

Successfirmations: Think, Reveal, Receive – LeaderShaping the Formula *for* Success:

Understanding an Applications-based Strategy that
Develops the Future Picture

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Message from the Author

Thank you for being a part of the leadership segment of C# Corner, a free online community for IT developers and professionals.

Our “Successfirmations: Think, Reveal, Receive” leadership community offers a diverse and engaged forum dedicated to one purpose; LeaderShaping! Over the past few years, DamianPitts, Inc (DPI), *a division of the Bison Group® Corporation*, along with other researchers and practitioners has seen the need to call for a refreshed way of thinking about building the Future Picture – a new leadership mindset if you will. At Successfirmations, the community identifies emerging ideas and methodologies, and host face-to-face executive education programs in the classroom backed by a powerful online learning platform where members are invited to explore these new developments in the field to improve leadership development. We believe that through leadership, we can promote a more just and equitable society.

We need to expand our thinking about leadership from focusing on the behavior of individuals influencing others to a more expanded view of leadership as a dynamic process that many who care about an issue connect their efforts to make significant change. Of course, it would not be different if we were to follow traditional ways of thinking. The new mindset that we are striving to encourage is one that will foster strategic and flawless execution, using military stratagem and teachings from the United States Marine Corps as a backdrop, and as a way to rethink leadership development delivery strategies.

I would like to thank **Maresh Chand**, founder of C# Corner and Mindcracker Network for inviting me to share my writings, advice and teachings to the community and my wife **Nina Marie Pitts** for her relentless review, checking for errors and accuracy. Also, please feel free to share the leadership knowledge and information with others.

Ductus Exemplo.

Damian D. “Skipper” Pitts

Founder, The Bison Group® Corporation and DamianPitts, Inc



*“The only thing necessary for the triumph of greatness
is for the chosen to fail at not trying.” – Damian D. “Skipper” Pitts, 2007*

In this E-Book you will learn:

- Tools and tactics for changing “you,” your “organization” and the world.
- Why leaders should examine, diagnose, organize and self-assess before executing.
- How “adaptive leadership” behaviors can help solve problematic issues.
- How to use team building maneuvers to build great teams and extraordinary team leaders.

At first glance, this e-book seems to be just another publication filled with leadership philosophies to focus on advice you already know: establish a well thought-out strategy forward, prioritize and focus on leadership of self and how to change internal/external resources to change everything else. But, the consistent quality and creativity may pleasantly surprise you. So many of the world’s problems, and the issues that organizations, teams and people face every day, can seem unyielding and unsolvable. Strategic Leadership & Execution consultant, Damian D. “Skipper” Pitts, proposes a new way to lead the charge to change:

“**Successfirmations: Think, Reveal, Receive – LeaderShaping the Formula for Success**” calls for eliminating outdated approaches to embrace new skills, a positive mental attitude, adaptive behaviors and team building maneuvers to receive the desired effects in the future.

Skipper’s counsel combines wisdom from organizational behavior, positive psychology, strategic execution, transformational leadership and team building maneuvers with a healthy dose of self-assessment to help leaders face ongoing challenges and execute their work with artistry. These are solid and fresh touchstones for leaders to learn from. The value proposition they offer will help anyone or any organization make difficult decisions about change. Successfirmations is filled with useful real-life examples and well thought-out advice that has worked in the marketplace, using military stratagem from the United States Marine Corps as a backdrop. This process takes time, significant amounts of energy and self-knowledge, but the rewards leaders and organizations will achieve is very well worth the trip.

Napoleon Hill is quoted as saying; *“No man has a chance to enjoy permanent success until he begins to look in a mirror for the real cause of all his mistakes.”* When was the last time you looked into the mirror? Consider the upcoming pages your chance to do so.

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Successfirmations: Think, Reveal, Receive –

The Four Words Framework to Create Unstoppable Power, Influence and Success...

In this opening chapter, I will demonstrate how anyone can create unstoppable power, influence and success to achieve the desired effects required to live out the finest Future Picture known to man! Have you ever stopped to wonder what life would be like if President John Fitzgerald “Jack” Kennedy, the 35th President of the United States, and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. didn’t support and fight for the fair and equal rights for ALL people? What about Thomas Edison and the light bulb, the Wright Brothers’ First in Flight of an airplane or Henry Ford and the automobile?

A computing trailblazer, Grace Hopper, invented one of the first easy-to-use computer languages, which was a big advance in the field of computer programming. Sandra Day O’Connor, as the first woman appointed to the position of U.S. Supreme Court justice, carved a place for women at all levels of the legal profession. Helen Keller was deaf and blind before the age of two. Yet, she accomplished great works that have benefited others tremendously and still impact people’s lives today. And finally, perhaps no American has been written about more than Abraham Lincoln. His rise from obscurity to become one of the great leaders in history is a unique story, and one that continues to fascinate.

Imagine, what if these great achievers had not dreamed their dreams? Did they possess a secret formula for success or were they just that much smarter than every one else? Clearly, life did not offer an easy street for any of those mentioned here. Maybe, they and other of our modern day heroes are just born with certain gifts and abilities that you and I are not. I might be at the beginning of getting myself in trouble by thinking that these extraordinary people necessarily did not have extraordinary talent. Maybe, they simply had an extraordinary belief in themselves. Or, maybe, just maybe they knew the four words that create power to guarantee success. And, they used those words to accomplish what they did. Ponderous isn’t it?

It is my belief that all of these people did know those four words. I believe they used those words each and every day of their lives, and by doing so they became great achievers in our society. Those words were so much a part of their lives that they didn’t even have to think about using them. It was a subconscious and a natural act for them. Perhaps in the beginning these specific people didn’t know to use the magical words, but soon realized their power and began to use them habitually. Ultimately, those words were integrated into their thinking, their purpose for living, their speech and in turn, permeated throughout all that they were striving to achieve.

Are you wondering what those four words are? Do you really want to know?

Okay, but before I tell you ask yourself this question. If I had the four words that would give me unstoppable success and influence to guarantee a healthier and happier way of living, would I use them? With success and influence come power and an uncanny approach to being held to a higher level of accountability and responsibility. When you have it or achieve it for your own use, you have an advantage so you must be deliberate in its use.

Think about where you would use this power to succeed and be more accomplished. Would it be used to benefit only you? Would it be used to help others? What about finding a voice; would it be used to help find your voice? And, what about others, would you use it to help others to be more successful in their lives? Would you help others to understand their own unique contribution to ALL of humanities ills; to identify their passion to succeed in finding their own voice? Maybe you have another priority but, allow me to be certain with you in my following statement to you: The power of those four words is, and can be, the beginning of a truly promising transformation to anyone’s life! They offer a significant potential to change your life. They will change how you see things. You will look at challenges and problems differently and will find yourself no longer being afraid. You will notice the miracle of positive coincidence. What are these words?

Well, allow me to finally tell you. The four words that will develop unstoppable success and influence to create power and guarantee a more successful Future Picture are: “What – Must – I – Do” Wow, that’s all there is? Yep, these are the four words used to create unstoppable power; for any given challenge, problem or situation you have choices and these words are the doorway to realizing the positive and influential outcomes from those choices.

You can either ask “why does this always happen to me,” or you could say, “Why does this have to happen now,” or you could say, “when will somebody (else) do something about this,” or you could say this:

“What – Must – I – Do that will turn this situation around?”

“What – Must – I – Do that will stop this from happening – again?”

“What – Must – I – Do to take action right now?”

“What – Must – I – Do to get me one step closer to my goal?”

A variation of those four words and ones that are equally as powerful are: “How – Can – I...? If you put your head to the task to complete the phrase, you’ll begin to see what I mean. For example, “How – Can – I take action now that will change the status quo?” “How can I...do things differently and get a better result?” “How can I...change my behavior?” Understanding that more is required, this phrase continues the work within the process for overcoming life’s challenges. The “How can I... variations also work to introduce the four victory questions in life to most people: *Why Am I Hurting? What is it about “me” that influences the hurt? How do I prevent re-injury – although I know that it will be revisited? And, how do I change my circumstances, current and future?* Combined as a framework for a healthy transformation, those four words, their variations and the four victory questions in life all work to create “value, size and opportunity!”

Especially now that the economy continues to rebound, smart people have learned to shift their focus to develop ways of eliminating the behaviors and actions that halt progress. These timely four words, their variations and the four victory questions explore new ways to capture emerging opportunities through personal and professional restructuring or retooling. Anyone who decides to use them will realize a rebirthing process with a portfolio of proven leadership and management strategies for driving a greater performance in life that sustains high growth potential, while experiencing uncontested competition.

The framework improves critical thinking, decision-making skills, emotional intelligence, strategic agility, motivation, meaning and purpose. Just about anyone can get results for a short period of time, but it takes a dedicated person who knows how to effectively manage what they’ve learned to realize through outcome-based evidence to unleash their full potential to succeed.

Do you see how different the combining of those four words, their variations and the four victory questions in life offer a different way of living? Nobody has the ability to effect more change over your life than you, so why would any of us ever seek to ask; “when are they going to...” or, “when will he/she...,” or “why can’t someone else...” or, “why can’t this situation be different?” A question with no actionable answer offers an ugly and unforgiving cyclical approach that ultimately leads to failure. The answers will never really solve a problem or give cause for a true call to action. Alternatively, the “what can I do” questions have just the opposite affect and will give rise to action.

Your life is a reflection of your thoughts, your words and dreams: “*You are what you are by the way you think, speak and act.*” The quality of the questions you ask will determine the quality of those thoughts and the quality of life that we all will live. Whatever the challenge or problem that you must face in life, now or in the future, has an answer and you must be able to get closer to that answer just by asking a better set of questions. An answer may not be evident immediately, but one will come. In fact, you already have the answer; you simply need to awaken it with one of those powerful take action questions from within the framework offered earlier. You can start asking better questions today and witness better results as they unfold. Alternatively, you can ask the victim questions; “why this or why that,” and run the risk of never releasing yourself from the hamster wheel of frustration.

Today, I challenge you to begin the practice of asking really good questions. I challenge you to unleash the power of your own words, thoughts and dreams. And, I challenge you to adopt a better framework for thinking, speaking and acting life – and, not just living life – each and every day. I challenge you to get away from your emotional state of being to try a much different approach. Feel free to email me with your results: Dpitts@thebisongroup.com.

It's all about understanding the theoretical underpinning that lies within the framework that develops a positive mental attitude: the ability to learn to look for more and to achieve greater outcomes in life; getting in touch with the instruction in life that offers tough love to identify what your individual drive to succeed is and how it is fueled (internal passion) – and, to engage in a deep conversation, while standing in front of, and staring into "Snow White's Mirror" to ask: *"Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the fairest of them all?"*

Simply put, the framework requires a close intimate session with the person staring back at you while standing in the mirror due to the internal demons that will be exposed if and when the conversation is honest.

This conversation will help to shed away years of pains. Over the years, I had to learn that some of the most successful people in life needed to humble themselves for the critical importance of identifying the specific grade of fuel needed in their tanks as a stimulant to successfully engage one of the most furious emotions of all human emotions; *"Revenge" ... Revenge against Failure* to succeed.

And, it requires an assessment and greater understanding of both values and behaviors to understand what adjustments are required and what actions need fixing. I'll tell you that in finding the adjustments and needed actions for immediate action, those four words, their variations and the four victory questions in life must be put to use in order to create unstoppable power, influence and success to achieve more value, size and opportunity. In closing, I'll leave you with this: *"First learn to lead yourself and then lead others to find their voice...educate leaders who make a difference in the world by becoming one first."*

Successfirmations: Think, Reveal, Receive –

A Good Try is a Misdirected Failure before the Race has Started!



I am excited to have shared the previous chapter, “The Four Words Framework to Create Unstoppable Power, Influence and Success,” with you. I hope the advice provided you with valuable insights into the power of the framework and what you can expect to learn about yourself when using them in your daily activities. It is my belief that when an individual adopts and integrates the four words into everyday use, they are equipped to overcome the Success TRAPS in life to awaken their realized potential for lasting fulfillment. I have great confidence that everyone who decides to do so are able to apply the lessons as they journey forward on a new or redirected path towards extraordinary greatness.

In this chapter, “Successfirmations: Think, Reveal, Receive – A Good Try is a Misdirected Failure before the Race has Started,” you will be introduced to the “Strategic Power of 24” as a discipline used for developing a positive mental attitude that becomes essential in your strategy forward. You will also be challenged to think about a simple rhetorical question about trying. I don’t mean to be overly philosophical with my writing, but Successfirmations is designed to be a vehicle that transforms a “status quo” mindset into one that results dynamic outcomes.

Much is made of the importance of strategy in today’s world. A well-crafted, well-implemented strategy and the best strategic thinkers bear witness to long-term success. Do you believe that you need to be “more strategic” in your role as a leader? Do you falter when it comes to connecting your vision with the demands from your Future Picture (behaviors/actions)? These questions offer significant thought and must be answered to continue your success on your journey.

Successfirmations reveals how you can change every aspect of your life. You can turn any weakness or suffering into strength, power, unlimited abundance, health and joy. Everything is possible, nothing is impossible; all things reveal as extraordinary, while nothing is seen as ordinary. There are no limits. Whatever you can dream, you can have when you apply Successfirmations to your daily walk.

Successfirmations offer a mental attitude that admits into the mind thoughts, words and images that have “connectedness” to personal growth, expansion and success. It is the mental attitude that exerts significant amounts of energy, all moving in the same direction and at the same time, to move “good” to “great,” while finding a voice with favorable results. A positive mind anticipates happiness, joy, health and a successful outcome in every situation and action it encounters. Whatever the mind seeks, it finds and whatever it expects, it receives.

Even so, leaders on all levels often struggle to move strategy beyond setting direction on goals and toward an on-going process of transforming and sustaining oneself. The missing piece is Successfirmations: the enduring success of oneself lies in the mental attitude and work that provides the vision, direction and the context for increasing momentum into the Future Picture. Successfirmations is the driver of positive organizational behaviors that allows people to both thrive on their own generated value and the opportunities that result from that value. A strategic mental attitude involves thinking, planning and acting with insight both strategically and flawlessly. These actions in turn transfer into habitual behaviors that inspire the necessary leadership actions for any given scenario. The transfer helps to remove the emotional aspect from the behaviors when making decisions that are essential. For that reason, Successfirmations is a method that resembles creative visualization and offers the management of life’s process that encourages people to always want to better their best for the future.

Successfirmations is a subject that I believe more people need to discover, think about the benefits of and persuade themselves to try. A positive mental attitude and the power of thought; hence the Strategic Power of 24, is a mighty power that continues to LeaderShape lives today.

This shaping is usually done subconsciously, but it is possible to make the process a conscious one. Even if the idea seems strange give it a try, as you have nothing to lose, but only to gain. Ignore what others might say or think about you, if they discover that you are changing the way you think in becoming a “shifting individual.”

Shifting individuals remove themselves from the status quo and understand the importance of looking at life through a new set of lenses. Therefore, Successfirmations is all about a “shift” that permeates across all life with cause and purpose.

C. S. Lewis is quoted as saying, “the only people who achieve much are those who want knowledge so badly that they seek it while the conditions are still favorable. Favorable conditions never come.” This statement is so right when you think about how people continue to live their lives waiting for the next quick fix, success or gain without putting in the real work to actually receive any of it at all.

With that being said, now would be a perfect time for me to reveal the Strategic Power of 24 that encourages you to think about things from a different perspective. This is the starting point that begins your shift, but be warned; if you miss the underlining meaning in the Strategic Power of 24 (there are no typos), your shift will not begin:

1. Achievement; reaching goals and setting new ones. Master it!
2. Business; the goal is to mine yours well. Innovate!
3. Change; shift happens. Deal with it!
4. Character; doing the work when no one is watching – i did and everyone noticed!
5. Communication; the noise of life keeps getting louder. Until i learned to contribute!
6. Confidence; believing and doing means i can. Having a cocky attitude with an ego means u can’t!
7. Determination; i figured out how to measure mine. Have you?
8. Empowerment; knowing and doing is the right formula. Execute well!
9. Endurance; life is like running a good race. Are u finishing with finesse?
10. Enthusiasm; creativity colliding with excitement... i dared to dream; it worked!
11. Greatness; are you willing to make your best better? Change you!
12. Happiness; nothing better in life is worth having. How much is yours?
13. Importance; they talk to hear their own voices. No one is listening!
14. Knowledge; skills r the pursuit of a competitive nature. i do not compromise for less!
15. Leadership; i believed that i had it right. Until i learned to be better!
16. Mistakes; a fact of life that requires an eraser; i carry a BIG eraser!
17. Opportunity; Journey a rotten tree to see the open field... and potential dynamic of a situation! i did and found it!
18. Psychology; i work to enhance human well-being and performance in my workplace. And say goodbye to those who won’t get onboard!
19. Sacrifice; life is about pain, sweat and tears. Laugh a little!
20. Self-empowerment; my collective effort of self-leadership. It wins my future whenever i put it to work!
21. Success; is ur’s headed in the wrong direction? U-turn!
22. Trust; friends r friends when all is well. Mybff is me!
23. Winning; i stopped my mediocrity. Have you?
24. Wisdom; a lack of it is like tying together the legs of a thoroughbred; i cannot gallop!

The Strategic Power of 24 illustrates the term “misdirection” in a way that most people never consider for themselves. Let’s for a moment attempt to conduct a short experiment; in the next minute, I want you to stop reading and try to turn away from this article for a minute. Remember to note your place. After you’ve done so, close your eyes and count to ten (10) before picking up where you left off. Then, continue from where you let off. Ready, set, go! Now, try to turn away again. Come on, give it a good try. Did you actually turn away from the article? If you did, you didn’t try; you actually turned away. If you didn’t turn away, it’s because you didn’t try.

Confused? You shouldn’t be, but if you’re a person like me, you needed to read the “if you did/didn’t” twice to ensure that you read it correctly. Confusion is only a short misdirection until an explanation follows. Take yourself back to The Empire Strikes Back movie and the words of Yoda: “Do. Or do not. There is no try.” Here’s the point to all of this; Yoda was right!

There is no “try in life.” You either do something or you don’t. The word “try” is a misnomer that falls too close to the term “I can’t” and the two are for the undisciplined and unwilling. “Try and I can’t” are for the people who complain when life gets tough or doesn’t go as expected. At best, they communicate an intention, NOT a commitment. With this point in mind, consider the following statements for yourself:

"I'll try to be on time today."

"I'll try to get back to you later today."

"I'll try to make a decision on that, but if I can't, I'll let you know."

"I'll try to drop it off for you, but I can't promise that it will happen by 3:00."

Are you getting my point yet? You either say it will happen and you "do" or you say that it will not happen and you "don't." There is no in-between. There are no gray areas, only black and white; only yes and no without the maybe. What do you think would happen in your life if you were to extend the "try" concepts to other areas of your life?

"I'll try to stop at the red traffic light."

"I'll try to do better in school."

"I'll try to love my children."

"I'll try to get another job."

"I'll try to look both ways before crossing the street."

When the outcome is important to us, isn't it funny how the word "try" seems to be left out of the equation? Don't try – make a commitment and get it done! Try, as simple of a word as it is, presents a success trap or misdirection in your life – a dangerous event that results disastrous outcomes. Try is only for those people who are good; the great commit, execute and win! The next time you're about to say that you'll "try" to do something, reconsider your approach – for it is the beginning of a jaw dropping failure headed in your direction.

If your expected outcome is important to you, do not try; MAKE THE COMMITMENT and EXECUTE! And, when you do, make sure that your execution is both flawless and strategic to influence your Future Picture. If the activity is not important, then why even try in the first place?

I encourage you to take advantage of the lessons that lie within Successfirmations: the Four Words Framework, the Strategic Power of 24 and a Good Try! Understanding fully the connectedness throughout will allow you to continue to strive to apply the Successfirmations principles to become a shifting individual. In fact, think of a problem you have right now and imagine the discovered opportunities that can be realized if only you were to apply a new set of "adaptive behaviors" – **the Four Words Framework, the Strategic Power of 24 and a Good Try** – to deliver the results you didn't think possible.

This is an exciting prospect for new self discovery, fulfillment and peace to your life! And, remember this; overcoming success traps is all about discovering and learning to use your newly found "adaptive behaviors" to experience real change in your life.

Thank you for being a good student to this point. I hope you are persuaded to join, if not yet a member, our C# Corner Leadership Community. I admire your commitment to leading principle-centered, purpose-driven lives, and I encourage you to help others on their journey. I look forward to instructing you in the next chapter, **"The War Room – When Innovation Intersects Strategy."**

Feel free to contact me directly via email at Dpitts@thebisongroup.com if you would like to have the **Strategic Power of 24** from Successfirmations sent to you in banner format. They are also available as leadership t-shirts and desk cards to ensure you are using them on a daily basis. The **Strategic Power of 24** helps you to become a strategic leadership thinker on a daily basis! In today's dynamic, global environment, there is an absolute need for leaders of all types to become and remain strategic thinkers.

I wish you all of life's greatest blessings as you continue on your path of this exciting part of your journey in life. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of it.

Successfirmations: Think, Reveal, Receive –

Learn the “War Room” to remain Competitive in today’s Marketplace – Innovation Intersects Strategy



In this chapter, I will outline how innovation intersects with strategy when leaders learn to think out-of-the-box to help their team, organization and self remain competitive and stay ahead of the curve. This is the first in a series that will outline how great teams get better, and how leaders can do the same by looking into Snow White’s mirror to ask a simple, yet complex question: “Am I willing to better my best?”

To begin and now that we got the “Strategic Power of 24” out of the way in the last article, we must examine **four questions** that all leaders must be prepared to answer, even if by asking them, the outcome could possibly get them into hot water: “Are you a leader of change? If so, are you influencing others to your point of view helping them to rethink and reinvent the organization’s strategy forward as circumstances and economics rapidly change? What are the decision makers in your organization currently doing to connect the organization’s strategy with its approach to achieve a successful Future Picture? And finally, are you the leader that should be asking these questions in the first place?”

These are some of the questions that I offer to leaders of change when I have the opportunity to help transition change in the right direction. When asking these questions, most of the time the individual or groups (for the purpose of this chapter, I will not refer to them as teams yet; teams receive its own unpacking in the next chapter) I am speaking to respond by saying an all too common statement; “I hardly ever think of it this way, I just go ahead with the punches!”

I have learned that there are three ways people and organizations react to a crisis. One way is to turn your head to ignore the situation and hope that it will fix itself (best of luck!). Another way is to run around in a panic-induced cost-cutting frenzy that could seriously impair the organization’s long-term growth potential and future state. The third and, of course, smartest method is to recognize the impending threat to both your top and bottom line, and quickly adapt the strategic outlook and business model to the new environmental conditions. If you are experiencing some issues that allow some of these thoughts to pop into your mind during the course of the day, here’s some advice to help you to win the battlefield of transition.

I have continued to state enthusiastically over the last few years that, in a world where the pace of change has gone hypercritical, today’s most important race is the race for transformative thought, strategic leadership and organizational renewal. It is the race to change as fast as the environment is changing around you; the race to influence positive organizational behaviors and the race to reinvent your strategy and your business model before they become obsolete. When the economy is in a state in flux, most organizations tend to postpone their professional development efforts and favor cost cutting as the strategy that will preserve the future. In my opinion, this is a grave mistake that will affect the future of the organization in ways that will likely kill the very spirit the leadership teams are hoping to preserve.

Their efforts during the challenging times will only prolong the inevitable; ultimate demise once the current crisis is diminished. The lesson here is this; a successful model (business or personal) will break almost overnight when the waves of the ocean start crashing against the pillars of the pier if leadership does not remain on a continuous, yet discontinuous approach to train the organization’s greatest asset – the people.

So with that being said, allow me to address my opening question that leaders must ask before I unpack the strategy of the war room. I believe that every success begins with people. People are the driving force behind the management of any process that stimulates success. People must be responsible to their own accountabilities in order to effectively lead themselves and others, influence change to process and for doing the work that is both strategic and flawless to affect the Future Picture.

When individuals stand in the mirror and ask “am I willing to better my best,” they need to understand how to unearth the formula for success by also asking; “do I understand what the formula for success looks like? And, what does it take to achieve greater success in my life?”

The Formula for Success

Countless numbers of books and articles have been written on the subject and there are even more answers. The answers, one might think, depend on how you define, redefine or measure success as it relates to your life. This, by no means suggests that you should look at success through a selfish set of lenses, but regardless of your definition or yardstick, achieving success in business or in life requires a specific set of core elements and essentials.

The first element to tackle is honesty by having the confidence to deal with the truthful brutality of Snow White's mirror. You see, Snow White's mirror is honest and like the mirror, not until you can be honest with yourself – brutally truthful – are you able to be the same with other people, about what you truly want and what holds real meaning for you. This is essential and if you're not focusing your efforts on a greater good that is consistent with your core values and beliefs, you're most likely not putting forth your maximum effort.

The next element is to call on your own sense of courage to answer the four victory questions in life (regardless where you are in your perceived level of success): 1) why am I hurting? 2) What is it about "me" that influences the hurt? 3) How do I prevent re-injury – although I know that it will be revisited? 4) And, how do I change my circumstances, current and future? It not only takes courage to be honest with yourself when answering the four victory questions, and when you decide to deeply examine what is valued in order to get what you are working to achieve. But, once you decide and set meaningful goals, it takes courage to actually do the required work the answers reveal.

At times you will find yourself navigating uncharted waters and it will take courage to overcome your fears to continue making progress. The courage needed to achieve this element is both emotional and physical; in most cases, it requires a decision to undergo an attitude adjustment that for most people is long overdue.

The third element delivers a triple punch; Enthusiasm, Self-control and Focus (Concentration). Enthusiasm enables you to "engulf" everyone with your interest and your ideas for success. It not only keeps your momentum moving in the right direction, but it keeps you looking a few steps ahead in the chess game of life to achieve your next accomplishment. Enthusiasm is the foundation of a pleasing personality: the hinge that you must bust wide open with your efforts, and when done with intelligence, it enables you to remove the many obstacles from your path. Possessing a pleasing personality is as important to you as the blood running through your veins when it comes to your growth as a leader. A pleasing personality also allows you to influence others to cooperate with you.

Then there's self-control, the balance wheel that controls your emotions when enthusiasm is high and you are filled with excitement – directing it where you wish for it to be led. Self-control is all about discipline and without discipline; enthusiasm can run as wild horses out of control. Afterward, there's focus and concentration. These two characteristics make-up a significant part of the element and focuses your attention upon one subject or issue at a time until you have worked out practical plans for mastering that subject and winning over the issue.

Concentration will teach you how to ally yourself with others in such a manner that you may have the use of their entire knowledge repository to back you up in your own plans and purposes. Combined, the three attributes make-up the third element, which offers an awesome combination and the connectedness that anyone can use to win their formula for success.

The fourth element also delivers a powerful combination; Persistence, Tolerance and the Paradigm of Influence. Success comes to those who are persistent, yet tolerant in their efforts. The line between success and its opposition is a very fine one. Often, it is when the roadblocks appear the biggest and the prospect of success seems the most distant that you are about to step across that line.

This is when tolerance, as a dominating attribute, must take center court. Tolerance teaches us how to avoid the disastrous effects of failure and prejudice, which can translate into the prospect of defeat for most people. A lack of tolerance means the beginning of "entanglement and foolishness," thereby poisoning the mind and closing the door on opportunity for further reasoning and investigation. We learned in the last article the importance of a positive mental attitude. Achieving this positivity of the mind combats entanglement and foolishness.

One should think about persistence and tolerance as a significant set of principles for accurate thought to determine situational awareness. No one can achieve integrity for establishing accurate perception to his/her understanding for situational awareness without practicing tolerance before persistence.

Intolerance destroys opportunity, collaborative relationships and positive influence of the mind that too causes doubt, mistrust and further prejudices. Then there's the Paradigm of Influence; hence my developing the shift that begins with Successfirmations: Think, Reveal, Receive! Success comes to those who think it, reveal its purpose and receive it. It also comes to the individuals who persevere and, rather than throw their hands in the air in the face of chaos or roadblocks and barriers, they understand the need to use the paradigm with a clear reasoning of its dynamic power. It helps them with exerting more effort, with a little more patience, and an uncanny ability to endure the hardships of fatigue to keep momentum moving forward.

The Paradigm of Influence offers an illustrative tool used to explain the strategies identified to achieve high levels of success on the personal level – that will also translate into the professional levels in your life. This paradigm is for individuals, organizations and teams and explains how ordinary is the evil undoing to extraordinary and how moving throughout life using “who you are” versus “who you should be” is no longer merely an option; survival requires much more – and persistence and tolerance is at the top of the food chain. But, to thrive, excel and lead into the future, people must be willing to move beyond extraordinary, which includes fulfillment, strategic and flawless execution, and significant contributions made to become exceptional. Gaining access to the elite club that permeates success through life and stimulates individual growth to a higher level of human genius and motivation requires a new reality, a new mindset, a new skill-set and new habits. This is what the paradigm is all about; causing a shift in life to recharge progress.

This paradigm shift becomes apparent when the individual finds the significance and purpose within their own voice to be courageous in taking a stand in life, and inspire others to do the same, using the entire fourth element to initiate the shift itself.

Using the Paradigm of Influence, people begin to truly understand the very nature of their inner person and voice – one who inspires the will to transform the way they think about “self,” the purpose of their life, the strategy forward for the communities they are a member, and inspiring the people within their sphere of influence to transform as well. It boils down to the bare bones for the individual to make the best decisions to determine “needs” over “wants” to achieve highly successful outcomes. When the fault lines are moved to cause the shift in your life, you will experience a new awakening, or rebirth of sort to become a “Lighthouse” to carry the light for others; a “Quarterback” to communicate more effectively; and gain an unending supply of “Energy” to identify your passions, strengths and weaknesses, while learning to use them to your advantage.

The fifth and final element is one that teaches the value of teamwork in all you do; “cooperation.” This element instructs on the value of coordinating your own efforts with others by putting aside friction, jealousy, strife, envy and greed. Cooperation helps us to make use of the great universal law of human conduct in such a manner that anyone can easily get harmonious cooperation from any individual or group of individuals. Cooperation simply stipulates; “do unto others as you would want them to do unto you.”

When you are successful in cooperating with others, you will be well on your way to living your Five “Ps” in life as seen in the Paradigm of Influence above: Leaders must learn to reach beyond effectiveness toward fulfillment to thrive, innovate, excel and lead in a new reality, a new mindset, a new skill-set and a new habit. My Five “Ps” are designed to help and allow you, as a leader, to understand that:

1. There must be something to “Prevent” – the Flee.
2. There must be something to “Pursue” – the Chase.
3. There must be something to “Portray” – the Model.
4. There must be something to “Perceive” – the Read.
5. And, there has to always be something to “Pronounce” – the Hold.

So what's the formula for success? I wish that I could tell you that it's a simple one, but in reality, it really is not. But I can tell you this; if individuals are willing to stand in front of Snow White's mirror to ask the eluding question for most: "am I willing to better my best?" – while undergoing the brutality of honesty, he/she will be well on their way of learning the formula of success! I am going to cheat and lay it out for you anyway, but be warned; to achieve it to become a better you for "you," the five elements outlined here must be accomplished.

Here's the formula and because life is a never ending school of learning, the formula ends with yet another question that everyone seeking to learn the formula must also answer:

Success = Honesty + Courage + Enthusiasm, Self-control and Focus + Persistence, Tolerance and the Paradigm of Influence + Cooperation x "YOU! Are you ready to redefine your success?"

Remaining Competitive in Today's Marketplace – Innovation Intersects Strategy

As I decide to address the outlined four questions that all leaders must be prepared to answer, even if by asking them, the outcome could possibly get them into hot water, I must prepare you to get ready for a bumpy ride. Do you remember the questions: "Are you a leader of change? If so, are you influencing others to your point of view helping them to rethink and reinvent the organization's strategy forward as circumstances and economics rapidly change? What are the decision makers in your organization currently doing to connect the organization's strategy with its approach to achieve a successful Future Picture? And finally, are you the leader that should be asking these questions in the first place?"

Answering these questions require you to learn the secrets of military Special Forces, specifically the United States Marine Corps. This is where military stratagem meets the civilian sector and lends "lessons learned" for peak performance.



The post 9/11 world has brought the United States Military Special Operations community into the limelight as never before. For many observers, there is something inspiring and even mysterious about these highly trained teams of individuals who are motivated to achieve their mission at any cost. In business and even more so, in life, we talk about being willing to "walk through walls" to achieve our goals, but in the case of special operations teams, these people actually do things like that.

So what's the secret? What's so special about special operations? Can business professionals and civilian leaders alike learn something from them besides the obvious truisms about the importance of focus, discipline, strategy and flawless execution? In fact, the effectiveness of special operations forces is rooted in a carefully designed and comprehensive system of recruiting, training and support, transformative thought and strategic leadership, positive organizational behaviors and culture, and building a greater Future Picture (understanding how the future will look prior to arriving in it, but doing the work ahead of time so that you are not surprised on arrival, yet equipped to make it better).

Can private-sector organizations emulate these techniques in the same consistent and integrated manner? What about people who care about the communities they live in or the organizations they are a part? The answer is YES they can; and although we must acknowledge the significant differences between the private sector and the military, the rigors in military training must apply to the private sector if people are to achieve significant growth in their lives. For example, in the military you make a long-term commitment (often four or six years in special operations) and cannot just quit because you find a better job. You have a legal and moral requirement to follow the orders of your superior officers. Service members are also, explicitly or implicitly, willing to remain on a continuum for learning how to become better leaders and specialist at their craft. There can be great power in taking responsibility in such a case when people make a decision to cause significant change in their life.

For a moment, let's set these differences aside and look at what we can learn from the key elements, concepts, metaphors, idioms and sharing of knowledge as we move forward in this article in learning the secrets of military Special Forces.

As you'll see, in fact, many special operations practices can be and have been adapted to the private and business sector, and now they are available to you through Successfirmations. There are a few practices that I'd like to point out that each of you must be willing to adopt for yourselves:

Deliberate Practice. This characteristic in the training is one that embodies the concept of repetition. Deliberate practice entails isolating the specific elements of performance that will enable you to excel at an activity, repeating them over and over again, and getting objective feedback.

A great deal of research supports the notion that intensive, deliberate practice – and not innate talent – is the secret of exceptional performance. A U.S. Marine Corps Special Forces weapons specialist, for example, must master nearly 50 different weapons systems during 65 days of intensive training.

Realism. U.S. Marine Corps Special Forces training is characterized by extreme realism. Throughout a training mock-up to prepare for a mission, individuals might be made to stay awake for two or three nights in and subjected to lifelike explosions and bullet fire. A final exercise to earn the title and a slot on a U.S. Marine Corps Special Forces RECON team lasts for a tough and punishing few weeks that requires a taxing amount of energy and an enormous will to complete.

In the same manner, I use my classrooms at Temple University and my articles shared with you to offer advice and instruction that is filled with the rigors of knowledge to prepare each individual to approach life's battles using a different set of lenses and a much qualified mindset to win on the battlefield. My approach in the lessons offer an "in your face" perspective that achieves a significant "discovery of self;" allows each individual a chance to fully understand how-to "locate where they are, who they are and where they wish to be – now and in the future."

The lessons allow for growth by examining "evidence-based outcomes" to understand progress; established "SMART Goals" for the Future Picture – and how-to actually achieve them; and finally, reestablishes a "true commitment, sense of accountability and responsibility" for the actions and behaviors when dealing with the storms in life. It doesn't get more real than this!

Constant Feedback. A key feature of U.S. Marine Corps Special Forces training is constant and relentless feedback about performance. Nearly every exercise, from tying knots while holding your breath underwater to building a camouflaged shelter, is graded by experienced instructors, and most exercises have an "after action" review that bluntly analyzes what went well and what could have been improved.

At regular intervals, instructors rank the people within their training units according to performance, and often ask each team member to rank everyone in the unit. They might very well confront a trainee and ask, "why do you think your team members ranked you dead last?" The classrooms, the articles and the carefully articulated instruction elicits feedback and team members are established to help other team members with the lessons throughout what I am calling, "the program." Even the online articles are viewed by me as a part of the program; one that requires deliberate practice by you.

Staying Together; "One Heartbeat, One Pulse." Business organizations talk endlessly about the importance of teamwork, but in special operations, teamwork is truly rooted in the culture. Training instructors take a black-and-white approach: If the team does well, everyone is rewarded; if a single individual commits an infraction, the entire team must be disciplined.

During qualification programs, many activities are designed to promote teamwork; these might include carrying large tree logs together or doing "buddy breathing" underwater, in which individuals must share a single oxygen source. The tree log-carrying exercise, where a team of 10 or 12 trainees must carry around a 1,000-pound tree log for several hours each day, including to and from meals, looks like pure punishment, but as reality sets in, it is actually a powerful team-building activity.

Here's how I remember one of our colleagues describe the training: "If you are not all perfectly in step as you walk, the log starts to sway from side to side and go out of control. You master the log together, as a team, or you just fall apart." This same concept must be applied throughout all teams including this program where you can look to me as the instructor and you as the willing participant.

We must work together as a single team to accomplish goals and disciplines that derive from our collaboration. So, while reading the articles, should you have any questions, it is your responsibility to ask by responding and it is mine to reply. In doing so, success and peak performance will follow. The secret of U.S. Marine Corps Special Forces training is, in essence, the strategic development of human capital and this means you! If anyone seeks to leverage these lessons, they must commit to longer-term investments in self discovery.

The high-performance system that the U.S. Marine Corps Special Forces community represents thrives because of a multiyear investment strategy by military commanders and their civilian overseers; it would surely flounder if it were subject to the start/stop/start approach, hazy measures and lack of accountability characteristic of most individuals once they have completed a learning initiative. Learn to adopt these principles of elite Special Forces: remaining committed to deliberate practice, realism, receiving constant feedback and staying together – “one heartbeat, one pulse.” Integrating these principles into your style of leadership and into the organizations and teams you are a part, not much is able to stop you.

The War Room

Now its time to address the original premise of the chapter, the “War Room” – Innovation Intersects Strategy. Having a specific place to devise individual and organizational strategy to make sure your company not only keeps its edge over its competitors, but also seizes new opportunities requires a War Room. This is a designated space where leaders learn to think out-of-the-box to help their team, organization and self remain competitive and stay ahead of the curve.

My colleagues and I have spent years arguing that leaders like you need mental and cognitive agility that we refer to as “strategic sensitivity.” Strategic sensitivity means that you as a leader must be open to the world, critically alert and make sense of developing situations and scenarios as they occur. In light of the significant changes in the world over the past five years, I believe gone are the days where organizations could “do” strategy as an episodic planning exercise.

Once the exercise is completed, they then go into implementing strategic initiatives developed from the exercise for a period of time, only this behavioral style last in short burst. It’s only a matter of time before they have to think about “what to do next?” Or better yet, “how to deal with an impending crisis that calls the strategy into question.”

With this definition, strategic sensitivity is influenced by a leader’s ability to make wise decision. The decisions must be based on their constant alertness, situational awareness (what’s going on around them) and their ability to stay agile in their decision making for the situation. These decisions are then translated in “strategic renewal” for the organization, but only when the leader’s decisions and resources are able to be redeployed in an efficient manner. Strategic renewal as a derivative of strategic sensitivity encompasses the ability to invest, divest, to build businesses, provide infrastructure, to have new businesses up and running in a few days and also be able, if it doesn’t work, to withdraw at limited cost and do something else.

Strategic renewal allows organizations to undergo change and enhance their productivity. Changes can be effected in several areas of the organization including culture, strategy, mission, teams and structure. It is a framework that defines the role, responsibilities, and performance of human capital across the organization and the planning for it must only take place in the organizations “War Room.”

To explain the War Room concept, leadership appoints a specific room that will be specified as the location where the organization’s strategy is planned. This location must remain under lock and key to ensure the organization’s intellectual capital offers an uncompromised agenda to influence positive outcomes. Strategic renewal is the resulting effect that is birthed from the War Room. This is only possible when those appointed to the War Room each understands the importance of strategic sensitivity and establishing the organization’s “Memorandum of Understanding” – the principles to achieve professional mastery.

Establishing Principles for Strategic Sensitivity

There's a third quintessential dimension to remaining agile as a leader using strategic sensitivity: leadership unity or the collective commitments needed for leaders and senior management teams to make courageous collective decisions, and to work together to get things done, rather than be pulled apart by the constant tensions of decentralization and delegation of business units (or functions) on the one hand, and the search for unity of the organization on the other. This dimension is, to me, the most critical aspect of strategic sensitivity: the notion of leadership unity and its critical importance, and how organizations must pay deep attention to the mechanisms that sustain leadership unity. Leadership unity translates into strategic integration and this drives organizational value.

It's a very simple process to understand. The United States Marine Corps is successful day in and day out because the culture, strategy, mission, teams, structure and most of all, people work to protect leadership unity. The integration of strategic sensitivity, agility and strategic renewal are essential to the organization's success. Likewise, if organizations are able to successfully thrive on integration, they will also exhibit these great behaviors, working as a team to achieve the desired results.

Strategic Sensitivity does not just look at the political and organizational aspects of a leader's ability to develop dynamic teams and people within their influence of trust, but also explores how leaders use a specific "code" to energize teams. This code, the "Memorandum of Understanding," helps leaders to remove the emotional dimension from the commitment aspect. Nothing must get in the way of everyone remaining on mission for the good of the organization. Using this code, leaders keep a collective responsibility and commitment for further developing the organization, avoiding any traps of success.

Simply stated, the code offers a clear framework for employing battle-tested Marine Corps tactics and leadership principles in your business and it's really amazing how widely our findings can be applied, and how applicable they are across a multi-disciplined industry segment. Not only is the speed of change increasing, but the nature of the change is also becoming more complex, more systemic and less predictable. For this reason alone, leaders and organizations both need to think about adopting and integrating strategic sensitivity and the accompanying code that comes with it.

Memorandum of Understanding – the Code

You now have before you what needs to happen when a War Room is established for the organization. The Memorandum of Understanding, as the leader's code to first establish and then to follow, offers the opportunity to take the steps that achieve a high level of mastery that guarantees organizational growth. It is completely unpacked in my publication, *Success TRAPS: Awaken your Realized Potential for Lasting Fulfillment* (2009, www.amazon.com). The adoption of this code, as a living, breathing organism to each level of the organization helps people build awareness, use their experiences to implement a new approach to department and develop a strategy, which includes resolve and ethical conduct. This is the task that lies before them.

It sounds like the normal work that we all know and do so well. But be cautioned, it is not! When individuals do not combine the code with rules and regulations, reporting and accountability to force conformity to standards, they will fail. Achieving mastery is a continuous pursuit of ethical behavior that ultimately manifests into a quest of improving the human spirit; to pursue good, to do the right thing in the workplace. The code says that whoever should adopt it into his/her life, will possess a level of courage to execute the necessary task that drives performance to exemplify the highest level of personal and professional conviction.

Why establish a code to live by? The answer is simple; establishing a code or set of principles ensures a level of conduct (code of conduct) that extends the life cycle of the organization. This code of conduct is what I have been referencing – the "Memorandum of Understanding."

As a code of conduct, it compounds strategic sensitivity and provides the needed resource to assist leaders in their personal development, growth, guidance, and assessment in the organizational leadership body. The code establishes a strict perspective for instructing successful practices, theories, and beliefs that drive people to achieve a successful future (how you intend to conduct yourself into the future for others to emulate).

The Memorandum of Understanding (in its abbreviated form here) is also designed to help the leaders responsible for making decisions for the organization to learn broadly, to inspire the service out of generosity for others, and to prepare them to lead systems courageously into the future. The Memorandum of Understanding encourages a perspective to become firmly grounded in the potential for successful growth using the following constructs:

- § The Cardinal Rules
- § The Guiding Precepts
- § The Forms of Disposition
- § The General Orders
- § The Strategy Forward – Establishing Professional Mastery
- § The Centers of Gravity

The Cardinal Rules. The Cardinal Rules offer a set of guidelines that are invaluable for people and organizations to follow while planning and executing at the strategic or tactical level. These rules, once established by leaders and teams are the rules that govern forward movement and must not change.

The Guiding Precepts. The Guiding Precepts are designed to inform people what they should and should not be doing in accordance with executing a well designed strategy to win. They also inform of the reasons “why” an action must occur and the repercussions should the individual and/or organization fail at meeting such a task.

The Forms of Disposition. The Forms of Disposition offer a profound illustration and a substantive transformation in “thought” about how people achieve a perspective on things in life. It refers to an orchestrated, systemic and revolutionary new world-view resulting in a “change” of societies, cultures, and marketplaces due to behavioral perspective. In today’s language, this is often called “systems theory,” which sees a web of relationships coalescing to become something greater than the parts. Individuals must be able to look at things from a perspective that they are always changing and evolving into new forms – thinking “out-of-the-box!” We are doomed to a slow death unless radical change occurs in the way we think. Change your way of thinking or die a slow death.

The General Orders. The General Orders are broad, community-wide “need statements,” designed to encompass a variety of related issues in a person’s life or within the life cycle of an organization. These related issues are referred to as “Guiding Objectives,” are specific items that need to be addressed. The Guiding Strategies (developed to fit current and future circumstance) are the methods identified for addressing the Guiding Objectives, and the Guiding Policies are the specific action steps that are recommended to implement the Guiding Strategies. The General Orders, eleven of them, offer the ability to explore implications in an open and reflective manner and reinforce each other in providing a coherency and wholeness often lacking in life cycles.

The Strategy Forward – Establishing Professional Mastery. Traditional values are the foundation of the modern day; that was yesterday. Tomorrow, you have an opportunity to create commitment and the needed momentum to establish, publish, share, and teach a different set of life’s code, values, and ethics to journey into the future. After much hard work, you must be prepared to develop a strategy to move forward and plan the next steps to target critical successes for winning the Future Picture. What a legacy you will leave when executed with personal and professional bearing for others to follow. This is the way of the future. This is a new chapter!

The Centers of Gravity. Just as time changes, so does the internal and external influence in your life and in the life cycle of an organization. The Centers of Gravity are the dynamics within a process that offer the greatest impact on the overall system when change happens. They offer a high level of “value” and return on your energy “investment.” When combined with the concept of parallel deposits (creating energy from various perspectives in a short period of time), the Centers of Gravity make possible the seemingly impossible task of realizing success in changing paradigms. The Centers of Gravity place significant influence on the five established epicenters of any changing system to receive desired effects: Leadership, Processes, Infrastructure, Population, and Action Units.

In summary, I see the Memorandum of Understanding (once established for the organization) as an opportunity to free up the actions of people as servants, and instead, develop them as encouraged opportunists. It is empowering, it is enabling and it grounds people in a public way on the fundamentals that they all must share to benefit the organization.

There is no ethical malaise. It is important to realize that the new is not a finding from what has been lost. Rather, it is like the journey of the Scarecrow in the story of the Wizard of Oz in search of a brain (brain power in this context), the Tin Woodsman in search of a heart, and the Cowardly Lion in search of courage. People's value system is intact and in most cases, has been throughout their journey of personal growth.

The Memorandum of Understanding simply articulates and reaffirms the core value and behavioral perspective that already underlie their personal and professional appearance and conduct to achieve significant growth. And, all of this is stimulated from the affects of the War Room; hence, the influences that leads to significant strategic renewal in the end.

The Memorandum of Understanding is also designed to help an organization answer four fundamental questions in order to develop and execute an effective plan for a strategy forward. These questions are:

- § Where does the organization want to be in the future?
- § What will the organization apply its resources against to achieve the Future Picture?
- § How will the organization apply those resources?
- § When and under what conditions will the organization exit from their current strategic plan?

It's the act of dynamically adjusting business models and strategies to the deep changes at work in the external environment. Above all else, this requires innovation and the Memorandum of Understanding definitely offers an innovative perspective to most organizations.

In a 2003 article in Harvard Business Review entitled "The Quest for Resilience," Gary Hamel wrote, "Strategic renewal is creative reconstruction." It's all about dissecting the traditional business model and examining it for imaginative ways to reconstruct it to create significant intellectual and emotional thought space for value creation to positively influence the internal and external customers of the organization. This becomes all the more urgent in challenging times, when customer needs and market conditions swiftly and dramatically change.

As in the case of the New Covenant Church of Philadelphia organization, where the senior pastor and Chief Executive Officer, set aside a specific room on the same floor of the building as his office for directing the organization's strategic renewal efforts. The organization's new "War Room" had the same critical importance as Winston Churchill's cabinet War Room in London, used to direct military strategy during World War II.

New Covenant's War Room was a simple, but highly effective device that guided the organization's appointed leadership team to focus on establishing the strategy forward to reinvent the business model and find bold, new growth opportunities. And, its impact on the organization's strategies – and, ultimately, its performance – is still being felt today. The organization continues to be one of the most progressive thinking faith-based organizations in the region.

The reason; the CEO fully understood that the time to input strategic sensitivity and an actual War Room to boost the organization's human capital was best suited for the time when most organizations were calling on "cost cutting" as its strategy in the face of adverse conditions.

Very few organizations, for-profit and not-for-profit, can claim to have a specific War Room somewhere on location. But, what every organization can and should do – right now! – is organize a serious, high-level strategy forum (at least call it the "Innovation Room" where innovation intersects strategy) to begin exercising transformative thinking to rethink their business from its customer base backward.

One of the fundamental questions the leadership team must ask is this: “how do we get the people to buy-into the organization’s new perspective of transformational thinking to experience upward movement in a market where people no longer have financial resources?” And, in a nutshell, it is my perspective that in answering the question, these people should take a look at the slogan of Royal Bank of Scotland: “Less Talk!” “Start engaging the necessary requirements to strategically execute flawlessly to influence the organizations Future Picture.” Innovation powers us out of everything and must be taken seriously as a strategy that wins.

The absolute worst thing any organization can do during the greatest of challenging times is to assume they can go on with “business as usual – and to go along with the status quo.” Instead, they must conduct themselves as great leaders do and get busy working to understand how organizational clients’ (internal and external) priorities may have changed and quickly realign the organizational business model to address their new needs.

Reading through a past edition of the Wall Street Journal, most of the advertisements (for luxury watches, exorbitant real estate, and fabulous vacation resorts) looked embarrassingly inappropriate in view of the ongoing national economic crisis that the United States of America has been facing in the past few years and the next years to come.

One ad, from NOKIA, stood out in contrast. The headline: “Can anyone provide cost cutting solutions that work now? My answer is YES. Now, there’s an organization that seems to get it. But wait a minute. Didn’t that headline sound more like President Barack Obama when campaigning for office to become the first African American president? NOKIA seems to have understood the lesson from election between President Elect Barack Obama and Senator John McCain: Whether you’re overcoming organizational politics or training people to remain on top in their careers, the winners will be those who recognize that the game has changed, and the “same old stuff” just does not cut it any longer.

The world’s processes have changed in ways that the world looks much different than it did a few years ago (unemployment was up 47% from 2007 – 2008, home ownership was down 26% and the statistics continued to get grim). The way to make effective decisions require innovative thought and those who miss the opportunity to change will be left behind. The lessons that I get from this and would like to share with you is this; “If people seek to achieve what they have never had, they MUST be prepared to do what they have never done.”

As a U.S. Marine turned business professional, responsible for leading a dynamic team of specialist into the lion’s belly when the team engages a client who is seeking to overcome business and process challenges, innovation takes precedent as our strategic starting point. Without the War Room component added to the mix, there’s no need to start working towards strategic renewal because without it, the potential for failure rises incredibly.

As we establish these critical strategy rooms, we teach organizations to unpack their business model into five Centers of Gravity: Leadership, Infrastructure, Processes, Populations and Action Units. These five are used to influence positive organizational behavior from the leadership who is responsible for making the decisions to drive momentum: who they serve, what service they provide how they provide it, how they generate revenue and how they differentiate and sustain a strategic advantage.

Then we demonstrate how these Centers of Gravity are used to radically rethink each component using the “Six Lenses of Innovation:” a cutting-edge military-style methodology known as the “Battleplan for Preemptive Strike.” This methodology is the crux of the War Room. When leaders get to the point of integrating the Six Lenses of Innovation, the organization is well on its way to achieving successful outcomes within its own Future Picture.

The Six Lenses of Innovation is used by leaders to:

1. **Establish Achievable Aims**; challenge deeply-held tenets about who their customers are, how they interact with them, how they define their products or services, how they configure the value chain, and so on.
2. **Identify Means**; harness emergent trends and discontinuities to substantially change the way things are done in their industry.
3. **Ensure Intelligence**; leverage core competencies and strategic assets in novel ways to generate new growth.
4. **Enforce Security**; understand and address deep customer needs that are currently going unmet.
5. **Engage the Strike**; a deliberate Battleplan used by a strategic and numerically inferior power to head off a situation in which ultimate defeat would be inevitable.
6. **Flawlessly Execute the Exit Strategy**; just as everything has a beginning, all things have an end. Leaders are instructed how-to establish exit points using 32 solution-centric precepts to face fierce challenges in short time frames using the process.

We believe that as organizations begin to reshape their cultures; it's not hard to recognize how the principles found within the Battleplan for Preemptive Strike apply to the burning issues organizations are facing today in the marketplace. Isn't it time you subjected your own business model to some "creative reconstruction," aimed at making it better suited to today's shifting customer needs and new economic realities?

The Disciplines of Greatness: A Positive Attitude, the Formula of Success, Risks and the Battleplan for Preemptive Strike – My Close to You!

A positive attitude; it is critically important that you achieve a winning and open minded positive attitude about yourself and those influenced by your behaviors, personality, and the words you speak if you and the organization you have leadership responsibilities has a chance to remain competitive in today's marketplace. And I hope that in doing so, you are using innovative ways to intersect strategy with your leadership. The War Room offers a significant amount of power, but leaders need to be aware that "power" is not "conformity;" they must be discrete with the decisions to behave responsibly to become great.

This does not by any means suggest that leaders must become conformists! All ambitious people in history had to take their share of hard knocks. If you are trying to go along with the flow within popular culture, you will be looked upon as just another "Joe." So, you might as well be the trail-blazer prepared to blaze new trails for others to follow – and be "you" by not sacrificing your identity along the way.

As for the influence that stems from **the Formula of Success**, at the end of the day, you should be able to do an audit of the day's outcomes to examine the lineage of successful outcomes that were partly influenced by your behaviors. Do what is important to be exposed to different things that can take your performance to higher levels – increasing your personal stock margins to market yourself into the future – while ensuring that continue to be exposed to different disciplines. Contribute in new ways that allow others to become great because they attempt to emulate you as a significant influence in their life. Make sure that you do all that you can to prove yourself, and then make it known that you are willing to go the extra mile to achieve the Future Picture.

Risk; one of the most important adjustments for most people who are trying to accomplish greatness is their attitude to exercise fearlessness and take risk. This is tricky, as the outcomes are unknown in most cases. If you have played it safe thus far in your approach to life and in your career, understand that greatness does not allow for this approach – specifically, in the 21st century and beyond. To win big, you must play big! Greatness is all about handling risks responsibly, intelligently, and in a calculated manner. And finally, luck; in this world, there's no such thing as pure meritocracy.

Nobody gets ahead in life without experiencing a little luck along the way. Luck happens to the most deserving of people and some of the most undeserving. The key to having luck come your way is to make your own luck happen. It's that simple! These three disciplines of greatness, with one additional forthcoming, may not deliver immediate results now, but you'll be well-positioned for the future and a much better individual and organization in the end.

It is my belief that as people and organizations begin to reshape their inner circles, way of thinking and cultures; it's not hard to recognize how the principles found within the **Battleplan for Preemptive Strike** methodology (the Six Lenses of Innovation), your fourth discipline of greatness, can apply to the many burning platforms people and organizations are facing today. Isn't it time you subjected your own business model to some "creative reconstruction," aimed at making it better suited to today's shifting customer needs and new economic realities?

My hope for you is this; get out of line and break from the status quo to find what you want out of life, find what you are willing to leave behind in order to get it and then connect that purpose every single day with what you do. You just may actually catch a glimpse of the magic that stems from your War Room, while owning a few more "wins" while building a "successful" Future Picture. It is my wish that even the best of the best can open their eyes enough to understand and learn to apply these strategies that are proven throughout time.



The "War Room" offers transformative thinking that we can sure afford at the moment – strategy can be inexpensive, yet priceless when you know how to use it. If you want what you've never had, be willing to ethically do what you've never done to win without losing yourself, your soul and the heartbeat of the organization along the way.

God Speed.

Illustration on page 10 by Lars Leetaru.

Successfirmations: Think, Reveal, Receive –

How do you Grade “You?” What Grade Would You Receive?



Now that we’ve journeyed the beginnings of a new path thus far using Successfirmations as the crux for establishing a new “you” and a new thinking perspective for the organizations you are a member, let us examine for a brief moment the progress to this point. If there was a way for you to step outside of yourself to grade your behaviors and performance, not your personality or charismatic way towards people in the workplace, but your actual performance in life, what grade would you receive? An A, a B+, or perhaps a C-?

What about those individuals who would honestly give you a D, or even an F? Do you realize what it would take to earn an A+? Are you aware of the causes for people to give you a failing grade? These are questions that most people never think about for themselves, or are willing to truly try to provide an honest answer because it is tough to examine the truths from the reflection when standing in front of Snow White’s mirror.

Most people believe they have wonderful relationships with their coworkers, family members, friends and colleagues...until they lose a relationship due to conflict or any other reason. And, when that happens, how often do they take responsibility for their part in the relationship’s defection? In most cases, the answer is “NOT MUCH!” They look for the external cause: a cut- throat occurrence; the “un-admitted arrogance” and sense of entitlement; or maybe that specific something that caused the perception of a violated behavior, action or ill spoken set of words placed together to form a hurtful statement or comment. With external causes, people look for reasons to point fingers or blame others for the obvious.

The reaction to these occurrences moves people to fight for the reinstitution of fairness and transparency in relationships. The loss demonstrates the gutting of the social context and safety-nets that have long been in place to keep us secure when dealing with one another. Examining external causes in relationship defects, and in most cases this can also mean the personal relationship with “self,” and understanding your input and part in the whole scheme of things, you will be able to see how these “causes” are easily looked at as “excuses” that works at facilitating enmity from people whom you have and do not yet have relations with in the world.

People play at least as big a part in keeping relationships as do their charisma, qualities, effective communications, and friendliness they sell. That’s right, you read it correctly; “they sell.” Building relationships are all about the sell – what is it about you and within your presentation, and ongoing presentation, that is so compelling for others to want to be around you? What value do you offer? Are you an asset or a liability in relationships? If you were able to actually issue a quarterly report card and grade yourself in the following areas, what grades would you receive?

- **Bearing:** Do you possess this one attributes that everyone must learn early in life: general appearance, carriage, deportment and behavior? Does your walk in life mirror a high level of bearing that allows you to look into the mirror to see a reflection starring back that looks, acts and speaks like a leader? Do you maintain an impeccable personal appearance, avoiding the devil’s tongue, remaining true to your word, holding your temper, speaking clearly and walking upright – personally and professionally?
- **Dependability:** Are you dependable to yourself and to others? Do you complete your assignments with a full level of confidence that your outcomes will maximize effort into the future? Do you give everything to accomplish your absolute best effort, supporting personal conviction and policy to achieve the highest standards of performance – day in and day out?
- **Integrity:** Can you describe yourself as upright and of sound moral principles – the qualities of truthfulness and honesty? Do you place honesty and a sense of duty above all else? Is your character in tact? Do you understand that nothing less than complete honesty in all dealings with interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships is acceptable?

- Loyalty: Are you an intrinsically committed person? Do you believe that loyalty to “self” and to others is integral to building wellbeing and strong relationships? In its use, do you place everything that is critical to meeting an objective within a mission above self?
- Tact: Do you deal with others in a manner that will maintain good relations and avoid conflict? Are you aware that during conditions of stress, the use of tact becomes challenging when delivering personal criticism to self or to those influenced by your actions? Do you practice a calm, courteous and a firm approach to encourage a cooperative response without unpleasantness to the other people within your community? Do you consistently treat yourself with the highest level of respect and courtesy, regardless of conditions or true feelings (this is a sign of maturity and tact that is required of all leaders)?
- Unselfishness: Are you a selfish or unselfish person – be honest? Can you describe your actions this week as the type that avoided you providing for your own personal comfort and advancement at the expense of others? Do you constantly put the interest of your future above the “here and now” of your own interests? What about the same for others within your area of influence? Are you fully aware of the importance to become altruistic and generous; the quality of not putting yourself first, but being willing to give more of yourself than what is given to you as an act of unselfishness?

Now, what about if other people were able to actually issue a quarterly report card and grade you in the following areas, what grades would you receive?

- Trust: Are you able to be trusted? Can people trust you with a “yes” or “no?” Can people rely on you to not only follow up, but to also follow through?
- Attitude: Are you enthusiastic? Do you see possibilities when others see limitations?
- Knowledge Share: Do you help people with making informed decisions based on current conditions, requirements and information?
- Reliability: Can people look to count on you to be available when they need you?
- Responsiveness: Can people depend on you to follow up and act in a timely manner?
- Problem Solving Ability: Can people trust you to correct errors and remove roadblocks in a timely manner?

While for some, the actual grades received can be devastating, causing in many cases, irreparable harm. But, for others, they could actually pale in comparison to what we have witnessed and heard over the past few years. As we take to look at a concept outlined in Chapter 2 of *Success TRAPS: Awaken your Realized Potential for Lasting Fulfillment*, we understand that Pains are the causes of problems and challenges in our lives. Canes represent the excuses we make, while Automobiles represent the vehicles that we use to overcome the two.

But for the sake of this chapter, let’s place our focus on one of the metaphors, specifically “canes.” This is one of the most sinister of the three because it allows people to make excuses and permeates the reasoning of the excuse over time. These are words that people learn to think and speak and provide a crutch for themselves that ultimately get used with others. In most cases, canes are so foul that they exceed all bounds of good statesmanship, good personal governance and good taste. And, without knowing it, canes contribute to the reasons why we now live in a society that more people than not can make their disgust abundantly clear. The actions simply have the potential to become a domino effect, permeating from each of the 6,979,800,000 humans inhabiting this great Mother Earth.

Now is the time for all good men and women to come not to the aid of themselves, but to the aid of their fellow neighbors and country. If we fail any further in this area and continue to receive grades that are in the opposite direction than the highest available, success on a personal level across the world economy; and starting in each of our personal homes, will hereafter be spoken about in the past tense.

Now is the time for everyone to stand up for the one basic concept that surely everyone must agree on: that winning a better future for our next generations to take residence and preserving a successful and healthy lifestyle takes precedence over all else.

Not knowing what grades each of you will receive, I am sure that we can all agree that we each stand on the potential brink of disaster if things in our current life do not change. It only takes a few good men and women to save our future – the future of self (to become a better you) and the future of others – from faltering at this very moment in our history. What are you prepared to do?

Are you willing to simply stand idly by watching others make a mockery of everything your life stands for or do you want, for yourself and your next generation, to have more in a lifetime because of your personal actions today? This is the decision we, as a people, must face; this is the decision that you must act upon. The time to stop making excuses and carrying the canes at your side in and for life must come to an end and it simply comes down to four words: ***Impact, Love, Decisions and Obedience:***

- What changes are you willing to make to be an **impact** to your life and to others?
- What do you **love**? What do you love about you?
- What **decisions** must change about you?
- Can you be more **obedient** now? Can you be obedient to the new decisions that you are willing to make to win your goals?

Making it easy and desirable to have a positive relationship with you (even for yourself) will not only earn you higher grades, it will ensure that other people continue to want to engage in relations with you because of your value. When you deliver an A+ standard for yourself, you will win the opportunity to permeate an A+ standard across all of humanity – transform from ordinary to extraordinary.

For some Americans, they remember the day the 37th President of the United States, Richard Nixon boarded Air Force One for the last time. He was a man broken by his own ambition, his own arrogance and his own delusions of being a citizen beyond questioning or reproach. As much as most people wanted to see him out of office, there were no parades, no celebrations; it was a sad day for Americans to see a sitting U.S. President with a significantly low failing grade. And, even in the face of his own public humiliation, President Nixon finally chose to do the honorable thing; rather than put the country through the disgrace that would accompany the impeachment process, he resigned.

So, in the face of what has been done in your life up to this point, there is no room for negotiations, for compromise or for further discussion. There is no other time or opportunity to right the past excuses and there is absolutely no better opportunity than now to change your grades. This is your chance to allow EXCUSES to be gone – a thing of the past – and all it will take is for a few good men, and a few good women to start the process! You must be willing to become one of the few ordinary people who transforms into an extraordinary human being.

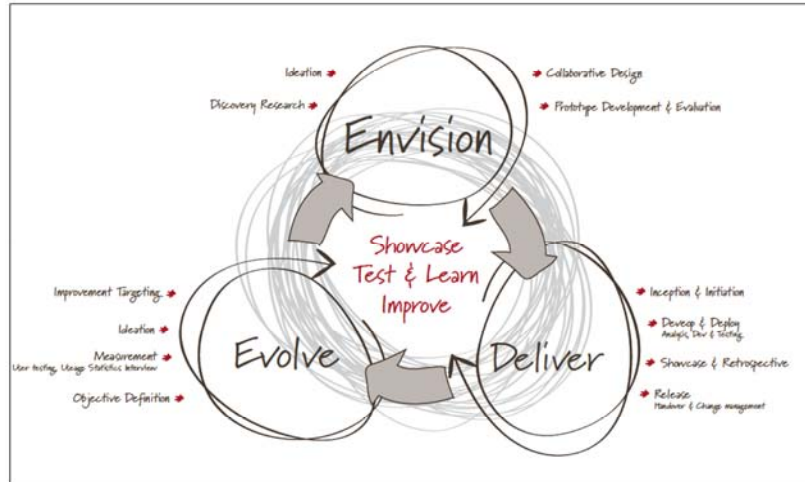
What are your excuses (Canes) in life? If they match any of the following, you have been going through life with a “cane” in hand:

- Explanations (a fault or an offense) in the hope of being forgiven or understood,
- Apologizes (oneself) for an act that could cause offense, or explanation for; vindicate or justify,
- A grant of pardon to forgive for an action,
- Allowances for; the act of overlooking or to judge leniently,
- To free, as from an obligation or duty; to become or make exempt,
- Explanations offered to justify or obtain forgiveness,
- Explanations offered in defense of some fault, or offensive behavior, or as a reason for not fulfilling an obligation, etc.

So, before we move on to the next chapter to discuss teams – and there’s really no need for you to move on if you don’t answer the grade question – I ask you; **what grade would you receive?**

Successfirmations: Think, Reveal, Receive –

Front Line Adaptive Leadership that Builds Great Teams...Envisioning the Future!



Having published several articles and two publications on the topic of building great teams, I was delighted to find and now follow Jason Furnell's work on the topic. Helping to plan and execute team building maneuvers has become my passion and being asked to plan and facilitate a strategic team envisioning symposium for me is like being a young kid waking up early on Christmas morning. Having served as a United States Marine, not many organizations are as proven and knowledgeable about the subject.

Using stratagem from the U.S. Marines and integrating lessons from the classroom, my team and I have come to understand that great teams execute well when adaptive front line leadership disciplines are inherent. It is the discipline of adaptive front line leadership that helps organizations with building great teams that understand how to strategically envision the future. It is always a please when I can learn from others, specifically Furnell's work to help others like you to learn the same. His envisioning diagram lends purpose to our work and a framework to help our team instruct you and yours.

In this chapter, I will discuss the means that we use to help others with envisioning the measure by which they can assess their own successes. We must be able to broaden the horizon of a shared vision that develops the desired effects within the Future Picture. We have to elevate the aspirations within the actual "intent" for team leaders and organizations to achieve the desired impact they want to have on the world, while encouraging a broad range of divergent ideas and emergent thinking. This offers an infinite and bold ambition for most people when they are deciding to use military stratagem to define a stretched view of great teams to come.

So, a team is what you are hoping to build? But, what kind of team? A team who uses the academic approach to getting things done or one that brings real-world experience to the situation at hand? What criteria, then, do you use for choosing your teammates? Team building programs during the late 80's and throughout the 90's took place in the woods at the height of the now infamous ropes courses. These courses were designed to engage organizational groups in a series of team activities that voluntarily made people face self-imposed limitations while hanging from trees and cables. The next decade led the way for classroom-based team building sessions that included behavioral profiles and performance assessments, such as the universal language of DISC and its models, along with the Myers-Briggs Type Indicators.

I believe that I was a part of the best lessons on the planet when it comes to not only building teams, but constructing extraordinary ones. So from that experience, I also feel that organizations must not only develop good teams, they have a responsibility to the future to build "GREAT" teams led by extraordinary people!

Building great teams hits at one of the most discussed topics within business media and the workplace: Organizational Behavior, leadership & process, and inter-office politics. The day of the individual worker is clearly over, as today's corporate arena demands that workers possess the ability to effectively work as team-led associates within an organization. It is a scenario all top leaders and managers know well: The organization, their people and their systems all require efficient and effective processes to remain constant in its approach to move quickly toward new and innovative ways of reaching mission-critical objectives. This is a task that is directed by the senior officials within team environments that are led with great initiatives seeking to elevate the aspirations within the "intent" for team leaders to achieve the desired impact they want to have in the communities they serve.

As we look forward to the next generation of team building programs, people will be coming out of the woods, out of the classrooms and out of the convention centers. The question then is: Where will they be headed? The answer; I believe that they'll be headed to learning environments with a sensory-rich atmosphere that entrenches them in military-style training and simulation as the team building practices increasingly require experienced quality from the battlefield, in business and across industry.

In April 2005, the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania traveled with students, staff, and sponsors to the U.S. Marine Corps Officer Candidates School in Quantico, Virginia to learn what they were really made of. The venture, aptly titled "Learning Leadership and Decision Making Under Uncertainty and Complexity," sought to expose the future business leaders of the world, to the types of training exercises that have produced generations of successful military leaders.

While there are obvious differences between battlefield leadership and corporate leadership, there are also many parallels that can be drawn – especially in the constantly evolving business landscape in the world. We could be nimbler in our decision-making and we could learn to be better team players even from the top. We could lead by example (Ductus Exemplo) and we could actively train our subordinates to eventually lead us. Sounds like a farce? Don't forget that the U.S. Marines has a proven track record of 236 years and running. And by the way, this program at the Wharton School of Business lives on today.

Just as in the experiences at the Wharton School, live training continues to evolve from the military training paradigm toward new solutions that prepare warfighters (the title given to associates that are a part of a GREAT team environment) to fight against asymmetric enemies often embedded in civilian populations and organizations. Since 2005, the Bison Group has invested substantially in new live training solutions to counter challenges faced in the business marketplace, specifically Military Operations Counter-IED Devices: Decision-making, collective behaviors, and cultural influences.

However, the heavy financial burden of the U.S. and world economy, another form of conflict; "Domestic War on Terror (DWOT)," has taken valuable resources away from future planned training and simulation, and instead toward extending the life cycle of organizations in trouble. Therefore, industries are being forced to deliver temporary solutions for less instead of future-oriented growth strategies.

As stated earlier, future-oriented growth stratagem for teams must lend best practices to help organizations envision the measure by which they can: 1) assess their own successes; 2) broaden the horizons of a shared vision that develops the desired effects within the Future Picture; and 3) elevate the aspirations within the actual "intent" for team leaders to achieve the desired impact they want to have in the communities they serve, while encouraging a broad range of divergent ideas and emergent thinking can only have one purpose – achieve high levels of performance.

Says a mouthful doesn't it? But let me be clear, one way of ensuring that GREAT teams are developed for such a task lies in the approach and adoption of business warfighting stratagem; a high impact and hands-on curriculum that I will share some of here. Team building programs, like our **Business WARFIGHTING for Great Teams next generation program**, offer a good starting point for a team development revolution and your team should follow close by.

If the Harvard Business Review magazine (November 2010) can dedicate a full publication on the topic of "Leadership Lessons from the Military" ("extreme conditions in Afghanistan and Iraq have become a testing ground for adaptive management skills that every CEO should understand"), I would think that it is only appropriate to at least consider using military stratagem to improve the blood line in your organizations; teams. Why consider becoming a GREAT team when you can simply learn to transform into one!

Team Building Maneuvers and the Team's Leadership Conquering the Challenge of "Change" through Team Building Maneuvers



Leading teams into qualitative team building maneuvers prevails over the challenge of change at a time that change is definitely required in most organizations. In order to experience successful change, the "fear to change" must be addressed. Change is the one constant when uncertainty shows itself in life and change undoes the way process is both managed and executed. Change is natural and good, but people's reaction to change is both unpredictable and irrational. It can be managed if done right – but when reacting to the uncertainties exhibited by the stimulus for change, mistakes are made and can be very costly. Managing the process that leads to change means managing people's fear.

Nothing is as upsetting to your people as change. Nothing has greater potential to cause failures, loss of production or failing quality. Yet nothing is as important to the survival of your organization as your people and their response to change. Research tells us that 70 percent of all change initiatives fail (Source: Author Peter Senge, "The Dance of Change," Doubleday Press, Toronto, Ont. 1999, p. 3-4). Beyond a doubt, the likelihood of your change initiative failing is overwhelming. Since 2004, I've studied, facilitated and taught change processes and experience tells me that change efforts fail for one, two, or all of the following three reasons:

1. Failure to properly define the Future Picture and the impact of the change.

All too often, the "change" initiative addresses the symptoms of current challenges and problems rather than the future the organization wants or needs to create. Change is about creating a desired future, not just correcting current problem/symptoms.

2. Failure to properly assess the current situation, in order to determine the scope within the requirements for change.

Organizations perpetually assess the current situation against current measures of performance. However, change is not the same as problem-solving or project management. Rather, managing change is about moving an organization strategically forward to achieve its vision of the future.

3. Failure to effectively manage the transition of moving from the present to the future.

Experience demonstrates that failure to effectively manage the transition/transformation need is the leading cause of failure for strategic change initiatives. The change itself is not the problem. Change is an event; it is situational: deciding to implement a new system, target a new market, acquire or merge two organizational cultures (Source: Author William Bridges, "Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change," Addison Wesley, Don Mills Ont., p.3). The problem occurs with what happens within the gap between the present and future, after the "change" and before you get to "there." The reality of change is that change is about people not structures – people are the reasons for stop gaps in change initiatives!

Failure to successfully execute often comes from seeing the change as solely structural, so once the new system is designed and ready for implementation, the new organization is agreed upon and the doctrine papers are signed to legalize the "deal," everyone, including the CEO, walks away from what is considered (prematurely) a "done deal."

This is a mistake that goes on all too often like a broken record. History is full of examples of organizations and teams that failed when experiencing changing environments (most of them are now extinct). The secret to successfully managing change, from the perspective of the people within the organization and their teams, is "definition" and "understanding." To make it clear, I'll explain them in subsets.

Definition and Understanding for the “WHAT” in Teams

It is important to understand that not everyone who works together or in close proximity is a member of a team. This concept is a misnomer for a lot of people. A clear explanation of a team is a group of individuals who are interdependent with respect to intelligence, information, transferable skill sets, resources, and tools and who seek to combine their efforts to achieve a shared-vision towards a common goal. A team, for instance, is either building or falling apart. An essential aptitude for true team building and the maneuvers they require is leading the team into building on a continuous basis.

Team building maneuvers lead a group into higher levels of team spirit, cooperation and interpersonal communication. Building teams is the process of developing on the team-dynamics and interpersonal relationship of the people that come together to make-up the unit. Team spirit either grows or it dies based on the dynamics of the unit.

Teams have specific characteristics that should be addressed:

- Teams must be constructed to achieve a shared-vision for a shared goal.
- Team associates are interdependent regarding some common interests; teams are the instrument of sustained and enduring success in leadership and management.
- Teams use strategic thinking, acting, and influence – associates each possess the authority to manage their own stimulus for change.
- A team is a type of group, but not all groups are teams – team leaders know this to be true.
- Teams are formed to best facilitate learning and peak performance while operating in a socialist environment.
- Team associates are not responsible to “self,” but to their team and its mission; their obligation is to guide the unit to find its voice, while strategically and flawlessly executing.
- Teams learn to navigate positive transition to disseminate authority and power for change – and, they understand when it is a “must” to move into greater levels of performance (the difference between ordinary and extraordinary high performance teams).

The difference between ordinary teams and high performance teams are its people and their abilities to overcome the fear of change. High performance teams place a focus on the people who drive the overall performance within the system: “how do you define a high-performance team?” A high performance team is a group of people who are led by an exceptional leader, ALL having complementary skills, who understand roles and goals, and who are committed to achieving those goals through a shared-voice, as one unit or body, to demonstrate strategic and flawless execution measures for overcoming changing environments.

This team format learns quickly how-to work together toward mutual goals using their individual skills to support one another regardless of the situation they are engaging or any amount of resistance to change from a fear of the unknown or an expectation of loss or failure.

The “alpha” of the high performance team’s resistance to change is how they perceive the change. The “omega” is how well they are equipped to deal with the change they expect. The team member’s degree of resistance is determined by whether they perceive the change as good or bad, and how they expect the impact of the change to be on the entire unit. Their ultimate acceptance of the change is a function of how much resistance the team member has and the quality of their coping skills and their support system. The job role of the team leader is to address their resistance from both perspectives by helping each member reduce it to a minimal, manageable process level.

The success of the response depends on the leader’s ability to lead by example, their level of trust from the members on the team and their ability to persuade the members to overcome their resistance so the unit can move ahead. When the leader is able to communicate a low threat level and/or limited risk, the member’s perception will be one of trust for engaging the objective. Simply, it will all come down to the leader’s relationship with the team; hence, the success of the team not only depends on its members, but also on the leadership they follow.

Definition and Understanding for Accepting “CHANGE” on Teams and Organizations

Now, we'll look at how teams can manage change and fear, and overcome them both to perform at its peak as a unit, and pronounce its leadership style to permeate peak performance across an entire organization. The “alpha” here begins by looking at change as an emotions state that is synonymous with fear. Fear stipulates an uncomfortable emotional response to potential threats and a way of life.

It is a basic survival mechanism that occurs in response to specific stimulus of future events, such as worsening of a situation or continuation of a situation that is unacceptable. It needs to be addressed by the leadership personnel in as much detail and as early as possible. Leadership must be able to provide updates as things develop and become clearer if any chance is possible for overcoming the fears that are the precursor for change.

“Definition” is a two-way street. In addition to defining a problem that causes fear, team leaders need to get their members to a point that they feel comfortable defining the reasons behind their resistance.

“Understanding,” the “omega” here is also a two-way street. Team leaders must be prepared to clearly explain to their members what is changing and why. They must also be clear about the member's reluctance. Here are a few things that the team leaders must be aware of:

- Team leaders must not try to rationalize the issues, but focus on opening and maintaining clear channels of communication with their team members so they understand what is coming and what it means to them and the unit.
- Team leaders must be able to help their member gain a comprehensive understanding of the situation at hand, both the positives and negatives.
- Team leaders must inform their members what the change will be, when it will happen and why – what is not changing and how the anchors on the team (the characteristics, such as “trust” that holds the team together) will be affected as they face the winds of uncertainty and change.
- Team leaders must be able to understand the specific fears of each member. What their concerns are and how strongly they feel about the potential outcomes, both the positives and negatives (do they perceive it as a good or a bad thing?).

The Bottom Line: Definition and Understanding

Conquering the challenge of “change” through team building maneuvers requires innovation, creativity and some good old fashion “leadership.” People yearn for ideas (big and small ones) and think that if they just had that one “right” idea for the team or organization, success would surely come. Certainly, we can all do things to be more creative, but having ideas isn't the biggest, or even first, source of our challenges.

Think about it this way. You've experienced what is believed by you to be the greatest workshop ever attended, so you go back to the workplace to integrate what you've learned – only, you never do. You've thought about trying a new approach to your meetings, but never did. You've had a great idea that never went anywhere.

You've had an idea for a new process, but failed to introduce it to other the leaders. The list can go on and on and you'll see that there's no shortage of ideas or creativity that is stopping you. What is stopping you is fear, the fear of change or the fear of failure. Either way you look at it, fear is the stimulus that stops great people from doing great things – the action that is required for successful progress in life and in the workplace.

Change and Failure (Breakdown)

Failure and success are the outcomes of change. No matter how you look at them both, they each have a constant that cannot go unnoticed, “leadership.” We cannot succeed at higher levels of performance if we maintain status quo, but inherent in change is the possibility that we might fail or experience a breakdown in process. So any discussion of the “fear of change” or the “fear of failure” needs to start with a discussion on transition and transformation. While there are downsides and risks involved in change (including the risk of failure) think of all of the positives that can come from change:

- Process improvement to leadership and management,
- Overall employee performance increases,
- Team development, transition and transformation,
- Greater satisfaction (individual) – personal proficiency,
- Strategic (organizational) renewal – professional mastery, and
- Marketplace expansion, and much more.

And these are just a few. The next time you feel the fear of failure, think about how you feel about change and how it impacts your level of fear. All change involves a certain amount of uncertainty and ambiguity and those two conditions provoke anxiety. This is a reason to hold onto the past for lessons learned; it's familiar, and as the adage goes, "better what you know versus what you don't know." So, although change has the ability to promote new systems, structures, organizations and teams, people will always conform to the "same-old-same old," unwilling to let go of the past. That is why looking at the positives and keeping an open mind is so critical to the success of experiencing change.

Structuring Failure and Success (Breakthrough)

One individual's failure is another individual's success; it's all based on a decision that "must" be made at some point. Sun Tzu, arguably the greatest military strategist that many still follow, had his say on success and failure with this explanation: "Consideration and analysis of The Five Elements, "Dao" – Moral Unity, "Tian" – Weather Condition, "Di" – Geographical Condition, "Jiang" – Leadership Quality, "Fa" – Discipline and Organization Structure. This was a must know for commander serving him. Victory came to those who understood, and no victory to those who did not. The Five Elements determined success or failure when conducting the strategies of war.

Now, here's an explanation of Sun Tzu's statement through comparison and an analytical lens. The Five Elements will reveal the factors of success and failure of all battle, namely: **Moral Unity, Weather Condition, Geographical Condition, Leadership Quality, Discipline and Organization Structure.**

Moral Unity determines the cohesiveness between the ruler and his subjects, the leader and his followers, the general and his soldiers. Ultimately, to achieve full support by fellowman, putting aside life and death matters and share the view of the ruler's is the goal of Moral Unity. Only when a view or decision is fully supported, can orders be carried out smoothly by the team.

Weather Condition such as summer/winter and drought/flood will have significant affects on how plans are executed. When weather is an element that no one has any control, the best strategy will be take full advantage of the conditions when able. Going against the force of nature may prove rewarding when one overcomes, but it usually spells destruction.

Geographical Condition here refers to distance of near/far, terrain/mountainous/flat regarding the battle space, wide/narrow the battle field and whether the location chosen to engage the battle favors attack/defense. This will limit the size, type and performance of the troop. The same for business – this will also determine the team's reaction to the mission and the amount of resources – people, process and management of initiative that will be required to win.

Leadership Quality (my favorite) concerns the general/commander's leading capability. There are five qualities of a good leader: "wisdom, trustworthiness, benevolence and deportment, courage (both physical and emotional) and sternness (temperament)." These five qualities will affect the leading capability of a commander, his culture and climate for organizational behavior effectiveness within the environment and the efficacy and value of his command being carried out by the people under his leadership.

Discipline and Organization Structure is the system of open communication and the vehicles used to do so – how each level within the organization manages and leads the people and process, including logistics. It requires a fair, consistent and clear communication to everyone. Communication is the greatest resource in all of life, not only in organizations, but in all we set out to accomplish. Effective communications is leadership's greatest tool to win its people, systems, processes and management of functions.

As The Five Elements are inter-related, no leader can either ignore or fail to understand the constructive/destructive nature of each element. Victory will overcome “failure” and “success” will fall upon those who analyze and clearly understand The Five Elements. Therefore, by asking who offers fairest reward and punishment, whose troop, team or organization is best trained and led, whose equipment and resources are more efficient and plentiful, who can deliver and communicate order/leadership smoothly, effectively and thoroughly, who has better geographical/weather advantages (culture and organizational climate), who has more resourceful leaders and followers – teams, whether the appointed leader/leadership is wiser, more strategic in their thinking, tactical in their approach to engage and has virtue... the winner is clear, defined and understood.

Constructing it all to Enhance Leadership for Teamwork as an Essential Goal

What am I referring to in the term “Leadership for Teamwork?”

Organizations can try to influence leaders to work as a team, but only leaders themselves can make it work. Why should you want to be a team-oriented leader, and how can you take steps to make it happen, even when the status quo is not favorable? A strong motivator to becoming a better cohort with your leaders-colleagues-peers is to take stock of what “not” collaborating is costing you during the tough times (and, even the not so tough times).



As you attempt to lead others and yourself, it is important to keep in mind your quintessential intention to enhance, deepen and strengthen the spirit of “we are absolutely on the same team, sounding with one unified voice, and committed to achieving the same outcome/ Future Picture for one another.” Integrate the improvement of the quality of leadership for effective teamwork into your objective, strategy and tactics. Include it in the vision and mission and ensure that all members across each level of the organization understand and can communicate it without fail. It must not “only” be written on a fancy picture and placed on the wall (the all too common inspirational). It must run like blood through veins and become as important as the air we breathe.

Express your value of Leadership for Teamwork and team fortitude by ensuring that the cost factor is not as important in the decision to remain on a continuum to train organizational behavior, transformational leadership, strategic execution and team building maneuvers as the decision to make all allocations to do so. The cost of not doing it, even when things are tough, offers a far more potential for failure.

If you overlook Leadership for Teamwork and effective team building maneuvers by focused exclusively or excessively on the outcome you want teamwork to accomplish, you’ll place your team and organization in a position to neglect the means to your end and eliminate the solution-centric outcomes in your future. This would be like a U.S. Marine purposely neglecting to adequately care for his weapons while on the battlefield.

How you think about each individual and team in the organization is the most critical aspect in Leadership for Teamwork. By leading your own thoughts, you begin leading in the most significant way. So discipline yourself to think about those you are responsible for leading as members of your team, and not as your problems, adversaries or competitors. You have to “mentally embrace” them as for you, and not against you, particularly when they demonstrate difficult conduct. This is the truest form of selflessness that, in most cases, is forgotten.

An effective and easy tool to form the greatest disciplines in Leadership for Teamwork is for everyone to do his best to interpret the behaviors of others, however dissonant, as a sign of a core challenge or initiative that needs immediate attention. It’s important to realize that behaviors are a form of communication to address Leadership for Teamwork and this action can transform bad feelings of resentment into positive organizational behaviors and gratitude.

Barack Obama, the 44th President of the United States, used similar techniques to successfully win the elections to lead the American people; “CHANGE and Leadership for Teamwork!” His message rings true around the world and is also being used to bring communities and Governments (also forms of teams) together in ways that at one time, would never have been thought of. Marcus Aurelius said, “Accept the things to which fate binds you, and love the people with whom fate brings you together, but do so with all your heart.”

This statement can be applied to teams and defines the true meaning of Leadership for Teamwork. The team that is not overwhelmed with being productive and full of life is far too busy dying. Life is born from every member and led by every member. Regard Leadership for Teamwork as an essential means for overcoming fear, winning change and leading through cooperation to experience peak performance that takes the organization to the next level.

How to Lead your Team to the Next Level

What is the worst thing that could happen? Actually, people will ask a more rhetorical question: “what could happen?” But, they never really get the answer they are hoping for because of fear. Most of the time, just asking the question seems like progress is being made or, a significant amount of time (meetings to schedule more meetings that promotes nothing but time and talk) planning and not executing.

This is a question that simply hangs in the spam folders, lost in internet space or on a memo at the water cooler. Don't let it become a technical “error message” that requires someone else to get it done. Take the initiative to go against the status quo and get the question answered yourself. Consider the very worst thing that could happen; answering the question for yourself can and will stimulate movement in a positive direction. Often, the absolute worst case isn't as bad as might think.

What is the best possible outcome? Seriously, what is the best thing that could happen? Think about the scenario where everything goes perfectly. Will this be your outcome? Maybe not, but your worst case scenario likely won't happen either. It takes both of these questions to really understand your situation. Chances are, your results will be somewhere between the two. Once you have considered the range of possibilities, you are in a better position to decide whether to proceed or not, and you will have definitely reduced your fear of failure if you do take that step forward.

Next, you can explore the development of a “Memorandum of Understanding” for the team. As outlined earlier in the “War Room – Innovation Intersects Strategy” chapter, this is designed for teams and its members to learn broadly, to inspire the service out of generosity for others, and to prepare them to lead courageously into the future. A team's Memorandum of Understanding encourages a perspective to become firmly grounded in the potential for successful growth using a series of constructs – a portfolio management approach – that everyone buys into for effective department and forward movement. A Memorandum of Understanding acts as the blueprint for strategic leadership on the teams and across the organization.

Are you wondering how to build an organization in which executive leaders, team leaders, middle managers and front line staff will flourish? The answer is not a simple one; you must get the best leaders to pay close attention to the design of the elements around them (situational awareness). The Memorandum of Understanding helps to articulate a lucid purpose, helps to create effectively great leadership teams, prioritize their initiatives carefully, redesign organizational structures, ensure its strategic intent meets the required strategic agility to flawlessly and strategically execute and, most importantly, integrate all these tactics into one coherent strategy.

Using Rhetorical Maneuvers as a Key Stratagem –

The Twelve Solutions to Stimulate Rhetorical Maneuvers for Building Great Teams

The talk in the workplace during the uncertainties in the global markets centers around the many nuances about how to become a team, the differences between teams and groups, what it takes to work as a team and how to make the team more effective. Yet, few people have come to understand what it really takes to develop a great team; one that performs continuously with extraordinary results!

Being a part of a team that most can count on, in the broadest sense, requires the right people coming together with skills and talents to compliment one another to achieve the desired effects of the sponsoring organization and leadership. It has much to do with the people possessing the passion to be great, in order for their behaviors to stimulate great outcomes and their understanding of the future picture – the mission and objectives – and how to achieve the overall purpose of the organization.

People selected to become a member of a team must be prepared to contribute to the environment and overall success of the organization. They must put their personal feeling aside and work towards a significant level of Personal Proficiency that translates into increased levels of Professional Mastery. When assigned to a specific task, they must understand and be in tune with their situational awareness; unified to the heart beat across other departments of the organization and members to accomplish the overall objectives. The future picture must drive their actions and performance to do what is needed to win.

People must differentiate the overall sense of teamwork from the task of developing working groups that is formed to accomplish a specific goal. People confuse these two team building objectives. This is why so many team building trainings, programs and seminars, meetings, retreats and activities are deemed failures by the participants who attend.

The facilitators would normally fail to define the differences of the two, "groups" and "teams," and the participants would leave not having a comprehensive understanding for the team they would like to achieve. Developing an overall sense of team work is much different from building an effective, focused work team when considering the approach to take to engage effective team building maneuvers.

The Differences between Teams and Groups

In 2007, the Bison Group's Executive Education Training Division was launched at Temple University due to a conversation between an Adjunct Professor in the HR department and me. The Professor offered an inquisitive, yet profoundly interesting statement about teams and groups from one of his clients in the workplace. He started off by asking; "what is the difference between a group of people that work together towards achieving an initiative and a team doing the same?" I answered by posing a question of my own; "when does a group become a team?" This exchange stimulated a lengthy conversation and we were in agreement that the same took place with deeper meaning in the workplace. I went on to say, "the definition of a team is best described as a small group of individuals with complementary skills and abilities who are committed to a common goal and approach for which they hold each other accountable." This definition would presume that the behaviors of a team are decidedly different from a group.

The best size for teams is 6-12 individuals. Larger teams require more structure and support; smaller teams often have difficulty meeting when members are absent. Members have skills and abilities that complement the team's purpose. Not all members have the same skills, but together they are greater than the sum of their parts. On teams, members share roles and responsibilities and are constantly developing new skills to improve the team's performance. They work in a democratic fashion with every voice having an opportunity to be heard.

Teams identify and reach consensus on their common goal and approach, rather than looking to a leader to define the goal and approach. Again, and most importantly, teams hold their members accountable – very accountable! What does this mean in practical terms? When they experience conflict with a member, they speak to that member directly rather than to a supervisor. When a member is not performing to the level required, the team addresses, or self disciplines, the performance issue.

As we continued on in the conversation, the Professor decided to define the groups' perspective and functions. He went on to say, "a group can be defined as a small unit of people with complementary skills and abilities who are committed to a leader's goal and approach and are willing to be held accountable by the leader. A group supports the leader's goals and the leader-dominated approach to goal orientation and achievement. A group drives individual accountability rather than shared accountability.

Leadership is predominantly held by one person rather than the shared, fluid leadership on a team. In a group, the dominant viewpoint is represented much different from the team's democratic approach with voice where multiple, diverse viewpoints are represented. Decisions in a group are made by voting or implied agreement; decisions on a team are typically made by consensus."

When taking on the approach of defining the two, teams and groups, it is unfair to say that one is better than the other. A good question to ask would be, "when is it best to develop and use a group and when do you make the extra effort to develop a team?"

It's important to understand that groups are much easier and less complex to form than teams. Groups work best when the decisions and process are already determined, buy-in is not necessary, time is a critical factor and there is split or minimal management support for teaming. To form a group, it is best to identify a very strong and confident, effective leader and empower the person to recruit group members, formulate the goal/orientation and approach for driving decisions to be made. This approach would be practical for short-term projects where the outcomes are already defined.

Teaming, on the other hand, should be used when you need a broad buy-in for the greatest level of performance output, when no one person has the answer and when shared responsibility is important to the success of the goal and meeting objectives. To achieve a real team is difficult and time-consuming, yet achieving a great team is almost improbable.

Great teams require specific ingredients such as time, trust, positive organizational behaviors and more. There is no silver bullet or magic dust that will transform a group into a team overnight. It takes an enormous amount of time, along with lessons learned from mistakes to craft the necessary skills that work well together. And, a comprehensive understanding how to solve problems, challenges and issues when they show up – and, make the right decisions effectively.

The conversation finished by the end of a twelve week semester with both of us coming to a common ground about teams and groups. We decided that organizations must decide on their short and long-term objectives before deciding on which direction they should journey.

Also, senior leadership must be prepared to ask the people involved, "what would it take to be a real, high performance unit?" Then, as they brainstorm the answer, they must challenge the stakeholders and themselves to press onward to become the very best they can be to achieve the future picture of the organization. We also agreed that the team approach using the characteristics found within the outlined "twelve Cs for effective unit development" is the best approach organizations can use to overcome any uncertainties that lie waiting in the marketplace. The stakes are far too high and an extraordinary team of individuals will be needed to win.

Twelve Cs for Effective Unit Development

Most team building programs don't achieve anything in the long term, even if they appear to have worked in the short term. Changing behavior takes time. You cannot expect people to change their behavior and continue with those changes from a two or three day training experience.

The focus of team building must be on improving results, not just improving relationships. The process starts by measuring how clear team members are on their purpose, vision, values and goals, and goes on to focus on the maneuvers and all aspects of the team dynamics for achieving those goals.

It is important to know that no matter what you call your team-based improvement effort: continuous improvement, total quality management, lean manufacturing and Human Sigma, or self-directed work teams, you are striving to improve results for internal and external customers. Few organizations and leaders, however, are totally pleased with the results their team improvement efforts produce.

If your team improvement efforts are not living up to your expectations, the "twelve Cs for effective unit development," a self-diagnosing checklist might tell you why. Successful team building maneuvers that develop effective, focused work teams require attention to detail in the following areas. It is important to think about the many questions posed to ensure the appropriate discussions are stimulating directional flow towards the team's success.

1. Clear Expectations: Has executive leadership (to be successful, there must be buy-in from the top) clearly communicated its expectations for the team's performance and expected outcomes? Do team members understand why the team was created? Is the organization demonstrating consistency of purpose in supporting the team with resources of people, time and money? Does the work of the team receive sufficient emphasis as a priority in terms of the time, discussion, attention and interest directed its way by executive leaders?

2. Context: Do team members understand why they are participating on the team? Do they understand how the strategy of using teams will help the organization attain its communicated business goals? Can team members define their team's importance to the accomplishment of goal orientation? Does the team understand where its work fits in the total context of the organization's goals, principles, posture, vision, organizational behavior and values?

3. Commitment: Do team members want to participate on the team? Do team members feel the team mission is important? Are members committed to accomplishing the team mission and expected outcomes? Do team members perceive their service as valuable to the organization and to their own careers – is there a “win-win?” Do team members anticipate recognition for their contributions? Do team members expect their skills to grow and develop on the team? Are team members excited and challenged by the team opportunity?

4. Competence: Does the team feel that it has the appropriate people participating? (As an example, in a process improvement initiative, is each step of the process represented on the team?) Does the team feel that its members have the knowledge, skill and capability to address the issues for which the team was formed? If not, does the team have access to the help it needs? Does the team feel it has the resources, strategies and support needed to accomplish its mission/objectives and future picture?

5. Contract: Has the team taken its assigned area of responsibility and designed its own mission, vision, posture statement, Memorandum of Understanding and strategic intent to accomplish the mission. Has the team defined and communicated its goals; its anticipated outcomes and contributions; its timelines; and how it will measure both the outcomes of its work and the process the team followed to accomplish their task? Does the leadership team or other coordinating group support what the team has designed?

6. Command and Control: This can be defined as the exercise of authority and direction by a properly designated team leader or members on a team over assigned and attached resources in the accomplishment of the organization's mission. That being said, does the team have enough freedom and empowerment to feel the ownership necessary to accomplish its contract? At the same time, do team members clearly understand their boundaries? How far may members go in pursuit of solutions? Are limitations (i.e. monetary and time resources) defined at the beginning of a project before the team experiences barriers and rework? Is the team's reporting relationship and accountability understood by all members of the organization? Has the organization defined the team's authority? To make recommendations? To implement its plan? Is there a defined review process so both the team and the organization are consistently aligned in direction and purpose? Do team members hold each other accountable for project timelines, commitments and results? Does the organization have a plan to increase opportunities for self-management among organization members?

7. Collaboration (Coalition of Forces): Does the team understand team and group process? Do members understand the stages of group development? Are team members working together effectively interpersonally? Do all team members understand the roles and responsibilities of team members (Concept of the “Bus”)? Team leaders? Can the team approach problem solving, process improvement, goal setting and measurement jointly? Do team members cooperate to accomplish the team contract? Has the team established group norms or rules of conduct in areas such as LeaderShaping, conflict resolution, consensus decision making and meeting management? Is the team using an appropriate strategy to accomplish its action plan?

8. Communication: Are team members clear about the priority of their tasks? Is there an established method for the teams to give feedback and receive honest performance feedback? Does the organization provide important business information regularly? Do the teams understand the complete context for their existence? Do team members communicate clearly and honestly with each other? Do team members bring diverse opinions to the table? Are necessary conflicts raised and addressed? Do team members understand that conflict is necessary for lessons learned?

9. Creative Innovation: Is the organization really interested in change? Does it understand the contextual implications for the change? Does it value creative thinking, transformational thinking, unique solutions and new ideation?

Does it reward people who take reasonable risks to make improvements? Or does it reward the people who fit in and maintain the status quo? Does it provide the training, education, access to publications and textual resources, performance management assessments and infield trips necessary to stimulate new thinking?

10. Consequences: Do team members feel responsible and accountable for team achievements? Do team members feel responsible and accountable for other team members? Are rewards and recognition supplied when teams are successful? Not successful? Is reasonable risk respected and encouraged in the organization? Do team members fear reprisal? Do team members spend their time finger pointing rather than resolving problems during the necessary Debrief sessions? Is the organization designing reward systems that recognize both team and individual performance and organizational behavior? Is the organization planning to share gains and increased profitability with team and individual contributors? Do team members feel responsible and accountable for team and individual strategic execution tactics? Can contributors see their impact on increased organization success?

11. Coordination: Are teams coordinated by a central leadership team that assists the groups to obtain what they need for success? Are teams coordinated by a designated “Red Team,” one who works to employ contingency script that assists the team with working out problems and challenges as a precursor to engaging the mission? Have priorities and resource allocation been planned across departments? Have the proper configurations or reconfigurations been made and planned for across departments? Do teams understand the concept of the internal customer – the next process, anyone to whom they provide a product or a service? Are cross-functional and multi-department teams common and working together effectively and efficiently? Is the organization developing a customer-focused process-centric orientation and moving away from traditional departmental thinking?

12. Cultural Change – Collective Behaviors: Does the organization recognize that the team-based, collaborative, empowering, enabling organizational culture of the future is different than the traditional, hierarchical organization it may currently be? Is the team a networked unit or hierarchical one? Is the organization planning to or in the process of changing how it rewards, recognizes, appraises, hires, develops, plans with, motivates and manages the people it employs? Does the organization plan to use failures for learning and support reasonable risk? Does the organization recognize that the more it can change its climate to support teams, the more it will receive in pay back (ROI) from the work of the teams?

I highly suggest that you spend some serious time and attention on each of the “twelve Cs for effective unit development” to ensure your work teams contribute most effectively to your business success. In a position of leadership, your team members will respond favorably, your business will soar to new heights and empowered people will “own” and be responsible for their work processes. Everyone will find his/her voice. Can you ask for anything better in the workplace than what is proposed here?

Finally, Maintain a Positive Team Building Attitude

To lead most effectively, the leader’s attitude needs to be strongly and deeply rooted in the dynamics of the team and its fortitude, particularly when relating with individuals who are also seeking to grow themselves and the organization they are a part. The Memorandum of Understanding has been used to lead successful transformation efforts for organization and teams to achieve their goals in and away from the organization and the battlefields of life. A paradigm-changing approach, the Memorandum of Understanding concurrently addresses multiple disciplines across the entire transformation life cycle; enabling leaders and teams to help people build a stronger, more responsive and resilient organizations.

It all begins with three creeds: one for achieving Personal Proficiency, one for achieving Professional Mastery and the last for achieving strategic execution while remaining strategically agile; a message in the form of a poem to help you, your team members and the team unit as a whole with overcoming your deepest fear. Finally, and the best part of this all, I'd like to add something my team and I refer to as, “The Entitlement.”

Rather than relating to a series of ongoing problematic behaviors as a hindrance or as a threat to your objective, relate to the development of your Memorandum of Understanding as a guide for how you need to build teamwork, team spirit and the fortitude to meet the inevitable challenge of change through effective leadership.

The Leader's Creed – Individual Leadership

"I possess my own weapon. There are many like it but this one is unique. It is my life. I must master it as I must master the discipline that allows me to be. Without my weapon, I am useless. I must fire my weapon as a rifle. I must shoot straighter than the enemy who is aiming at me. I must win him before he wins me. I will! My weapon is human, even as I am human, because it is my life. My weapon and I know that what counts in personal war are not the rounds we fire. We know that it is the hits that count. We will hit! I will keep my weapon clear and free, even as I am clear and free. My weapon and I are the defenders of my soul. We are the masters of our enemy. We are the standard of generations to follow – Failure is never an option, Ductus Exemplo!"

The Leader's Creed – Instructors

"These are my future leaders. I will train them to the best of my ability. I will develop them into smartly disciplined, mindful-physically fit, basically trained specialists, thoroughly indoctrinated in love of personal leadership. I will demand of them, teach them to demand of themselves, excellence and demonstrate by my own example the highest standards of personal conduct, morality, and professional skill."

The Strategic Executor's Creed

"My loyalty to my team and organization is beyond reproach. I humbly serve as a guardian to my fellow colleagues, always ready to defend against the enemy's force that is trying to diminish our progress. I do not advertise the nature of my work, nor seek recognition for my actions. I voluntarily accept the inherent hazards of my profession, placing the welfare and security of others before my own. I serve with sincere gratitude on and away from my team to impact my teams' responsibility on the battlefield. The ability to control my emotions and my actions, regardless of circumstance, sets me apart from others. ... In the absence of orders I will take charge, lead my teammates and accomplish the mission. ... I will never quit nor will I ever conclude my pursuit for excellence. I remain agile to strike with speed and force and thrive on adversity. My team expects me to be mentally stronger and strategically smarter than my enemies. If knocked down, I will get back up, each and every time. I will draw on every remaining ounce of emotional strength and ability to protect my teammates, the mission and the organization to ensure success. I am never out of the fight and forever in debt to self, my teammates and the mission."

Your Deepest Fear

"Conditions are never just right. People who delay actions until all factors are favorable are the kinds who do nothing."
– William Feather

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. Storms come and go, but it is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We must ask ourselves, why are we chosen to accept brilliance? In actuality, why would we not want to be chosen? And, chosen by whom? You? Me? It's impossible to thrive without constantly updating ourselves with the knowledge used to execute life's journey. Individuals who see themselves as visionary's grasp this concept better than most. They remain on a continuum for growth, personally and professionally, to stay ahead of the learning curve within our ever changing global economy.

Accepting your personal call to duty may require you to walk slower so that people won't feel insecure as you embark upon a personal rite of passage. We are meant to live for greatness and the time to shine is now. Are you ready? You have no choice but to be prepared to influence others to be ready for finding their voice as you have learned to find your own. It requires a choice for changing reality and for some, that choice is easy. As we decide to become a beacon of light, we must be willing to step out on faith, work towards greatness, and be fully aware that all storms have a time to be over. Liberation found within our personal convictions unshackles our souls to guide us unconsciously into becoming a Champion of Change.

The Entitlement

No one alive can buy it or rent it and it can not be lent for any price

...If ignored both of your enemy and yourself, you are sure to be defeated in every battle

Truth must always protect the covenant of integrity and honor amongst good

...knowing how to subdue the enemy without fighting is the ultimate objective

It can not be inherited nor can it be purchased

... the laws of success are to avoid the enemy's strength and strike his weakness

You alone and our own have earned it with our passion, heart, sweat and tears

...it is a doctrine in battle, that supreme training gleans a presence and makes our position invincible

You own it forever, the attribute & title: The "LeaderShaped Leader!"

Accelerate Your Team Building Success with these Dynamic Publications

People in every industry talk about team building and working as a team, but few understand how to create the experience of team building or how to develop an effective team. Many view teams as the best organization design for involving all staff associates in developing business success, productivity and profitability. I offer additional information to help you with achieving your goals of building great teams in the following publications. They have been referenced to assist you with accelerating your team building maneuvers using adaptive leadership to envision the future for building great teams:

1. The Discipline of Teams: Small Group Performance Workbook

How to implement the disciplines, frameworks, tools, and techniques required for team building and team performance is the focus of this book by the authors of one of my favorites, "The Wisdom of Teams."

Performance is the result of both the leader and the team successfully interacting for business results, quickly. (Jon R. Katzenbach, Douglas K. Smith: John Wiley & Sons)

2. The Five Dysfunctions of a Team

Once again using an astutely written fictional tale to unambiguously but painlessly deliver some hard truths about critical business procedures, the text targets group behavior in this entertaining, quick read filled with useful information that will prove easy to digest and implement. The text weaves lessons around the story of a troubled Silicon Valley firm and its unexpected choice for a new CEO: an old-school manager who had retired from a traditional manufacturing company two years earlier at age 55. Showing exactly how existing personnel failed to function as a unit, and precisely how the new boss worked to reestablish that essential conduct, the book's first part colorfully illustrates the ways that teamwork can elude even the most dedicated individuals--and be restored by an insightful leader. A second part offers details on the "five dysfunctions" (absence of trust, fear of conflict, lack of commitment, avoidance of accountability, and inattention to results), along with a questionnaire for readers to use in evaluating their own teams and specifics to help them understand and overcome these common shortcomings. (Patrick Lencioni: Jossey-Bass)

3. Overcoming the Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Field Guide for Leaders, Managers, Facilitators

Fans have clamored for more information on how to implement the ideas outlined in The Five Dysfunctions of a Team publication, so the author answered the call. This text, "Overcoming the Five Dysfunctions of a Team," offers more specific, practical guidance for overcoming the Five Dysfunctions, using tools, exercises, assessments and real-world examples. He examines questions that all teams must ask themselves: Are we really a team? How are we currently performing? Are we prepared to invest the time and energy required to be a great team? Written concisely and to the point, this guide gives leaders, line managers, and consultants alike the tools they need to get their teams up and running quickly and effectively. (Patrick Lencioni: Jossey-Bass)

4. The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: Participant Workbook

Based on Patrick Lencioni's extraordinarily successful leadership fable The Five Dysfunctions of a Team, this Participants Workbook outlines Lencioni's powerful model and the actionable steps that can be used to overcome five common problems that may prevent your team from performing at its best: Absence of Trust, Fear of Conflict, Lack of Commitment, Avoidance of Accountability and Inattention to Results.

(Patrick Lencioni: Jossey-Bass)

5. Building Great Teams: Charting the Path of Organizational Politics

Learn how to strengthen and build your team dynamics and interpersonal communications skills; remain in control of any situation that you and your team encounter; and manage your responsibilities with tact, poise, and polish. Building great teams requires your ability to understand how to successfully chart the path of organizational politics as the essential task to achieving personal mastery and the results they influence.

This text is designed for professionals who are looking for a non-traditional approach to integrating a well-defined, team-centric initiative into their organization. It facilitates a high level of professional development and demonstrates how to navigate the maze of successful team building. Using strategies from the United States Marine Corps, the text demonstrates reasons to incorporate innovative ideas and insights into core responsibilities and identifies real solutions to pressing organizational issues. You will learn to look for and see the organization behind the organization and use the insights to build and maintain support for your upcoming team-led projects.

The text develops a compelling case study for your associates and the organization to understand the comprehensive approach for integrating strategic human capital and team development initiatives. Upon completion, you will receive actionable insights to emulate its approach into your existing work environment, while increasing the performance benchmarks that lie within the four critical dimensions of process improvement and effective team development: people, process, profit and profitability.
(Damian D. "Skipper" Pitts: Book Surge Publishing)

6. Building Great Teams: The Monograph

The author answers the "how-to" question for leaders across the business marketplace on building great teams with a Monograph to accompany "Building Great Teams: Charting the Path of Organizational Politics." The text offers more specific, practical guidance for teams to chart the path of organizational politics while building greatness. The Monograph offers a blueprint for leaders and managers alike to apply a few of the disciplines found in great teams. A clear model for diagnosing and improving a team's performance will assist beginning teams to grow. The action steps provided are the path to successful team building. Longer term teams will use these reminders for effective performance and ongoing team building.
(Damian D. "Skipper" Pitts: Book Surge Publishing)

7. Business WARFIGHTING for Great Teams

Have a team that is under performing and not living up to expectations? This team building book offers 23+ strategies and suggestions for spotting performance problems and solving them using U.S. Marine Corps-like initiatives for successful results. The text seeks to expose the future business leaders of the world to the types of training exercises that have produced generations of successful military leaders. While there are obvious differences between battlefield leadership and corporate leadership, there are also many parallels that can be drawn - especially in the constantly evolving business landscape and its use of teams. We could be nimbler in our decision-making. We could be team players, even from the top. We could lead by example. And we could actively train our subordinates to eventually lead us. Sounds like hogwash? Don't forget that the U.S. Marines has a proven track record of success in the area of building teams that execute flawlessly and strategically – 236 years and running. (Damian D. "Skipper" Pitts: Bison Group E-Book)

8. Why Teams Can Fail and What to Do About It: Essential Tools for Anyone

Have a team that is under performing and not living up to expectations? This team building book offers suggestions for spotting performance problems and solving them. A long term favorite of mine, you'll learn a lot about helping teams perform more effectively from these team building recommendations. (Darcy Hitchcock: McGraw-Hill)

9. The 17 Indisputable Laws of Teamwork

Autocratic leadership is dead; it doesn't work in today's organizations; it may never have really worked. Building a sense of team work in your organization will help you win and perform. These team building lessons help you professionally and personally contribute to the team. (John C. Maxwell: Nelson, Thomas Publishers)

10. The Performance Factor: Unlocking the Secrets of Teamwork

Pat Macmillan discusses the six components needed to produce high performance teams. This readable book provides insight into the challenges facing groups. The role of the leader in service to the team and the importance of team purpose are emphasized. (Pat Macmillan: Broadman & Holman Publishers)

11. Skilled Facilitator: Practical Wisdom for Developing Effective Groups

You'd look a long time to find a book that defines the art and science of group facilitation as well as Schwarz in this instant classic. Starting with an introduction to group functioning, he offers insight into all aspects of groups including how to play the varying roles of the facilitator and work with different personalities and problems. (Roger M. Schwarz: Jossey-Bass)

12. The Wisdom of Teams: Creating the High-Performance Organization

The importance of teams has become a cliché of modern business theory, but few have a clear idea of what it means. In this new edition of their best-selling primer, Katzenbach and Smith try to impart some analytical rigor to the concept. Drawing on their experience as management consultants and a plethora of case studies at companies like Burlington Northern and Motorola, they cover such topics as the optimal size of teams, coping with turnover in team personnel and nurturing "extraordinary teams" rather than "pseudo-teams."

Reacting against the touchy-feely interpersonal bent of discourse on teams, they emphasize hard-nosed principles of "performance, focus, and discipline," over the softer concerns of "communication, openness and 'chemistry.'" Teams, they argue, gel and achieve not by developing "togetherness," but by tackling and surmounting specific "outcome-based" challenges ("eliminate all late deliveries...within 90 days" rather than the vaguer "develop a plan for improving customer satisfaction."). Some of the authors' recommendations are reasonably precise and practical, but too many are nebulous truisms ("keep the purpose, goals, and approach relevant and meaningful") or weighed down by turgid consultant-ese ("integrating the performance goals of formal, structural units as well as special ad hoc group efforts becomes a significant process design challenge"). The case studies are better written, but it's not clear that these inspiring anecdotes of team triumph add up to a systematic doctrine. The book leaves the impression that teams ultimately just have to learn by doing. (John R. Katzenbach and Douglas K. Smith: Collins Business)

13. The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization

A director at MIT's Sloan School, Senge here proposes the "systems thinking" method to help a corporation to become a "learning organization," one that integrates at all personnel levels indifferently related company functions (sales, product design, etc.) to "expand the ability to produce." He describes requisite disciplines, of which systems-thinking is the fifth. Others include "personal mastery" of one's capacities and "team learning" through group discussion of individual objectives and problems. Employees and managers are also encouraged to examine together their often negative perceptions or "mental models" of company people and procedures. The text is esoteric and flavored with terms like "re contextualized rationality," but the book should help inventory-addled retailers whom the author cites as unaware of their customers' desire for quality. (Peter Senge: Broadway Business)

14. The One Minute Manager Builds High-Performing Teams (Updated)

Simplistic? Absolutely! But, this team building book covers the stages of team development, how to work with a team, the importance of team leadership and more. This highly readable book is a useful beginning read about teams. It's one that all team members will use and enjoy. (Eunice Parisi-Carew, Donald K. Carew, Kenneth H. Blanchard: Morrow/Avon)

15. A Message to Garcia

This text written by legendary author Elbert Hubbard is widely considered to be one of the top 100 greatest books of all time. This great classic will surely attract a whole new generation of readers. For many, A Message to Garcia is required reading for various courses and curriculums. And for others who simply enjoy reading timeless pieces of classic literature, this gem by Elbert Hubbard is highly recommended. Beautifully produced, A Message to Garcia would make an ideal gift and it should be a part of everyone's personal team building and leadership library. (Elbert Hubbard: Classic House Books)

Summation

I hope you enjoyed this chapter and are able to use the information to develop into a better person, a better leader, develop better teams who execute with great prowess and better organizations into the future. If you would like to learn more about building great teams, please check out two of my other books on the topic, [Building Great Teams: Charting the Path of Organizational Politics](#) and [Building Great Teams: The Monograph](#) (www.amazon.com). Please feel free to share this information with your colleagues to also help them with understanding their role on the teams – the team of "us" – across the world's organizations – the team of life.

Successfirmations: Think, Reveal, Receive –

Unlock the Potential of Natural; your Wake-up Call – it's your LIFE!



Since the financial collapse in the worlds economies began in 2008, I have been watching with eyes wide open pondering how people are using leadership and strategy to change or correct the circumstances that they've found themselves in. In our tough and somewhat uncertain times, these are important issues to address and consider in order to devise the best strategy for moving into the future. Researchers in the field of personal performance have indicated that humans are only getting 8 to 10% of our true potential. If this is true, and there is truth in the research, then we have a huge upside to engage.

So, let's take this final chapter to look at a simple human pleasure and what we can learn from its natural power; a natural palm wax scented candle. Its teachings (yes, we can learn from a candle), its aromas, the wick and its fueling power all combine to illustrate how four simple steps can be used by anyone to unlock your potential and improve the strategies you live by to achieve and exceed your own defined understanding for success in life. And, it all begins with a simple quote:

"Enthusiasm is excitement with inspiration, motivation and a slight hint of faith from the aroma of creativity; burning your inner flame allows you to create from within. Dare to dream by lighting your creative wick; your own fragrance of sweat and the light within your eyes will be the action taken towards the achievement of success." – Damian D. "Skipper" Pitts

Four Steps to Unlock your Potential

1. Know and Understand "Self"

Here we are talking about the image that stands in the mirror each morning and the depth of the reflection to understand personal awareness of your natural strengths and weaknesses. Amidst the desolate landscape of fallen great individuals, people across every corner of the globe have sat quiet in the darkness of a small bedroom and began to wonder: why is it that success is so hard to achieve, takes so much time to attain, and yet has the potential to fall with a mighty blow – quickly? Well, the answer can be traced to a word that most have never heard before – Putrefaction: decay, breakdown rotting.

Have you ever sat down quietly to remove the noise of life from the moment and looked at yourself? Start with a complete personal assessment package to finding out what makes you tick. Use more than one assessment to uncover different things – such as "how you do what you do each day – your behavioral style" or the "what of your actions." Another consideration would be "why you do the things you do – where do you have passion or indifference? Or, simply the "why of your actions." What competencies have you mastered or have no mastery? What are your personal skills or true potential compared to the population as a whole? What is your emotional status or the value system that endures your drive to peak your own performance? Are there emotional triggers leading to poor performance and results that could be changed or modified? And finally, what is your level of putrefaction? Can you detect personal putrefaction early and can it be avoided? How much destruction must a person endure before the path towards doom become inevitable and unshakeable? How can the course be reversed? Are you aware when it shows its ugly face in your mirror? Have you ever tested the burn time of your own wick to understand your personal proficiencies, skills and knowledge to allow you to become the true professional you are naturally growing into?

The starting point for all personal development and performance improvement is to know your natural strengths and weaknesses – the burn time of your own wick – and compare these to the requirements of your role for "self" and others in life. Your inner passion is the wick that runs throughout and drives your strengths to impact your performance. Understanding your burn time – the buttons that determines the "what (behaviors) and why (values) of your actions" helps to improve the areas needed for you to perform at higher levels. Putrefaction is the ignored weaknesses that you believe have no bearing on your performance in life, but the impact when it is ignored has lasting effects.

Knowing and understanding yourself requires a personal study of positive psychology and strengths-based leadership for teaching and learning – and, as I was learning to overcome my own weaknesses (putrefaction), I set out to confront the questions offered here.

What I learned will astonish anyone looking to achieve success from their own natural abilities; you can stave off putrefaction and decline simply by understanding how to direct your inner passion – the wick that runs throughout and drives your strengths that impacts your performance. When you find yourself sitting in a dark place in life, reverse the course by starting with a complete personal assessment to finding out what makes you tick. Putrefaction can be avoided, putrefaction can be detected and putrefaction can be reversed; it just requires a lot of work – **it's your life.**

2. Know the Package you are Selling!

Yes, the old product knowledge is still important today, only this time, the product is you! The first step helps you with your self confidence because you are becoming keenly aware of the product being offered to the world. The ability to speak in terms of problems solved, unique characteristics, competitive advantages and true benefits or advantages to the individuals affected by you gives you a natural advantage. Believe it or not, most individuals can only parrot the features or product details because human behavior allows us to believe what others allow us to think of ourselves (perception). I once heard the radio personality, comedian and television star Steve Harvey make a statement in the form of a question that everyone should consider in life: “when my confidence collides with your insecurity that makes me cocky?” I was driving at the time of hearing this profound statement and had to pull the car over to think.

You see, you must master the product (you) and the applications that arise from the product to be seen as a true master to those whom you influence or emulate. Mastery sends off an outstanding aroma that excites others to succeed. The better you are representing the product, the greater the opportunity you'll have to remain in a state of enthusiasm. And, enthusiasm is excitement with inspiration, motivation and a slight hint of faith from the aroma of creativity – your own natural creativity that wins success through hard work.

Also, something else you should be capable of in representing an outstanding product is gaining a complete understanding of the related services it offers and the significant benefits that accompanies that package when the product arrives to its destination. Now, for the people who are able to honestly and truthfully follow me to this point, gaining mastery in representing a well constructed product takes a lifetime. There is no easy ride to the top, no quick fixes or gimmicks and no get rich quick schemes; only the fine print of very hard work while everyone else is sleeping. However, the best sales people tend to break away from the status quo by taking in small usable bite-sized strings of knowledge and information, usually built from others who are experiencing success of their own.

In other words, the best understand that if they are to have what they have never had, they must be prepared to do what they have never done! And, to do what you have never done and to succeed, I would suggest that you watch and emulate who you believe is the best, learn their methods and make them your own. The more you know... the more valuable you become to the world. Or, you can keep doing what you have always done. I am sure that you are very well aware that doing this only produces what you have always received – **it's your life.**

3. Only Swim in Blue Oceans

Most people away from the business sphere may not have heard of Blue Ocean Strategy. It is a strategy used in business to determine uncontested opportunity. Performance improvement initiatives, personal or business, fail for two main reasons. First, conception: people (the main ingredient in both) try to do the wrong things. And secondly, execution: they fail to engage with the complexities of aligning behaviors around the new models. Three patterns have emerged: some initiatives are total failures; some start well and then lose momentum; a few launch processes of self-sustaining improvement.

Now this would seem to be logical, yet some sales people (remember #2) cannot understand who their primary competitors are. Talk about being naive. Yet, it goes further than just the obvious primary competitor. People must also learn to watch for secondary or non-traditional sources of competition and the competition I am referring is not far off; it is staring back at you in the mirror. Swimming in Blue Oceans means that we are confident in our abilities to swim all together, simply because this form of swimming means that you are out at sea – metaphorically speaking, so far away from the status quo that all you can see is blue oceans where nothing else matters, but your own ability to survive.

Achieving outstanding performance in life emphasizes the importance of making the right decisions and choices. You must gain an understanding of the role played by the people in your life, the process that you work to live by day-in and day-out, and the measures taken to meet the level of performance to win your day – each and every day of your life. You must be willing to learn additional applications and procedures within the power of life to lead and transform lives, organizations and communities, beginning with your own, while grappling with transformation to draw upon the dos and don'ts in performance excellence.

This requires you to ask a question of self: “Am I willing to undertake a process of significance to take a stand?” How many people are crazy enough to jump off of a boat while out at sea, with no land in sight, to swim back to shore, knowing that they will make it without fail? Undertaking a process of significance to take a stand means that you are doing just that; learning to integrate concepts and tools to manage implementation to achieve sustainable levels of performance.

It is my belief that we as people must be willing to understand how to accept the importance of encouraging others to call upon their own inner strengths and courage to face the many tough situations ahead. Courage is the first essential quality and attribute for effective leadership and a significant benefit for leaders on a journey to achieve outstanding performance.

Courage requires us to dare to dream by lighting our creative wick to realize our own fragrance of sweat and the light within our eyes will be the actions taken towards the achievement of success. Your process to take a stand must be designed to help you analyze different sources of resistance and look at how to create change strategies that factor in the different, non-linear dynamics of a change process over time.

Specifically, learning to swim in blue oceans helps you to enhance your skills in the area of understanding your own motivations, creating and sustaining positive momentum for change and building broad networks of support. So, do you have the courage to swim in blue oceans? – **It's your life.**

4. Learn your Place and GET there – Purpose

Here is where strategy enters the sales game, knowing your customer can be a strategic concept. In fact, most individuals striving for success actually have a customer, goal, driven strategy or major driving force for reaching their goals. These people are those who clearly understand that they need to be very well aware of the boats taking them out to sea and the skills of the captains driving the boats. I believe that we were all sent here for a reason and that we all have significance in the world. I genuinely feel that we are all blessed with unique natural abilities and gifts. The expression of our gifts contributes to a cause greater than us.

A few years ago, I was running at full speed; chasing after my dream of money and success. However, because of the allure of the chase, I had forgotten why I was running. Luckily, I learned of a relationship with the brothers FUD and THUD. Allow me to explain by sharing a personal story. My friend Dwayne (not his real name) had achieved all the financial goals I was reaching for. He had financial independence, several successful businesses, a fabulous home and the luxury to afford the finest things money could buy.

Through hard work, persistence and sheer action; he had made it! But, Dwayne was not happy. He did not have the free time to enjoy his wealth. He wanted a family. He wanted peace. He wanted to live his life with a special person, but because of a lack of trust (that he himself did not realize was so strong); he was unable to achieve the simplicities his successes afforded him. He had too many responsibilities, too much to lose and too many things to protect.

He had spent years building his empire and once it was complete, he spent most of his time keeping it from eroding. But, with all of his hard work, nothing could have convinced him that with less work and in far fewer years, his empire would disappear. And this explained his meeting the brothers FUD and THUD. The brothers FUD and THUD bring with them a state of utter confusion or disorder; a total lack of organization or order causing a chaotic state. When introduced, they like for people to know them by their birth names; Fear, Uncertainty & Doubt and his brother who is simply known by the sound of failure hitting the ground hard.

Getting to know Dwayne was a life altering and eye opening experience. His story snapped me out of my state of unconsciousness (the monotony of life). It became clear to me that, "I did not want to spend the next years of my life chasing after money, only to find that the potential of coming back to the same starting place was real; emotionally, mentally and spiritually" empty. His story of meeting the brothers FUD and THUD caused my chase to come to a screeching halt! Everything was put on hold and I spent the next few months re-evaluating my life and my purpose.

During this period, a few questions began to run through my mind: "What am I chasing after? Why am I chasing it? What is my purpose? And why was I put here?" To answer these questions, I knew that what I needed was direction and I realized that in my own outrage, I was looking for answers in awkward places and in best selling books that basically advised me not to think, but make decisions on impulse without factual knowledge or critical analysis.

To no surprise, my life like many others had been transformed by the culture of ignorance that we reside. Most people do not think for themselves, they try to win life by the sharp blade of incisive reasoning that has become a lost art of people everywhere. Whereas the blade that most should focus is the one of understanding purpose – and why crucial decisions cannot be made in the Blink of an eye. Purpose allows focus and discipline to permeate throughout the vision for the future; regardless of how much money anyone could acquire. If the way forward in life does not align with where purpose is leading, it should not be pursued.

Figuring out your purpose requires you to identify "where you want to be" and then directs the "way for getting you there." Purpose offers a fundamental human need for guiding ideals that give meaning to our actions. It is man's search for meaning as the primary motivation of his life. Put another way, purpose is described as a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful to self and of consequence to the world beyond the self. In my opinion, life's successes requires purpose as a selfless act founded on the belief that people want to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, to cultivate what is best within themselves, and to enhance their experiences of love, work, and play.

Purpose must encapsulate three central concerns: positive emotions, positive individual traits, and positive institutions. Understanding positive emotions entails the study of contentment with the past, happiness in the present and hope for the future.

Understanding positive individual traits consists of the study of the strengths and virtues, such as the capacity for love and work, courage, compassion, resilience, creativity, curiosity, integrity, self-knowledge, moderation, self-control, and wisdom. Understanding positive institutions entails the study of the strengths that foster better communities, such as justice, responsibility, civility, parenting, nurturance, work ethic, leadership, teamwork, purpose, and tolerance. It is safe to say that anyone who really works to establish purpose following these outlined descriptions will have a future meeting with the brothers FUD and THUD. Simply because nothing worth having of value comes without the pains of real hard work.

I am excited for your introduction to the brothers FUD and THUD because if you should have the painful pleasure of meeting them, you will have placed yourself on the road to achieve the promise of success from your own positive emotions, positive individual traits, positive institutions and understanding for achieving your own purpose. If you are less fortunate and do not have the painful pleasure of meeting them, I would suggest that you begin seeking a course correction within your way forward – **It's your life.**

Never Stop Learning

I have come to the conclusion that learning is the fundamental activity in a successful and purposeful life. If we fail to learn, we fail to grow, and this means that we die. Life gives us endless opportunities to learn, and the more difficult the situation, the more we are likely to learn.

We can learn from other people, especially difficult ones – they are like angels sent from heaven to teach us about ourselves. We can learn from the things happening around us. And most of all, we can learn by watching ourselves, seeing how we react and reflecting deeply on what moves us. In closing, these four activities, if they can become habits, will lead to success in all areas of life. They won't offer a quick fix, but they are the foundations of a life lived well.

In my search for expanding my personal growth, I set out to write a book that instructs others how to unlock the potential of their natural gifts by never giving up; be willing to change tactics, but never give up on striving to achieve the core purpose in life. Never give up on the idea of building the Future Picture that is most deserved in life – Success! Be willing to evolve into something entirely different, even to the point of zero overlap with what you do today, but never give up on the principles that defines your character.

Swim in Blue Oceans; be willing to embrace loss, to endure pain, to temporarily lose freedoms, but never give up faith in the ability to prevail. Be willing to form alliances with former adversaries, to accept necessary compromise, but never ever-give up on core values. Understand that failure is not so much a physical state as a state of mind: success is falling down, and getting up one more time, without end. Whether you prevail or fail, endure or die, depends more on what you do to yourself than on what the world does to you – enjoy the education and feel free to share it with others.

God Speed as you continue on your path to experience your own unique state of LeaderShaping through Successfirmations: the art of self leadership that reveals how you can change every aspect of your life. You can turn any weakness or suffering into strength, power, unlimited abundance, health and joy. Everything is possible and absolutely nothing is impossible; all things reveal as extraordinary, while nothing is seen as ordinary. Think, Reveal, Receive and know that there are no limits. Whatever you can dream, you can have when you apply a positive mental attitude to your daily walk.

And remember, Successfirmations offers a mental attitude that admits into the mind thoughts, words and images that have “connectedness” to your personal growth, your expansion of territory and to your significant level of success in your Future Picture. You must never forget that it is the mental attitude that exerts significant amounts of energy, all moving in the same direction and at the same time, to move “good” to “great,” while finding a voice with favorable results. This is your voice that others will learn to hear because it will be your voice that leads others to finding their own.

Successfirmations create unstoppable power, influence and success using your newly discovered adaptive behaviors. These behaviors will help you to achieve happiness, joy, health and a successful outcome in every situation and action you’ll encounter. And lastly, know that whatever the mind seeks, it finds and whatever it expects, it receives.

Now that you’re at the end of the publication, I hope that I achieved my objective by providing spot-on advice on how to change “you” and take your people and teams to new levels, while conquering the challenges of life. Successfirmations offers a tool for you to overcome any “fears of change” that may be inside of you. Fear nothing, for fear is only a four letter word that stops only the weak and now that you’ve come this far, you are not one of the weak. Do the work of Successfirmations and watch how life rewards you with significant increase.

And more importantly, if you would like to receive a copy of the Memorandum of Understanding to guide you with developing your own, visit Amazon.com to order a copy of my latest publication, **Success TRAPS: Awaken your Realized Potential for Lasting Fulfillment**.

Ductus Exemplo!

About the Author: Damian D. “Skipper” Pitts



As the Founder and Chairman of the Bison Group® Corporation, I am charged with leading a team of U.S. Marines turned business professionals, with expertise in facilitating training on topics of executive education, transformational leadership, organizational behavior, team building maneuvers and strategic execution. As a life coach, I’ve authored 45+ journals, 10 publications including, “Building Great Teams: Charting the Path of Organizational Politics,” “Success TRAPS: Awaken your Realized Potential for Lasting Fulfillment” and Successfirmations: Think, Reveal, Receive (Release date: February 2012). I have also authored the *ELBOK* Leadership Challenge®: an exclusive program taught directly by leading experts in military strategem, organizational behavior, strategic leadership and team building maneuvers for life and the workplace. If I can help you with your growth needs – personally and professionally, I am here for you!

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