?

9) What is the focus at my organization, in terms of profit vs. sales?

10) What is the gap between my current and future resource needs? How can I begin to close that gap?

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Rules

Rules: *Authoritative principles or regulations governing conduct, actions, procedures, arrangements, etc.*

Reflective Questions

1) What is an example of a written rule at my organization?

2) What is an example of an unwritten rule at my organization?

3) What are the constructive rules (written and unwritten) that must be followed by my team and me?

4) What are the destructive rules (written and unwritten) that we can avoid, change or remove?

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5) What new rules are needed and/or would be helpful?

6) How do I go about clearly defining specific rules that may apply to a particular project or initiative?

7) In what ways do I revisit the rules and communicate them as needed to ensure that everyone understands and is able to follow them?

8) Does everyone in my charge understand the rules enough to explain them to others?

9) What more can I do to help employees understand the rules?

10) How do I address employees when they fail to follow the rules?

11) Do I follow the rules myself?

12) What are my "rules to live and work by?" What would be the value of sharing those with my team?

13) Does everyone on my team understand the written and/or unwritten rules associated with the Leadership SOPs? For example, do they know the rules regarding the level of **risk** the organization is willing to tolerate when a new idea is developed and implemented? Do they know the rules regarding how to **relate** with one another on certain projects, and in general? Do they understand the rules related to **recovering** from long or intense projects and maintaining work/life balance? Etc.

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Roles & Responsibilities

Roles: *Functions or positions that carry with them expected behavior.*

Responsibilities: *Duties, obligations and burdens (expected behavior) for which one is answerable, accountable and relied upon and which require good judgment and sound actions.*

Role	Responsibilities	Priority (1,2, or 3)
Leader	• Bottom-line **results** – all that happens and doesn't happen under my watch. Setting and meeting goals and demonstrating success by effectively measuring the results.	
	• Strategic, forward thinking – for honestly and courageously assessing the current **reality** and clearly communicating a vivid picture, or vision, of the desired reality. Managing the change to the new reality.	

Role	Responsibilities	Priority (1,2, or 3)
Leader	• Managing **resources**, including people, equipment, facilities and budgets, among others. Getting the most from people is paramount.	
	• Identifying, establishing and communicating the **rules** within which all team members must operate.	
	• Clearly defining and communicating the **roles and responsibilities** of all team members.	
	• Fostering positive, **respectful relationships** among team members. That starts with the earning my own respect by: demonstrating both organizational and technical knowledge; leading by example; exuding both confidence and humility; listening effectively; accepting responsibility for decisions; demanding accountability from others for their decisions; and treating others with dignity and respect.	
	• Thinking "outside of the box" and taking calculated **risks**, based on prior analysis of risk and reward. Not locking into "the way we've always done it."	
	• Demonstrating and demanding **relentless resolve** when it comes to the pursuit of goals. Enduring and overcoming challenges.	
	• Creating a healthy work environment that promotes **recovery** activities to counter the stress related to a relentless work ethic.	
	• **Recognizing** and reinforcing the positive contributions of all team members. Recognizing subpar performance with coaching and counseling and recognizing when others need training, advice or feedback of another sort.	
	• Constantly learning from my own actions and inactions and those of my team through the art of **reflective thinking**. Learning to think reflectively before making decisions by taking a step back to look at situations from other perspectives.	

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Role	Responsibilities	Priority (1,2, or 3)
Leader		

Role	Responsibilities	Priority (1,2, or 3)
Leader		

Reflective Questions

1) What are my top four to seven roles – at work and away from work?

2) Which of my work roles is my primary function, and how does it fit in with other people's roles? Do I understand what others do well enough to help me lead my team or organization?

3) How clearly defined are my responsibilities within each role? Do I know what I am responsible for? Would it be helpful to define those responsibilities in more specific detail?

4) What method do I use to prioritize my responsibilities?

5) Considering my roles, when should I be a leader, and when should I be a follower?

6) How effectively do I delegate responsibilities?

7) In which roles do the people I lead serve? Did I help them identify those roles, including secondary roles?

8) Do the people in my charge understand how their primary role or function fits with other people's roles, including my own?

9) How clearly defined are the responsibilities within each of my team members' roles? Do they know what they are responsible for? Would it be helpful to define those responsibilities in more specific detail?

10) What method do I use to help my team members' prioritize their responsibilities?

11) What methods and mediums do I use to communicate to the people I lead regarding their roles and responsibilities?

12) How do I know whether the people I lead understand their roles and responsibilities?

13) How is it different to define roles for a cross-functional team vs. my regular work team?

14) How are roles captured in my organization? In writing (i.e. duty or job descriptions)? How are they reviewed, and how often?

15) Are the roles at all levels of my organization known? If not, what can I do as a leader to change that?

16) In what ways do I consistently behave and lead responsibly? At work? Away from work?

17) In what ways could I behave and lead more responsibly? At work? Away from work?

18) How do I go about demonstrating responsibility (or accountability) for my actions and results, whether positive or negative?

19) What examples do I set for the people I lead?

20) Have I ever failed the "red face test?"

21) How would I assess my adherence to the Golden Rule?

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Respectful Relationships

Respectful: *Characterized by politeness, deference and a high regard for the worth or value of a person, personal quality or personal ability.*

Relationship: *A logical or natural connection, association or involvement between two or more things or people.*

Organization/Company

Superiors

Internal Customers

External Customers

Internal Peers/Partners

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External Peers/Partners

Self/Spiritual

Family/Friend

Followers (direct)

Followers (indirect)

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Reflective Questions

1) Assess each of your own key relationships in the various categories – followers, peers/partners, customers, superiors, self, organization/ company, family/friends.

   a.Target specific relationships that need improving and that you can influence positively.

   b.Decide what is lacking in each – mutual benefits and/or mutual respect.

   c.For each, put together a plan for improving the perceived benefits balance or the mutual value/trust proposition.

   d.Execute the plans – one relationship at a time if necessary.

2) Assess the relationships among and between the various other categories of people with whom you have relationships. For example, assess the relationships your followers have with each other but also assess the relationships your followers have with your customers. And so on.

a.Look throughout your web of relationships, and target specific relationships that need improving and that you can influence positively.

b.Decide what is lacking in each – mutual benefits and/or mutual respect.

c.For each, put together a plan for improving the perceived benefits balance or the mutual value/trust proposition. Consider that you may need to coach others on the elements of establishing healthy, productive relationships.

d.Execute the plans – one relationship at a time if necessary.

Reflective Questions

1) Who are three people you respect greatly? What is it that you value in them? What makes you trust them? How do you express appreciation for the value they bring to you? In what ways do you place your trust in them?

2) What characteristics do you share with the people you respect most? How are you different?

3) What more can you do to show people they are valued?

4) In what ways do you give your time, energy and attention to others with whom you have a relationship? How could you do more, or what could you do differently?

5) In what ways do you encourage and help others contribute? How could you do more?

6) In what ways are you valuable to others? What more could you do?

7) In what ways do you set a good example? In what ways would you like to set a better example?

8) In what ways do you demonstrate trust in others? What do you trust them with? Responsibility? Information? Insight into you? What could you do differently?

9) In what ways are you trustworthy? Are you honest, open and transparent with others? Are you fair? Do you keep promises?

10) Do you have a difficult time marshalling others to join you?

11) Do you communicate "eye to eye and heart to heart" or do you sometimes find yourself hiding behind positional power?

12) Do you talk behind people's backs?

13) Do you share your thoughts? Or do you keep people at a distance?

14) Are you perceived as someone who should be avoided or approached?

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15) How do you deal with conflict?

16) Do you feel that people respect you? Why or why not?

17) How do you encourage others on your team to build healthy and sup-portive relationships? How do you show them?

Risk: *The possibility of suffering a harmful event or loss.*

Risk is tricky business. Some say stick to the facts. Others say go with your gut. I recommend a combination approach. Think through your risk-taking opportunities by carefully calculating the likelihood and magnitude of the upside and downside of both action and inaction.

	Upside (likelihood and magnitude of consequence)	**Downside** (likelihood and magnitude of consequence)
What happens if I DO?		
	Upside (likelihood and magnitude of consequence)	**Downside** (likelihood and magnitude of consequence)
What happens if I DON'T?		

Then apply your best judgment, listen to your gut and make the best decision you can at the time. Prepare in advance for course corrections due to mistake or failure. Learn from mistakes, and don't hesitate in changing direction. This approach will give you the confidence to take more smart risks than your peers and competitors, creating more change and more progress.

Start applying this approach one risk at a time. Move from zero to something and then build. While you're at it, take steps to instill a risk-taking, innovation culture where you work.

Reflective Questions

1) What are your current tendencies when it comes to taking risks?

2) How do you currently assess the risk of various opportunities?

3) How does your risk tolerance compare with your organization's risk tolerance?

4) What are your superiors' expectations with regard to risk-taking?

5) What are examples of smart risks and dumb risks you have encountered?

6) What's a risky decision you face now, at work and/or in your personal life?

7) How can you reduce or eliminate some of the fallout from a risk that doesn't pan out?

8) What prevents you from taking risks sometimes? Is it fear of rejection? A need for approval? The need to always be right? Fear of hurting o thers? The need to avoid guilt? A lack of belief in yourself or others? A desire to avoid conflict? The need to understand every detail? Denial that change is needed or even possible? A belief that it's not your problem? Are you more focused on your image and reputation than what you want to accomplish?

9) In what ways do you manage risk, and in what ways sometimes does risk manage you?

10) In your current role(s), how will the levels of risk you are willing or unwilling to accept impact the results you are trying to produce?

Relentless: *Unyielding, sustained pace or intensity; steady; persistent.*

Resolve: *Firmness of purpose or intent; determination.*

Think about one of your greatest accomplishments – something that required work to achieve and brought you great pride. Then, ask yourself: How did I do that? Was it a specific goal of mine? What qualities did I bring to it? What mistakes or setbacks did I suffer along the way? How did I respond to them? Was I ever tempted to give up or settle for less? Why didn't I? What price did I pay for this achievement? Did I have to prioritize my commitments to succeed? What were my competing commitments? In what ways was I "all out" or "hell-bent?"

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Did I have a "short-term progress/long-term results" mindset?

Next, I would like you to follow the recommendation of leadership consultant and executive coach Doug Sundheim:

1) Pick some area of your life where you are dissatisfied with your progress or results. Write it down.

2) Answer this question on paper and out loud: "If I were hell-bent on getting the results I want, what would I do differently than I'm doing now?"

3) Then finish this sentence on paper and out loud: "If in six months, I'm not getting the progress or results I want, the reasons will be …"

4) Start doing the things you wrote in #2 and preventing or avoiding the things you wrote in #3.

5) Repeat relentlessly and with resolve, as necessary.

Applying this approach to a single area of your life will help you go from **zero to something**. The idea is to begin recognizing what it takes to rise above the rest of the leadership pack and to recognize your own ability to go all out. After meeting this first identified goal or objective, you will be primed to move on to the next one and succeed once again.

What I have found is that relentless resolve is less about

taking extraordinary measures and more about consistently doing the little things that make a difference, even when the little things go unnoticed. It's about prioritizing in a way that allows you to invest fully. And most importantly, it's about maintaining a stick-to-it attitude when setbacks and challenges inevitably arise.

I think it's useful to assume that the leaders with whom you compete are working relentlessly to outperform you. That is absolutely true of your highest performing peers. But the reality is that most leaders are not so relentless and resolute. Most do not have the discipline to do the important little things day in and day out. Most do not narrow their commitments enough to devote themselves completely. And most shrink when the going gets tough. Relentless resolve is something that will set you apart from most of your peers. And it's absolutely necessary if you aim to compete with the best of the best in your chosen field.

Reflective Questions

1) How might your own relentless resolve, or lack there of, impact your team members?

2) What's the difference between relentless resolve and wasted effort?

3) Do you have a project that you gave up on that should be re-started? Explain.

4) Do you have a project that caused you to settle for less,

but that in retrospect could have been pursued more relentlessly and resolutely? Explain.

5) Do you remember a time when you were so relentless you beat the proverbial "dead horse" and should have instead altered course and pursued the same goal by other means? Explain.

6) What commitments are you currently juggling, and what opportunity is there to narrow your commitments so you can invest more in your biggest priorities?

7) What price are you willing to pay to meet your biggest goals?

8) What does "progress, not perfection" mean to you?

9) What barriers are there to maintaining a long-term mindset, and how can you overcome them?

10) What would it mean to relentlessly pursue the R's of Leadership?

11) How can you set aside cynicism and allow yourself to be inspired by others who have demonstrated relentless resolve?

Recovery: *The act of restoring or returning to a better, healthier condition.*

To me, the best way to start implementing this 'R' is to define what work/life balance means to you and your team. Actually create and share a statement of some sort that indicates the goal of work/life balance is to achieve health and prosperity for both the organization and individual team members. It's important that the concept be seen as both an employee and organizational priority. And that statement cannot be seen as spin.

Next, with your statement as a foundation, develop a small set of guiding principles. Guiding principles might express respect for employees' time off, a commitment to flexibility, recognition and support for the six levels of total fitness, etc.

Example Statement and Guiding Principles:
Team X is committed to work/life balance as a means of achieving health and prosperity for both the organization and its employees.

1) *Team X respects employees' time away from work as a healthy influence on their ability to contribute effectively at work.*

2) *Team X is committed to reasonable flexibility in helping the organization and its employees achieve work/life balance.*

3) *Team X promotes total fitness for its employees, which can include physical, mental/emotional, spiritual, family, financial and professional fitness.*

This is as far or official as I would go with policy. Communicate these principles and use them to influence your decisions. But leave yourself the flexibility to deal with people's stress and recovery needs on an individual basis, in ways that benefit both employee and employer.

As you proceed under such a statement and guidelines, be sure to stay on constant lookout for signs of stress. Remember that you can alleviate a good deal of stress by simply leading effectively and implementing the various leadership R's. Make sure to model appropriate work/life balance yourself. Plan for recovery periods when team members are involved in particularly intense efforts. Educate team members about the fitness levels – physical fitness, mental and emotional fitness, spiritual fitness, family fitness, financial fitness, and professional fitness – and create an environment in which work/life balance is ac-

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tively promoted, examined and talked about.

Given the fast pace of today's world, it is more critical than ever to counter relentless work with relentless recovery, whether rest or play. Recovery is a natural process, like sleep, and it's an important part of our leadership responsibilities, as well as our own personal and professional development.

Reflective Questions

1) What are my objectives around work/life balance, both for myself and for my team members?
   What outcomes do I seek?

2) What policies are in place regarding this topic?

3) What scares me about discussing this topic with team members?

4) What do I do now to recover from work? What do my team members do?

5) What am I doing this week or next week to recover?

6) What relaxes me? Do I do it enough?

7) How many hours do I work? Am I working too many?

8) What am I doing for my next vacation? When?

9) Do I know when to slow down and when to rest?

10) Who on my team is overworked?

11) What do I know about my team members' fitness levels?

12) In what ways do I cause stress for my team members?

13) What do I do to help my team members recover from intense efforts?

14) What do I do to help my team members pursue work/life balance?

Recognition: *The acknowledgement of achievement, service, merit, etc.*

Recognition is a win-win, providing both leaders and our teams with what we need from work. We meet their basic need for acknowledgement and esteem, which conditions them to be exactly what we need – successful, happy, productive and positive. In addition, recognition provides us with more opportunities to align the stars by connecting individual behavior to organizational vision, mission and goals.

Lest we forget, it also feels good – not just to receive recognition, but to give it. And that remains important. At times, we're all a little anxious about downsizing, restructuring and the world's uncertain economic climate. So, cultivating an attitude of gratitude is something from which we all can benefit.

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Recognition Do's

• **Be specific.** When providing recognition, describe the particular situation and task that a team member faced, the action he or she took, and the result. Make it easy for the team member to see exactly what you are reinforcing.

• **Be balanced.** Lean toward positive feedback, but also make sure to give critical feedback. And when you do, be just as specific. Describe the situation and task faced, the action taken, the result – only this time, make sure to also discuss alternative actions that could be taken next time, and the alternative results one could expect.

• **Be timely.** Once again, the science of psychology helps us here. It says that the more immediately a consequence is felt, the more effective that consequence will be in influencing future behavior. In other words, don't save your praise and criticism for formal reviews or events. And don't shy away from spontaneity. Recognize behavior as soon as you become aware of it; if you do so, the praise will be more reinforcing and the criticism will be more likely to prompt change.

• **Be sincere.** This often trumps tangible value in our team members' eyes. So, truly think about and mean what you say. Express appreciation in your own way. Be creative. Don't go through the motions. People can spot fakeness a mile away.

• **Be consistent.** Don't go through spells of plentiful and minimal recognition. And avoid recognizing a certain type of behavior one time and then ignoring it the next. Our team members get confused when we are too random. And, sure enough, psychology tells us that consistent reinforcing leads to faster learning.

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• **Individualize.** Being fair does not mean giving everyone the same type of recognition. Some team members may respond well to a widely circulated newsletter recognizing their exploits. Others may prefer extra time and attention from the boss. Similarly, some may respond better to earning extra money or prizes while others may prefer earning the removal of obstacles, hassles and frustrations. Know your team members, and know what is meaningful to them. Apply a personal touch.

• Generally speaking, **praise in public and be critical in private**. This is a matter of respect, and, from a practical standpoint, it maximizes the impact of your feedback by minimizing defensiveness and resentment. But keep in mind, when it comes to praise, some people are not always comfortable receiving it publicly. So, as I mentioned above, learn what your team members like and individualize.

• **Use variety.** Once again, the psychologists help by confirming the obvious: people will grow tired of the same old recognition, and it will eventually influence their behavior less and less. Team members may even come to see the recognition or reward as an entitlement. At the same time, the psychologists say, if a perk can be enjoyed and then expire, people will be motivated to get it back. Both of these bits of science cry for variety. So, mix it up a little.

• **Share your feelings.** When providing recognition, explain how someone's behavior made you feel. It's powerfully reinforcing to learn that your boss felt pride, respect or happiness because of what you did. It also can be a powerful motivator for change to learn that your boss was disappointed. So, as a leader, don't just stick to the facts. Share how you're feeling.

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• **Recognize frequently** – Don't be stingy with gratitude. Recognize as often as possible, just so long as you remain sincere.

• **Link recognition to organizational priorities.** Formal recognition programs must absolutely and directly support the organization's values, vision, mission and goals. But it's also critical to link informal day-to-day recognition to those priorities. When recognizing people, point out how their behavior supports or contradicts company priorities. Don't expect the organization's culture to magically spring from priorities set to paper. Unless those leadership statements are reinforced daily with various forms of recognition, they will simply gather dust. This is what makes recognition strategic.

• **Be fair.** It's quite natural for leaders to develop favorite employees – people with whom you share common interests, people who have earned a great deal of your respect or trust, etc. So, don't feel bad if you have favorites. Just keep in mind that, even if you may have favorites, it's important not to display favoritism. Watch yourself so that you do not overly target a specific employee or group of employees with your recognition. Don't become blinded by your favorites at the expense of others. Jealousy can quickly turn to a sense of injustice, which will erode your leadership legitimacy as sure as anything. So, be fair and always remain an equal-opportunity recognizer.

Recognition Don'ts

• **Don't apply a price tag to everything.** In other words, don't make it too difficult to earn your praise or attention, and recognize good behaviors even when the results fall short or have yet to be realized. Imagine you are an offensive line coach

in football. Would you only praise a good block when it leads to a touchdown? Would you fail to criticize a bad block even when a touchdown was scored? In both cases, I hope not.

• **Don't promote cutthroat competitiveness.** Instead, promote cooperation and success for everyone. This can be tricky in naturally competitive environments such as sales. But, to the degree possible, try not to pit your team members against each other. You want them to stand out by propping themselves up, not tearing each other down. So, speak to that. And provide critical feedback to those who pursue success and recognition at the expense or exclusion of the team.

• **Don't turn the task of recognition over to HR.** Formal rewards programs may necessarily require HR partnership, but avoid putting HR in charge and washing your hands of this aspect of your business. Doing so will make your programs meaningless, like a birthday card with a stamped signature. Remember that recognition and rewards are most effective coming from an employee's boss.

First Steps

If recognition is an area of leadership you choose to improve, I suggest starting discreetly, without even telling your team members. Start with the informal, day-to-day recognition that is inexpensive, effective and immediately achievable.

The primary change will be in your mindset. To begin, you will need to start identifying and realizing more opportunities to praise people. Then, you'll need to experiment with methods of delivering your praise in a way that effectively reinforces the behavior and links it to the organization's priorities. You may also need to experiment with ways of offering critical feedback.

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In both cases, you will need to find out what feels comfortable and fits your personality.

It may sound corny, but I have found that keeping a journal is a good way of instituting changes such as these. Keep it on your desk for a few weeks or longer. Take a couple minutes each day to jot down a few notes about the recognition opportunities you saw, what you did, how it was received, and how it felt to you. In addition, you might reflect on what this skill means to your leadership, how it relates to your team's potential for success, and what goals you might have for the next day.

Journaling is just one way to make your new recognition mindset stick, so that it becomes part of who you are as a leader. Another suggestion would be to discuss your efforts with your boss. Make it part of your own development plan. Whichever way you want to approach it, developing recognition as a core strength will require commitment and practice.

The next thing I suggest, beyond the daily recognition efforts, is to make recognition a more purposeful part of your existing 1:1 meetings with team members, to include weekly and monthly check-ins as well as quarterly and annual reviews. You don't necessarily need to create new meetings. Just make a conscious effort to provide more recognition – both praise and critical feedback – in the meetings you're already having.

As your skill becomes more advanced, you also may want to consider more formal recognition programs as well. In that case, I suggest involving your boss and HR in considering various ideas and conducting thorough cost-benefit analyses.

Reflective Questions

1) Why is recognition important to your leadership effectiveness?

2) Are you a leader known for recognizing your team members?

3) What sort of things do you recognize most? Least?

4) Do you recognize team members who demonstrate the R's of leadership, even if they are individual contributors? For example …

   a. Do you recognize people who use **resources** efficiently?

   b. Do you recognize people who follow the **rules**?

   c. Do you recognize people who foster supportive **relationships**?

   d. Do you recognize people who are **realistic, respectful** to others, **responsible,** and **relentless**?

   e. Do you recognize those who take **risks**?

   f. Do you recognize people who make **recovery** a priority and avoid criticizing people for it?

   g. Do you recognize those people who do a good job of **recognizing** others?

   h. Do you recognize those who take the time to **reflect** positively on past, current, and future actions?

5) What are some examples of you adhering to the guideline

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of praising in public and offering critical feedback in private?

6) How would you describe your style of recognition?

7) What about your recognition efforts is lacking?

8) Are you least comfortable providing praise or criticism?

9) Is your praise usually specific enough to be effective reinforcement? How could it be more specific?

10) In what ways do you link recognition to both business results and organizational priorities?

11) Have you ever been accused of favoritism? How could that have been avoided?

12) What is your plan for improving your day-to-day recognition efforts?

13) What ideas do you have for formal recognition programs?

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Reflective Thinking

Reflection: *The deliberate act of rationally contemplating and carefully considering one's own thinking.*

Develop the Reflective Mindset of Humility, Contemplation and Growth

Dedicate some time to reflect on your own leadership and situation. In your mind, remove yourself from the day-to-day tasks and demands, and reflectively think about what is going well and what isn't going so well. Think about the big picture of your impact. Take some time to reflectively think about people who have had an impact on your leadership style and why they impacted you so. Consider both those who taught you what to do and those who taught you what not to do, and think about why you make such distinctions. Look at your organi-

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zation's leadership. Do the characteristics of the senior leaders transcend their areas of responsibility? Do yours? How would you describe their leadership style? How would you describe yours? What would those you lead say if they read or heard your description? Would they agree or disagree? Which R's of Leadership are your strengths? Which are weaknesses? Is your team, department or division heading in the direction you're supposed to be leading it? What could the concept of "Zero to Something" mean to you and your team?

"I'm Gonna Make A Change, For Once In My Life, It's Gonna Feel Real Good, Gonna Make A Difference, Gonna Make It Right"
- Michael Jackson, from the very reflective song "Man in the Mirror"

Consider capturing your reflections in a journal and discussing them with at least one confidante or mentor. From there, determine what you can change and what you can't change, and then take action. Are you going to attend training? Are you going to form a peer support group? Are you going to enlist the services of a leadership coach? Mentors?

As you dedicate time to these reflections, note when and where you feel most engaged in such thoughts. Is it while taking a walk; going on a long, slow run; listening to music at home; sitting in a coffee shop; or staying late at the office, perhaps? Determine where and when you do your best reflective thinking.

Next, pick a time when you feel particularly caught up in the heat of a leadership challenge – when things are moving fast, uncertainty is high, and you are a bit overwhelmed. Then, I want you to do the unthinkable – make time to step away for a short while, and go back to that place where you do your best

reflective thinking. Engage a confidante or remain in solitude. Either way, remove yourself both physically and mentally from the situation, and do your best to review it from an objective, third-party perspective. See what sort of clarity it provides, and roll with any fresh perspectives you develop.

Do a Reflective Gut Check

Following these first deliberate "pauses for the cause," I recommend trying a reflective gut-check with whatever team is involved in your current challenge. No doubt, you have had similar meetings, but focus this time on asking more reflective questions, such as: Have we learned anything yet that would indicate another direction might be better? What should we do differently? Do we have clear roles, rules and responsibilities? Respectful relationships? Are we solving the right problem? Is it worth it?

Focus on not only asking more reflective questions but on emphasizing and demonstrating your willingness to hear honest answers – reality. Even if you ultimately determine you're on the best course, you will have the benefit of proceeding with more confidence and, presumably, an even more engaged team.

Conduct a Reflective Post-Project Review

After you have done your initial reflection journal, experimented with taking a "pause for the cause" in the midst of a specific business challenge, and held your first reflective gut-check meeting, I recommend planning your first reflective post-project review. Even if you've held such reviews in the past, focus this time on engaging your team more than ever with thoughtful, reflective questions. Plan the questions ahead of time. Send them out in advance so people have time to think prior to the

meeting. Encourage candor and vulnerability. Be candid and vulnerable yourself. Assume responsibility for making sure identified learnings are integrated into the next project.

Most importantly, don't expect to do all these things at once. A big aspect of reflection is taking the time to breathe. Overwhelming yourself with it would defeat the purpose. As always, the "Zero to Something" philosophy applies. Make some progress. And then make some more.

Reflective Questions

1) What are some specific "a-ha" moments from your life – times when you specifically remember learning something that stuck?

2) In your own experience, why does certain information stick while other information is forgotten?

3) What are some things that didn't stick? (It's OK to be general; I know you can't remember the specifics!)

4) What does critical thinking, or reflective thinking, mean to you, in your own words?

5) When, from whom, and under what circumstances, do you seek feedback from others?

6) When have you had the courage and humility to change your mind, change course or admit you were wrong?

7) For you, has "being right" ever gotten in the way of " getting it right?"

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8) While technology allows you to act and react more quickly than ever, in what ways do you make the time to consider decisions reflectively before making them?

9) Why it is important to take "a pause for the cause" even in the heat of battle?

10) In what ways do you teach your team members how to reflect on the past, current and future?

11) If you have previously led or participated in something resembling a reflective gut check or reflective review, what, if anything, was lacking?

12) What sort of current strategies do you have for taking two steps back and reflectively thinking about what has been done, what is being done, and what needs to be done in the future?

13) To what degree do you and your team members "keep it real" when reflecting on current or past efforts?

14) If you had to pick which side you erred on – action or analysis – which would it be and why?

15) What reflecting have you done on the individual R's of Leadership? How would continuous reflection help? And what would continuous reflection look like?

Conclusion

Start writing your own book

If you haven't already, start your own leadership journal and think of it as notes for the book you will eventually write. Document what you learn from books, experiences, peers, bosses, etc. Writing, as we discussed in the last chapter, will help you reflect on what you learned. Over time – as you learn, write and reflect more – patterns and themes will develop. You will naturally begin to synthesize your knowledge and will develop your own mental model for leadership – something that works for you. Do yourself a favor and abandon all hopes for a secret leadership panacea. Instead, pursue the very concept of this book – steady, meaningful progress. Allow your leadership to develop from zero (your current baseline) to something. Then reset the dial to zero and once again move from zero to something. Keep moving forward. Eventually you'll look back and realize that your consistent gains have added up to big growth. At that time, you can turn your journal into your own book.

First, though, start the journal by ruminating about this book. Write about the things that connected with you most and least. Reflect on how the book relates to your strengths, opportuni-

ties and desires for growth. Write about what you plan to implement and how. Don't worry about writing perfectly. Don't spend too much time or be too thorough. It doesn't need to be in book form yet. Spend as much time as you're willing or able to invest. Just make sure to write something. Start the process. Zero to something.

Try Stuff

In addition to starting your journal (or continuing it if you started while reading the previous chapters), I recommend that you start developing the habit of "trying stuff." If you are to reach any conclusions about leadership philosophies and techniques, you need to test-drive them and see what works for you. Start by trying the concepts in this book, and start right now.

Prioritize Your Leadership SOPs

In these final pages, I have provided several blank priority assessment forms, which are also available on my Web site - zerotosomething.com. Make copies of the form if you wish. It's a simple way of assessing your own skills and your team's needs so that you can quickly determine your priorities.

Forms

	SELF ASSESSMENT (1=least developed; 11=most developed)	TEAM NEED (1=biggest need; 11=smallest need)	TOTAL (Add self-assessment and team need ranks)	DEVELOPMENT PRIORITY (1=R with lowest TOTAL; 11=R with highestTOTAL)
Results				
Reality				
Resources				
Rules				
Roles & Responsibilities				
Respectful Relationships				
Risk Taking				
Relentless Resolve				
Recovery				
Recognition				
Reflective Thinking				

Priority Assessment Form

In the "Self Assessment" column, rank the R's, from 1 to 11, in terms of your current skills. For example, if your skills are least developed in the area of Results, rank that as 1, and if your skills are strongest in the area of Recovery, rank that as 11.

In the "Team Need" column, rank the R's, from 1 to 11, in terms of your team's current needs. For example, if your team would benefit most from a focus on appropriate Risk Taking (i.e. that is the team's biggest need), rank that as 1. And if the team would benefit least from a focus on Respectful Relationships, perhaps because that is already a towering team strength, then rank that as 11.

As you do these two rankings for the first time, I suggest you look back at each chapter, particularly the reflections and questions at the end, to refresh your memory. Once you are comfortable with your rankings, add the two for each R and write the totals into the "Total" column.

Next, note that the lower totals represent your highest development priorities and the higher totals represent your lowest development priorities. In other words, your highest development priorities are the R's in which you are weakest and your team's needs are greatest. The R with the lowest total should be Priority #1 (in terms of your development), and the R with the highest total should be Priority #11. In the last column, write the priority for each R, from 1 to 11.

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Priority Assessment Form

Your own development priorities (column #1) will not necessarily be your immediate action priorities. Indeed, if you have a new team with a great need in one of your areas of strength, you should act immediately. That's an opportunity to move quickly from zero to something. Take it!

The last-column priorities, rather, represent where you want to concentrate your development efforts. Pick the top two or three priorities for starters. Go back and review those chapters. Spend time thoroughly answering the reflective questions at the end of each chapter. Perhaps write your answers in your leadership journal. Develop some ideas for ways to implement improvements. Talk to your boss and peers about your ideas. And then give them a whirl. If one thing doesn't work, reflect with others on why it didn't. Revise and try again, or try something altogether different. Be wary of doing or expecting too much too quickly. Focus on our philosophy – zero to something.

There is no magic formula for where to focus your energy. I constructed the priority assessment as I did because our team's needs tend to reflect our own leadership deficiencies. In that way, combining the two rankings to determine our priorities makes sense. But, in some cases, particularly when you inherit a new team, your team's needs may have no relation to your own strengths and weaknesses. In that case, you may want to prioritize strictly according to team need, utilizing strengths and developing weaknesses as applicable. In any case, assess yourself and your team honestly, and use your best judgment in prioritizing.

Remember, too, that you can pull out these pages at any time in the future. It's good to reassess from time to time – at least annually.

Begin – The Rest is Easy

You have a lot to chew on:

- 11 Leadership SOPs (the R's), with distinct concepts and reflective questions;

- A suggestion that you assess yourself and team according to the SOPs;

- Encouragement to "try stuff" from the individual chapters and other sources;

- And a suggestion that you start a leadership journal.

Before all of that, I also introduced the "Zero to Something" philosophy, which is worth some reflection. As you recall, "Zero to Something" is a mindset of methodically making progress toward your goals and ideals, confident that small, consistent progress will inevitably add up to big achievements. "Zero to Something" acknowledges that inertia and complacency are the natural enemies of all and that leaders overcome such tendencies by consciously exerting influence on destiny. It's a philosophy that says starting is the hardest part and that leaders are those willing to start, make progress, and then start again – over and over. The "Zero to Something" philosophy values discipline, structure, humility and personalization. It also says leadership begins in the mirror, requiring that we lead ourselves and then others.

Think about that last paragraph at work tomorrow. Think about it in your next meeting. Think about it when confronted with your next challenge or decision. See if it provides any clarity or direction. Revise it. Expand upon it. Reflect in your journal. At some point, hop on to zerotosomething.com and share your insights with others and me. I want to know how "Zero to Something" has been useful and applicable, and I want to learn from the ways you have adopted and adapted it.

Now, go. Reset the dial. You're at zero, en route to something. Next stop: something else. Eventually: something GREAT!

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Priority Assessment Form

About the Authors

Arnie Strebe is the Chief Talent and Business Improvement fficer for Evergreen Enterprises and Plow & Hearth, both headquartered in Virginia. There, he leads the design, development and implementation of all people and performance improvement initiatives.

Arnie worked previously for Minnesota-based The Schwan Food Company, where as a member of the Senior Executive Development Program, he held operational assignments in sales and marketing, manufacturing, human resources, and learning and development. Among his achievements at Schwan was the founding of Schwan's University, an employee training and development organization that earned several national and international awards for excellence. Arnie also held senior leadership positions at URS Corporation, an international engineering firm, and the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

Arnie holds a master's degree in education. Prior to entering the business world, he enjoyed a successful career in the U.S. Army as an enlisted soldier and officer. On the personal front, Arnie keeps busy as a certified USA Triathlon coach and has completed many triathlons himself, including three Ironman events. He also provides other fitness-related coaching, as well as executive coaching, and says his personal mission is to help others succeed. Arnie lives with his wife, Sigrid, in Richmond, Va. He has two grown daughters, Tori and Courtney, and a stepson, Tanner.

Jeremiah Gardner is a public relations and communications professional for the nonprofit Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, a world leader in addiction treatment and recovery services, headquartered in Minnesota. There, he also manages the organization's online social community and contributes to public advocacy efforts. Jeremiah also is a writer and producer for the independent documentary film, *Miracle Cures and the History of Addiction Treatment*, which remained in production as this book went to press.

As a former newsman and editor for The Associated Press, Jeremiah has been published in newspapers throughout the United States, including the Los Angeles Times, Washington Post and Chicago Tribune. More recently, he worked at The Schwan Food Company as a technical writer, multimedia specialist, curriculum writer, training manager and performance consultant, helping the business earn several awards for training and development excellence.

Away from the office, Jeremiah has written, performed and recorded with a number of music groups. He also is an active triathlete and marathoner. He holds bachelor's degrees in journalism and political science and a master's degree in addiction studies, and he is licensed in Minnesota as an alcohol and drug counselor. Jeremiah was once named outstanding graduate at The Fund for American Studies' Institute on Political Journalism at Georgetown University, and he also has completed additional graduate courses in business and law. He lives in the Minneapolis area with his wife, Jenny, and twin sons, Keegan and Jace.