Leadership Map

George Bernard

Contents

0 Executive Summary: One Page Leadership Map **3**

1 Introduction **3**

2 My Story **3**
2.1 Childhood: Setting The Stage . . . 3
2.1.1 Establishing Norms . . . 3
2.1.2 Building Humility . . . 3
2.2 Adolescence: Building Character in "The Woods" . . . 3
2.2.1 Antifragility: Resilience built through Adversity . . . 3
2.2.2 Lessons from Antiquity: Lao Tze and "The Way" . . . 3
2.2.3 Lessons from Antiquity: Ancient Greece . . . 3
2.2.4 Lessons from Antiquity: Roman Stoicism . . . 3
2.2.5 Lessons from Modernity: Positive Existentialism . . . 4
2.2.6 Lessons from the Community: Friends That Promote You . . . 4
2.2.7 Lessons from the Community: Accountability To The Collective . . . 4
2.3 University: A Sobering Climb towards Maturity . . . 4
2.3.1 Moral Development . . . 4
2.3.2 Being Criticized: The Importance of Community Call Outs . . . 4
2.3.3 Duke Men's Project . . . 4
2.3.4 Success At Duke . . . 4
2.3.5 Failure in Success: Losing Humility . . . 4
2.3.6 Defeats and Failures . . . 4

3 Life Mission **4**
3.1 Establishing the Ripple . . . 4
3.1.1 Focus on Community . . . 4
3.1.2 Effective Altruism . . . 5
3.2 Becoming a Craftsman . . . 5

4 Success, Happiness, and Meaning **5**
4.1 Why are these separate? . . . 5
4.2 Success . . . 5
4.2.1 What is Success? . . . 5
4.2.2 How do you measure it? . . . 6
4.2.3 Why chase it? . . . 6
4.3 Happiness . . . 7
4.3.1 What is it? . . . 7
4.3.2 How do you measure it? . . . 7
4.3.3 Why chase it? . . . 7
4.4 Meaning . . . 7
4.4.1 What is it? . . . 7

4.4.2 How do you measure it? . . . 7
4.4.3 Why chase it? . . . 8

5 Moral Fiber **8**
5.1 Primer on Integrity . . . 8
5.2 Moral Role Models . . . 8
5.3 Moral Beacons . . . 11
5.4 Moral System . . . 11
5.4.1 Touchstone Principles . . . 11
5.4.2 Moral Compass . . . 11
5.4.3 Moral Code . . . 11
5.5 My Character . . . 11
5.5.1 Boyscout Principle . . . 11
5.5.2 Help Others . . . 11
5.5.3 Minimize Harm . . . 11
5.5.4 Duty to Act . . . 11
5.5.5 Shortcoming: People Pleasing . . . 11
5.6 Moral Courage and Being Strong-Hearted . . . 11

6 Amoral Fiber **11**
6.1 Master your Craft . . . 11
6.2 Learn, Learn, Learn . . . 11
6.3 Good Citizenry . . . 11
6.4 Being Less Wrong More Often . . . 11
6.4.1 What this means . . . 11
6.4.2 Epistemic Humility . . . 11
6.5 Shortcoming: Developing Discipline . . . 11

7 Leadership Qualities **11**
7.1 Lead from the Rear . . . 11
7.2 Lead by Example . . . 11
7.3 The Shepard and The Drove . . . 11
7.4 The Goatherd and the Tribe . . . 11
7.5 The Craftsman's Faults and Strengths . . . 11
7.6 Growth Opportunities - Personal Competency Worksheet . . . 11

8 Twenties Journey: Objective, Direction, and Path **12**
8.1 Aspirations . . . 12
8.1.1 Find a Community . . . 12
8.1.2 Professional Development and Recognition . . . 12
8.2 Strategies . . . 12
8.2.1 Master my Craft . . . 12
8.2.2 Prioritize Health . . . 12
8.2.3 Widen my T . . . 12

9 Implementation: 3-year plan **12**
9.1 3-year Mission Statement . . . 12
9.2 3-year Success Kaleidoscope . . . 12
9.3 Leadership Development Objectives & Key Strategies . . . 12
9.4 Key Issues, Decisions, and Plans . . . 12
9.5 Working at Tresata . . . 12
9.6 New City, New Community . . . 12

10 Implementation: The next 7 months **12**
10.1 Fall 2018 . . . 12

10.2 Winter 2019 12
10.3 Spring 2019 12
10.4 Summer 2019 12

11 Closing Comments and Reflections **12**

0 Executive Summary: One Page Leadership Map

1 Introduction

2 My Story

2.1 Childhood: Setting The Stage

2.1.1 Establishing Norms

2.1.2 Building Humility

2.2 Adolescence: Building Character in "The Woods"

2.2.1 Antifragility: Resilience built through Adversity

2.2.2 Lessons from Antiquity: Lao Tze and "The Way"

2.2.3 Lessons from Antiquity: Ancient Greece

2.2.3.1 Arete: Fulfilling Your Potential

2.2.3.2 Socrates' Moral Imperative: When To Be The Biting Fly

2.2.4 Lessons from Antiquity: Roman Stoicism

2.2.4.1 Life Is Long If You Know How To Use It - Seneca

2.2.4.2 Wake and Do The Work of Man - Marcus Aurelius

2.2.5 Lessons from Modernity: Positive Existentialism

2.2.6 Lessons from the Community: Friends That Promote You

2.2.7 Lessons from the Community: Accountability To The Collective

2.3 University: A Sobering Climb towards Maturity

2.3.1 Moral Development

2.3.2 Being Criticized: The Importance of Community Call Outs

2.3.3 Duke Men's Project

2.3.4 Success At Duke

2.3.5 Failure in Success: Losing Humility

2.3.6 Defeats and Failures

3 Life Mission

3.1 Establishing the Ripple

I am not a spiritual person. It's not immediately clear to me what happens to us when we die. If we are judged for our actions, how am I to live such that Anubis measures my heart lighter than a feather? If we are not judged, then what drives me to live the good life. If there is no judgment, then I should pursue my own goals ruthlessly and selfishly. I am reminded of the words of Rabbi Hillel the Elder

> If I am not for myself who is for me? And being for my own self what am I? If not now when?

We tread a fine line with our time in this world, between acting in the service of ourselves and acting in the service of others. My actions, if they are ethical, should not be because of a fear of judgment or desire of heavenly reward. My actions in the service of helping others and being true to myself must be justified by a consistent goal.

The key to all of this is in my **ripple**. The benefits I make on this world, I hope, will last in the signal of kindness of others. There will come a day when my name will be forgotten, everyone I know long dead, but the people I help and the people they help and they help will continue. My benefit to the world, my *raison de etre* is in the ripple of goodness that I will create to my highest ability in my own sphere of influence.

3.1.1 Focus on Community

I live in the domain of the practical and the human. I want to be realistic about the benefit I can make in the world. This does not mean I should artifically limit the scope of my benefits, but that I focus on helping those within my sphere of influence.

One of my life goals is to have a deep connection with my tribe. I don't mean this in a self secluding way. The connotation of focusing on your community can come across as a dogwhistle for putting your own people first. When I say tribe I mean a responsibility to my people across ethnic, class, religious, and political lines. I want to seek out those who challenge me to be better and think better. I want to make a place in my life for those people, and I want to help them achieve their goals and to feel loved by their tribe in turn.

3.1.2 Effective Altruism

Tempering this focus on the immediate community, we must see our ability to act on the global scale. Our world is incredibly connected, and this has been amazing for seeing the way that people around the world live. This has also shown us the dire straits that many people in this world live in. We often lose our will to act, to overcome the bystander effect, when we are so far away from the problems that people face. Simply put, we cannot live in our progressive western democracy, go to work in literal towering crystal spires, and constantly think about "starving african children or whatever".

There is huge cognitive dissonance here. If it meant getting our shoes dirty, we would save a drowning child. If it meant getting on a plane and flying across the world, we would still save a drowning child. From both of these toy examples we see that the duty to act is always there, regardless of moderate personal damage (ruining clothes) or distance (flying there). How do we get from the high level ethical breakdown in which we are honorbound to act, to what is implemented as fundamental apathy?

Don't get me wrong, I am not condemning the very human focus on the local over the global, but one of my personal goals is to act efficiently in the service of global issues. Ergo, my life mission adds two intertwined goals. First, I want to donate large amounts of money to extremely effective charities (malaria and schistosomiasis intiatives), and, second, I want to share this approach to charity, that we should prioritize giving to extremely effective charities and that we have a duty to act in what ways we can.

3.2 Becoming a Craftsman

My last main goal is more amoral. I get pleasure out of making cool things. I take pride in the things I make. I have that peculiar affliction that I am good at, and deeply love, being an Engineer. It comes back to that Greek idea of Arete, I want to maximize my potential in this direction. I want to be the best Engineer I can be. Solving cool problems for smart people.

I am a toolmaker. I seek to build the tools that enable others to maximize their potential. In this way, I also establish my ripple. I want to smash the barriers that people have by enabling them to take advantage of humankinds shared incredible computational power. A life of service as a humble toolmaker, is a life I will not regret.

4 Success, Happiness, and Meaning

4.1 Why are these separate?

With so much discussion of the fundamental problems of being human, it is easy to focus on semantics, pinning down the meanings of words. How many times have my classmates stopped our teacher, Tony, and asked him to "define this word you're using, exactly". The problem is fundamental to language and more exposed when we try to talk about abstract but very personal subjects. Success, Happiness, and Meaning are all inextricable. Even these words we use only crudely set a first order approximation of the problem domain. If words and models are our maps and the ground truth of our desire is the territory, it is painfully obvious that the map is not the territory. I choose these three categories as the brute separation of this territory, to be holistic in this discussion will muddy the waters (if they are not already fevered ramblings).

4.2 Success

4.2.1 What is Success?

Success is the feeling we get when we take pride in the fruits of our labors.

As we've covered in class, a sufficient second order approximation of success can be in the following components:

- Happiness
- Achievement
- Significance
- Legacy

"Now wait a minute George", you might ask, "Why is happiness here and also covered later. That seems redundant." And to that I say that you're right... kinda. Happiness is a component of success, but in this domain it is focused on the element of enjoying the fruits of your work. The tomatoes you grow yourself always seem to taste better to you, but could honestly be replaced by store bought and anyone else wouldn't notice.

Achievement is how the success feels in a more visceral sense. It is the feeling of pride when you make it to the summit. Even if the view is obfuscated by fog, even if it is frigid, you can't help feel a sense of satisfaction from conquering this mountain. It is the feeling of **winning**.

Significance is that benefit that your success has to your tribe. How much profit did your project produce for the company? How fulfilling is it to see that student you helped turn around and ace her computer architecture midterm?

Legacy is how your success lasts. When you create your sculpture, your magnum opus, is it made of q-tips and twine? or wraught steel and hard stone? How will your success survive and thrive? We want our successes to not be destroyed in front of us. We want the code we write to be a pivotal benefit to a system that will keep chugging long after you may have left the company.

4.2.2 How do you measure it?

We can thus measure our success more easily by measuring the constituent components.

We measure achievement by how many of our goals we accomplish, by how difficult it was to accomplish them, and comparing them to the goals of others.

I'll focus on measuring happiness later, as much of that discussion applies here.

Legacy and significance are harder nuts to crack. You can imagine why the average Duke student may not focus on these as components of her success. They're far less *real* to us. They require a worldy wisdom to see as products of our labor.

Measuring significance is often not up to us, but on the people who we work for. The appreciation of the people that our work benefits us set the terms for seeing our actions' significance.

Our legacy is not something that we can see moving forward, these dots are only connected looking back on our life's random walk. Legacy is like concrete. It get's stronger the longer it has set, reaching peak strength years after the pour. The roman sewers and aquaducts were lasting success, but we know this only long after their society collapsed. Time has the final word on our legacy.

4.2.3 Why chase it?

Why should we chase success? Is it that warm feeling, that hedonic motivation that makes us search out and carve our success into the mural of human civilization. I feel at a loss for words how to describe this. I want to have some higher reason for my craving success. The materialistic explanation is all I can fall back on. The stupid, beautiful, and simple answer is that we chase success because it feels good. Being successful means surviving the night and finding a good mate. Success is therefore a key fuel in our motivation engine, but success alone cannot drive us forever.

4.3 Happiness

4.3.1 What is it?

Happiness can, too, be broken up into sub-components:

- Joy is that immediate pleasure. Those butterflies in our stomach. The overwhelming sense of ecstasy.
- Contentment is that slow burn of gratitude. The sense of rightness and harmony in the world.

4.3.2 How do you measure it?

The simplest way to measure your happiness is to count the frequency of *butterflies*. It is that fire in your belly that speaks to you. It does lead to a bit of experimental error, for when we look for the ways that happiness appears in our life, we open ourselves to more of it, overestimating its base occurence.

It is easy, for most, to recognize ecstatic moments, but it is oft harder to recognize effective contentment. The feeling of being more than alright with the state of our world is fleeting if you are so focused on **The Next Big Thing**. To be content, an atomic component of happiness, is to be in deep gratitude to the circumstances of our life, both those that we have worked to achieve and those we had the raw luck to be given.

4.3.3 Why chase it?

For the same reasons that we chase success, we chase our happiness. Happiness is more difficult to produce than success however. Where we can work to chase success and be rewarded, chasing happiness often has the exact opposite effect. Happiness is an occasional beneficial side effect of chasing success, but it can also open itself up to you when you least expect it. If anything, happiness is the heat produced by our motivation engine burning success and meaning in different ratios.

4.4 Meaning

4.4.1 What is it?

Paul Tillich, in his seminal work on the phenomenology of religion "The Dynamics of Faith", spoke of our religious motivation engine. Humans crave ultimate fulfillment, to do so we engage with our ultimate concern and the risk that our concern is idolatrous (i.e. worshipping a false idol and receiveing no such fulfillment). Meaning is our fulfillment produced by our success.

On first glance, it seems that meaning could be represented by the success components of Significance and Legacy. To that I say once again, you're right... kinda. They are in the same territory, but something about meaning cannot be reducible to success. Ultimate fulfillment is a product of our purpose and drive. Meaning is both the lens and crucible to interpret our success and turn it into what drives us.

4.4.2 How do you measure it?

The question reduces to how do we see meaning in our lives. What do we see in those who live with high meaning? Brooks would say that they have chosen the path of service to others and to the world.

I have to punt the ball on this one. Like the supreme court's definition of pornography, "I'll know it when I see it". This, I think, is a binary issue. You can either feel fulfilled by what you are doing or not. You can be fulfilled in some silos of life more than in others, but within each silo, if you are true to yourself, the answer is in your gut.

4.4.3 Why chase it?

These answers must be getting boring to you by now. It's the same as it always has been. We chase meaning because the feeling of being fulfilled is a different kind of wonderful. It is the last fuel in our motivation engine a distillate effect of refining our sucess through a focus on fulfillment.

5 Moral Fiber

5.1 Primer on Integrity

For this section, it is useful to understand what I mean when I say integrity. I mean it as the sweet spot where our actions overlap with our intentions.

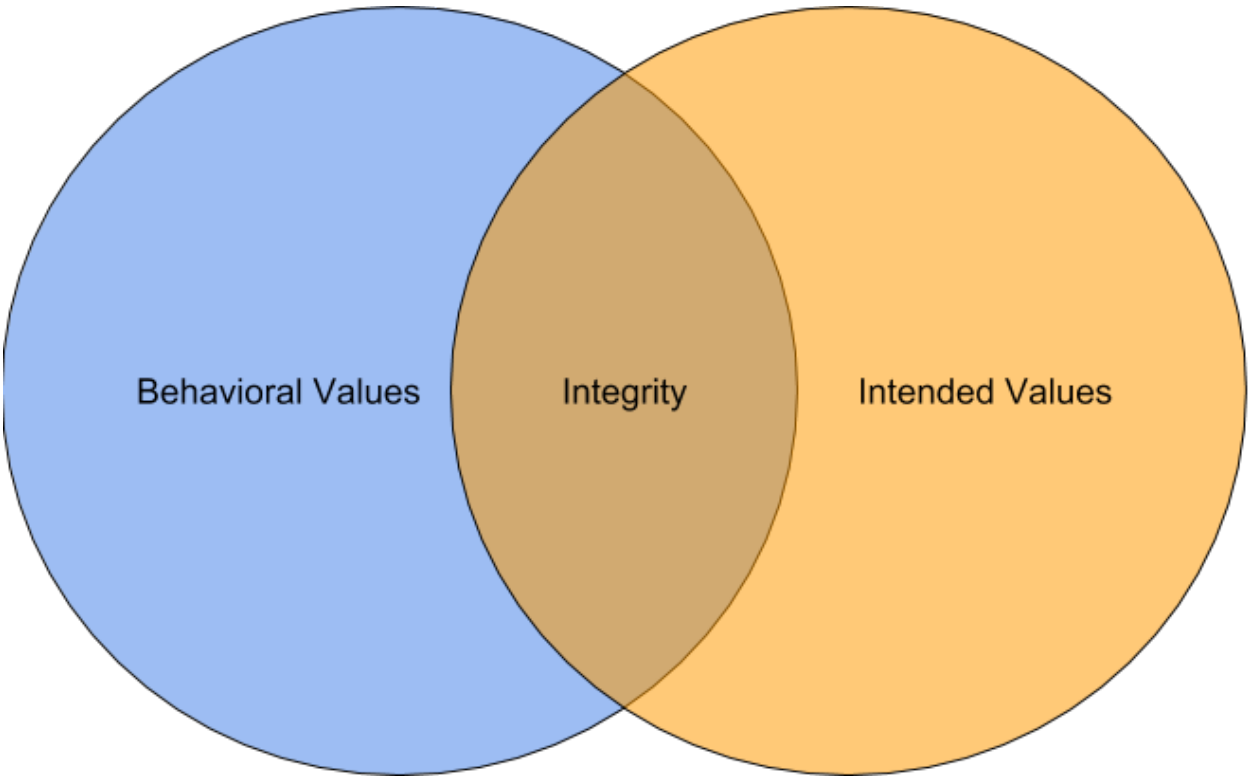

Figure 1: Integrity = Overlap of Intention and Action

5.2 Moral Role Models

I have always learned to be a better person by the quality of my company. Those I most admire are those I most stand to learn from. There is something about everyone that I can admire and want to copy and assimilate into my being. I have simply too many role models to list, but I can attempt to list the categories of those people whom I admire.

- Immense, Raw Empathy
- Absolute Kindness
- Humility
- Generosity

- Strong-Heartedness and the Moral Courage to Act

Those same categories I list for my role models, are those traits that are the largest delta growth opportunities for myself. I often feel that I behave in cocky, cold, and lukewarm way. All of my role models have rock solid integrity; they act in the way they believe they should and have the "Heart of a Lion" that drives them to be true to themselves.

5.3 Moral Beacons

5.4 Moral System

5.4.1 Touchstone Principles

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5.4.3 Moral Code

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5.5.1 Boyscout Principle

5.5.2 Help Others

5.5.3 Minimize Harm

5.5.4 Duty to Act

5.5.5 Shortcoming: People Pleasing

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6 Amoral Fiber

6.1 Master your Craft

6.2 Learn, Learn, Learn

6.3 Good Citizenry

6.4 Being Less Wrong More Often

6.4.1 What this means

6.4.2 Epistemic Humility

6.5 Shortcoming: Developing Discipline

7 Leadership Qualities

7.1 Lead from the Rear

7.2 Lead by Example

7.3 The Shepard and The Drove

7.4 The Goatherd and the Tribe

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7.6 Growth Opportunities - Personal Competency Worksheet

- Taking action, making decisions, and following through

- Managing conflict and negotiating
- Time management

8 Twenties Journey: Objective, Direction, and Path

8.1 Aspirations

8.1.1 Find a Community

8.1.2 Professional Development and Recognition

8.2 Strategies

8.2.1 Master my Craft

8.2.2 Prioritize Health

8.2.3 Widen my T

9 Implementation: 3-year plan

9.1 3-year Mission Statement

9.2 3-year Success Kaleidoscope

9.3 Leadership Development Objectives & Key Strategies

9.4 Key Issues, Decisions, and Plans

9.5 Working at Tresata

9.6 New City, New Community

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10.1 Fall 2018

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