

'Everyone should read this book. It provides useful insights and examples that will help you grow as a leader irrespective of whether you are just starting out in your career or if you are a seasoned CEO'

Rikard Steiber, Global Marketing Director, Mobile & Social, Google

The background of the entire cover is a solid red color. Scattered across this background are numerous white silhouettes of people in various walking poses, some carrying briefcases or bags. These silhouettes are distributed throughout the cover, appearing to move in different directions. Two horizontal dotted white lines are positioned above and below the main title.

WE ARE ALL LEADERS

**LEADERSHIP IS NOT A POSITION
IT'S A MINDSET**

FREDRIK ARNANDER

WE ARE ALL LEADERS

Leadership is not a position – it's a mindset

Fredrik Arnander



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For Theodor, Estelle and Nicholas

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ELEVATOR PITCH

Like a good business plan, this book has an elevator pitch: a short presentation conveying the essence of the idea in the few seconds it takes to get from one floor to another in an elevator.

1. **The vision:** We are all leaders. Leadership is not a position, it's a mindset.
2. **The mission:** To make you a leader, so that others become leaders, too.
3. **How?** 100 leadership concepts to put into action today.
4. **Your value?** Understanding just one of these concepts will improve your leadership.
5. **Why should we all be leaders?** To build organizations with the agility, and focus to succeed in the modern business world.

LEADERSHIP FOR A NEW ERA

In a time of rapid technological change and economic uncertainty, the successful businesses will thrive through encouraging employees at all levels to take an active role in leading themselves and their organizations. The aim of this book is to help you – whatever stage of career you're at – to think proactively, take responsibility, and excel in work and life through strong leadership.

The business environment is rapidly becoming more fast-paced and global, and the young talent that companies are competing to recruit is of a new generation that will not accept traditional hierarchies. Consequently, the leadership approach has to change.

Most existing leadership books are still rooted in a pre-digital era. This book will help established managers and entrepreneurs update their approach and stay relevant in a changing environment, as well as giving those at the beginning of their careers a head start.

Building on my experience of start-up companies, and trying to create agile and flexible organizations through leadership at all levels, and encouraging innovation and proactivity, the book outlines concepts and tools to make everybody a leader. This book is a response to a need for a new approach to leadership. It starts with the vision that we can all be leaders – and we must be, to meet the challenges of today's business world.

Not since the Internet boom of the early 2000s has there been such a strong entrepreneurial movement in the world, driven by the opportunities created by new technology (and the decreasing cost of technology), the global infrastructures for communication and social networks,

new consumer behaviour and lifestyles, internationalization of venture capital, and the rise of a new generation of entrepreneurs.

This time it is happening not only in the Western world but also in all of Asia, South America, Eastern Europe and Africa. There is a crisis in the macro economy, but start-ups are soaring in the tech sector. At the same time, business is so fast today that it requires new thinking in management, entrepreneurship and leadership.

There are three main trends underlying the book:

1. From hierarchical to flat organizations. Modern companies have less or no hierarchy.
2. From entrepreneurship and management to leadership. How to build companies by building people.
3. From central to decentralized. The speed of business requires action at the front.

This is a leadership book for a new generation of leaders. The success of modern companies does not derive from the authority of a few in formal leadership positions but relies on a flat approach (some would say 'bottom-up', but that would imply a traditional hierarchy) where everyone takes responsibility, drives innovation and acts proactively. This approach to leadership is a solution to the challenges many companies are facing in fast-growing markets. It also appeals to the talented people that companies want to recruit.

Hopefully the book will change the way people think of leadership, from the traditional view where a few leaders rule the roost to a modern view where leadership is important at every level of an organization. In a world crowded with business and management books, the contributions this one makes set it apart from the rest in four main ways:

- First, leadership books are usually aimed at a target group that can be defined as traditional leaders: the CEOs, the 'captains', the heads, leads, directors, managers, bosses, chiefs. The typical leader in literature, both in fiction and non-fiction, is a man with a vision, guiding a large corporation, a war or a grand project to success. This book is not only for Formal Leaders but also for

people who work anywhere in an organization, as well as people who want to be better parents, for example, and want to take charge of their lives and relationships in different contexts; the informal leaders, what can be called the Mindset Leaders. Every situation potentially calls for leadership, and everyone can be a leader. Leadership is not a position, it is a state of mind.

- Second, this is an attempt to bring the rather pretentious and somewhat abstract subject of leadership down to earth. Many leadership books take a heavy and academic approach that would scare most people away from the topic. Why can't we make leadership something plain and simple, hands-on and easy to put into action?
- Third, most books written on the subject are from the USA, the birthplace of business, self-improvement and inspirational books. This is also where we find the greatest companies, the largest market, the smartest academics from the best universities and the CEOs with the biggest egos. I admire the dynamic US business culture and many of the leading US companies and entrepreneurs that it created. But US organizations can also be quite traditional and hierarchical. I wanted to write a business book from Scandinavia, home of the flat democratic organization, where decisions are made in a culture of equality.
- Fourth, this is not a book primarily for big corporations or grand organizations. It is for leadership in the small and growing business, the organization or company that is evolving and where all people at every level play an important part in shaping the outcomes. I don't claim to have expert knowledge about running big corporations, since I have spent most of my professional life with start-ups, new ventures and small growing businesses. However, this book can also be useful in transforming large and traditional companies, which are facing the same – or even greater – leadership challenges in this era of rapid change.

In short, this book is simple, Scandinavian and for everyone in every situation. Does this sound like a leadership book from IKEA? Well, the book comes in a flat package. But unlike assembling a piece of furniture from a manual, leadership cannot be spelled out in diagrams and instructions. You learn by doing, reflecting on the outcome and following your heart. Leadership is always individual. So maybe this book is more like another Scandinavian company – LEGO. You put together the pieces any way you like. And I hope you have fun doing it.

Finally, I did not write the book because I'm a leadership expert with a mission to share my wisdom, but because I've made a lot of mistakes and had to think hard about leadership, and have had to practise to be a better leader. I discovered I was a rather poor leader, and I have had to learn to improve. Maybe I'm just like you. I have gradually and painfully gained insights into what maybe works and what doesn't.

I have organized the book into 100 leadership concepts, each with its own name and a TLA (three-letter acronym). Using TLAs is a way to learn by summarizing an insight into a meaningful concept. It's also a bit of a joke: the business world is full of TLAs, and even in my own companies I find a baffling excess of acronyms, such as GMM (group management meeting) and KAM (key account manager). Anyway, by using TLAs I hope I'm not only poking fun at this tendency but also offering a few useful ideas.

My main driver has not only been to make my own leadership better but also to spread good leadership and inspire others in my organizations. I truly think that everybody is, and can be, a leader.

Fredrik Arnander
London, 2012

CHAPTER 1

THE MINDSET LEADER

I was in the middle of a terribly hectic and demanding phase in my company, and it was getting hard to see clearly what was going on. When you are caught in the whirlwind of a fast-growing business with numerous challenges, you sometimes need to stop whatever you are doing, take a step back and get some distance. And I did.

‘Don’t forget to breathe,’ my yoga teacher said to me, and that’s pretty good advice. Without breathing, we will not live. And without ‘taking a breather’, and pausing for reflection, we will not learn. While motivation is the first step on the way to becoming a leader, the crucial next step involves spending time thinking about your actions and learning from the results. Leading starts with learning. That is also why throughout this book you will find reflection points, at the end of each chapter, to help you learn.

This chapter is about thinking about your leadership – and how we all can be leaders.

#001 The Mindset Leader (TML)

The difference between the Formal Leader and the Mindset Leader.

I'd like to start with a very simple concept that is a key foundation for the philosophy of this book. We are all leaders. And if we are all leaders, what does that mean for individuals and organizations? Ask a random sample of people whether they consider themselves to be leaders and you will probably get at least three different kinds of answers. 'Yes, I am a leader', 'No, I'm not a leader' and 'Maybe I'm a leader, I'm not sure; what do you mean?'

There are several reasons why you might not consider yourself to be a leader:

- You don't have a formal leadership role. For you, someone else is a leader.
- You don't want to be a leader. You're just fine being 'led' by others.
- You don't know what it really means. Leadership is just a buzzword.

Furthermore, if you think you have a leadership role, like being the managing director or the 'head' of something, you might be confused by the idea that everyone is suddenly a leader. What does that mean for your hard-earned authority?

The answer is in the difference between the leader with a formal role and title on the business card, and the leader who has adopted a leadership mindset. You can call them Formal Leaders (FL) and Mindset Leaders (ML).

LEADERSHIP

Formal Leaders (FL)

- = Has a formal title
- = Has responsibility
- = Is accountable
- = Applies to some
- = Authority in role

Mindset Leaders (ML)

- = Has the mindset
- = Takes responsibility
- = Is proactive
- = Can apply to all
- = Authority in person

Let me show you an example to illustrate the difference between Formal Leaders and Mindset Leaders. Imagine an online marketing agency. The typical work at this agency is to manage ad campaigns to advertise products that the client company sells online. You will find three different roles: A – The Sales Manager, whose job is to sell a new project to new clients. When the new project is sold, enter B – The Campaign Manager, who takes over to set up and run the campaign, and deliver results to the client. The client is also assigned C – The Key Account Manager, a contact person who will ensure that the project runs smoothly while trying to sell more services to the clients.

Now, who is really responsible for the client – A, B or C? One made a contract, another is delivering on the contract and the third is supposed to develop the relationship. All have clearly defined roles in the work around the client, but who is ultimately responsible? They can all be Formal Leaders, if that is their defined role in the organization. One of the three roles A, B or C, could be assigned formal overall accountability for the client, for example the Key Account Manager. There might be a department head who is officially accountable for the clients. Or another person, for example the CEO, can be the Formal Leader, i.e. the person in charge and accountable for the clients and the results.

But by making just one person accountable, the others might feel less responsible.

What if there's suddenly a problem outside the formal role? Wouldn't it be good if they all felt responsibility for the client, and could react on whatever issue arises? Wouldn't it be even better if they could proactively identify opportunities and act on them? Wouldn't it be good for you, as the client, to know that all of your contacts at the agency felt responsibility for the success of your campaign? Wouldn't it be great if they all were proactive, instead of the Formal Leader pointing out issues to react on? In a company of Mindset Leaders, it's up to each and every one to assume leadership. The Mindset Leader would be there not only to deliver more client value but also, by thinking like a leader, identify opportunities for the company, support her colleagues and take initiatives for her personal development. Imagine the company where all people are Mindset Leaders.

But if everyone is responsible, nobody is accountable, right? There is a balance between Formal Leaders and Mindset Leaders. Formal Leaders who are too authoritative will diminish the motivation of the Mindset Leaders to act autonomously and proactively, leaving only a few who feel responsibility. You know that you are in a more traditional culture when you hear: 'Please let me check that with my manager.'

Yet an organization with strong Mindset Leaders, where everyone independently exercises individual leadership, could risk undermining a useful and clear structure and the roles of the Formal Leaders. At one extreme you have one almighty leader who everyone obeys (the old model) and at the other extreme everyone is a leader with equal input and power, a 'boss-less' organization. The current reality is somewhere in between – all around us there are Formal Leaders with various official responsibilities. But *regardless* of the level of Formal Leadership, everyone should be Mindset Leaders.

Can anyone really be a leader anywhere?

The concept of leadership for all might work well in one kind of organization and be more of a challenge in another. Traditional hierarchies will have a harder time accepting the idea, for example, and a lot can depend on the type of industry and on cultural considerations in different parts of the world.

The tech sector is fast moving, which means that it needs a more decentralized leadership. The pace is so fast that decisions must often

be made on the spot. Who has time to wait for the CEO to digest all the relevant information and make up their mind? And the CEO does not have all the answers anyway.

The belief that everyone can be a leader is not a result of cosy equality and democracy. Rather, it is a business necessity to deliver results in dynamic industries that are more like battlefields: those closest to the action are in a better position to make decisions from on-the-spot information than superiors far from the front lines. We see this approach in action in elite military units such as the US Navy Seals, even where on the surface the organization looks like a traditional hierarchical structure with many ranks and levels of command. Facing demanding and rapidly changing conditions where the stakes are very high asks for a balance between Formal and Mindset Leadership.

Leadership is not a position, it's a mindset. And it is a mindset that is open to anyone who cares to adopt it, regardless of place, industry, job, situation or other circumstances. The only obstacle is really yourself. Once you start believing that you can be a leader, your attitude towards the world around you will start to change.

#002 Your Inner Motivation (YIM)

Finding your why.

Just because someone tells you that you're a leader, you won't automatically be one, or even feel motivated to be one. First, you have to believe that you have every right and opportunity to be a leader, and to take action as a leader. Second, you need to find your motivation to be a leader, your why.

As Daniel Pink states in his book *Drive*, the best motivation comes from within, not from external carrots and sticks, such as an extra bonus, or the threat of being sacked. Without the inner motivation to lead, you will get nowhere.

Where you get that drive from will be personal, and particular to you. It might be a professional interest, a new and demanding role, a wish to take control over your life, intuition, curiosity or anything that prompts you to lead. And as I say to my children: 'If you don't have anyone to lead, you can always lead yourself.'

If you've ever made a New Year's resolution to lose weight, then you're in for a leadership challenge. If you've ever been promoted to a job that involves responsibility for people, you have a leadership challenge. When you are growing a company, developing a team, wanting to deliver quarterly results, raising kids, needing to get on the plane when the check-in is closed, dealing with a colleague who is upset or with someone who is rude to you – you have leadership challenges.

In the movie *Remember the Titans*, the newly appointed African-American coach Herman Boone has a strong motivation for leading his football team, a mixture of black and white players in the southern United States in the early 1970s. He wants his team to win, both over the competing teams in the Virginia state championship and over racial prejudice. It is the combination of personal and professional passion and commitment that drives him and his team to succeed.

I can tell you what motivated me to become a better leader. For most of my professional life I have worked with technology start-ups. But I don't know much about technology. I don't program code and I don't really know how technology works. I have a degree from a

business school, which means that I don't know much about anything. Nothing wrong with business schools, but after graduating I felt like a generalist with a general knowledge about economic stuff. However, I have learned a thing or two about how to make ideas come true, raise venture capital, build organizations and make companies grow. That is part of my job as an entrepreneur. In short, I start companies and build them.

When I started a new company in 2005, it was business as usual: to make an idea come true. Idea work is nothing glamorous, just a hard job. Then we grew the company, were hit by the financial crisis in 2008 and were forced to cut costs, all of which are typical management tasks. Having sorted out various financial troubles, I came to the conclusion that to take the company to the next level, we needed to improve our leadership. There was a very specific leadership challenge – to make the new management team work together better.

We declared that the annual theme would be 'Leadership'. That meant that we were trying to be better leaders at all levels. And as we started to reflect on our leadership, I also started to jot down notes for this book.

I have worked with many demanding management teams, with high requirements on the leadership. I usually get more or less direct feedback when it does not work. Without people to tell you what they think in a direct way, you will never develop; you'll just live in a bubble of your own, detached from reality.

With the team I was now facing, I realized that only by being a decent leader, by being continuously better and more useful to my colleagues, could I earn the respect of my teammates. They already respected me as an entrepreneur, I guess, but my 'people skills' were poor. I realized this from both direct feedback from colleagues and how my words and actions could sometimes let people down. This, maybe more than anything else at the time, was my motivation to improve as a leader: to be as good as my colleagues, or at least to build on their strengths and not let our various individual shortcomings get in the way.

I wanted to develop from being a somewhat egocentric entrepreneur driven by my own ideas to begin to think like a leader who could support colleagues and create a positive energy in the team. Note that

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I choose *not* to say 'I was forced to change' because part of the process was to adopt a proactive and positive mindset. To be motivated from within.

Whereas management is an assignment that can be handed out, leadership is something you have to earn. Noticing that my efforts to improve my leadership were beginning to have positive effects, my scope and ambition widened to make everybody in the company a leader. Then it broadened to include my family, and trying to be a really good father to my three children, another formidable leadership task. And finally, I took on the challenge to lead myself in a better, even 'world-class', way. My focus shifted from ideas and management to people.

At one off-site session, our management team read and discussed Patrick Lencioni's *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* and concluded that, despite our efforts, we were probably pretty dysfunctional. 'Artificial harmony', 'destructive conflict' and big egos were among our challenges. At last we could recognize our shortcomings and talk about how to improve ourselves and our working relationships, realizing that so long as the top management team works well in a company, everything potentially works. We tried to be better together, spreading good leadership around us, and the energy in the company improved and ultimately resulted in growth, revenue and profits. We did this by adopting a common framework that we agreed on. Acknowledging that there are problems is the first step to try to solve them. For example, we realized that healthy conflict is good for creating commitment (everybody gets to give their opinion before deciding on one direction that all will stand by), while negativism and criticism can create a destructive conflict that would tear us apart instead. Also, we practised how to give and receive open feedback. Later, when the climate in the team deteriorated again, the whole company was affected.

The focus on leadership prompted me to scrutinize my leadership style, reflect on my actions and the responses they triggered. I started to practise every day to be a better leader in various ways. I kept a leadership journal. The point here is not exactly how I learned things or what I learned, but that I started to reflect and that I was motivated to do so, by both internal drivers (to be a better leader) and external

ones (to make the company more successful). It relates back to my motivations and finding my 'why'.

There are basically two ways to check that the leadership functions well. One is to take a measure of the general morale of an organization. Is there a positive, constructive and motivated atmosphere around you? Or is there a climate of complaint, whining, destructive conflict and back-stabbing? Observe how people around you act and react, and you get a measure of your leadership. That is also why open and unfiltered feedback from others is key. You need some external reference.

The second check is performance. In the business world, the purpose of leadership is to produce good performance and results. Sometimes excellent morale does not go hand in hand with performance. You might have a super atmosphere around you, with everyone getting along fabulously, but poor financial results because your team aren't motivated to help the business grow.

Equally, your teams might be miserable and dysfunctional, but achieve great results anyway. For example, you might succeed thanks to favourable market conditions – which may change at a moment's notice, leaving your unmotivated teams unable to adapt. I would argue that there is a high probability that any organization that practises good, active leadership at all levels is more likely to produce good results.

#003 Spread Good Leadership (SGL)

Your good leadership will automatically make others become leaders.

If you define yourself as a leader, would you then:

1. Want others to do what you tell them?
2. Like others to be leaders, too?

If your answer is 1, maybe you are more like a Formal Leader, a traditional boss. Most leadership books are actually about how to make you a better Formal Leader. If your answer is 2, this book is for you – but also for the Formal Leader who is open for a new perspective on leadership. The ultimate goal for you is actually to make others better leaders by improving your own leadership. The whole point of your leadership is to spread it and create virtuous circles. Think about that for a while and let it sink in.

Building a team of leaders is not just a possibility or an opportunity, it is something that you should make your goal to achieve. The great thing is you don't have to educate people or tell them what to do – just take care of your own good leadership and it will spread automatically. Good leadership fast becomes a benefit for everybody. It is very contagious.

Good leadership spreads, and the same applies to *bad* leadership. What is bad leadership? One way of looking at this is to think that there is no bad or good leadership – only bad and good behaviour. If the behaviour is 'good' (whatever the frame of reference), it's called leadership because it makes you into a role model. If the behaviour is 'bad' (measured by the same reference), it is simply bad because it triggers bad behaviour in others.

With this in mind, you will have a very different approach to your leadership. It will not be about leading, but by the sheer force of your conscious behaviour transferring leadership skills to others so they can lead themselves. The moment you realize that and actually start to reflect on your leadership and act as a leader, good things will happen.

You will notice why some things work, and others don't. You will notice when you cheer people up, and when you piss them off. You will notice your strengths and your weaknesses. You will notice when you perform and deliver results and when you don't.

Let's look at a simple example of leadership. You get an angry email. How do you reply? Do you send an equally angry email back, or do you pick up the phone to sort it out? Angry emails can create destructive loops of misunderstandings and can perpetuate negative feelings. Once I stopped replying to angry emails and started to call or meet in person to sort it out instead, I gradually found that I didn't get destructive emails from colleagues any more. Good practice, in the form of direct and non-confrontational communication, had spread, and replaced the bad practice of destructive communication.

In the decision not to respond in kind to an angry email, you have realized one of the key ideas behind good leadership – that you always have complete control over two things: your interpretation of reality and your responses to it. (Please also see Interpretations And Responses #021 IAR.)

An angry email isn't necessarily a personal attack; it could be the result of someone having a bad day. By reacting in a humane and respectful way, you are able to address the problem behind the emotional outburst and also encourage the sender to feel safe in communicating with you directly and respectfully as well. Leadership is, ultimately, about compassion, and the ability to put yourself in others' shoes.

To make the diffusion of leadership more hands-on, and encourage Mindset Leadership, there are at least four ways you can spread it and help create a culture of all-leadership.

1. Encourage an *atmosphere* where it's expected that everyone is a leader. Be prepared to also explain and show what it means in practice. Refer to people as leaders. When I post on the company Intranet, I begin, 'Good morning Leaders!'
2. Spread your good leadership by *your actions*. With a proactive mindset you lead in every situation and show how it's done.

3. Offer *tools and concepts* for improving the leadership and invite people to forums where you discuss it. One of the best tools is feedback – inspire others to use it.
4. The Formal Leaders might have the formal authority in the organization, but you can give Mindset Leaders *power* by allocating resources to their ideas, acting on their beliefs and letting them run their own projects and be in charge. One of my favourite Mindset Leaders is Linda, who always takes the initiative to organize company parties, being the natural authority for that domain without any formal role. The golden rule, for both Formal and Mindset Leader, is to respect each other's roles. (For more about this, please see Respect The Role #057 RTR.)

#004 Learn To Learn (LTL)

What do you think about the way you think?

Do you have an insight into how you learn? One of the amazing things about human beings is our ability to think about how we think. Do you learn by doing, by discussing, by reading and reflecting, by meditating, by travelling, by listening, by watching, or any other way?

Personally, I learn by doing, analyzing the outcome and conceptualizing. I have done many stupid things in my life, and I hope that I have learned from them. I appreciate people who do things, whether they are crazy or serious things, if I can also see that they actually reflect and learn from their experiences. I try to have the mind of a beginner, formulate my ideas and act on them. I take notes, trying to boil things down so that I understand them myself.

Based on my reflections on my own leadership, I began to specify my findings in short, coherent statements, such as Control Upset Emails (#020 CUE), to highlight in this case the trap of anger, frustration and loss of energy and time in destructive email exchanges. So whenever I got an email that smelled of trouble and a potential destructive dialogue, my brain would remember 'Control Upset Emails', thus prompting a smarter response. I estimate that this simple practice has saved me hundreds of lost hours and tons of lost energy.

When you start noticing your own behaviour and listen to the feedback from people around you, you will also start learning about your leadership. A good practice is to keep a Leadership Journal, to make notes about your observations. Maybe you will formulate your own TLAs about what works and what doesn't. My journal was the foundation for this book, just as I have a Tennis Journal packed with insights on my forehand and footwork for improving my game. However you learn, reflection and discovery are central, but motivation and joy are essential.

#005 All Are Leaders (AAL)

Living the vision.

Thinking about my own leadership role, how to build growing companies in fast markets, how to create modern organizations, and about my appreciation of all the talented people I worked with, I had an epiphany: *One leader is good, 100 leaders are better.*

Having started to improve on my own leadership, I began to think about how the whole company, all the people working in a company, could develop and benefit. Was it possible somehow that everyone could adopt the mindset of a leader? Well, the ultimate way to turn ideas into behaviour in any organization is to incorporate them into the culture.

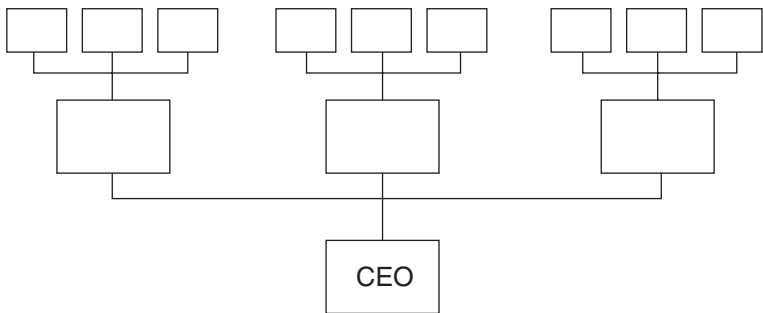
At the company where I was CEO, we ran a set of cross-organizational workshops in the company with people from all departments to discuss the company's culture and our core values. We called it the 'Pizza Group' because we met in the office after working hours to have pizza and beer and talk about what was really the foundation of the company. We talked about the values behind our behaviour, and the essence of our company culture.

One of the core values that emerged in our discussion was that we were all leaders, at every level of the company, capable of solving any challenges that arise in the business. It's one thing to say this, of course, but another thing entirely to create an understanding about individual leadership. It is also a challenge to make this value explicit in the context of an organization because – as I've suggested earlier – there's an official structure of Formal Leaders.

Even if the company is 'flat', non-bureaucratic, informal, non-hierarchical, with fast decision making and a democratic culture, it usually still has a board of directors, a management team, department heads, team leaders and other structures and routines that imply hierarchy. All that structure means you don't see your job as a leadership role if you feel that you're at the bottom of a pyramid. That also means that any culture or organization that nurtures the image of the pyramid in the form of a classic organization chart (with a few people at the top and many people at the bottom) is an old and traditional organization

which might not be perfectly suited to a modern business. You don't have to tear down the pyramid, but you should turn it upside down. If you are the Formal Leader, like the CEO, place yourself at the bottom to show that your work is to support the people doing the real work in the organization, at the front line.

THE UPSIDE-DOWN PYRAMID



People will not become leaders just because you say so. First, the motivation has to come from within. Second, it helps if you can show how it's done and inspire, and empower. But the real obstacle is probably the everyday whirlwind of work. At the front line, you've got a lot on your plate. You are pressed to deliver results, work long hours, meet deadlines and generally keep things moving in your job. The management and board point out the plan and direction, and you are happy for the information. You see yourself as a cog in the machine, not a leader. Also, people tend to be closest to themselves and their wallets. Why care for the company, my colleagues, other departments or the greater good and big picture? I have my bills to pay.

I've often noticed that monthly meetings and other gatherings where the purpose is to involve everyone in the bigger picture (results, numbers, plans, strategies, news and other things you imagine would be motivating to learn about) usually end up becoming monologues to a more or less passive audience. Ask yourself: How can I step back, so others can step forward?

Finally, in a well-functioning company the focus is on revenue (financial confirmation that clients want to buy what you sell), growth

(a sign that the company is on the right track) and profits (a healthy financial balance between the cost of what you do and the return on these costs and investments from sales to real customers). If a company is focused on results and customer value, it's focusing on the right things. However, that makes it easy to focus most of your discussions in a company around topics such as revenue, growth and profitability (which are typical management issues) and forget that it's actually people who are making it all come true.

If you grow yourself, then automatically the people around you, and your organization as a whole, will grow with you. And given the aggregate potential effect of this mindset, then the economy as a whole will grow and create prosperity for society. That's how leadership is connected to the well-being of many. Developing a culture in which everyone steps up to lead is a way to make that happen.

Say that you want everybody in your company to follow your new strategy. Now you have a choice. Do you tell them to act upon your directives, or else? Or do you communicate your vision in such an inspiring way that the organization follows you because they are motivated to do it from within? The latter is the approach that Jan Carlzon used to turn around Scandinavian Airlines (SAS) in the early 1980s to make it the most admired airline company in the world at the time.

SAS was reinvented in the early 1980s as the 'Businessman's Airline', focusing on the needs of the business traveller. Communicating this mission to the organization, and discovering what it meant in practice in terms of offerings to the customer (such as frequent departures) and preferences (for example, the importance of departures on time), created a new internal mindset. People at the front lines could act independently and proactively from their own understanding, and not on directives from the top. The baggage handler became a Mindset Leader who loaded bags on the aircraft more efficiently to enable the flight to depart on time since he knew this was essential to the customer – and not because a Formal Leader had told him to 'work faster'. The culture at SAS was based on the belief that the front-line people, ticket agents, baggage handlers and flight attendants were in the best position to discover the needs of real people. Promoting leadership and letting the front line take the initiative also meant changing much of manage-

ment from control to support, thereby establishing new values throughout the organization.

Communication and information were at the core of the SAS culture. Jan Carlzon famously said: 'An individual without information can't take responsibility. An individual with information can't help but take responsibility.'

However, for Jan Carlzon there was still *one* leader and the job of the leader was to communicate strategy and objectives, and then let the people take over. The purpose of the leader was not to manage the business himself but to create an atmosphere and establish the values so people could do their work. However, they did not go all the way to state that *everybody* is a leader, with equal opportunities to shape the company. Nevertheless, the ideas at SAS in the early 1980s were ground-breaking and changed forever how we view an organization. Implying all-leadership, and finding a new productive balance between the 'management' and the people at the front line, Jan Carlzon was a leadership innovator. His book about the re-invention of SAS was called *Moments of Truth* in English, but the title of the Swedish original, in translation, was *Tear Down the Pyramids*.

#006 Be In Charge (BIC)

*Everyday life is a perfect training ground for leadership.
You are in charge.*

You're in a pub in London and there are glasses on the floor and everybody keeps tripping over them, crashing them, until somebody decides to take care of the problem and remove the glasses. That's leadership. You are always in charge, if you want to be.

I was once sitting with my children in the sunshine at an outdoor restaurant. It was a lovely day. The waiter came by. My children wanted ice cream and I ordered apple juice. 'Sorry sir, but we're not serving food,' the waiter announced rather unexpectedly. 'But ice cream isn't really food, is it?' I tried. 'Yes, it is,' the waiter insisted. 'Ok . . . Why aren't you serving food?' I asked. 'The kitchen is closed, so we only serve drinks.'

My children gave me a look that said: You solve this!

'But since it doesn't involve cooking anything, maybe you could just bring out a couple of dishes of ice cream for me?' I tried lamely. 'No, that would create a problem,' the waiter carried on. 'What problem?' 'Then everybody would get the impression that we're serving food here and start ordering.'

I contemplated that problem for a while, that they would suddenly have a lot of customers. Then I tried again.

'What if you put the ice cream in a glass as a drink?' I suggested. 'Well . . . we actually have milkshakes on the drinks menu,' replied the waiter after giving it some thought. 'Excellent. Put the ice cream in a glass, call it a milkshake, serve it as a drink!' 'I guess that could work . . . milkshakes and apple juice coming up!'

It happens every day that your expectations don't match the outcome. Imagine an everyday situation like buying something at a grocery store, getting a bus ticket or checking in at a hotel. If there's a problem, even a very small and ordinary problem, how do you solve it? Do you see yourself as the passive victim of events, or do you instinctively turn on your leadership radar to turn the situation around? If you proactively identify yourself as part of the solution, you are simply

a leader. Practise everyday leadership in common situations. All you have to do is to keep a cool head, adopt the leader's mindset and help your fellow human being to find a solution.

When you think of a leader you might think of the CEO of the fast-growing company, the prime minister during a war or the football coach in a dramatic final directing his players on the field. But we are surrounded by opportunities for leadership all the time, in even the most banal of situations.

Whenever you're interacting with other people, you can lead people and you can lead yourself. You sometimes hear that you have to be a 'born leader' or 'born entrepreneur'. Many people seem to think that leadership or entrepreneurship is hard-wired into some people's nature and can't be learned or acquired. I think this is wrong. Everyone can be a leader.

Jörgen Oom is a Swedish psychologist who, based on his experience from sports and business life, specializes in motivation and attitude change. Through working on mental training with athletes, including Olympic gold medallists and top ice hockey teams, he has created methods for establishing winning attitudes and great performance. Jörgen taught me at least two things. First, it's all about the Right Mental Attitude, your RMA. If you're negative, negative things will surely happen. If you focus on the positive in any situation, the outcome is more likely to be positive. Second, if anything is going to happen at all, it depends on you. As Jörgen says: 'If it's to be, it's up to me.' I think that's a great way to define leadership. The moment you decide to take action, you turn into a leader by definition. And that's the magic – it's simple!

Jörgen also taught me not to say 'Have a nice day', but instead to use the more proactive 'Get yourself a nice day!' It's up to you.

REFLECTION POINTS

1. Write down a short description of your role (or roles), job or situation today.
 2. Would you describe yourself as a Formal Leader with a formal leadership role in your organization? How would you describe your mindset? Do you see yourself as a leader?
 3. If you are motivated to be a leader, what or who triggered you?
 4. Have you reflected about how you learn?
 5. Have you ever noticed how your behaviour and leadership spread to others, in good or bad ways?
 6. Can you think of a situation where you practised everyday leadership?
 7. In a challenging situation, do you zoom in on the negative stuff, or do you focus on the potentially good things?
-

CHAPTER 2

ENTREPRENEURS, MANAGERS & LEADERS

Three friends are going to have a party – it's Halloween. The first one comes up with an idea, it's a nightclub transformed into a moon base and the theme is punk zombies in space. Then the second friend takes care of the logistics because she loves planning and preparation: booking the venue, administering the guest list, sending out invitations, managing food and drinks, registering the RSVPs in a spreadsheet, sending out reminders, and so forth. On the night of the party, though, it's the third friend who really takes care of all the guests and makes sure that everybody is having a great time.

They have all contributed to the party. One had the original idea, one ran the project and on the party night they all put their energy into making it a great event. But while friend number one was mostly worrying whether the party was living up to the punk zombie idea, and friend number two was arranging the seating, it was friend number three who focused on each and every guest, giving them all the attention. Who of the three friends are you?

How would you define yourself? What are you really at heart? An entrepreneur, a manager or a leader? Are you idea-driven, administration-driven or people-driven?

This chapter is about finding your leadership style.

#007 Entrepreneurs, Managers & Leaders (EML)

What is your leadership strength?

Your personality, genes, upbringing, approach, skills, passions, beliefs, stage in life, role in a business, mindset and life experience are all factors that go into making you who you are. They will also define your leadership strength and style. Now, that strength and style can change as you mature and learn, your company grows, or your responsibilities expand. If you know yourself you're likely to have a core of values that never changes, but your style and how you behave and express yourself may go through transformations over time.

There are many stories about how a board of directors, investors, colleagues or a co-founder of a company finally came to the conclusion that the founding entrepreneur had to go. Yes, it was a great idea and good start and nobody else could have done it. But now the entrepreneur has become a liability, making others uncomfortable. He's being unruly, obstinate, single-minded, uncooperative, uneconomical, unstructured and unmanageable. Time to bring in the manager. Then finally the leader.

By taking a constant beating from reality in my various start-ups, I've developed from being an Entrepreneur to becoming a Manager to finally facing the challenges of the Leader. Now, you might ask, what's the difference? I think there's a huge difference, and it's all about your focus, skills and strengths. I suggest that leadership comes in three different main styles: the Entrepreneur, the Manager and the Leader.

- The Entrepreneur – my job is to realize *my* ideas (it's all about me)
- The Manager – my job is administration (it's all about an efficient organization)
- The Leader – my job is people (it's all about others)

The first transformation, from entrepreneur to manager, was no real challenge for me as a graduate from business school. When I started

my first company I wasn't new to the world of finance, strategy and organizational charts. However, I cared more about realizing my ideas than I did about the people I worked with. So let's start with the starter.

The Entrepreneur

The Entrepreneur is an innovator, bringing new ideas. The essence of entrepreneurship is really to get others to believe in your idea – customers, people you recruit, investors and others who you need to make *your* dream come true. You need to communicate, to be relentless, persistent, energetic and trust that your instincts are right when everybody is trying to prove you wrong – or when they are just plainly indifferent to whatever your vision is.

This has also created the cliché of the lone entrepreneur: a man (and increasingly a woman) fighting against the ignorance of a world that doesn't care – just to win in the end and become stinking rich. In any case, the mindset of the Entrepreneur is focused on the idea. It's also a very egocentric mindset. Me, me, me. My idea, my idea, my idea.

There are just as many reasons for starting a business, organization or project as there are entrepreneurs. However, in my experience it's usually not about the money or the glory; it's because there are no alternatives. You just *have* to try that idea that will not leave your head.

Many people think that entrepreneurs are risk-takers with an appetite for adventures and life in the fast lane. I can only speak for myself. I never saw start-ups as a way to get my adrenaline kicks. Quite the opposite, I think it's a way to reduce risk. In your own company you can control your destiny far more easily than if you're playing a small role in a big corporation under constant pressure from the stock market and the risk of restructuring and lay-offs. Of course, it all depends on how you view it. Starting companies from scratch and making ideas come true – all the way from a blank sheet of paper to a successful business – is a lifestyle that requires much energy and persistence. But in the end it's nothing more than a job, nothing glamorous. The entrepreneur just does what they have to do. If your goal is to make money, then it's maybe easier to become an investment banker.

The Manager

When a young company grows, it's less about the idea and more about managing a growing organization and allocating the resources needed for growth. The Manager needs to decide, together with his board and management team, how much revenue to expect, how much the business will cost to run, what capital you need, how to structure the business and its organization, what people you need and what their roles and titles are – as well as resolving conflicts when people aren't satisfied with their titles on their business cards. You need to cooperate with people and make compromises, not be a single-minded rebel.

The Entrepreneur who stays with the company becomes a Manager, destined not to their own calling in life but to call budget meetings and performance follow-ups, and to draw organization charts with boxes and lines. This is usually the time when the Entrepreneur realizes they are more of a 'starter', and the board calls in someone experienced to manage the business. This someone will accordingly define themselves like this: 'I'm not a starter. But I'm good at running a business.'

This is also the time in a company's history when people begin to say, 'Now we're getting bigger, we must not lose our entrepreneurial spirit.' Everyone will feel that the focus of their work is more about managing than entrepreneurship. The mindset of the Manager is administration. This is also one of the critical points in the life of the Entrepreneur who stays on. Do you have what it takes to make the transition from entrepreneurship (me, me, me – my idea, my idea, my idea) to the quite different focus that is the meaning of management (planning, organizing, budgeting, efficiency, controlling, structure)?

The bulk of knowledge, competence, literature, experience, best practice, training, education and ideas in the business world centres on the concept of management. The symbol of the career-minded professional is the MBA, the Master of Business Administration. Efficiency, structure, economies of scale and organization were key when the Western world was industrialized. Business schools are meant to prepare their students for managing production resources and administrating organizations. The subjects of entrepreneurship and leadership are

much less explored, and in the industrial era, they are much less easy to understand. Return on capital is tangible; the motivation of people is fuzzy.

So it should come as no surprise, then, that there are probably more managers around than there are entrepreneurs and leaders. This also implies that if you are an entrepreneur at heart and want to stay a 'starter', you're likely to find many good and able people to take on the next stage of your business. And if you stay an entrepreneur and surround yourself with capable managers, you will probably need to tune down your egocentricity to focus on a growing organization and the people you are working with.

The Leader

I would argue, however, that the long-term success of any organization, group or project will depend neither on ideas nor on management. It will be about leadership.

Yes, ideas are wonderful, beautiful and powerful, and they can change the daily lives of millions, as great entrepreneurs have shown. But they're also a hassle, they're useless until someone executes them, they're endless, they change all the time and they take a lot of time and effort. Ideas themselves do not create success.

Yes, administration and management are necessary to run a company. You need some form of structure and strategy, but it doesn't create much value in itself.

The success will ultimately depend on people, and the company where the people work and spend a great deal of their time. People together make ideas come true. Culture matters because it's the operative system of the company, guiding actions and behaviour. It is also what ideally makes it fun to go to work and like your job.

Leadership is not about yourself (even if you have to know all your strengths and flaws inside out) but about supporting others to grow, about being there for your team and coaching them into becoming winners – into leaders. It is also about great, diverse and cohesive teams that can work well together and make fast decisions. The mindset of the Leader is people. At the core of the Leader is empathy (the ability

to understand emotions of other people), one of the five components of *Emotional Intelligence*, as suggested by Daniel Goleman. It's hard stuff to learn for the Entrepreneur who mostly cares about his ideas, or for the Manager who cares more about organizational charts.

I wouldn't say that the Leader's job is primarily to motivate people (even if that's sometimes needed), but to develop other leaders who find their own motivation from within.

In Frank Baum's children's novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, the Scarecrow wants to get a brain, the Tin Woodman a heart, and the Cowardly Lion courage. They all believe that the Wizard can solve their troubles. In the book that you are now reading, courage is the symbol of entrepreneurship, brains the sign of management and the heart stands for leadership. As a leader, you ideally want all three, and just as in the novel, you have to find them yourself, within yourself.

You are never *only* an Entrepreneur, a Manager or a Leader: you always have all three characteristics in you, to varying degrees and according to your personal mix. Your mission is to find out where your strengths are, and your leadership profile, and continue building on that understanding.

A company, essentially, consists of 1) ideas, 2) a structure/organization for value creation and 3) people functioning together in this context. That is also why you would like to have the right mix of people with skills for working with ideas (Entrepreneurs), administration (Managers) and people (Leaders).

There are accordingly three different ways to run a business: the Entrepreneur's way, the Manager's way and the Leader's way. You can also call it three different lenses:

- The Entrepreneur's Lens: your main focus is to constantly create new realities from ideas. With passion, drive and persistence you motivate to realize your vision, your way.
- The Manager's Lens: your mindset is to allocate resources to create value. You are essentially an administrator. Growth comes from management and execution, to manage ideas.

- The Leader's Lens: you can avoid neither ideas nor management, but your focus is helping people to succeed, supporting them when they fail and celebrating when they win.

Another way to put it: are you at heart idea-driven, administration-driven or people-driven? Your management style can develop continuously from Entrepreneur to Manager and Leader (or any other path). It also requires three different lenses or mindsets as you run a company or organization, or when you interact at home, with your friends, sports team or your children. In any given situation, do you look at it through the idea lens (are we in line with vision . . .), the administration lens (how can we do this efficiently . . .) or the people lens (what are the behaviours . . .)?

As a Leader, you have to combine these mindsets or lenses depending on the situation, sometimes adopting an entrepreneurial approach, at other times managing a process and then again supporting your colleague to reach a target. The ultimate mission of the combined Entrepreneur/Manager/Leader is to make things happen in a great way for the benefit of all stakeholders, based on your personality and your way of doing things. Call it value creation, in short. And as you surely see by now, there is not *one* way of leadership, only *your* way.

It's a choice to think as a Leader. As the CEO and co-founder of fast-growing companies, one of my main challenges has always been leadership at all levels, from the top management in a turbulent and dynamic industry to the day-to-day leadership carried out by everybody. And I do mean everybody. Even if you do not define yourself as an 'Entrepreneur' (since you are not the founder of the company), you may still be innovative. If you are not technically a 'Manager' (since you do not have any formal management role), you may thrive on finding more efficient ways of doing things. And whatever your role in life, by conducting yourself with positive proactivity and bringing out these qualities in others, you are free to call yourself a 'Leader'.

#008 Results Is Behaviour (RIB)

Results are the outcome, but people are the source.

The ultimate goal of leadership is not to find your style, it is to create results. Whatever style that gets results, works. It is more a question of finding your style and strengths, and building on those strengths, while understanding your approach to leadership and getting things done. But in any case, if results are the outcome, people are usually the source of the results.

In the business world, your leadership is measured quantitatively by the performance it delivers. It's about numbers: growth, income, revenue, profits, market share and other Key Performance Indicators. The KPIs are the signs, that you have defined, of winning or losing. There can, of course, be other measures of performance depending on your organization and work. (Please also see Adding Up Numbers #084 AUN.) That's looking at the outcome though, not the source of success.

The 4 Disciplines of Execution by Chris McChesney, Sean Covey and Jim Huling outlines the difference between a *lag* measure and a *lead* measure. The lag measure tells you if you've achieved the goal. It's a backward-looking indicator, like quarterly results or a golf score. Lead measures are what you have to do to reach the goal, they 'lead' to the results. So lags measure the goal (like looking in the rear-view mirror), leads are predictive and influenceable (they tell you how to drive). Using that terminology, the goal in leadership is results (what you want), but the way to get there is people (how to do it).

Leadership is about results, which are delivered through behaviour, which equals people. Results > Behaviour > People = Leadership. That is also why you would like to have a strong culture that guides that behaviour. Read more about the 'operating system' in Chapter 6.

#009 Your Leadership Profile (YLP)

Who are you?

What is your leadership style? The point is that we all have a little bit of entrepreneur, manager and leader in us. Your task is to identify your strengths and core skills and compile your Leadership Profile. So, what's the purpose of this?

Equipped with a better understanding about your Leadership Profile, you will have a tool for leading yourself and helping the people around you succeed. Knowing your leadership style and core skills will allow you to better apply and build on those strengths. When recruiting, forming teams, supporting colleagues, try to think in terms of Leadership Profiles. What is the mix of Entrepreneur, Manager and Leader here? Am I facing an idea-person, a structure-person or a people-person?

When forming a team, you would ideally want a heterogeneous group. Look for participants who can contribute ideas, someone who can turn them into execution and structure, and people who can smooth things over when a crisis arises or when personal relations break down. You want diverse, cohesive teams. Imagine a group with only single-minded, creative idea-people; it would soon implode. Then think of a group with only managers who can't dream up any new ideas; the company or organization would stagnate (but be well organized). A group solely made up of people-people with more regard for feelings and empathy and little concern for structure and ideas wouldn't create much either long term. The bottom line is that you would like to find the right 'leadership mix'. This concept, that a team is a group of leaders, is in itself different from the traditional approach where there is a group with one leader.

You would also like to understand Leadership Profiles to help match the right individual with the right role and task. For example, it's good if the one who's responsible for a big and complex project possesses some Manager skills, the head of team has Leader skills, and it helps if the Chief Financial Officer (besides being a great Manager) also is a bit of an Entrepreneur to get the business from an innovative perspective.

Another way to use your Leadership Profile is to set out to change it to develop your leadership. My own profile a few years ago was a strong Entrepreneur with some average Manager skills but poor Leader skills (i.e. not that good with things like empathy and listening). Now, my Leadership Profile is quite different, with more focus on the people I work with. I know that the Entrepreneur will be the strongest part of me, but my analysis of my Leadership Profile, and the feedback I got from others, enabled me to understand that I had to work to develop my Leader (people) side.

Furthermore, with a better understanding of your strengths and weaknesses, you can proactively look for people who can complement you. If you are a strong idea-driven Entrepreneur, but with limited skills for administration and personal relations, you might want to find a Manager who can balance your shortcomings. One of my early mentors told me to hire people who are 'better than yourself', i.e. are stronger in areas where you have identified that you are relatively weaker. To hire people 'better than yourself' is a humble way to say that you have acknowledged your own profile.

I have found that a simple tool for understanding both yourself and the profile of the people around you can help you to be more successful and effective in your leadership. Of course, people and the relations between them are complex things and a simple analysis and general approach will not be sufficient if you need to go deeper. However, the assessment of Leadership Profiles is a handy tool to help you develop yourself, your team and your whole company in a proactive way.

You can find out your Leadership Profile using Leaderchart, which includes a test at the end of this book, and compare your profile with 27 Leadership Profiles. You can also find out more about the test at arnander.com.

REFLECTION POINTS

1. Have you thought about what you enjoy doing the most and what you think you are best at?
 2. Do you match the Entrepreneur, Manager or the Leader? Is your leadership 'lens' ideas, administration or people?
 3. Have you experienced how new challenges call for a new mindset?
 4. Think about people around you. Is there someone who you think is the 'typical' Entrepreneur? Can you think of a Manager you know? Is there a person you would describe as a Leader?
 5. How would you measure the performance of your leadership?
 6. Do you agree that the Entrepreneur, the Manager and the Leader are three different and useful perspectives on leadership?
 7. Did you do the leaderchart test and what did you find out about yourself?
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CHAPTER 3

THE REAL ME

I have spent a lot of time and effort trying to define a vision for my companies, and it was not always easy. Sometimes the vision appeared naturally, at other times not. It can be even harder to define your personal vision. Some people have a vision, guiding them and their mission in life. Do you have a vision and guiding culture for You?

This chapter is about leading yourself.

#010 Be World Class (BWC)

Finding your own vision.

When it comes to running companies, it is obvious that you have to focus on making the company world class, with the potential to be the very best at what it does. It's called 'winning the game', as I learned from Professor Robert Burgelman at Stanford University. You can also call it 'world class – or no class'.

To listen to Anja Pärson is inspiring. She is the most successful female alpine skier in history, and she always felt that being best in the world was a natural drive, and worked hard to achieve it. In sports, you are up to your competitors in your discipline and the best is clearly distinguished from the second best. In the game of business, you measure your company against your competitors in the same category. There are a number of hard parameters to determine who is the best in the world: revenue, market capital, market share, growth, profitability and other indicators. You can start another company with the ambition to make that the best company in another field.

But when it comes to making yourself world class, it's a much more complicated and high-stakes affair. You can't be the best at many things and you usually have only one chance to really excel at something. It takes all you have, and it's not always apparent exactly how you stand in relation to your competitors.

I always had this idea that I wanted to be best in the world at something. So, what was I going to be the very best at? I was not going to be the best in the world in any sport, not even close to it. In sports, as a market, you have the quantitative and competitive measures to determine who the top performers are. There is no doubt in the world of sports who is the number-one ranked tennis player, the reigning World Cup football champion or the fastest human being with the record in the 100 metres.

If your goal is to become the world's best writer, I guess that the ultimate measure is the Nobel Prize in Literature. However, it's a very narrow race and just like in sports, even if you did possess the extraordinary talent for it, which I don't, your chances would still be terribly

slim. In the end it would still be up to the subjective tastes of the Swedish Academy. Sure, you could also measure writers by sales or numbers of copies sold, if that would really qualify for the title 'best writer'.

You could go for an Oscar, the award that signals that you are the very best in the world in your field in the movie industry. If you started now and worked really hard it would be possible (everything's possible, right?) to pick up an Oscar in a few decades. Of course, the achievement would still be subject to the judgement of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

You could build the best company in its category, ranked by any of the typical economical parameters that define companies. It would still be difficult to determine what company is really the 'best'. Should you, for example, measure size or client satisfaction?

Now, the point here is not really about the glory or big plans, but trying to be really good at whatever you do. Why wouldn't a taxi driver in Shanghai try to be the very best in the world at driving a taxi in Shanghai? That kind of mindset makes a difference and creates deep satisfaction, in this case both for the driver and for her clients.

It suddenly came to me: *I want to be the best in the world at leading myself.*

If I can lead myself in a really good way, then perhaps I can be a good leader for others, helping them to ultimately lead themselves, and then in turn perpetuate good leadership. If everyone were to take leadership of their own lives and destinies, personal and professional, we would ultimately have a pretty optimistic future. Good leadership spreads by its own positive force. By leading ourselves, we become 'hotspots' that radiate good leadership. It starts with yourself.

Maybe you think it sounds odd or superfluous to have the ambition to be best in the world at leading yourself. Among other objections, there is no market or ranking for self-leadership so you would never know if you are really the best at it anyway.

You can also argue that being best in self-leadership doesn't require much. After all, there isn't much competition. Or is there? Who else claims to be better at leading You? Think about it. There are probably several people who might have a say in the Leadership of You. Your

boss, your friends, your spouse, boyfriend, girlfriend, children, mother, father, coach, colleagues, doctor, personal trainer or anyone else who in some way has a stake in your life. So, let's start with being better than the people around you at leading you, even though you would also appreciate the great leadership of others when needed.

The vision to 'be the best in the world' is more of a mindset, whatever you do in life. It's an ambition to practise every day to try to do something really well. I can ask myself after a late night with little sleep and early meetings the next day: 'Was that really world-class leadership of myself?'

#011 Good & Bad Dogs (GBD)

The only one you ever truly lead is yourself.

The main competition is always yourself. You are the one you're competing with for the great leadership of yourself. It's about winning over your own shortcomings, weaknesses, bad behaviour – and your insecurities. And it's about living up to your own values, focusing on all that makes you great, and learning every day how you can be better.

I can easily write a list of the things that I think of as my own bad self-leadership:

- Sending a stupid email when I know I shouldn't
- Drinking too much at a party
- Telling people what to do, instead of listening
- Being unfair to someone who deserved better
- Losing my temper with my children
- Wanting revenge for something someone did to me
- Reacting to others' bad behaviour
- Sleeping too little when I need to recharge
- Not giving honest and direct feedback

I can also identify when I do things well, and what makes me a better leader:

- Physical training, with 50% sporting days per month
- Doing yoga and practising to be present and focused
- Turning out great results thanks to a team that I supported
- Listening to the feelings behind people's words
- Showing compassion and empathy for a colleague
- Sending a thank-you note after a nice lunch
- Accepting things as they are
- Being proactive and choosing my own actions
- Praising people who deserve it

In Robin Sharma’s book *The Leader Who Had No Title*, there is a wonderful story. A student admires a wise elder for his achievements and his strength of character, then asks him if he ever had weak thoughts. The elder replies: ‘Of course, I have weak thoughts and my ego tries to pull me off track every single day. This happens because I’m a human being. But I also have my authentic side, which is my essential nature and all I really am. That part of me creates the noble and brave thoughts – and keeps me on track to become my greatest self. So it is almost as if I have two dogs inside me: a good dog that wants to lead me to where I dream of going, and that dog that tries to take me off my ideal path.’

‘So which one wins?’ asks the student.

‘That’s easy,’ replies the elder. ‘The one I feed the most.’



Write down what you think is good self-leadership, and what you know and consider to be bad self-leadership.

My good dog, guiding me right

My bad dog, pulling me off the path

You are in control of who is leading you, your good side or your other side. The truth is that you are never leading others, you are only truly leading yourself. You can only truly control yourself, since it is *your* behaviour, interpretations and responses that are the true core of your leadership. Think about it.

You always lead yourself first, by deciding on your course of action. For example, your boss tells you that the company is re-organizing and that your job will change in a way you are not happy with. How do you lead yourself? Do you come to the conclusion that the world is unfair and that it sucks to be a victim of stupid arseholes? Or do you tell yourself that even though things look bad, this could be an opportunity after all: you could negotiate with your boss, look for other roles in the organization, or find a way to make the changes to your job work for you? You decide, you are in charge.

You never really lead anyone other than yourself. When leading, you first decide on your own actions and thoughts, your awareness, and that will then influence others, directly or indirectly. Even if your leadership style is simply to tell people what to do and give orders, punishing and rewarding your team accordingly, you still have to lead yourself into that way of thinking and then act upon it.

So, who are you and what values guide you? Just as a company has (or should have) a guiding culture, what is your own 'operating system' and set of core values?

#012 The Real Me (TRM)

Be true to yourself.

In Warren Bennis's *On Becoming a Leader*, there's a quote from the letters of the late American philosopher William James.

'I have often thought that the best way to define a man's character would be to seek out the particular mental or moral attitude in which, when it came upon him, he felt himself most deeply and intensely active and alive. At such moments there is a voice inside which speaks and says: "This is the real me!"'

To find out who you are, and why you are the way you are, is the first step in any leadership. This is, of course, a lifelong journey and you may never get the answer. The point of this book is not to help you find yourself – there are plenty of other places and contexts in which to do that – I would just like to underline that all good leadership starts with yourself.

To find out something more about yourself, be on the lookout for moods, circumstances, environments, people, contexts, challenges, rooms, buildings, landscapes, events and other situations where you feel at home. Maybe you find that you are suddenly completely at ease, enjoying just being, a natural part of the context, and you say to yourself, in the words of William James: 'This is the real me!' If that happens, notice it. It means something. Then ask yourself *why*, and you will maybe find out even more.

There cannot be two yous. In 2005 the magazine *Business 2.0* asked 30 business visionaries about their golden rule, the philosophy they live by in business and personal life. One of the titans quoted was Warren Buffett, the legendary chairman and CEO of Berkshire Hathaway. His golden rule? *There can't be two yous.*

'When you get out of bed in the morning and think about what you want to do that day, ask yourself whether you'd like others to read about it on the front page of tomorrow's newspaper. You'll probably do things a little differently if you keep that in mind,' Buffett reasoned.

Ideally, you are one authentic person. You are not different people depending on the situation. Not only does that create confusion for those around you, it also demands more of you if you're going to keep track of all the different versions of yourself. Above all, it suggests that perhaps you haven't made up your mind about who you are, that you aren't connected to your core and fundamental values. Or that you think that you can be the real you only when nobody is watching.

You are also your agenda. If you have ever wondered who you are, take a look at your calendar. This is another simple way to learn about yourself. It might be so obvious that you didn't even think about it, but how you spend your time tells much of the story about you.

Say your typical day looks something like this: woke up at 6 am, made breakfast for the whole family, took the kids to school, had your first meeting at 9 am with your management team, spent most of the day in various other meetings and calls, had dinner with a woman (who was not your wife or related to your business), came back at 8 pm to read bedtime stories to the kids. That says something about you.

If your day was: woke up at 10 am with a hangover, spent the day looking for a job and then went to the bar again with your buddies, that tells a different story. The way you spend your time doesn't say *why*, but it does say *what*. And your actions speak loudly.

#013 Know Your Weaknesses (KYW)

Weaknesses are not strengths, but it's a strength to know them.

One of my first mentors told me that the greatest strength you can have as a leader is to know your weaknesses. This is scary stuff, because it relates to sides of ourselves that we are maybe ashamed of, and want to hide or change.

You're probably also better defined as a human being by your weaknesses than by your strengths. 'Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way,' begins Leo Tolstoy in his classic *Anna Karenina*.

In the same way, I assume most good accountants, for example, are probably good at what they do in the same way. They are mainly good at accounting. What separates them, and makes them human, is how they are weak in different ways.

There are different forms of weaknesses, for example:

- Something that you want: you would kill for love, for example, or you need drugs
- Something that you're afraid of losing: your children, your job, your money
- Something that you are hiding: you're cheating on your partner, or you're stealing
- Something that you lack: you don't have a degree

The main point here is not how to practically deal with your weaknesses, even though that could probably be a good idea, but to know them. Understanding your weaknesses is probably one of the greatest strengths you can have as a leader. It's better that you're aware of these weaknesses, can admit them and can deal with them proactively, than for the people around you to uncover them first. Sure, it's good to find out your weaknesses through honest and constructive feedback (unless you don't already know about them), but it can be bad if it happens by accident.

How you manage your weakness is a matter of personal preference and the nature of the weakness. The proactive pattern is always the same: 1) know and admit it, 2) deal with it. If your weakness is drugs or stealing, you should probably seek help. If your weakness is just a generally unhealthy lifestyle, you could maybe change on your own by applying better discipline and going to the gym. If your weakness is just good wine, it might not matter at all. You can choose to do nothing and live with it, but ask yourself to what extent your weakness might hurt yourself and others.

Your capacity to build yourself and others is based on the strengths, but what makes you great is to understand the ways in which you are weak and can improve. Your weaknesses and obstacles can also be turned into advantages and strengths if you have the ability to see it that way. (Please also see Take It On #043 TIO.)

#014 Set Your Virtues (SYV)

It's good to have your own compass, even if you fail to follow it.

Do I follow my own rules? I try to, but fail every day. One way of controlling yourself, your bad dogs and your weaknesses is to set up guiding principles for yourself. Yes, we are only human and we are fantastic just the way we are, but we can always try to be a little better. Another way to put it is to live by your virtues, if you can.

Benjamin Franklin, one of the Founding Fathers of the United States of America, early in life started to practise the leadership of himself. In 1726, at the age of 20, he developed the now famous 13 virtues, which he lists in *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*:

1. 'Temperance. Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.'
2. 'Silence. Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation.'
3. 'Order. Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.'
4. 'Resolution. Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve.'
5. 'Frugality. Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself, i.e. waste nothing.'
6. 'Industry. Lose no time; be always employ'd in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.'
7. 'Sincerity. Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly, and, if you speak, speak accordingly.'
8. 'Justice. Wrong none by doing injuries, or omitting the benefits that are your duty.'
9. 'Moderation. Avoid extremes; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.'
10. 'Cleanliness. Tolerate no uncleanness in body, clothes, or habitation.'
11. 'Tranquility. Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable.'

12. 'Chastity. Rarely use venery but for health or offspring, never to dullness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation.'
13. 'Humility. Imitate Jesus and Socrates.'

Franklin realized that he did not always live up to his own virtues and had his shortcomings, but also saw that the attempt to follow them made him a better man and contributed to his success. The point is to develop a framework to guide yourself, and to allow you to check whether you are on or off track. That has a value on its own – you get a map for your behaviour and will know if you're lost or not. It is more or less certain that you will fail to live up to your own rules, and that is because you are only human, if it is any consolation.

In *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey suggests that you write your personal mission statement, outlining your philosophy, values and creed – your 'personal culture' that guides you and your actions. Things to put in a mission statement can be values such as 'Listen more than you speak', 'Support people to help them grow' or, if you are more ego-centric, 'Always put myself first.'

The importance of leading yourself is hardly something new, and neither is the insight that all good leadership starts with you. But given all the focus you have on everything that is outside of you, it's easy to lose yourself in other stuff: the need to deliver on your budget, meet a deadline, run a project, organize a company, make a return on the capital your investors put into your business, make sure your children are happy, support your colleagues and buy groceries. Don't forget yourself.

#015 Two Leadership Levels (TLL)

How your actions are connected to your core.

Throughout this book, there are two levels that you should be aware of. The first level is the foundation, your core, your personal mission statement, your own 'culture of one' and 'operating system' or simply 'you'. Call it the Ground Level. The second level is your everyday behaviour, your actions, based on your beliefs. This second level is about the 'management of yourself'. Call it the Surface Level.

Management, or execution, in a *company* is a consequence of the strategy, goals and culture of that company. Whether management and execution is 'right' or 'wrong', 'bad' or 'good', successful or not, depends on the frame of reference. In a company, hopefully, you just don't react to whatever happens. If there is an opportunity (for example, to enter a new market) or an innovative idea (for example, to launch a new product) or an aggressive move from a competitor, you just don't react and go ahead. You first ask yourself, 'Is this in line with what our company wants to do and what we believe in?'

Here are some of the values in my 'personal culture':

- I always make my children my first priority.
- I proactively take on challenges and focus on the positive.
- I'm fair, honest and trustworthy in business, and try to make all parties winners.
- I know I have a big ego, but I will do my best to focus on others.

In 'professional' management of yourself, you should always be conscious of your own actions. Your actions should never be childish reactions to things people say and do. If someone bumps into you on the street and says, 'Watch your step!', it is easy to say instinctively, 'Hey, it was you!' That is a reaction. Pausing for a millisecond, deciding on your response, you might instead say, 'Sorry.' That is to act rather than react.

It takes a lot of training and practice to resist reactive behaviour. Ideally, you should be proactive, taking action based on your own belief

system. For example, if I say that it's good to have meetings in Other People's Offices (#058 OPO), it is based on my value that I want to focus on others. Calling a meeting in my office is to set the stage from my perspective, while strolling over and having a meeting in a colleague's office would be to do it from someone else's perspective, i.e. a little gesture to focus on others. So, it's a proactive action, based on my own mission statement.

Just like the floors on a house, the second level (the Surface) is built on the first level (the Ground). As the surface and waves of the ocean are connected to the strong currents and floor below, your actions are (or ideally should be) a consequence of your belief system.

Providing a book with a number of TLAs, or leadership tools and guides, would be to offer just the surface of things. These tools are meaningless if they are not connected to your underlying values. Don't adopt anything that you read here, or anywhere else, without first checking that it is in line with your own mission statement. Sure, it's great if the TLAs can provide inspiration. But use them only if you truly think that your values support them. The personal culture that you are most comfortable with might just as well be to order people to your office whenever things go wrong because you believe that fear keeps people on their toes, and that, in turn, produces results in your world.

It is a good habit to have your two levels in the back of your head at all times. You can check your actions against your foundation to determine whether they are in line with your beliefs. If you take action that seems not to be grounded, ask yourself what happened.

Sometimes I choose to stir things up, taking on the Entrepreneur's approach, disregarding the structure and organization in the company (Manager Lens) and the people around me (Leader Lens) to create a little chaos with new ideas. Hopefully, I know what I'm doing and where I am on the map. Sometimes it just goes wrong and I'm off track. Actions without foundation in your 'operating system' are just reactions to the actions of others, or plainly whimsical. Live at the Surface Level, but be sure about your Ground Level.

#016 Do You Believe (DYB)

It's easier to take action if you know what you want.

As Jonathan Powell writes in *The New Machiavelli* (and as Machiavelli himself wrote before him), charisma is key to leadership skill. And what gives you charisma? Optimism and enthusiasm. To be optimistic and enthusiastic, you have to believe in something. Belief is a core leadership skill. But it is about more than charisma. If you don't believe in what you do as a leader, regardless of whether you are a Formal Leader or a Mindset Leader, you will have a hard time doing it.

Sometimes I have taken decisions without really believing in them. For example, at one company I agreed on a strategy simply to keep a team member and colleague happy. This was unwise, and resulted in us having to cancel the strategy six months later when it indeed proved not to work, thereby really de-motivating my colleague. In this way I committed two serious mistakes. First, I supported something I did not believe in (even if my colleague did). Second, I put someone's personal interest before the needs of the company. When you run a business, you must always ask what is best for the company.

Do you believe? As a Leader you have to believe in something. Steve Jobs of Apple believed in amazing products. Bill Gates of Microsoft believed in compatible products.

What is the thing you believe in? It doesn't have to be right (but you must think it is right and be willing to fight for it until proved wrong). It doesn't have to be extremely well thought through (but it helps, since others will challenge you with their own data). Your beliefs can be based on intuition, just a feeling or an insight, or they might rest on solid research, experience or logic.

What you believe in can be expressed at many levels, from a general vision of the future or your belief in the right company culture down to how to execute the tiniest detail. Optimism and enthusiasm for this belief create the charisma that motivates both you and the others around you. Furthermore, your beliefs are the foundation for your integrity, if you stay true to them.

For example, you might believe in the future of cloud computing, the idea that software as a service runs on external servers, accessible on the Internet through your browser. However, you have no idea about how this should be executed in your company's business plan. Another person at your company might also believe in the future of cloud computing, and also believe in a strategy for how to do it: what resources are needed, what clients to target, what the product will look like and whom to recruit to make the ideas come true. A third person at the company might believe in a way to acquire customers using the power of search marketing to drive online sales of the product. But if no one believes in anything, it's not likely that anything will happen. An important part of leadership is making others' beliefs count, too.

Whatever you work with, it's good to have beliefs about how to do things, what is right and wrong, what is good and what is bad. As a leader, you're expected to have ideas about the future, or how to run a company, or the best way to solve a conflict.

In a key scene in the movie *Moneyball* (2011, Sony Pictures) the general manager Billy Beane is explaining to his sidekick Peter Brand that he's about to trade one of their top players, Pena, to favour a lower-ranked player, Hatteberg, which goes against conventional wisdom. Driven by the need to beat richer teams, Beane and Brand have developed a new strategy, an unorthodox system that's not based on individual (expensive) players, but which uses mathematics to calculate the synergy of all players that can make a team win, using a smaller budget.

Brand: 'Billy, Pena is an All-Star, OK? And if you dump him and this Hatteberg thing does not work out the way we want it to, you know this. This is the kind of decision that gets you fired. It is.'

Beane: 'Yes, you're right. I may lose my job. In which case I'm a 44-year-old guy with a high school diploma and a daughter I'd like to be able to send to college. You're 25 years old with a degree from Yale and a pretty impressive apprenticeship. I don't think we're asking the right question. I think the question we should be asking is, do you believe in this thing or not?'

Brand: 'I do.'

Beane: 'It's a problem you think we need to explain ourselves.
Don't. To anyone.'

Brand: 'OK.'

Beane: 'Now, I'm gonna see this thing through for better or worse.'

That's an example of belief-based leadership. It also shows another essential leadership skill: courage. You are willing to bet. Now, to be a leader, you don't have to bet your whole life on every decision you make, but having the courage of your convictions helps motivate those around you to realize your vision.

What if you are the Formal Leader and believe one thing and the rest of your team believes the opposite? You all believe strongly, but unfortunately not in the same way. You cannot let two different 'faiths' drag on. You either have to surrender to the other belief or make sure what you believe in happens.

#017 Practise Daily Scales (PDS)

Leadership is your job, and you set the role description.

Just as a piece of music needs an accomplished musician to bring it to life, the core values and corporate culture of an organization are useless unless you can turn those values into behaviour and actions. For this reason, many of the ideas in this book come from the ambition to show what everyday leadership means in practice – and to show that good leadership requires regular practice. You can't become a concert pianist without practising your scales.

Every day, I fail as a leader in one way or another. However, the insight that I have failed means that I know I did something wrong. I can identify the shortcoming and do something about it. Next time, I'll do it better.

At a course at Stanford University called *The Executive Program for Growing Companies (EPGC)*, I learned a saying, probably hard-earned from the Wild West, that goes: 'There is only one thing worse than being unlucky, and that is being unlucky without knowing why.' If you know why you have failed, it's less of a failure.

The benchmark for what is considered right or wrong, good or bad, is ultimately your own framework. Sure, you probably exist in an environment where there are external rules, like a corporate culture, codes of conduct, manuals and good old social norms. But you will still have to decide for yourself how you're going to behave.

When you start practising, you will notice that leadership is ongoing, on-the-job training that you will never graduate from. You have to practise constantly, just like the musician plays his daily scales. Part of the practice is to reflect on your leadership, part of the practice is to put your insights into action. Leadership is always learned in a context together with other people. (Please also see Be In Charge #006 BIC.)

#018 I Am Human (IAH)

Your best excuse.

If it's any consolation at all, nobody is perfect. You are human. There will be times when you know you have done something wrong or said things you shouldn't have said, when you're mean and stupid, when you piss people off and hurt the ones closest to you, when you do not perform, when you fail and just plainly fuck up. You know you did, and you know why. You may also be able to identify which parts of yourself, your weaknesses and your strengths, contributed to the actions you regret.

It might sound obvious, but the insight that I am only human was one of the best leadership lessons I ever got. My mentor was an Israeli business leader and former elite soldier with a reputation for being very demanding. When he was the CEO of a company in Scandinavia, where the corporate culture is a bit softer than in Israel, it was said that he frequently reduced people to tears with his tough leadership style.

He told me that he simply could not stand mediocrity and that he could not hold back when he saw it. It was probably a combination of his upbringing, his parents' sufferings during the Second World War, his experience in the military, his training as a soldier, his cultural background, his personality, and being from Israel. He did not defend his style, and did apologize when he went too far, when he realized he had done so (sometimes because people started crying). But he also knew himself and realized that there was only so much he could change about the person he was. 'I'm only human,' he said. You cannot necessarily expect others to always accept your behaviour, but you have to understand what you can change about yourself and what you cannot. You can be sorry about what you do to others, but you don't have to make excuses for who you are.

Ultimately, the insight that you are who you are provides some consolation, an excuse. Neither you nor your environment can really expect you to be flawless at all times. *That's* just not human.

REFLECTION POINTS

1. Who are you?
 2. List your strengths, as you see them.
 3. Are you aware of your weaknesses? Do you have any weaknesses that you should do something about?
 4. How do you feed your good and bad dogs?
 5. Does it happen that you do things you do not believe in?
 6. Do you have a set of values, a defined list of virtues or a 'personal mission statement' that you live by? Can you see how the beliefs at your Ground Level are connected with the actions at your Surface Level?
 7. When did you last have to excuse your behaviour?
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CHAPTER 4

ALWAYS SHOW UP

Good leadership is paying attention to details. Every little seemingly harmless situation, discussion, text message, email or phone call is a potential leadership situation that needs your full care and attention.

Now, there are two schools of thought. One is that the emotional well-being of other people is your problem and that you should care about it. The other says that you can do and say whatever you want, and however people react is their problem and there is nothing you can do about it. We will talk about that later. The point is that your actions will, in one way or another, create reactions among the people around you. We are social animals, and we exist in relationship to others.

The most meaningful measure of my success in life will be what my children say about me at my funeral. Given a choice between my investors saying that I delivered a good return, or my children saying that I was a good dad, I would always choose the latter (even if return on other people's capital has in many cases been the number one driver in my job). While I won't be in a position to hear what anyone says about me when I'm gone, of course, the point is that care for my children guides me in my life.

In the end, you are judged by the sum of your actions. And it is not the sum of just the big and important actions and decisions, it is the

aggregate of all the small things you do every day that will ultimately be your testament.

It then follows that 1) you would need to think about *all your actions, all the time*, and 2) you will find it useful to have a compass for guiding you through all the life situations that require decisions and actions – and sometimes non-actions.

In today's word-based world, with its ever growing flow of information in emails, texts, tweets, posts, status updates, comments, reviews . . . it can seem that you are what you say. But you are the sum of your actions, not your words. You are what you do, not what you tweet.

This chapter is about you and your actions.

#019 Always Show Up (ASU)

Do what you have said that you were going to do. Simple. Or is it?

One of the most effective ways to be a good leader is to simply show up. One of the most effective ways to disappoint people is not to show up, or to cancel at the last minute with a bad excuse. Are you a show-upper, or a canceller? I'm normally a show-upper, but I have to admit that there are sometimes exceptions.

It's OK to cancel if you have legitimate reasons, which might include your children being sick, your flight being delayed, or something really important coming up unexpectedly that you have to prioritize. According to most cultural norms, I assume, you must have a good and socially acceptable reason to cancel, and I'm sure that in your life you have had at least once told a white lie to get out of something.

Why is it so hard to simply say, 'Sorry, I don't feel like coming to the dinner tonight. I would really rather just stay at home and read a book'? In the best of worlds, that would be a legitimate reason, wouldn't it? But in the best of worlds, people would also know that they could trust you to show up at a dinner if you have said you will.

There is a scale between always showing up, no matter what, and cancelling on a whim. At what end of the scale are you? Showing up 100% of the times you have a commitment, or never showing up? If you are a theoretical 100% show-upper you are a reliable wonder of stoic duty everybody will admire, and if you cancel every time people expect you to show up, you are a diva nobody will trust in the long run.

Ask yourself: Between 0–100%, how often do you actually honour your commitments? Is your show-up rate 25%, 50%, 75%, 99%?

You are probably somewhere in between the stoic and the diva. I guess you have cancelled meetings, not come to work or skipped a lunch appointment now and again. It happens. And you have probably also honoured a commitment against all odds, when nobody expected you to. Didn't it feel good to honour your promises?

These things matter and people appreciate it when you show up, on time. If your show-up rate is sliding for any reason, take notice. It might be because you are over-committing and taking on too much and start missing entries in your calendar. Or you care less and become arrogant because you are famous. Or you are sick and tired and lacking in energy. Or because you think that the meeting is just a waste of time. Or you assume the right to always make last-minute changes because you are a busy politician who has to optimize your time with regards to the current priorities.

We all have meetings or events that we loathe attending. Do you find that sometimes you don't show up for these because you think they don't matter anyway – or to make a point? Well, this is called passive aggressiveness. It entails making a statement about something in an indirect way. And that's bad. If the meeting is something important but boring, you should go. If you really feel it is not important, it might be better and more mature to explain to the organizers why you don't find it an efficient use of your time, so that they have a chance to work on things. That is constructive feedback. Not showing up is bad communication and will reflect negatively on you.

An easy way to improve your show-up rate is to simply make fewer appointments. That's OK, and can be a very sound and sane approach to both private life and work. However, having few things to do does not necessarily make those things easier to do. You may have noticed that when you have just one thing you are supposed to do (for example, making a work call during a lazy vacation week with an abundance of time) it is almost impossible to get it done, while during a busy work week with a full agenda adding one more call seems to require marginal effort even if you have much less time. It is often easier to get things done when you have a lot on your plate. As the saying goes: 'If you want something done, ask a busy person.'

As a rule, show up. That is good leadership. And show others that it is important to show up. If you cannot be there, excuse yourself and have a good reason.

Now, if you have a business dinner to attend tonight – the third this month – but you feel that you should really spend time at home with your family, what would you do?

- A. Go to the dinner.
- B. Cancel, without stating any reason.
- C. Cancel, with a white lie (that you are sick).
- D. Cancel, saying that you *have to* be home with the family tonight.
- E. Cancel with honesty – saying that you *want to* be home with your family.

As a rule, choose A and show up. If you have the guts, choose E if that is what your heart tells you (and that is also good leadership). We often say that we ‘have to’ do things, as a way of avoiding taking responsibility for our actions. After all, how you decide to handle the situation is ultimately a product of your inner compass of right and wrong, your personal desires and the social consequences you are willing to accept.

When you get an invitation to a party, this is the ideal scenario: you RSVP as soon as possible, stating that you would be delighted to come. You show up in great shape with a nice and personal gift, have a good time, leave all the people you meet with a positive feeling about you, and leave equally inspired by the people you have met. Then you send a personal, hand-written, thank-you card stating what a good time you had and praising your hosts. Aim to live your life like that, and good things will happen. (Please also see Maximize Positive Interactions #031 MPI.)

#020 Control Upset Emails (CUE)

Stop destructive loops, spread good behaviour.

Being upset can mean being mentally or emotionally distressed, angry, frustrated, irritated or in other states of negative mindset. This is the story of The Upset Email. Every now and then this little bastard shows up in our inbox. In its own simple and devilish way, The Upset Email is one of the best leadership tests. The challenge embodies much of what leadership is all about.

Here's the all-familiar situation:

You get an email that is full of emotion, maybe anger and disappointment. Things are not always spelled out, but you can sense much going on between the lines. In the email you are criticized in a way you feel is unjust. You start getting angry yourself. There are several points in the email that require some response. So, what do you do? React or act?

- A. You let loose all your emotions and reply with an equally upset email.
- B. You ignore it and don't reply at all, forgetting (maybe suppressing) the whole thing.
- C. You sleep on it, think about how to interpret the email and how to respond (in due time).

Some say that it's good to show what you feel, and in many contexts this is true. But in the complex and fast-moving world of social networks, email, text messages and other means of instant communication, the human factor amplifies. And when communicating in a professional environment, it is best to stick to the issue; and to sort out whatever emotional conflict may exist, to Reduce The Noise (#093 RTN), it is better to meet.

The problem is that by replying to The Upset Email on impulse, i.e. sending back an email full of negative emotion, you will feed a destructive loop that will trigger an equally sour response until it gets out of control. Your job as leader is to stop destructive loops, not feed

them. However, ignoring a bad email is not the solution either – the underlying problem is unlikely to disappear just because you didn't reply to one of the symptoms.

It is hard to give general advice to The Upset Email dilemma. There are so many situations, social settings and different kinds of personal relations that it is impossible to give an iron-clad rule for how to reply. However, in general, it is good to know:

1. The Upset Email is a warning sign, and you should proceed with caution if possible.
2. You are in full control of your interpretations and your response.
3. Whatever your response is, it will trigger good or bad reactions on the other side.

Please note that if the email is full of *positive* emotion, you can send back whatever *positive* response you like. There is no limit really to the level and amount of praise and happiness you can send. Of course, excess use of 'love bombing' risks resulting in annoying people, but as a general rule you can be as positive as you like when communicating, but one negative email can be disastrous.

When I get The Upset Email, my first thought is to identify it as such = danger. Then I pick up the phone to sort it out or suggest a meeting. I have noticed that people rarely send me angry emails nowadays, and when I call they are a little worried that it is because I want to sort something out. Email means that all is hunky dory, whereas a phone call can mean red alert. That is why I sometimes make a call just to say hello to neutralize the phone as a channel.

So, beware of emails. But as you have noticed, this is not about emailing, but how you choose to respond to everyday challenges around you.

#021 Interpretations And Responses (IAR)

Reality doesn't hurt.

Reality doesn't hurt in itself – it is our interpretation of it that hurts. As the author Byron Katie says: 'It's not the problem that causes our suffering, it's our thinking about the problem.' This understanding is fundamental to the idea of leadership. Much has been written in popular literature about this phenomenon.

In *Getting Real*, Susan Campbell, writes about experiencing 'what is', or seeing things for what they are. She writes that to 'experience *what is* helps you make the distinction between what is, that is what you actually experience (see, hear, sense, feel, notice, remember) and what you imagine (think, interpret, evaluate, believe) . . . There's a difference between what is, and the ideas you have about it'.

The constant chatter of our minds about everything that is going on around us can drive us mad. But know that we can control the mind and ask ourselves for a second opinion. The ability to think about how we think, our consciousness, is what separates humans from other beings. Use it! Here's an example:

You are in love with someone. You adore this person and they are aware of your feelings. You have spent some time together and it seems you both like each other – but *you* don't know whether the other person loves you, or wants the relationship to be more than friendship. In order to find out, you send a text message to suggest a dinner date. There is no reply for some time, and this is obviously painful. A lot of thoughts will pass through your mind; She/he is ignoring me . . . does not love me . . . has another lover . . . this was a stupid idea . . . why did I send this text? . . . I can never contact her/him again . . . shall I send a new text? . . . call? . . . let the whole thing be? Your mind is torturing you. It is not really the fact that you do not get a text message back that is hurting, but your interpretations of that reality.

Well, you can tell another part of your mind to inform you that the reason she/he isn't replying is just because she/he is travelling or busy. You simply don't know.

When you finally get a text back, saying ‘Sorry for not replying earlier, I lost my phone. Would love to have dinner’, you will feel the most wonderful relief and wonder why you put yourself through all this suffering.

In business life this happens all the time. Why don’t they respond to our proposal? Why haven’t they got back to us on the contract? Why did they send us this email about changing the meeting?

In the case of The Upset Email, you should know that you don’t have to react to it. You can read the email, interpret it any way you like (from ‘what an idiot’ to ‘he must have been having a bad day’) and choose any response (from ‘I will fire him’ to ‘let’s have a coffee and sort things out’). Never forget that you are in control of the options.

In a meeting, when your adversary comes at you with a provocative statement, you can choose to keep your head cool and take a deep breath before you reply. Do not be a victim of your own reactions, responding to whatever happens around you. Try to experience what is, control your interpretations and responses, be proactive and guided by your own compass. It is not always easy, but it is possible with training. Self-regulation (the ability to control reactive impulses and moods) is one of the five components of *Emotional Intelligence*, formulated by Daniel Goleman.

#022 Keep Head Cool (KHC)

Put it in the freezer.

*'If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too.'*

From the poem *If*, by Rudyard Kipling, 1895

I rise early and often take a long warm bath to reflect on the day ahead. When I arrive at the office, into the whirlwind, there are meetings, challenges to resolve, decisions to make, potential pitfalls, etc. So when I start my day, I want to be grounded, not caught in the whirlwind and contributing to the general chaos, frustration and confusion. (See also Practise Daily Scales #017 PDS.)

So when my son asked why I take a bath in the morning, I explained that I want to be calm and ready when I come to work. I want to keep my head cool. He said: 'But it looks like your head is red hot, so why don't you put it in the freezer instead?'

That is pretty good advice. When things heat up it is good to simply change focus, do something different, put your mind on something else, somewhere else, and cool down. 'Put it in the freezer.' Stay there long enough and you will be forced to think differently.

#023 Apologize In Public (AIP)

If you screw up in public, apologize in the same forum to make it count.

This is certainly one of the hardest things to do, but you should do it without hesitation. I learned from one of my mentors that if you make a mistake in front of a group, you must apologize in front of the same group. There is not much else to it.

The rule is that you apologize at the same level you fucked up on. If you disappoint a friend, you apologize directly to that friend. If you make a mistake in front of the whole company, you apologize and admit that mistake to the whole company. If you screw up in public, like US president Richard Nixon did and several other politicians before and after him, you are supposed to apologize in public, to the people. Nixon never really did, but confessed his wrongdoings in the famous interview with David Frost in 1977. Richard Nixon is also famous for saying: 'Defeat doesn't finish a man, quitting does. A man is not finished when he's defeated. He's finished when he quits.'

Once, on a foreign trip with a delegation of distinguished Swedish academics and industrialists (where I happened to be an unlikely but grateful participant) led by the head of state, the King of Sweden, I screwed up one morning, over-slept and missed the bus where the rest of the group was waiting. Later that day, I apologized in front of the whole group. However, I made sure to finish my apology with a joke about myself and my mistake to try to end on a positive note. The King seemed to approve. In any case, I welcomed this embarrassing situation as an opportunity to practise this AIP rule.

#024 Tell The Truth (TTT)

Do you have what it takes always to be truthful?

Am I always fully honest? No, I have to admit. Do I always tell the truth and nothing but the truth? No. Do I sometimes leave out information, without actually lying? Yes.

How honest can you be? Interviewed in the *Financial Times*, Larry David, the creator of *Seinfeld* and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, was asked about what stops him from being brutally honest, like his character in the TV series. His response: ‘Somebody would beat me up every day. You can’t be that honest and function in society.’

Business, like the rest of life, is all about people. That means that the social rules that apply to life in general also apply to leadership. The basics hold true: do what you have said you will do and keep your promises, be on time and don’t lie. The concept of truth is central, and often hard. There are at least two senses in which we can tell the truth:

- A. Stating your opinion, or being *honest* about your feelings and opinions.
- B. Admitting something that is not known by others, or *revealing* the true state of things.

I think it comes down to this – honesty and revelations. The first one is mainly motivated from within, while the other one is driven by external factors. When Billy Bibbit tells Nurse Ratched in the movie *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* that he is not ashamed about sleeping with Candy, he is telling the truth about his feelings. This is an example of type A telling the truth. And he gets terribly punished for it. A so-called whistle blower at a company, revealing dirty secrets and uncovering a scandal is a type B truth-teller.

In one of my companies, a key person showed bad judgement. He was going to buy some old stock options from the company and on the last day before the options expired, he came back and offered a very low price. Now, we had no chance of finding another buyer and the price was very different from the one we had agreed with the shareholders.

When I called him about the matter, I did not really tell the truth, I was not honest. I presented the problem as something that mainly concerned his forcing the board of the company to make a difficult decision by offering a lower price at the last moment. The real problem was not the stock options but the trust issue that this had created. Given this behaviour, did we want him to continue to be involved in the company? Directly addressing the issue of trust would have been honest. I did get around to it a couple of days later, when things had settled down a bit. But telling the truth up-front is hard.

Although President Nixon never formally confessed to any wrongdoings in the Watergate Scandal, he was under enormous public pressure to reveal what had really happened and his role in the affair. People wanted him to tell the truth, in a type B sense of the term. They wanted him to reveal something that he was hiding. If you have a secret lover, are using company funds for your own interests or do not possess the diploma you said you have, you are not telling the truth as understood in the example B above. You are not revealing the true state of matters.

Happily, the matters in which we are most often dishonest are more banal, like telling a white lie to avoid a dreadful meeting. Oscar Wilde, the famous British author and dandy, said: 'A little sincerity is a dangerous thing, and a great deal of it is absolutely fatal.'

To tell the truth in all cases without any filters is probably social suicide. Our society is actually built on a small amount of healthy deception. Many of us have probably told someone 'you look great' when they in fact look miserable. If you care about the relationship, you generally don't tell someone that they look awful, even if they do. The truth is often painful, and it can be used as a weapon, too. However, it is easier to tell the truth if the other person trusts you, and if you say it with empathy and concern. As a rule, you can say what you want and tell the truth if you say it with respect. If your friend looks awful and you are worried about their health, it may be that you can share this honest opinion with them if you do so with respect and regard for their feelings.

You should not only speak the truth when there is a truth to tell, instead, actively look for truths and tell them, so you don't miss any.

Make it a rule to tell the truth. Seek out truths that need to be told. That is an active mindset. Let me give an example.

Whenever I do a board presentation, I start with a slide I call 'Good and Bad News'. I summarize the positive points I want to highlight, but I make sure to scan for any negative information that I think should be disclosed. To be on the active lookout for bad news is not a negative or pessimistic mindset, it is rather a way to try to tell the whole truth. It is so easy to forget or downplay the uncomfortable parts. It is human nature to shy away from the hard stuff and pretend it does not exist. The truth will always show up in the end anyway, and it is better that you tell the truth before someone else thinks you're hiding it.

#025 Deliver Tough Messages (DTM)

Upfront, with empathy.

This is a rather short leadership insight. How do you deliver tough messages? Well, the answer is that you just do it, directly and with empathy if possible. Billy Beane, the baseball manager for the Oakland As, put it well in *Moneyball*: ‘Would you rather get one shot in the head, or five in the chest and bleed to death?’

The standard example of a tough message is when you need to tell someone that their job is being made redundant. It is a sad and horrible thing to take away someone’s job. You interfere with another human being’s life and livelihood. You have to take that very seriously.

- First, if you have bad news to tell, tell it up front and directly, without trying to soften the blow. People want to hear straight and unfiltered information when it concerns important things.
- Second, try to deliver a tough message with compassion, with a focus on the other person’s feelings. If you care for the person you are talking with, show it.
- Third, do it in person and do it personally. If you have a tough message to deliver, don’t let anyone else do your dirty work. Don’t deliver tough messages on the phone, or through email or text. Do it face to face, looking the other person in the eye.

#026 Take The Blame (TTB)

Failure is yours, success is ours.

When we make mistakes it is a natural human reaction to try to explain why, and sometimes to blame it on someone or something else – to find your alibi, your explanation of how you were not really involved at all. Resist that impulse.

Don't give yourself too hard a time or bury yourself in self-doubt. But accept that your failures are always your own – and your successes always belong to others. It becomes you so much better than the alternative, that failure is always someone else's, and success is always yours. If you take the former approach, you will be aware that someone will surely give you credit for some of the success in due time.

I once wrote a CEO's letter to the shareholders as part of the annual report. The company had missed the plan, which meant that I as CEO had missed the plan, and I wanted to give some perspectives on what was going on in the company. We had launched new products and services during the year, expanded into new markets, raised capital and done a lot of other things. I wanted to take the blame for running the company in such a way that we lost focus, did too much at once and lost growth. Also, I felt the urge to give a better picture of everything positive that was going on in the company, since we had implemented a new strategy, spun off an interesting business under a new brand and had many exciting opportunities in the pipeline. Instead, I realized the letter must have sounded like a big excuse and an effort to explain. I used 'we' too often, where I should have written 'I'. Always admit mistakes up front, always take the blame without a fuss.

- Anything connected to failure, like missing the plan, should start with 'I'. I have missed the plan. I am sorry.
- Anything connected with success, such as winning a major client, should start with 'We'. We won an important contract. We are happy.

When things fail, it is usually the negative result of a number of correlated and interrelated circumstances and people involved. The point here is not that you should always take on the sole responsibility for everything that goes wrong, it is rather about how success as well as failure is portrayed to others, and your approach to that. So, as a general rule in the back of my head: Failure is *yours*. Success is *ours*.

#027 Action Point Magic (APM)

*Follow up on what you have said you will follow up on.
Make things happen.*

You know the situation. At the end of a meeting or a phone call there are a number of action points and you are supposed to follow up on your tasks. It could be a business setting where you are planning next year's budget or with friends planning a ski trip. 'OK, to summarize, we have three action points. You do this, you do that, and Fredrik, you do this thing. OK? OK!'

Has it ever happened that you did not follow up, and when someone asked you about that action point you had to admit that you forgot about it? And has it happened that you did not have time to do it, or simply just downgraded the priority?

Has it happened that other people forgot their action points and did not follow up on what you decided? Or that you actually followed up on what you were supposed to do, but the others had forgotten about it? Yes, I think all of the above happens quite often.

Action points do not always come from meetings, discussions and interactions with other people – they also come from yourself, without any expectations from anyone else. You make a note to buy that gift, send that card, call your friend, pay that bill, etc. How you organize your to-do list says a lot about you. How do you manage yours?

- In an app synced with other apps, in the cloud
- A list on paper
- In your diary together with all your other stuff
- In an Excel file on your computer
- On Post-it® Notes all on the wall
- Not at all

Just as we are slaves to our clocks, we are prisoners of our to-do lists. It feels good to tick an item off the list, and it feels bad to see your list of unfinished business growing longer. Life is a long to-do list, and then we die.

Management by to-do list does not sound like much fun, but it is powerful and efficient because it focuses on getting things done. Properly handled, to-do lists get those action points actioned. Keeping a list, and systematically taking care of those tasks, actually creates reality. Say one of the tasks on your list is to make a phone call to someone. You make the call and reality occurs: something that was formerly in your head and on a to-do list now takes place in the outside world! You might think it is banal, but every time you take care of a simple little task, something wonderful happens:

- Things get done, you turn an ambition into something real.
- By getting things done, you spread good leadership by following up on your promises.

That is Action Point Magic.

#028 Give Away Pride (GAP)

Don't let prestige get in the way.

My grandfather, Anders Gartnäs, was an inspiring person. He left his home in rural Dalecarlia in northern Sweden in the 1910s to go to university in Gothenburg and start a career as an engineer. It is remarkable because he grew up on a farm in a small village and was expected to take over the farm after his father. There were no books (and the story goes that he was forbidden to read) and no newspapers, no radio and no external sources of influence whatsoever. Imagine a life back then without Internet, TV or mobiles. But his dream was to become an engineer, and off he went. He got his degree in engineering from a prestigious school, Chalmers University of Technology, went on to work for the telecoms company L.M. Ericsson, one of the hottest technology companies of its time, where he invented new products, and later started his own business based on his ideas. He was a true entrepreneur.

Even though he died when I was only a year old and we never got to know each other, he has always been one of my greatest inspirations. My mother often quoted her father and I grew up with his approach to life. In his diaries he wrote a poem in 1917 about his efforts in life and his 'Will of Steel', and we sometimes read it at family gatherings. In a direct translation, it goes something like this:

Is your burden heavy to bear
 Bending you to the earth
 Appears your path dark and gloomy
 The way is long and weary
 Your goal is still far away
 And you are so tired
 Try your Will of Steel!
 Better hold and obstacles will fold
 Forward strive, not stay
 Time will not stop
 Chase the clouds from your brow
 Be brave and hope again!

Besides the ‘Will of Steel’, he left two quotes that I always have with me. The first one simply says: ‘Stick and a bindle.’ It refers to the hobo, a wandering man with no belongings except the ones he is carrying in his small bag, called a bindle, tied to a stick. A hobo was a vagabond worker, going from place to place. My grandfather said that you should not own more than you can carry with your ‘stick and a bindle’. Of course, most of us have more possessions than that, and the advice is not meant literally. It really means that you should not depend on material things, and if you lose everything you have you should be happy anyway – because all you *really* need fits in a small bag, symbolically. It’s your inner strength. That was the strength he had found when he left home for his adventure. I often think that it would be OK to lose everything, I would still have myself and my inner core. I think about my grandfather and feel confident and strong.

Another quotation of his that stays with me is ‘You should not have so much pride that you can’t give some of it away’. There are several shades of meaning here. You should be proud enough that you can easily lose some of your pride without suffering any ill effects. And all your pride is not really worth anything if you cannot let go of some of it. You should not be too greedy with your pride, give it away. The general expression is ‘Swallow your pride’, but I think that giving it away is more relevant because when you let go of your pride and lose a little bit of face, it is often to another person that you are handing over some of that prestige.

So, I think in business negotiations, when both parties are locked down in a battle of principles, that I should be the first one to give away some of my pride. And if I don’t, it’s not a sign that I’m proud, but that I’m poor. Giving away a little pride does not really make you less proud. Note that there is a difference between corrupting your integrity and willingly losing some prestige. You can be the bigger person without having to sacrifice your core values.

So much in life and business gets stuck because of pride, prestige and people’s fear that they will look stupid. Instead, accept that you sometimes have to do something you find embarrassing. In business it is results that count, and if you have the opportunity to trade some of your personal prestige to create a better outcome for everybody, nobody will look stupid and you will get a big return on that pride you gave away.

#029 To Be Nice (TBN)

The importance of kindness.

To be nice is one of the most underrated virtues. Nice people can sometimes be regarded as weak, soft or ineffectual. Mean people get attention and respect, if not trust and affection. But as Roger Federer, the tennis champion, is known for saying: 'It is nice to be important, but it is more important to be nice.'

Recognize that all people fight their battles. The man you pass in the subway, the woman at the checkout, the child you are raising, your father and mother, your colleague at work, your boss. We all have our problems, challenges, ups and downs, struggles and battles. We are used to life's hardships, and we don't expect support and understanding. Life is life. So when someone is nice to us, for no reason, a stranger on the bus, it warms the heart. It does not cost you anything to be nice to the people around you, but the sunshine you spread is priceless. To look at someone, smile and say 'Hello, how are you?' is all it takes.

It is usually in tougher environments that people tend to be nicer, maybe because of a deeper underlying understanding about the hardships of life. I have noticed that it is more likely that a stranger entering an elevator in New York City will say 'Good morning' than someone entering an elevator in Stockholm.

In raising my children, I chose three simple things that I wanted them to focus on as a success formula for school and everyday life:

- Do your homework.
- Brush your teeth.
- Be kind.

For more about simple guidelines in work and personal life, see Stick To Three (#094 STT).

#030 Listen Without Commenting (LWC)

Can you hear the feelings?

I went to a strange four-day retreat in northern Sweden in Vikarebyn, that proved to be useful in one interesting way. I learned how to listen without commenting. If you have ever tried and experienced how hard it is, you should know. To listen to another person, who is maybe terribly troubled, without intervening or reacting is difficult to do. It is human nature to comment and try to help, sometimes just because we tend to think that we should, and not out of real compassion.

This is how the exercise works. You and another person, who might be a stranger to you, sit opposite one another. In turn, each of you then tells a very personal story. The task is to listen to the other person, without interrupting, commenting or trying to give any advice. When the other person has finished telling the story, you are still not to comment on what they have said, but simply to express how you felt when you experienced the story, and how you felt for the person who told it. The point of the exercise, as I view it, is to listen not only to the words and the narrative but also to other people's feelings, and to your own. It is also about truly focusing on another person, which can be pretty good leadership training.

Too often in work and in life you are trying to step in and solve someone's problems, fix things, give advice. It is good practice to just listen, resisting the temptation to interfere, speak, act. Be aware that often your role is just to be there, silent. And if you are to comment on anything, just confirm the feeling: 'I can see that you are angry, or happy, or sad . . .' You don't have to try to fix everything.

#031 Maximize Positive Interactions (MPI)

Make every contact count, in a good way.

Much in business and life is about frequency. In selling, ‘frequency’ is a key term. It refers to the number of times you reach your customers through certain channels. If you are a travelling sales person, the frequency can be the number of doors you knock on. In online marketing and e-commerce it is the number of ad impressions, the clicks on those ads that bring visitors to your websites, and the resulting sales. Frequency is any kind of interaction with a customer, and can also be applied to the layout of a retail store, a supermarket or a mall, referring to the way customers are exposed to the offerings and the deliberate path that takes you through the building. In a political campaign, for example, it may be the number of hands you shake.

A large part of your life is interactions with other people, not only people you physically meet every day but in addition all your digital interactions. Today’s social networks offer the possibility to interact globally on a scale never seen before. Updates on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, company intranets and other online forums empower you to communicate daily with a large group of people. This was simply not possible before.

By communicating with more people online, you will eventually also meet more people offline. You get in touch, get to know each other and eventually meet for some reason or the other in the real world, have lunch. How many interactions do you have every day, online and offline? Not counting the constant flow in the social networks and various updates, I would say I probably have an average of 100 interactions every day: breakfast with my children, meetings, brief checks with colleagues, emails, messages, calls, texts, random encounters. That makes it around 36,000 interactions every year, not counting the online chatter in social networks. That is 36,000 opportunities to transmit a positive or negative experience.

In his book *Moments of Truth*, Jan Carlzon describes the insight that the whole company is judged in every single interaction between a customer and an employee of the company. Jan used to run an airline,

with countless opportunities for interactions between the company's staff and its customers, from check-in at the airport to touch-down at the destination. If the interaction with the company employee is positive, the whole company is regarded positively.

Jan Carlzon: 'Each of our 10 million customers came in contact with approximately five Scandinavian Airlines (SAS) employees, and this contact lasted an average of 15 seconds each time. Thus, SAS is "created" 50 million times a year, 15 seconds at a time. These 50 million "moments of truth" are the moments that ultimately determine whether SAS will succeed or fail as a company. They are the moments when we must prove to our customers that SAS is their best alternative.'

If the encounter is negative, it reflects badly on the whole company. How many times do you think *you* have dismissed an entire corporation because of a single bad experience? It happens, right?

Now imagine you are like that company. You also have countless interactions with the people around you, and you are judged in your entirety by each interaction. Whether online or offline, you want to make a good impression and spread energy. Aim for maximizing positive interactions.

#032 Follow Your Heart (FYH)

There comes a time when you have to find the answer within.

Every leader will eventually face a situation where there are two or more equally reasonable options to choose between. The film *Thirteen Days* (2000, New Line Cinema), based on the book by Robert Kennedy, describes the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962, when the president, John F. Kennedy, was facing the horrible prospect of World War III. The Soviets were placing nuclear arms on Cuba, within close firing range of the United States, and the ships bearing the missiles were steaming ahead across the Atlantic. They had to be stopped.

What to do? In the movie, Robert Kennedy says: 'We got a bunch of smart guys. We lock 'em up together in there, kick 'em in the ass til they come up with options.'

And yes, the experts and advisers do come back with two options. One is using aggressive military force against the Soviets and the other option is more peaceful. It all comes back to President Kennedy, who has to choose between an air strike or a blockade.

There will be situations for every leader where an equally strong case can be made for several options. The dilemma is that you cannot base your decision on facts and reason alone because all options are plausible and reasonable. There is no clear right or wrong. Everything is possible. What do you do? That is when you have to rely on your instincts, your values, your intuition; not what *is right* but what *feels right*.

John F. Kennedy did not go along with his joint chiefs and order an attack, which risked triggering a nuclear war. Instead he opted for the blockade and negotiations with the Soviets, and World War III was avoided. Because of the constitution of the United States, the ultimate decision and course of action was up to one single man, and the president had to follow his heart.

Be inspired by how President Kennedy handled the Cuban Missile Crisis. If the challenge of a global nuclear war can be resolved by heart, you can surely find the confidence to solve your everyday problems by following your heart, too.

#033 Check Before Promise (CBP)

Have you secured that 'yes'?

It happens all the time, and it is one of the most common leadership traps. You cannot deliver on a promise you have made because delivery would require people you have not involved or resources that are not yet committed. It is a characteristic of the typical entrepreneur to oversell, to the extent that it's almost part of the job.

As a rule, don't promise something that involves other people without checking with them first. When my children are invited to birthday parties, it is usually their parents who send out invitations by email to the other children's parents (like me). Sometimes I have replied 'yes' just to get the reply off, minimize the list of tasks on my to-do list, and put the event in the diary. Children always want to go to parties anyway, yes? Well, no. It happens that my children, on the day of the party, don't want to go at all. I remind them that you should always show up if you have committed to be somewhere. But then they remind me that I did not ask them if they wanted to go to the party, and they are thereby not committed at all. In all fairness, I have to admit they're right. I did not check with the people involved before making a promise to someone else.

To make plans and promises involving others without involving them in the decisions is to treat them like children. And even children do not want to be treated like children. They want respect.

In a business, the typical example is sales people promising customers delivery of something that they have no control over, since it might require further development from the product department, who have not been consulted. But it's not just sales people who do this, it can happen to anyone who is under pressure to deliver. So, check before you promise something if the fulfilment of that promise in any way relies on other people or resources. Taking someone else's time and commitment for granted is a sure way to demotivate people.

#034 Adapt Beginner's Mind (ABM)

'Stay hungry, stay foolish.'

I cannot say I'm an expert at anything. In fact, I don't want to be an expert. For me, having The Beginner's Mind means that I am always learning. I never get too comfortable, lazy and content with my own knowledge. Even when approaching the projects and activities I'm most comfortable with, such as starting and running companies, I feel that I am nothing but a beginner learning new things every day. I am hungry, restless, dissatisfied, worried, frustrated and making mistakes. I'm trying to be wise, but I constantly find myself facing new challenges that require new solutions and things I have never done before.

Adopt The Beginner's Mind and stay hungry. As I have been a beginner for most of my life, I may know a little more in my field than the beginner who has just started to learn. But that does not mean I am an expert, and it does not mean that I don't have to learn from others. By viewing yourself as an expert, you risk guarding your knowledge too much, since that is the foundation of your professional identity. This makes you unwilling to challenge your own beliefs, making you weak and vulnerable to new knowledge since it becomes a threat to you rather than an opportunity. So, being an expert can be a potential weakness. The beginner moves ahead with the flow.

If you think of yourself as an expert, you might base your existence and livelihood on it and demand that people respect your authority. To be an expert, in a positive sense, means that you are willing to share your 'expertise' on a subject when you are in a situation with people who have less experience than you. It will sometimes happen that you are invited to a meeting or event in the capacity of an 'expert' on one thing or another. If you find yourself in this position, be humble about it, and also acknowledge the limits to your knowledge and experience.

Arrogance is one of the worst social crimes. The arrogant person thinks he knows more than other people, and looks down on them. It may well be that he knows more, but that doesn't mean that he is superior.

There have been times when I have found myself to be the most knowledgeable person about something – for example the workings of an online business – and I have lost my patience with people who don't have the same level of understanding as I do. It has happened that my impatience, and, yes, arrogance, showed. It always makes me feel bad. The consequence is that communication is lost; the rapport and the relationship are replaced with hostility and coldness. Instead of achieving something together, there are then two opposite parties instead. Avoid becoming the arrogant expert and distancing yourself from others. Be the humble beginner.

#035 Stop Doing Things (SDT)

What you and everything around you would benefit without.

We are normally focused on doing things. We go to meetings, we pick up the children after school, we lift weights at the gym to get in better shape and drive to the supermarket to buy groceries. Most of the things we do, we do for a reason so we don't really question it. And there is, as you have noticed, a tendency to add ever more things to do until we feel that we are doing too much and that time flies too fast. Still, you sense that you are not doing enough and look for ways to fill your days in new, ingenious ways. It is easy to do things, but why is it so hard to stop doing things? We become enslaved by routine, patterns, ambition, duty and deadlines.

A real key to success is to take a critical approach to how you spend your time (or even your life) to find out what you can do without. Some things are obvious to some people, like stop smoking or stop eating unhealthy food. Some things are less apparent, like stop criticizing or stop talking, if that is something you tend to do too much.

You get experience by doing things, and evolve by stopping doing things. And by understanding what you should do less. Can you think of three things you do that you know do not contribute in any positive way to your life, to the people around you or to society as a whole? Write them down. Are you willing to stop doing them?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

When you stop doing things it might have consequences in the short and long term, depending on the thing you stop doing. If you

stop being married or quit your job, it will probably have more impact on your life than if you just skip another meeting. When you think about stopping doing things, rank the thing by 1) the consequences it will have, and 2) how those consequences will play out in time, short and long term. You will also see the things that you want to *keep on doing* and maybe do more of. (For a note on perspective, see Find The Ratio #074 FTR.)

#036 Quantity Time Rules (QTR)

It is not what you do, it is how much you do it.

One of the worst expressions I know is ‘quality time’. It implies that when you have little time, you should do more with it. The classic example is the hard-working parent who has very limited time to spend with the children. So, when the busy parent with a guilty conscience decides to do something with the children, like spending Saturday afternoon together, it is with the ambition to make it the best Saturday afternoon ever, stuff it with great things and make sure it is true ‘quality time’, not wasted, low-quality time. What is wrong with this?

- First, a relationship is based on ongoing interaction with ups and downs and regular communication. You cannot simply make it up with ambitious events.
- Second, by betting on ‘quality time’, you are under great pressure to deliver. What if the quality time turns out to be disappointing?

In a company, doing a conference, trip or off-site event with your team can be a good thing, but it cannot replace the daily relationship. With kids, as a father, I know that hanging out on the sofa watching TV – a typical low-quality thing to do by many standards – is a perfectly relaxed way to spend time together. With colleagues at work, as with children, what counts is the amount of time you spend together and that you get to know each other, not the exact quality of that time. The best off-site conference we ever had in my management team was a trip to the north of Sweden to ski, and no work agenda. Just spending time together. Quantity time rules.

#037 Rest Restore Recharge (RRR)

Get some sleep.

Did you ever get that question: What is keeping you awake at night? It is supposed to mean: What is really important and challenging? Personally, I have had nights when I could not sleep because I was thinking so hard about something, usually a problem or challenge at work.

Sleep is essential to keep you sane and healthy. Working through the night should not be a regular occurrence, or it will affect your performance and judgement. If your worries are leaving you sleepless, make sure you seek help and advice for this if it goes on too long. It's important that the expression be nothing more than an expression: 'It's keeping me awake at night' should mean that you have a difficult problem to solve, but you chose to sleep on it instead, waking up refreshed in the morning to take a new sober look at the challenge at hand. Chances are that it will look like less of a problem.

If you ever get that question 'What keeps you awake at night?', you just reply: 'Nothing, I sleep at night.' Even if you have big, hairy challenges, don't let them ruin your sleep. Rest, restore, recharge.

#038 Change With Facts (CWF)

People have more respect for facts than opinions.

It never fails to astonish me what facts can do. The typical state in a business, especially a management team, is a constant and sometimes heated debate about everything. It often happens that one faction holds a certain belief and another faction disagrees, or that a group of people all hold differing views that can't be reconciled.

Going back to the facts of the situation is always a good strategy, provided that everyone involved believes in the facts. You can nevertheless, find yourself in a situation, like President Kennedy during the Cuban Missile Crisis, where the facts are all agreed upon – but not how to respond to them.

For making change happen, I use facts in two ways. The first one is to change my own opinions. The second one is to change others' opinions.

I can have strong views and ideas, based on my gut feeling. If I suspect that something is not right, I want to get the facts. If the fact actually points in another direction than my initial thoughts, then I'm more than willing to change my mind. It's better to *do* the right thing than to *be* right.

To change others' opinion, first you must be sure yourself and present factual evidence to support your opinion. I have seen many projects, deals, investments, expansion plans and ideas take a 180-degree turn when new facts were presented. And the funny thing is that it is often quite frictionless. Given that the facts are trusted, people are open to change. It is so much harder for people to admit that the opinion of another person is right than it is to admit that the facts are right. Facts are not personal, they are objective and neutral. This is why it is easier to change with facts than opinions.

#039 Never Give Up (NGU)

Be persistent, by default.

It is possible to create new things, situations, fortunes, futures and possibilities through the sheer force of your mind, also great companies, beautiful art and trips to the moon. I believe that just by wanting something strongly enough, you will get it. It takes just one person and their idea to make it become reality. It might take time, but it will happen if you persist.

In his modern inspirational self-help classic, *Think and Grow Rich*, Napoleon Hill described how the early American super-entrepreneurs like Rockefeller and Morgan built business empires through determination and mental power. You can have everything you want if you are willing to work hard and make sacrifices. You have to decide whether it's worth it to work hard and become a multi-millionaire if it also means that you never see your children grow up.

I have two balancing perspectives. One is that you should never give up – eventually you will get what you want. The other perspective is something I call Let's Fail Quickly (#078 LFQ). To give it up. There is a fine line between knowing that you will ultimately succeed by hanging in there and applying more willpower, and realizing that it is time to quit. Put it in perspective: you want to win long term and don't give up on your goal, but along the way you might have to fail many times.

It is always better to identify early on when you are up against unbeatable odds and cut your losses, try a new route forward. An example of long-term failure, from hard experience at one of my own companies, came from investing year after year in establishing our business in a new market, only to realize after years of time, money and effort spent that we weren't going to succeed because of poor economic conditions, messy competition and the wrong people hired. Had we pulled out all the stops and thrown more time, money and resources at it, we might ultimately have succeeded – but it was simply not worth it.

I think, of course, that if you never give up even the most hopeless project will eventually be a success. Everything is possible and nothing

is doomed. But sometimes it is not worth pursuing. Since my mindset, by default, is geared towards making things work, I don't give up. I try, and try, and try. However, if I become convinced that it is not going to work, I'm quite eager to fail as quickly as possible, take the loss and move on.

The tricky question is to know when to quit. It could be a financial decision, an operational one or simply a gut feeling. Usually, the reason and the moment will appear naturally. It is generally harder to quit or shut something down when a lot of time, effort, financial and emotional investment and personal and political prestige are involved – not to mention complex dynamics, like the European Union and the euro – while more trivial projects can be closed down more easily. Just as you should like to succeed, you should be aware of when it's time to fail. But your default setting should be to never give up.

#040 Be The Diplomat (BTD)

Do you want to be the trouble-maker or the trouble-solver?

One of my ancestors, Folke Arnander, my father's uncle, was a young and promising Swedish diplomat when he was killed in a car accident in Rome in the 1930s. Though I never met him he is one of my inspirations. Whenever I find myself in a tricky negotiation or in the middle of some trouble that has to be resolved, I think of Folke and find the inspiration to solve the problem in a 'diplomatic' way, by positioning myself as a liaison between the conflicting parties. It's part of my compass.

For example, when things are getting tense and an issue is escalating to a destructive conflict between people, suggest having a coffee outside of the office at a nice café, change the scene and the atmosphere, slow down, take a walk and spend some time together and have a chat. This will also give you an opportunity to listen more profoundly to the feelings and what 'lies beneath', the real reasons. Diplomacy depends to some extent on good listening skills.

Personally, I don't really like too much conflict and confrontation. I do it when I have to, and I try not to hide from the tough and frank messages that I have to deliver sometimes, but it does not come naturally to me. I like to be the diplomat and find peaceful solutions. Maybe you are different and solve issues in other ways. To be the diplomat is not a standard recommendation I can make, but it fits me.

For me, to Be The Diplomat is a way of having some control over the way I interpret what is going on and of choosing my responses in order to achieve something constructive. It is good if all parties are open, honest and share their views, but to be diplomatic means not taking too rigid a stance and trying to bring the parties together.

In any case, you have the choice to be the one stirring things up or being the one calming things down. You can choose to be any of the two, and it is a typical leadership choice. In good leadership you choose your route of action and behaviour. As you know by now, human beings have that ability.

#041 Build Positive Momentum (BPM)

Negative beats positive, unfortunately. Build the positive instead.

One day in the street, a negative attitude met a positive attitude. Who won? The sad thing is that the negative attitude usually defines the situation. The negative beats the positive, unfortunately.

‘What wonderful winter weather!’

‘No, I hate this snow.’

End of discussion.

If you are in a meeting and someone comes up with an idea, beware of the group dynamics. This is how it can work:

1. An idea comes up.
2. Someone is negative about the idea. ‘That will never work, we have tried it before.’
3. Everybody will finally be negative and the person with the negative attitude controls the situation.

Of course, not all ideas are good. But if there is someone in your team who routinely shoots down others people’s ideas, be aware that this behaviour may be related to power more than it is related to the task at hand. Saying no to other people’s ideas, thoughts and initiatives can give some people an illusion of control. And while a good part of running a business is knowing when to say no so that you don’t over-commit yourself, if you don’t say yes now and again your company will not grow and change. This is the demanding part of creative work – trying out a lot of ideas that will never fly in order to find the ones that will.

The core of ‘brainstorming’ is to say yes to whatever comes up, and try it.

1. An idea comes up.
2. Group says: ‘Great, let’s explore that.’
3. Everybody has a positive attitude, but will eventually move to the next idea together.

A positive attitude builds momentum, but this can rapidly be destroyed by negative input, complaint and whining. A negative attitude is one that doesn't see the point in exploring ideas and options; that wants to focus on the enormity of problems rather than possible solutions. If there is a negative attitude in the room, it will demand very much positive energy to change that negative charge. As a leader, you should welcome constructive and good-hearted feedback, but you should not accept a negative attitude. View it as a weed that needs to be removed from the garden of ideas. Build positive momentum.

One of the core qualities of Ernest Shackleton, the Antarctic explorer and an admired leader, was his optimism. Shackleton is famous, among other adventures, for bringing his entire crew back home safely during the most challenging conditions imaginable, after his ship, *The Endurance*, was crushed by the pack ice in 1915. It is said that he insisted on optimism and cheerfulness from his team – and nourished optimism within himself to spread a positive spirit around him.

#042 Lead By Questions (LBQ)

Ask more than you tell.

There are basically two ways to lead: you can tell people what to do, or you can ask them their opinion. In modern life, people tend to appreciate being listened to and getting their opinions across.

As a general rule, it seems to be good to listen more than you talk. And when you do talk, it does not hurt to repeat what you have just heard to show that you are listening. To lead by asking questions has many advantages.

- First, if you accept that you don't have perfect knowledge about everything and how to solve every issue, you will learn something from asking others. There is always something you have not thought about, a perspective you have not considered.
- Second, by asking questions you involve others in problems and processes and make people more motivated than they would have been just by being told how it is. You make people think.
- Third, it lets others be seen, which is also a driver for motivation. That leads to another useful rule: ask *anybody* about what they think, not only your usual set of colleagues, advisers or friends. You will spread motivation and engagement, while getting surprising answers.

You are always entitled to ask so-called 'dumb' questions – questions that appear to be straightforward, humble and simple but are tricky because they go straight to the heart of the matter. "This sounds all great, and I'm not really an expert on online advertising. Excuse a very dumb question, but why would anyone click on this ad?" Just be cautious not to come across as arrogant or aggressive. That's not the point. The point is to lead forward in a constructive and involving way.

#043 Take It On (TIO)

Don't limit your challenges – challenge your limits.

The Olympic athletes Aimee Mullins and Oscar Pistorius have shown that everything is possible if you embrace your challenges. They are both world-class runners, and they were both born with fibular hemimelia, and had their legs amputated at the age of one.

What is your reaction when adversity, challenges and difficulties suddenly stare you in the face? Do you feel unlucky, or lucky? Do you think, 'Shit, why does this have to happen to me? Please make it go away!?' Or do you welcome the hardships?

Take it on! This is one of the most powerful tools for any leader. Shit happens, but the question is how you decide to view the reality. The concept of taking it on means embracing adversity. First, because it will not just disappear anyway. Second, because you can learn, grow and find energy from it. It is a source of personal development. The concept of taking it on actually makes you indestructible. Whatever comes your way, you welcome it instead of avoiding it. Much in modern human life is about minimizing negative impact; for example, home insurance, pension funds, safety belts, bicycle helmets and employment contracts. But no matter how hard we try, life hits us anyway. If your mindset is to embrace adversity, adversity loses its power to hurt and frighten you.

After practising to take it on for a while, you might find that you actually go looking for adversity – just for the joy of taking it on – since it can be so rewarding.

In their book *The Adversity Advantage*, Paul Stolz and Erik Weihenmayer outline how you turn adversity to your advantage. Paul is the originator of the Adversity Quotient method for measuring and strengthening human resilience. Erik is a mountain climber and the first blind person to climb Mount Everest, and other peaks around the world. Erik's lesson is that being blind is an adversity, especially if you are a mountain climber, but using that adversity to take on even more extreme challenges led to a rich and fulfilling life. The obstacle became his advantage and he grew thanks to it.

According to Paul and Erik, the first thing you have to do when facing adversity is to define exactly what it is you are going to take on. Is it the world's highest mountain, running a marathon, starting a company or fixing a broken coffee machine? Once you have it defined, you know what it is you are taking on. Then leadership begins.

To handle any adversity, Paul and Erik suggest a simple model they call CORE: Control, Ownership, Reach and Endurance.

- When you are suddenly surprised by a snow blizzard, for example, you ask yourself: What can I control? To what extent can you influence whatever happens next? Well, you cannot change the weather, but you can maybe control what you do about it, and you can always control your attitude towards it.
- Second, you decide whether you are the one who is going to solve the situation. How likely are you to do anything to improve the situation? A non-leader would say: 'You got us into this bloody snow storm, now you better get us out!' A leader takes ownership.
- Next, how far does the adversity reach? How far will this reach into other areas of your work and/or life? A blizzard could very well be life-threatening, and a divorce could be a tragedy, but you can also choose to see these as difficulties with limited impact.
- Finally, how long will the adversity last, or endure? You can say to yourself: Also this shall pass.

So, define it, take it on and handle it. With some practice, you will be able to lead through any adversity that crosses your path. When I was facing great adversity at one point in my life, my friend Grant Calder asked me: 'Where's the gift?' If you look for it, you might be able to see how your troubles bring with them something positive. Take the bitter with the sweet.

As I learned from Leif Johansson, the former CEO of Volvo, 'Life is a package deal'. Don't look at bad or good things in isolation, view the whole, and your adversities will maybe appear in a different light.

#044 Liked Or Respected (LOR)

What do you prefer?

This is a somewhat philosophical question. If you could choose, would you rather be liked or respected? The obvious answer is that you would prefer to be both, like Nelson Mandela, I guess. People like to be with you because you are such a warm, loyal and fun person, and they respect you for your competence, farsightedness and drive in business. They love and fear you, you are the One, the Father, the Leader.

Well, that is rarely the case. The truth is that many people working together neither like nor respect each other. They are often totally fed up with the people around them. Whether you want to be liked or respected is a matter of personal preference. If you look at a leader like Steve Jobs at Apple, he probably did not care whether he was liked or not. His point was to deliver innovative products and build company and customer value. And he was respected for that.

It is rare for a leader to be both liked and respected, as there will always be many conflicting views around a person who has a job leading others. In a company you usually have a lot of people with great leadership skills, despite not being Formal Leaders in the organizational chart. They are liked because they are such great buddies in their teams, and respected because they have great skills in whatever they do and inspire others. They are developers, key account managers, support staff and others who just create a good atmosphere, bring a cake to work and play table tennis with their team while doing a good job. That's your everyday leader, the Mindset Leader that the organization depends on.

One of the most important things that makes people happy is the opportunity to be with people they like. So if you want people to enjoy their job, to be more motivated and happy, be sure to recruit likable people, create a culture where it's fun and where people like to be, and be a person yourself that others can like. Achieve this and you will be liked, and probably respected, too.

There is another aspect to this, described by Robert Cialdini in his book *Influence*: if you like people and show it, there is a high probability that they will like you back. How do you show it? Simply say, 'I like you.' Try it.

#045 Don't Do Lunch (DDL)

Spend your time right.

In his book *The Seven-Day Weekend*, Ricardo Semler described how he stopped having business lunches with clients to instead spend time working on how to deliver even better value to his customers.

To 'do lunch' is to have a lunch meeting with someone, usually for a business purpose. To 'have lunch' is to eat food. We all need to eat food in order to survive, but we can all quite happily survive without useless meetings. Don't get me wrong, building business relationships over a good meal can be both pleasant and valuable business-wise. But if you fall into the habit of having frequent business lunches, you must ask yourself why. Most people don't 'do lunch', they just take a lunch break and eat with their colleagues, or by their desk. However, the networking Entrepreneur, the ever-administrating Manager or the relationship-building Leader often gets suggestions for a lunch meeting. The idea is that you can meet in somewhat more informal and intimate circumstances than a meeting room or office. It's supposed to be nice to spend time together while indulging in good food. Finally, most people assume that you are busy most of the time, but since you have to eat, you might have time to meet during the lunch break. The lunch has become a void in the middle of the day when people think it is OK to suggest meetings. They say, 'What about lunch some day?' It's a trap, I think.

Your lunch is not an empty slot that is waiting to be filled, your lunch is a precious space in the middle of the day that you can do valuable things with. Personally, I like to go to the gym in the lunch break and get something healthy and quick to eat after the work-out. Sometimes I bring my lunch date to the gym and we can discuss our business on the running machine or while lifting weights. It gives you energy, changes the setting and actually provides something useful for us all. Other days I simply work through lunch to get things done so that I can be home early to spend time with my family. Still, you have to eat and eat well. Skipping meals is a very bad idea.

Now, telling people that you don't do lunch can be perceived as rude. If you say, 'I don't do lunch as a rule, I work or go to the gym',

you will even come across as difficult. What you must do, however, is to assess the purpose of the lunch. If it is only about a casual catch-up with an acquaintance, you might just as well suggest a coffee around the corner and get it done in 15 minutes, if you have to do it at all. If the point is to strengthen the relationship with an important client it might be worth the effort, but the client might still appreciate it more if you spent that hour at the office working on how to provide more client value instead of buying a lunch for company money. If the lunch is with a co-worker who would like some of your time in an out-of-the-office setting, take it! As a leader, it's always right to spend face-time with your people. But as a casual habit, don't do lunch. Don't spend your time on useless things: challenge convention. (See also Stop Doing Things #035 SDT.)

#046 Face To Face (FTF)

When in doubt, meet.

Whenever you are in trouble with people, meet in person. FaceTime is the name of the product of a mobile phone manufacturer and software company that would like its users to enjoy being able to see their nearest and dearest smiling on the phone screen. The truth is that people have limited use for seeing friends and family making funny faces on the phone, even though it's entertaining for a while. Usually people are happy to know that everything is OK and can just as well drop a call, email or text message to confirm it: 'Hi, great to see you yesterday at the party! Look forward to seeing you again soon, you crazy bastard', or whatever.

When you really feel the urge to meet to talk things through is when something isn't working and you have to sort things out. Have you ever tried to solve a difficult, complex relationship problem by email, phone or text? Or by blog or Twitter? It just doesn't deliver. It will only fuel more misunderstandings, questions, distrust and problems.

If you have to solve a problem, sort it out face to face if you can. You have to meet in person, sit down and spend time together in the real world until you have discussed things and hopefully feel all right about the situation. You may never reach that goal, but trying to solve things over the network will just create an inhuman challenge in communication that is destined to fail. So far digital communication, the transfer of zeros and ones in packages over the net, has not solved how to transmit the twinkle in the eye that is the foundation of physical meetings, and which makes them so superior.

In addition, seeing each other in person is a sign that both parties care to make the time and effort to meet. And that's a pretty good start to solving a problem.

REFLECTION POINTS

1. In your behaviour, have you noticed the things that often produce positive results? To the contrary, what things in your behaviour seldom produce any constructive outcome? Can you think of things you should stop doing?
 2. Have you ever practised ‘interpretations and responses’, taking control over how you act and react in relation to the actions of others? Are you in charge of your interpretations and responses?
 3. How often are you completely honest, open and truthful?
 4. Would you describe yourself as a person who normally shows up?
 5. Are you a good listener? Can you really listen, not only to the words?
 6. How do you maximize your positive interactions?
 7. When did you take on adversity and notice how it made you stronger?
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CHAPTER 5

LET OTHERS LEAD

I feel miserable,' said the new CEO.

'Why?' I asked.

'I have failed again,' she replied.

'What happened?'

'Well, I let a colleague down. I hate when it happens. We have so much work to do, we are all tired, it's the end of the year and we need our energy to go forward, yet I drained someone of any motivation today. How could I do it?'

I resisted giving an answer or any advice, I just said 'Hmmm'.

'I was sitting in on a meeting with the sales team. When we were talking about how to keep up with all the information in our business, someone said that he doesn't read any industry news sites because he thinks it's too boring. I was provoked and snapped, said that if he doesn't keep up with what's happening in our market he would miss opportunities, he wasn't doing his job properly, and that he should consider working somewhere else.'

'I see . . .'

'Well, of course, it's not really his motivation I'm worried about now, but the head of the sales department, Mark. After the meeting he was upset that I had criticized one of his best sales people when it's not my job to run his department. Furthermore, no one had set any expectations regarding what websites to read or not to read when working in sales, so I guess you could argue that it was kind of unfair. In any case, I interfered with the department head's job and now he's got to clean up the mess I created. I know I'm right, but instead of building energy and culture, I pissed people off.'

‘I guess you are angry with yourself.’

‘Yes, because I know what I did wrong.’

‘I can see that you are also frustrated because you want to support the people you work with, especially when it’s a peer from your management team. But at the same time you want to push forward and think that you are entitled to speak your mind, right? But you want to do it in the right way. You have set high standards for yourself, and you break your own rules. That hurts, and you feel like a failure.’

‘Yeah, something like that.’

‘So what’s next?’

‘If you screw up in public, I guess you have to apologize in public. At the next opportunity I’m planning to say in front of the group that I feel I behaved badly.’

Now it is time to focus on others. The whole point, after all, is to make the people around you leaders. This chapter is about letting others lead, and be leaders.

#047 Awaken What's Within (AWW)

Fuel the inner drive.

When I'm leading my children, I try not to tell them what to do, not to give orders or directives. I never threaten them into a certain behaviour. Instead I try to coach them into experiencing what they feel is right. I try to awaken what is within, to make them follow their hearts.

I get a call from my son's teacher, who tells me my son has misbehaved in the school canteen. I ask my son what happened and then I ask him what he thinks he did right or wrong in the situation. If he feels that he should go back to the teacher and tell him what he has been thinking about, maybe apologize if that is appropriate, or just give his feedback – then that's great. I do not tell him that he must go back and apologize for whatever he has done. I wasn't there, so I wouldn't know. But he was there, and he can decide what his response should be.

When playing, my other son hits me with his wooden sword. I don't tell him that it is wrong to hit other people and that if he does it again I will punish him. I tell him that it hurts and then I hope that he will relate to my feelings, realize that hurting people is not good and understand what he is doing. Maybe it is too much to ask from a child, but I give it a try and I can see from his look that he has given it some thought.

At work, I try to avoid telling people what to do. Even if it is obvious and it would save a lot of time just to give a directive, it's better to awaken people's own sense of what to do. I sometimes fail at this and instead snap and hand out the order, 'This is what we do now', letting the testosterone take over. Or, 'The client thinks you did a bad job, you're out of the project.'

Planning a company event could be done like this:

Leader: 'Please buy beer or something for the all-hands meeting this afternoon.'

Office Manager: 'OK.'

Leader: 'Thanks.'

But better like this instead:

Leader: 'We have something to celebrate at the all-hands meeting this afternoon.'

Office Manager: 'Maybe we should get some cava and tapas?'

Leader: 'Great idea!'

Whenever I'm meeting with a job candidate, I'm trying to understand that person's motivations. I want to recruit people who are already motivated to do a great job whether that is because they like their field of work, they are naturally curious, or because they are positive about their life, opportunities and the future. They already have an inner drive. I don't want to recruit someone who would need a fine title, a high salary or other benefits in order to be motivated. A salary is something you get in exchange for the time you put in, the results you deliver and your contributions to the company, it is not the necessary condition for your motivation. Of course, the salary should meet your market value and represent your skills and experience, but the main motivator should ideally be your inner drive. The management guru Peter Drucker said that the best employees are like volunteers, they don't do it for the money but because they have a passion for it.

#048 The Dolphin School (TDS)

Reward the right behaviour, but do not punish.

Going with my children to play with the dolphins at the Dolphin Bay, located within the Aquaventure theme park next to the Atlantis hotel in Dubai, I thought that we were in for another tourist trap. It turned out to be a useful lesson in leadership. Before entering the big pool to meet the dolphins, we were ushered into a room for an introduction to dolphin training. First I thought this was just a waste of time, since the children were excited to meet real dolphins and did not seem to appreciate the prospect of spending 30 minutes in a classroom.

But I soon realized that this was going to be good. What really caught my attention was the dolphin trainers' approach to leadership. The marine mammal with the playful attitude was trained by rewarding good behaviour, since it craved positive attention. If the dolphin did something the trainer did not want it to do, it was neglected. But it was never punished. The trainer explained that dolphins are intelligent beings and they do not respond well to punishment. I immediately related this to humans – who are also said to be intelligent creatures – and I realized that punishment does not really work that well for us, either.

Later on, I made a deal with my children to adopt The Dolphin School approach at home. I would never punish them, but bad behaviour would be ignored. For example, if the four year old was running around the table at dinner screaming while the rest of us were trying to eat, we would just not notice or comment on it. It would be ignored, but not punished. However, if they did something good, there would be a reward.

The Dolphin School is one of the best leadership philosophies I have ever learned and I also practise it at work. At one point I was talked into punishing two people who had lost a lot of money for the company. I reluctantly complied, but it still feels completely wrong. Punishments create a culture of fear where external forces determine behaviour.

The sad thing is that punishments work, people avoid doing things they know they will be punished for, but it creates the wrong incentives and atmosphere. Instead of reactively *not doing the wrong things* because they will give you pain, it is better to proactively *do the right things* that bring satisfaction. A culture of punishments focuses on the negative, a culture of rewards focuses on the positive.

Furthermore, punishments make people afraid and insecure. At home, when the children trust that they will not be punished, they are more likely to tell the truth, which in turn enables a better and more honest relationship between parent and child. And ignoring the four year old who is running around at dinner time will soon bring him back to the table. If your bad behaviour does not get any attention, it's not that much fun to be bad.

Reward the good, be disappointed with the bad and show it, but never punish. That's The Dolphin School.

#049 Make People Stars (MPS)

Show your appreciation in public.

It is highly motivating to be recognized in public for work well done – the standing ovation, applause from an audience who love you and the feeling that you are a star. It does not need to be an Oscar gala, but you can praise the people you work with any time, especially in front of others.

When I run monthly meetings with the whole company I want to make sure that at least a few people get applause and recognition. Just like being nice, it does not cost you anything at all and you reap great rewards in terms of morale, motivation and performance. At the same time as you give someone public recognition, make yourself small. If you put someone in the limelight, be sure to not step in there yourself and take part of the credit. Make people stars, not yourself. (See also Take The Blame #026 TTB.)

#050 Time For Feedback (TFF)

Giving feedback is helping, and takes time.

Why ‘time for feedback’? Because you should book feedback meetings in your calendar, and because the feedback conversation in itself takes time.

Feedback is probably one of the most used and misused terms in business. It can mean anything from getting a response to something trivial (‘Hey, any feedback on that report?’) to a serious dialogue between two people about something important (‘Your drinking habit is a risk to your career’).

The definition of feedback I have learned is ‘coaching with the aim to help people help themselves’. Feedback is often used to get something off *your* chest, for *your* sake: ‘If you don’t make more of an effort I will have a problem delivering this quarter’s results.’ The purpose of useful feedback is rather to help another person achieve *their* goals: ‘I know how much you want that new client, but when you behave like that you will turn them off.’

From an excellent leadership institute in Stockholm called TUFF, I have learned a few things to keep in mind when giving feedback and having a feedback talk:

1. Establish that there is mutual trust and that you have a constructive relationship. It is very hard to give feedback when there is too much ‘noise’ between people, in the form of mistrust and conflict, for example.
2. Be clear that the purpose of your talk is to give feedback.
3. State that the purpose of the feedback talk is to help the other person to succeed in whatever it is they want to achieve. Feedback works when directed at the interests of others, not your own self-interests.
4. Be direct and don’t try to soften the blow. The right combination is being helpful and hard at the same time.
5. Listen for the ‘klonk’. This sound occurs when you put a coin into a vending machine, the machine accepts the coin with a

‘klonk’ and out comes your chocolate bar, or ticket, or whatever your desired outcome may have been. You want to make sure that your feedback was really understood, that it produced insight and recognition. That you made the other person see the truth.

6. Once you have achieved the ‘klonk’ you can start to move beyond the actual issue and listen to the feelings and deeper workings of the person you are coaching. What are their underlying drivers and motivators? If the person is too conflict-averse and eager to please, then you want to know *why* they are that way.
7. Finally, when you both have established a better understanding about the issues for feedback, you can ask the other person what they would like to do about it. As a coach and giver of feedback, your job is to ask questions and to properly hand over the problem, not come up with the solutions. Ask: ‘Do you have any ideas about how you could communicate better with your teammates?’

The Formal Leader is expected to give feedback to subordinates. But what about the Mindset Leader? If you are to act like a leader, do give feedback, even if it’s not part of your formal role or job description. You can always provide constructive and respectful feedback to colleagues and even your boss, to the waiter at the restaurant or your children’s teacher. Remember, there is a difference between proper feedback and complaining.

Furthermore, there is a fine balance between motivating, or pushing, people to do what you want to be done and supporting them in their interest. Feedback should not be subtle manipulation to get things your way. If the boss says, ‘It is not going to help your career if you don’t deliver the project in time’, the boss probably means, ‘It will be bad for my career if my team does not meet the deadline.’

If you are serious about developing as a leader, or as a human being in general, actively seek and ask for feedback. In most professional organizations there is a schedule for ‘performance evaluation’ and follow-ups. In my children’s school there is a quarterly review which requires the child, the teachers as well as the parents to reflect on a

number of themes before the 30-minute feedback talk – with the aim of developing the student, no one else.

Whether you like it or not, you exist in a social setting and depend on other people. Without feedback about how you are doing, the information that comes from the outside in, there is less of a chance you will be able to understand yourself and how you are perceived.

In his book *It's Not How Good You Are, It's How Good You Want to Be*, Paul Arden says: 'Do not seek praise. Seek criticism.' You naturally listen for good things being said about you, but you should really search for the bad news. That is how you evolve.

When it comes to criticizing others, I try to follow Warren Buffett's rule: praise by name, criticize by category. We all like and are motivated by praise, so praise individuals directly. We don't like criticism and are demotivated by it. So if you have to be critical it's better to criticize something less personal such as a department, a market or a business. You can also criticize an attitude or a general behaviour, but it's even better to celebrate and reward something positive and point in the right direction.

Giving feedback takes practice, but receiving it is an art in itself. Luckily it is quite simple. Whatever feedback you get, there is only one answer: 'Thank you!' Followed by reflection and maybe personal change.

#051 Compassion Not Co-dependency (CNC)

Be involved, but not to the point of self-destruction.

Compassion and co-dependency. This is a short entry about two very big subjects. Compassion is at the very root of human civilization and a foundation of Christianity and other religions, whereas co-dependency is a large area of research and practice that involves helping family members to overcome the destructive behaviour caused by the dependency (generally on drugs or alcohol) of another family member.

When you start focusing on the people around you, you should be aware of the dynamics. You are there to help, coach and support – not to be consumed by other people's problems. If you understand the basic difference between compassion and co-dependency, you have come a long way in your leadership. To put it simply: care about people and their problems, feel their feelings (be compassionate), but it's not your job to solve the problems. It's up to the one with the problems. Sure, if a colleague is feeling down there is nothing wrong in trying to cheer them up. The destructive part of helping others happens when you get so involved that you actually take over their problems (becoming co-dependent).

The Entrepreneur normally couldn't care much about other people's problems – you've got enough of your own! The Manager, being a bureaucrat and administrator, sees others' problems from a more technical standpoint – it's either their problem or the company's problem, and if it's not the company's problem then it's not a problem.

The Leader must care for people and, above all, be compassionate. To have and show compassion is to identify with and relate to the feelings and sufferings of others without taking over those problems and sufferings. You let go of your ego and focus on others, which requires a strong self-confidence.

#052 Motivations Of Others (MOO)

Know what motivates you, but focus on the motivation of others.

Remember the 'MOO', I tell myself. Why do they do this? They are not here to fulfil your motivations but their own. To be a good leader, put your own motivations to one side and focus on what motivates others. The oil of any successful venture is to fuel the satisfaction, motivation and passion of the people you work with. Just imagine a place with dissatisfaction, apathy and indifference . . .

If you look into the motivations of others, you will find many different dimensions. One is motivated by money, another by writing beautiful code, a third by innovation and a fourth by always being right. Understand these drivers and build on them. Provide cash incentives to people interested in money and provide challenging tasks to the developer who is motivated by writing great code. Make a free role for the innovator, and don't aim for winning every argument when talking with the one who always needs to be right.

#053 Here To Help (HTH)

Be there, support, make it easier.

If you ever get confused about what it is that you are supposed to do as a leader, just remember: I'm here to help the people I care for to succeed. I'm not here to make their lives more difficult. I'm not here to create obstacles or make things complicated. I'm here to help and make things easier. The head of sales was at one point so worn out that she simply could not take on any more work. I then offered to do some administration for her. These tasks were not in any way part of my formal role as CEO, but thinking that I was there to help her led me to do whatever she needed to get on her with her work.

Recently I visited the Wellcome Collection, a library, museum and exhibition centre in London for the 'incurably curious'. The purpose of the place is to make its many objects and books accessible for everyone, and everything is easy. There is no entrance fee, you enter the vast library and its reading rooms without any registration process, the wireless network is free and you access it just by clicking the network name. It's like the whole place is there to help you do what you came for: to read, learn, experience, enjoy. Be like that as a leader.

The perspective that you are 'here to help' as a leader has also been called *Servant Leadership*, a field pioneered by Robert Greenleaf. Some core characteristics of the servant leader are listening, empathy, foresight and the commitment to the growth of others. To understand servant leadership, think about the teenage wizard Harry Potter and the way he supports his little team and makes Ron Weasley grow, while helping and solving troubles like black magic and big dragons.

#054 Make Yourself Redundant (MYR)

You have not succeeded until you are not needed.

Warren Buffett is famously quoted for saying: 'Delegate almost to the point of abdication.' What he means by this is handing of all control and responsibility from the owner to the manager of a business.

I am a believer in that you either have the responsibility or not. If I am in any way responsible for something, I want to have the authority and accountability for it. It is a challenge for the Formal Leader, like me, when your domain is invaded by Mindset Leaders with different ideas about how to run the business you are responsible for. The solution is mutual respect. When I happen to be the Mindset Leader in another setting, approaching an area where there are Formal Leaders in place, I try to respect their roles and proceed with care. Likewise, the Formal Leaders must accept and try to benefit from the views of the Mindset Leaders. But even if I would like others to respect my role if I'm the Formal Leader, I am just as happy to give that authority and accountability to someone else.

By letting others lead you will release that person's energy and potential, and the job will be done differently, more creatively and better. Nothing makes me happier than handing over control of a business to a new CEO and seeing them do brilliantly – and so much better than I would have managed.

I have always thought that success, for an entrepreneur, lies in making yourself redundant – that you are not needed any more, it works just fine (or better!) without you. When the company grows with a proven formula, and people are leading the business forward without any need for you, the founder – that is when you have made it. You created something enduring that may outlast you. If the company depends on you, and you have to do everything yourself because you don't trust the people around you to be leaders, you have failed.

You can also use a 'leadership vacuum' to let others lead. In one company where I was responsible for the sales department, running an organization of country sales teams, one of the teams lost their Formal Leader (the sales director for the market). Suddenly one line of report-

ing was gone, since the team head reported to me and the sales people reported to the head. There was now no one who called team meetings, followed up on results and drove the team forward. I decided not to step in to be the team's temporary new boss, even though many expected me to take on the role that was now missing. First there was confusion and frustration, but then the team started to self-organize, calling meetings, setting targets and identifying challenges that needed to be resolved. This was amazing to see, how people stepped forward to take initiatives and showed leadership. I praised them later and thanked them for their leadership. But this Mindset Leadership from informal leaders would not have happened if I had immediately assumed formal leadership to fill the gap. As a Formal Leader, dare to let the empty space be and let others expand into leadership. But note, it works better if there is already a culture of all-leadership in place.

#055 Let Everyone Speak (LES)

Don't focus on the loudspeakers, but on the silent ones.

There will always be those who speak more than others in meetings. I call them the 'loudspeakers'. They want to make sure that everybody hears what they say. I'm a loudspeaker sometimes, even though I try to keep my mouth shut.

What is your approach to the loudspeaker syndrome? Do you think that A) it is the survival of the fittest and you need to shout loud to be heard, or B) you should encourage the quiet people to speak up? Since the headline of this entry is Let Everyone Speak, you can guess that I'm a supporter of alternative B. Why?

Given that you value and respect the people in the room, you would think that the discussion would benefit from the input from all, not just a few. Furthermore, do you think that people who have contributed to the discussion will be more motivated to work with whatever was decided at the meeting? The one who remains silent has neither an obligation nor an incentive to be part of the outcome. This person may be hostile to what is being discussed, without you knowing. How do you let everyone speak? Well, it is simple. Just ask: 'What about this?' (See also Lead By Questions #042 LBQ.)

#056 Close Down Computer (CDC)

Be Visible.

Depending on your job, it is not unlikely that you spend much of your time in front of a computer. Try closing down that computer for a day and see what happens. One of the effects is that it suddenly will feel awkward being in your office. Because what will you do there? OK, you can make phone calls, but unless your job is in a call centre you probably can't fill your whole day with useful phone calls. You can read, but sitting in your room reading may give the impression that you're not really working, even if the inspiration you get might be good for your job. You can write with a pen, perhaps a thank-you note, or some entries in your diary. But there is also a limit to the writing you can do, because these days it makes more sense to have notes and correspondence in digital form, such as a online document or an email. You can tidy up your office and sort through papers. You can probably think of a lot of things to do in your room with the computer turned off, but after a while it will feel strange and unproductive being there. That is the whole point. Closing down the computer will force you out of your office.

So there you are now, standing in the open plan. What would you do? You could walk around and talk with people, ask how they are doing. Show that you care. You could go out and sit down in a café for an hour and just watch the world pass by. This is also called taking time to 'smell the roses', devoting time to the valuable things in life that we never have time with because we spend most of our waking hours replying to emails. When you take a break you often get new perspectives and unconsciously solve problems.

Closing down your computer is a leadership tactic, since it forces you to change patterns, go out there and hopefully spend more time with real people, your colleagues, and focus on them. Or your customers! I sometimes close down my computer, leave my room and take an available seat in the middle of the office and make phone calls to potential clients, in the reality of the company, and the reality of the external world, and make myself visible.

#057 Respect The Role (RTR)

Support, don't interfere.

The company founder and CEO, an individual with a strong entrepreneurial profile, walks into a meeting in the Marketing Department, headed by the Chief Marketing Officer (CMO). The CEO tells the people in the room, the Marketing team, that on his morning jog he got his greatest idea ever. He then outlines his vision for a new ad campaign. Silently watching the show is the CMO, who has called the meeting with her team to present *her* marketing plan, which it is *her* job to write. When the CEO has finished his monologue, he looks at the CMO and asks what she thinks. She probably thinks that it's time to find a new job. She also feels that she neither likes nor respects her boss, and is quite unhappy and miserable for the rest of the week until she winds down on Friday evening with a glass of wine with her husband. Then on Monday, it's back to business again.

We are all walking around with our various professional 'hats' on, or Formal Leader roles. In a company, the entrepreneur might have at least five different *formal* hats: the CEO hat, the board member hat, the owner hat, the management team hat, the founder hat. These are all somewhat different roles, which could potentially be a problem depending on actual areas of responsibility. (See Too Many Chefs #071 TMC.)

The Head of Sales has one hat, the Chief Technology Officer has another hat, the Chairman of the Board has her hat, the Java Developer has his hat – and all of these hats have associated responsibilities and authority. I would like the people I work with to have an essential respect for these roles as such, while challenging us in how we perform in them and how we could do things better.

For example, the CEO feels entitled to call and run meetings with the management team. If someone else started to call management meetings, with their own agenda, and maybe not even calling the CEO, it would be a mess and close to a revolution. The company would soon be in a turbulent state. To respect the role is, in this example, to let the head of the team (and leadership could very well rotate) call meetings

with their team. However, it's perfectly all right for the team to challenge the Formal Leader in how he runs his meetings. That is feedback, and it should always be given in a constructive, thoughtful and respectful way.

I chose two meeting examples because in some way or other the 'role of roles' is often highlighted at meetings. Meetings are a form of structured social context that appears systematically in an organization, and in each of these events people are (or should be) aware of the roles in the room. But the importance of roles, or the 'hats' that we are wearing at any given moment, is stressed all the time, in all kinds of settings: the dinner table at home, in sports or when playing a game, when introducing new ideas, allocating money to a project, giving someone some tough feedback or giving someone a gift. Roles can be formal or informal. Someone can be an appointed chief, another can be the voluntary volleyball tournament organizer. What's my role and how does it relate to everybody else's role in this social setting? Should I organize the next volleyball event, even though Bob always does it?

You can go ahead and break the rules to make a point, or just because you want results and don't give a damn about others. That's a choice available to you to make. But it would be foolish not to be aware of the consequences. Usually it's good to respect the roles, just because it is the same thing as respecting people. That works for leadership.

#058 Other People's Offices (OPO)

It matters where you meet.

I had to fire the head of the sales team. I did not hold the meeting in my room, but walked into his room. It did not make the outcome of the situation any different, but the interaction was almost certainly less hostile.

In any organization, people need to communicate. A company, a village or a family are different variations of social contexts. The very essence of this context is relationships that are sometimes quite complex. The way you communicate (in person, through text messages, body language, aggressively, calmly, etc.), how often, how rarely, the place where you communicate and what you communicate all matters – and it's received in myriad ways depending on the receiver and everything that comes with their background.

Just thinking about it may make you want to stay away from interacting with people at all because the risk of misunderstanding and confusion is so big. That is probably why people prefer to spend time with close friends, because communication is simple: you like the same jokes and you know how to read one another.

With all this in mind, there are a few powerful rules that work to minimize the negative effects of communication. One is to avoid email or text messages for any discussion that might be sensitive or emotionally charged. Another rule is simply to spend time in other people's offices. This is so simple, yet so effective.

If you are the boss of a company, a team leader, a coach, chairman of an organization or a project manager, you should beware of summoning people to your office (if you have one). To summon a co-worker to you is an act of ruling over other people. Coming over to their place instead is much more humble. The place of a meeting is always charged with meaning. If you are applying for a bank loan, do you meet at the bank – or is the bank coming home to you? I don't think so. The one who holds the home ground has the upper hand.

If you're a boss and call a subordinate to your office, rank is established from the outset. This is especially the case if you are sitting

behind a desk, and as sometimes happens, you are sitting somewhat higher than the person opposite you. Just this setting, in the social context of an organization, is intimidating. And even if the purpose of the meeting is trivial, the atmosphere will be charged. If your purpose is to congratulate on a job well done, it will still create distance between boss and employee. If the purpose is to remark on a job not so well done, the setting makes it even worse. Do you want people to feel scared when they meet you? Sometimes, yes, but not as a routine. Another thing that might be worth considering is the gossip and drama that it creates when someone is summoned to the boss's office.

Take the meeting in other people's offices where you can create an uncharged atmosphere, focus on the job at hand and show that you are an equal peer with your team member.

#059 Small Personal Things (SPT)

It is not the big stuff that really matters.

Life is made up of small personal things that we care about, such as birthdays and anniversaries. They are ‘small’ because in the bigger scheme of things such as the sales targets you are supposed to deliver on for the quarter, falling real estate prices or global terror threats, they do not have much relevance for anyone other than the person directly involved.

Still, your birthday feels special to you, and possibly more important than current political issues or the macro-economic climate. You know that it is your birthday; you have celebrated it every year since you were born and your closest friends, family, relatives and a few Facebook connections will remember you and send their love and best wishes. Still, you can sit in that meeting and no one around the table will have the faintest clue that it is your birthday and they could not care less. They would most certainly congratulate you briefly if they knew, but you would not really interrupt the meeting and tell them, would you? It is just a small, personal thing. But for you it is kind of big.

There are so many things that are important to us individually, without meaning much really to others: collecting some weird form of art, listening to heavy metal music, going to drama classes in the evening, playing golf at weekends, that fishing trip with your pals every autumn, my new gadget, your new year’s resolutions, the pasta dish that is my favourite, and so on.

As a leader, don’t become occupied just with the big things – notice the small, personal things around you and how they matter to people. Acknowledge them. A CEO I know has entered all the birthdays of his employees in his address book and with his birthday app on his phone he gets an alert whenever there is a birthday in the company. Then he promptly sends a text message saying ‘Happy birthday!’, or congratulates the person as he passes their desk in the morning. It’s nothing really, just a small, personal thing, but it matters.

#060 Release The Energy (RTE)

Look for how to unleash the full potential.

One of my guiding principles is to look for the energy and potential that can be released – in people, ideas, businesses, companies. I think it's a positive and optimistic approach.

Look for a person's strengths and see how they can be developed. It is the same thing with companies, which are, after all, groups of people coalescing around ideas and processes.

In one company, we developed software for managing our own ad campaigns on Facebook in the early days, before such tools really existed. Then we were approached by Facebook to offer the tool to a wider, external market. We turned our software into an easy-to-use, powerful and affordable product for the advertisers, offered globally on the Web. This product was very different from the online marketing agency where it was developed, so we did a spin-off and started a new company that could exist on its own merits side by side with the original company.

To release the energy in the new business, we recruited its own management team and CEO, financed it separately, made sure it developed its own independent business plan and set the company free to unleash its full potential, in its own way, under its own brand. The management team got options in the company, making it their business, too. The results came quickly and the new and independent company grew fast ahead of plan.

Look out for that hidden potential. Maybe the COO can become a CEO of a separate company, or the great Mindset Leader can step up to more responsibility. Are there any opportunities to help individuals grow while making the business grow as well? Is there restrained energy that can be released by turning a systems development department into a new business area with its own plan, leaders and product revenues? Be on lookout constantly for potentials that can be unleashed. Release the energy wherever you can. This is probably easier to do if you are the Formal Leader, with a formal authority to bring about changes. But it is also up to the Mindset Leader to be on the lookout for any hidden potential and unreleased energy, relating to both your organization and your own part in it.

#061 Fifty Percent Ready (FPR)

Let other people in to finish your plan.

When you walk into a meeting, or any situation that you have called and initiated, you probably feel that you have to deliver. You have set the agenda, you have invited people who have allocated valuable time to spend with you, and you take pride in having thought things through and structured things properly. In short, you are prepared.

Now, if you come to the meeting with a fully ready plan and present it as such, the only thing the people in the room can do is to react to the idea and either like it or loathe it. If you have an open culture where everybody feels free to comment and criticize whatever is on the table, you might get constructive input on your idea. If you have a more destructive culture you will get negative feedback, an indifferent reaction, or worse: praise from people who want you to think that it is a great idea when they think it's nonsense. In this scenario, you might go ahead with your idea in the false belief that you have your team behind you when in fact they are hostile to your idea.

Presenting an idea that is 'too ready' risks reducing the involvement and buy-in from the rest of the team. After all, it's your idea, not theirs. What you want is feedback and, ultimately, involvement from the people who are going to make your idea come true. It's also called buy-in. You want others to grasp and embrace your idea.

The solution is to call the meeting and present the idea in a form somewhere between a sketch on the back of an envelope and a full proposal, take-it-or-leave-it 100% idea. In short, be 50% or half ready. This will allow you to be humble: 'I have thought this through' but not 'I have reached the final conclusion.' Presenting things in this way will allow and invite others to come up with their own suggestions on how to complete the idea, thereby making it their own.

Remember, as a leader your task is not to get credit for everything but to get things done – and that always involves others. And you must bear in mind that you don't have the final conclusion on everything. The world is too complex and there are always alternative per-

spectives. Have your beliefs, but welcome others to challenge and add to them.

Outside your organization, you might send proposals to your clients and customers. Even if these are a complete 100% idea that you stand for, the other side will have their view on it and come back with opinions. Embrace it, invite them. Be open.

#062 Not Your Agenda (NYA)

Be transparent, invite, ask.

At a dinner I sat down with the editor-in-chief of one of Sweden's largest newspapers. She had successfully brought the company back from the brink and was now turning a healthy profit. I asked her about her leadership style and she said that she made people feel they were part of a family. I later asked her boss, the head of the media group, about the secret. He said that she 'did not have an agenda' – she instantly acted on her beliefs without trying to manipulate people into her plans. She was transparent.

To believe in something is good. But to have an agenda in an organization can be bad. Just the expression 'to have an agenda' is packed with negative energy and makes people cautious. Someone who has an agenda is not to be trusted, because he singlemindedly turns everything towards the fulfilment of his own goals.

To have an agenda at a meeting, in itself, all other things being equal, is a good and practical thing that is required for efficiency. However, the way you set the agenda, what points feature on it and how you present things can turn hostile, especially when you come with fully prepared answers to each point. Setting an agenda for a meeting can become a power struggle, because the agenda is in its own right an interpretation of reality or priorities. Try to involve other in setting the agenda. How? Here's a simple way: whenever you send out an agenda, label it 'draft' to signal that you welcome input.

Now, there are different situations. There are circumstances when you are required to follow up on points or make a presentation and the expectation is that you deliver a well-prepared proposal. This is typical in a client meeting where you are supposed to outline your offering in a sales pitch. Or in a board meeting where the CEO is expected to report on the previous quarter with analysis and comments. These are fairly straightforward and typical situations that you can call delivery, reporting, pitching and commenting. You are the one with the presentation, and that's the point of the agenda. You are expected to present. In short, this is about 'Answering'.

The other setting is about 'Asking'. Here your main purpose is to get others' feedback on something, to get buy-in for an idea or plan, to launch a project. You want everybody involved, to initiate a budgeting process that requires department heads' time and effort, to create a winning spirit and build the energy. But don't bother asking if you have all the answers already, or if you just want to create the impression of involving people in the solution.

If you feel strongly that you know what to do, fight for your belief. If you think the solution is more open-ended, invite. The energizing thing to do, if you respect your team members at all, is to ask your team to prepare the agenda and come up with solutions. Resist the temptation to be effective. Resist the temptation to impress your thoughts and ideas you have been cultivating in your head for so many months now. Try to resist your own plan. Otherwise, you might be tempted to get your team to come to a certain conclusion without telling them explicitly what the conclusion is. This is the very problem of 'having an agenda', you want to achieve something without being frank about it. It's better to state your beliefs up-front.

So if you want involvement, outline the issues at hand. It can be a strategic dilemma such as whether to invest in project A or project B. Then, let the team members plan the agenda. If you are the Formal Leader, it can be a challenge to let go of the control. The result might not be the exact points that you would have brought up, or the solutions, but you have achieved involvement. Now, it is not your agenda, it is the team's agenda.

REFLECTION POINTS

1. How do you make people around you succeed?
 2. Do you ever encourage others to give you honest feedback? How often do you give feedback, to whom and how?
 3. What is your view on punishing wrong behaviour as opposed to rewarding good behaviour?
 4. Can you see the difference between compassion and co-dependency, and how does it relate to yourself?
 5. Are you afraid of being made redundant, or is it something you would welcome in a positive way?
 6. Can you think of a situation when you did not respect someone's role and it turned bad?
 7. Can you see any unreleased energy and potential in your life or work?
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CHAPTER 6

THE OPERATING SYSTEM

Two men were sitting in a small wooden boat, fishing calmly in the afternoon sun. Suddenly one of them discovered that the boat was leaking and water was pouring in. It was obvious that the boat was soon going to be filled with water and the two men would be in the sea.

The first man panicked and reached into his pocket to pull out his smartphone.

‘What are you doing?’ asked the other man.

‘I’m going to Google “leaking boats” to find out what to do about it.’

The other man looked at the source of the pouring water, saw the little round hole, found the drain plug that had somehow been removed and put it back in the hole. The water stopped pouring in.

The two men in the boat represented two different cultures, or responses, to a sudden challenge. One took on the problem from an academic perspective, immediately starting to search for information and understanding. The other looked at the situation actually at hand to find the source of the problem and was able to solve it. In this story, the first person was a university professor with little experience of boats, while the other was a keen fisherman.

This chapter is about culture from a leadership perspective.

#063 The Operating System (TOS)

The matrix that guides your behaviour.

The ‘culture’ of an organization, business, group or any social setting is the framework for action. A culture is all about behaviour. It is built into the fabric of everyday work. It tells you what to do in any situation that arises, both expected and unexpected.

When you arrive at the front desk of any professionally managed hotel chain, you get a smile. The concierge does not have to pull out a manual every time a customer approaches to find out what to do. And when an unexpected problem arises, his first reaction will be to sort it out and be helpful. This is because it is part of the culture of a service business, like a hotel, to be service-minded at all times.

One of the most striking aspects of our everyday life, and one that is not that obvious but present in the background humming, is that we constantly interact with operating systems. An operating system (also called OS, as in MS-DOS, iOS or Mac OS) is a set of programs that manages our computers and determines how we manage them. When you use your computer, smartphone, tablet or other device, the interface and the applications you interact with run on top of an operating system. The OS makes both the computer and the computer user behave in certain ways.

Just like a computer has its software, organizations and groups have their culture, which guides behaviour and determines what happens within that context. Walking into a café, restaurant or hotel, or a hospital, bank or police station, you instantly get a feel for the culture and how it works. It is not you or any other person but what is ‘in the air’ that determines the actions. As a leader you should be part of building that operating system, it is one of the most important things you can do.

The culture of a company can be called the operating system of that company. If the culture is strong, clear and – most importantly – accepted (or at least adopted) by the people in the company, then the culture will guide actions and ultimately determine how the whole company works. A culture is about values that translate into actions.

The same way an operating system is designed for performing tasks, a culture should ideally be designed to bring about desired behaviour and results in a company, which in turn reflects what the company stands for and its business model. The culture is the underlying idea about how the company works to be able to serve clients, make money and grow.

#064 Sing Same Score (SSS)

Don't attempt to sing two songs at once.

Ask ten random people at a company what the company does and chances are you will get ten different answers. With a strong and shared culture it is more likely that you will get the same answer, or at least something similar. A musical score is a sheet with the notations and lyrics defining the music. Like a well-rehearsed choir, you want an organization to sing from the same score.

You can already see the challenging dynamics of this statement. You don't want people to just repeat from a manual, but then again you cannot run a business based on anarchy without shared ambitions. It is good to have a shared idea about what kind of client value you deliver, if you are a business, and then let people be creative about how to deliver it. Think of it as 'mixing around a bottom-line beat'.

In one company, the bottom-line beat was defined as delivering 'the best user experience'. An innovative organization then came up with a range of innovative methods, tools, pricing models and technologies to achieve it.

To sing from the same score in a business is not to do exactly everything in the same way, but to have a shared idea about the purpose of the company. In a choir, the tenors and the baritones will not be singing the same notes, but they will be contributing to the overall harmony of the piece.

If you ask, 'Why do we exist?', and answers range from 'the best user experience', 'great selection of products' and 'low prices' to 'profitable growth', 'happy customers' and 'return on capital', then you are not really singing from the same score.

Different individuals and departments can have different scores. Maybe the company's COO is singing the score of delivering operational performance and cost efficiency. An important sub-score, but taken to its extreme it might support the COO's goal, to deliver cost efficiency, but not the goals of the CEO, who is singing the score of growth. As a consequence, there is no harmony in the company. They do not sing the same score.

An innovative company can sometimes be confusing because there are many scores to sing from, people are singing from different scores at the same time, and sometimes even fighting about what to sing. Imagine going to a concert and finding the musicians arguing over whether to play Mozart, Bach or Jesus Christ Superstar and eventually playing whatever they want. Looking in from the outside on a company like that can be painful. Working in that company even more so!

The solution is not to immediately kill off the new score but, if possible, to find its own context, spinning it off as a separate company, team, department or business unit – the right entity where people are comfortable singing the same score together. The people who want to sing Mozart can do that, and the people who want to perform Jesus Christ Superstar can form their own choir. Here is another example when there can be a potential conflict between Formal and Mindset Leaders. Possible solutions include mutual respect for roles, a strong and shared culture, a clear and common vision and interconnected sub-cultures.

In the early 1980s, when Apple developed the Macintosh computer, Steve Jobs made sure that his Mac team could sing from their own score, while the rivalling Lisa team, that developed a different computer, could sing from theirs.

#065 Interconnected Sub-Cultures (ICS)

Encourage different cultures and bring them together.

In any given organization, there is never just one culture. Sure, there is probably one overall shared culture, but within it you will find sub-cultures. The sales team has its own culture and jargon based on selling to customers, the engineers' culture is about delivering reliable code, and the finance department's culture might reflect cost-consciousness. In the family the culture of the dad will be somewhat different from that of the teenage son, even if there are shared guiding values, such as sitting down at the dinner table together.

Sub-cultures are good. It means that there is a strong culture at the practical level, a culture around a certain objective. If you have an overall culture, it must break down into sub-cultures suitable for the task at hand.

There is a hierarchy of cultures, if you wish, ideally functioning together in harmony:

- The culture of the society we live in, for example 'Democracy'.
- The company culture, for example 'Service'.
- The sub-culture of the sales department, for example 'Performance'.
- Your individual culture and values, for example 'Caring'.

Sales people, engineers and accountants are different and have different cultures because they have different tasks and objectives and thereby pragmatic cultures with the aim to support those objectives.

As a leader, there are two things you might want to do:

- Nurture these sub-cultures, as they are important and usually constructive.
- Interconnect them, to enable people to share and learn from each other.

An organization with separated sub-cultures can be destructive. I have seen companies where departments sit side by side in an office

(since I mostly work with small companies and start-ups) – Sales, Systems development, Finance, Business development, Fulfilment, Marketing – each with its own completely different sub-culture, and with no understanding of the other sub-cultures in the company. For example, the engineer had no insight into the everyday work of the sales person, who in turn didn't understand what the engineer was doing and how that department worked. One immediate downside, in this example, is that the sales people will sell solutions that the engineers cannot deliver, and the engineers in turn regard the sales people as stupid and ignorant. (See Check Before Promise #033 CBP.)

There can also be arrogance, rivalry and conflict between sub-cultures because they have slightly different and colliding objectives, or they fight for the same pool of capital resources.

So you have everything to gain from finding ways to interconnect and integrate the sub-cultures, make them communicate and grow with each other. Here, the non-formal Mindset Leader plays an important role. In every company there are people who bring the company together by organizing parties and table tennis tournaments. On the more formal side, inviting each other to department meetings is a simple way to connect sub-cultures and enable learning and understanding across the organization.

#066 Celebrate The Success (CTS)

Build on victories.

It's an easy thing to do – celebrate when there is something to celebrate! Still, it is often forgotten. To celebrate the success is like bringing The Dolphin School (see #048 TDS) philosophy (rewarding good behaviour rather than punishing bad behaviour) to the company level, inviting everyone to celebrate success. It is quite powerful.

I always look for reasons to celebrate and will find even the slightest excuse to pop open the champagne. It is not only because I like champagne but because success is built on success, and you want people to notice it when it happens. It is also fun to celebrate, and allows the company a welcome break.

Swedish football (soccer) player Henrik Larsson has a long career in European football, winning the UEFA Champions League for Barcelona in 2006. Henrik has described how soul-destroying it can be when success is routinely expected of you, and you are never better than your last game. After winning a game, or even a final, you celebrate the success for one night – but on the following Monday it's all about winning the next game. Any previous victory is irrelevant, it does not matter, it's all about the next one.

Your job is to deliver success, and you know that the moment something is achieved, the focus instantly shifts to attainment of the next goal. Still, nobody would argue that it is pointless to celebrate one achievement because it's just going to be replaced with another. It is human nature to take a moment to acknowledge the feat before moving on.

Celebrating success means not taking it for granted. Success is usually the result of countless hours of hard work put in by good people. Acknowledge and praise that effort, and be thankful. Success should never be routine, even if you expect winning to be the norm.

#067 Value Based Organization (VBO)

Shared values are at the heart of a culture.

A strong culture is based on a sense of pride: the people who feel they belong to the culture are proud to be part of it. As we have seen, culture is also a collection of beliefs, values, norms, laws and customs that guides behaviour. Cultures exist on many levels: countries, companies, clubs, non-profit organizations, churches, and circles of friends, on- or offline.

A social network like Facebook is a platform where users can express whatever opinion, value or belief they may hold (provided it doesn't violate the terms of use), so you wouldn't say it is a culture in its own right. Nevertheless, Facebook has a culture that governs how people comment on things, update information and signal approval of any material that has been posted. The moment people get together to do something, a culture or a standard for behaviour arises in some way or another. It can either be deliberately produced in order to achieve a certain objective or it can evolve on its own.

To make it simple, a culture is based on values that guide action according to a ranking order:

- Values
- Culture
- Actions

The central component of the culture is the values, and that is why it is more relevant to talk about a value-based organization than a culture-based organization. The culture is easier to understand if it breaks down into a few easy-to-understand core values. The point of each value is then to guide actions and behaviour.

It is worth repeating that culture is behaviour. If you have a culture, perhaps defined in nice words and slogans, but it does not guide how you behave – it is worthless. For example, if the culture of a bank is to 'deliver outstanding performance' it might be too broad or general to guide specific action, the 'deliver' part, and fail to define what actually

is 'outstanding performance'. And what are the underlying values? For example, can you use any means to deliver performance, or should you do it in an ethical and sustainable way? That is a typical question that values can guide.

To be useful, make sure that your organization's values are:

- Actionable and specific, possible to act on
- Accepted and regarded positively
- Shared and understood by all
- Defined together, not by some distant committee
- Simple and clear, easy to remember
- Something to be proud of, and meaningful
- Updated as the organization and the world outside evolve

The last point is crucial. Many organizations have suffered when a strong culture with solid values is no longer in tune with society and the people the organization wants to employ. The army, in many countries, is one such old institution that has had to adopt and change some values as society has changed.

#068 The Main Thing (TMT)

Build the company around one main value, if nothing else.

In a company, if you were to choose only one core value, what would you choose? The ultimate goal of leadership is results, so it would have to be something that you have identified as the ultimate driver of results. The Main Thing also has to be meaningful for the people working with it.

If you ask the successful online retailer Zappos, the answer would come quickly: customer service. Zappos has aligned the entire organization around one mission: to provide the best customer service possible. They call it the ‘Wow philosophy’.

If you ask the United States’ Marine Corps, their core value is *Semper Fidelis*, which is Latin for ‘always faithful’, their motto since 1883. This guides the Marines to be faithful to the mission, to each other, to the Corps and to their country.

For the restaurant chain Papa John’s Pizza, the core value is the quality of the product. This is how the company defines its focus: ‘We must keep The Main Thing, The Main Thing. We will consistently deliver a traditional Papa John’s superior-quality pizza.’

At Valve, the game developer, The Main Thing is hiring. This is how it puts it in the employee handbook: ‘Hiring well is the most important thing in the universe. Nothing else comes close. It’s more important than breathing. So when you’re working on hiring – participating in an interview loop or innovating in the general area of recruiting – everything else you could be doing is stupid and should be ignored!’

Swedish Radio Channel 3 (P3) has a simple mantra: ‘We love new music.’ They repeat it endlessly, which is good because the listeners understand that they will only hear new music (no oldies here) when tuning into P3. The staff focuses on new music, the culture around new music is reinforced in the organization, and above all we all get to share the passion that comes with ‘loving’ new music. The major thing at Swedish Radio Channel 3 is new music. Nobody will miss it.

A Value Based Organization means three things for me:

- It's based on core values and beliefs.
- It's focused on the value it provides to its stakeholders, such as customers.
- It's based on a belief and formula for how the company makes money.

To better understand what kind of culture you want to be part of building, figure out what is The Main Thing, as they say at Papa John's. Another way to look at it is in terms of the customer 'delight', which has more dimensions than just 'value', as described by Lena Ramfelt, Jonas Kjellberg, Tom Kosnik in *Gear Up*.

My main thing, in my companies, has always been 'customer value', whatever the business. The purpose of the business is to deliver a tangible or intangible value that is perceived by the client to be higher than the cost for the service or product. If the customers do not think they get value for money, and can get value elsewhere, the business will soon be gone. This price/value calculation is an always-on process in the back of the customer's mind. Of course, the customer value perspective has to be balanced by the company value perspective: the cost and benefits to the company of delivering that value to the customer. Too much cost in delivering the product or service will maybe make the customer happy but the company unprofitable. Too much emphasis on the company's results might reduce focus on customer value and decrease quality delivered.

This perspective – the balance of the customer's and the company's *value* – is the essence of business and a guiding *value* in my work. The term *value* can relate to both benefits and beliefs. Both are important, and they go hand in hand.

#069 Name The Culture (NTC)

The clearer the culture, the better.

To make the organization's culture even easier to remember and relate to, give it a name like the 'Wow philosophy' at Zappos. A culture is always best described by the core values it is made of, so give the values names, too. Make them memorable and fun. Make them important, and live by them. As a rule, have a few values, not too many.

At Keybroker, we called it the 'Try Us Culture' since we wanted customers to experience how our performance delivered value, and defined 11 core values. We thought the number 11 was less corporate than the even 10. The downside of 11 core values, though, is that they are too many to remember. Try to limit your core values to around three.

The foundation of the culture was the ambition to deliver real client value from online marketing and focus on results, while providing a rewarding and fun work environment. The culture, that was already in the air, was defined during a few sessions with a cross-departmental group.

The process to work out the culture was simple:

1. A meeting at each department was held to come up with words, terms, values, beliefs, concepts, descriptions and things that described the culture, such as 'performance-based pricing' and 'we are kid-friendly'.
2. The representatives from each department then met with their colleagues to contribute and pool the results at a culture meeting. Everything was written down on Post-it Notes® and put on the walls.
3. The clutter of Post-it Notes® was then organized according to themes, for instance 'client value', 'innovation' and 'recruiting'.
4. These themes, or clusters, then formed the foundation for the culture that boiled down to the 11 main core values. Then we named each core value to be distinct, different, uncorporate and memorable.
5. Finally, we wrote a short and snappy description of each value.

The strength of the process was that it was genuinely ‘bottom-up’, or more precisely, flat. It evolved from the grassroots of the company. Now it was just a matter of starting to live the culture and speak the language, which is just as important. This is the culture that we presented on the website as the 11 core values, both for our employees to enjoy and as a way to present the company for the people we were looking to recruit. Each core value was defined with a short paragraph to make it comprehensible. Just to reiterate: 11 are far too many to remember, it should be three (see Stick To Three #094 STT). However, we never bothered to boil it down, so here are the 11 core values as headlines.

1. Focus on client value = **Client is King**
2. Non-hierarchical organization = **Our world is flat**
3. Driving performance = **Results, results, results**
4. Recruitment and workplace = **Buddies with brains**
5. The integrity to say no = **Brave hearts**
6. A team-based company = **A Brazilian team**
7. Professionalism = **Quality**
8. Excellence in what we do = **Being better than Keybroker**
9. Innovation = **Madly masterminded**
10. Proactive attitude = **We are all leaders**
11. Balance = **Social harmony**

For example, after each interview with a new recruit, we asked each other: ‘Is this a Buddy with Brains?’ If yes, we knew that we had found the right person for the job. That is how a culture guides actions. It becomes The Operating System (see #063 TOS).

One final point. Do you really have to capture the culture in words to make it work? Some of the most successful and admired companies in the world don’t. Apple, Google and Facebook do not have formal, defined, clearly stated cultures, as far as I know. But do they have a Main Thing? Yes, I would say they do. Apple is about amazing products, Google is about the user experience and Facebook is a social utility that ‘helps you connect and share with the people in your life’, always for free. Written and articulated in a statement or not, derived through a

thorough democratic process or not, a culture that has got a name or not – either way, you had better be clear on the values guiding your organization.

REFLECTION POINTS

1. Do you have a clear culture where you work? Is it defined or not?
 2. Can you name your organization's core values? How many are there? Does the culture itself have a name?
 3. What is The Main Thing, the one most important thing in your business?
 4. What are the concrete actions that your culture results in? For example, does it guide recruitment, the way you deliver your services and products, or how you celebrate success?
 5. Have you experienced culture clashes, for example between different departments of the company or organization where you work? Do you and the people you work with share the core values and think positively about them?
 6. How did your organization's culture and core values arise?
 7. Did you take part in building and defining your organization's culture?
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CHAPTER 7

STRUCTURE AND CHAOS

The Duck and the Wolf were having dinner.

‘So,’ said the Wolf, ‘how’s your business?’

‘Well,’ said the Duck, ‘I’m busy chasing crusts of bread here and there. How are you doing?’

‘Not too bad,’ replied the slick, grey Wolf. ‘I have now organized a new pack that is ready to move in on those sheep in the valley, but as usual we have to watch out for the farmer, who wants to kill us.’

The donkey, who was sitting at a table next to them, could not resist listening to their conversation.

‘You could form a great team,’ he said.

‘Why?’ they replied in unison.

‘Isn’t it obvious?’ said the Donkey. ‘Duck, you and your mates could probably find more bread crusts if you organized properly and applied some method instead of just going where your beaks point. And you, Wolf, with your pack would probably find more sheep by improvising instead of hitting the same farm every time. If it works out you could start your own restaurant!’

That is why there is now a pub called The Duck & The Wolf, and I recommend that you try it – it’s quite good – and also that you run your own business in a similar fashion, constructively balancing chaos and structure.

Chaos is the creativity, innovation and constant trial and error that develop a company, but chaos can also kill the business. Structure is the framework, order and platform for running a business, but only structure will not lead you anywhere. The point is the right combination and balance. Put the two together and you have a winning formula.

This chapter is about organizing for leadership.

#070 Structure For Leadership (SFL)

The organization in which leadership happens.

Just as your business needs a structure, your leadership philosophy needs a structure, too. An organization for Formal Leaders is usually a traditional structure with hierarchies and several reporting layers. An organization for Mindset Leaders is more likely a structure with a flat approach, individual initiatives and less (or no) typical bosses. Now, it would be wrong to believe that a very flat and boss-less organization would have no structure. An organization made purely of Mindset Leaders would still need a structure, just a different one.

The game developer Valve is a flat company without bosses. In Valve's employee handbook they call it Flatland:

'We want innovators, and that means maintaining an environment where they'll flourish. That's why Valve is flat. It's our shorthand way of saying that we don't have any management, and nobody "reports to" anybody else. We do have a founder/president, but even he isn't your manager. This company is yours to steer – toward opportunities and away from risks.'

Ultimately, the purpose of Valve's organization is to produce better results, for the customers and for the company. In Valve's flat, boss-less structure, every employee is regarded as what I would call a Mindset Leader, guided by the culture and core principles such as hiring more great people, providing high return for the company, looking for the most valuable work you could do and working on projects that can deliver value to customers. Much of Valve's work revolves around projects, and it's up to you to select the project you think you could contribute to the most, help organize it, improve it and maybe step up to lead the project. As they say at Valve: 'Structure happens. Project teams often have an internal structure that forms temporarily to suit the group's needs.' Putting more emphasis on individual initiative, with less traditional structure, requires a system of checks and balances. For example, there are peer reviews (feedback from colleagues about your performance), stack ranking (your relative performance and value

contributions, and accordingly your compensation) and a culture with a constructive approach to mistakes and screw-ups. With lack of traditional structure comes important individual responsibility.

In the general company or organization, typical leadership structures include:

- Roles – who does what, how can you influence it and who's got authority?
- Reports – who's your boss, or are you boss-less?
- Team – who works together in a group, and what's the structure?
- Meetings – when and who do you meet regularly, and what is the purpose?
- Projects – what are they for and who runs them?
- Forums – where are you supposed to be and what are you doing there?

Now, there are three aspects to this. First, whatever structure you decide on must ultimately serve the purpose of your business and how you think you can achieve results in the best way.

Second, you need to find the right structural balance, for example clearly defined roles, simple reporting procedures, teams of the right size and composition, the right number of meetings and forums with a purpose, all according to your leadership approach and without too heavy bureaucracy.

Regarding forums, I always made it a priority to have a monthly gathering with the whole staff to provide everybody with transparent information, build culture and create energy. A forum is not really a meeting but any gathering that brings the company together. It could be a monthly meeting but also the annual Christmas party, a company holiday or a volleyball tournament. It can be the sales conference bringing in all the sales people or the introductory training week for new recruits.

Third, you have to make it work. People might be dissatisfied with their roles, dislike their manager, get on badly with their teams, and

spend too much time in meetings and forums which don't inspire anyone. How do you make it work when it doesn't? It could be the structure itself that is wrong, for example, too many layers of hierarchy, too many meetings without any purpose, too many participants on a project. Think about how to make the structure really useful. Furthermore, it might be the composition of people that does not work or the attitudes. Here the Mindset Leader is important. It is the Formal Leader, in the traditional organization, who calls meetings and sets agendas, but it is up to everyone to adopt a constructive mental attitude that makes a meeting work. No leadership structure will ever work if people are not prepared to put positive energy into it. Here, the Formal Leader will benefit from the drive and passion of Mindset Leaders.

Think about it. The beauty, drama and energy of a football (soccer) match is thanks to the structure of the game. There are two teams, 11 players on each, two periods of 45 minutes and a simple purpose: to put the ball into the opponent's goal. It is the structure that releases the energy. The same game without any rules or foundation would not be the same thing, just chaos. But unpredictability within a shared frame of reference creates magic.

It is the same thing with a company: it is the structure and organization of the business that releases energy. Focus, clarity and order are good things. Many different focuses at the same time, lack of clarity, and disorder take energy and time. But be aware – too much regulation and too many rules will be an obstacle to energy and growth. Your role as a leader is to find exactly the right balance.

Structure also involves the market you are in, the clients you sell to and what you offer them. It involves the underlying vision, mission, goals of the company. It involves the culture and spirit. Everything that relates to the way you do things is essentially structure.

The structure can also be an obstacle. If you have a team that does not work, even if each team member is a great individual, the solution might be to change the structure. Try a different team composition with members who can work better together with the right 'chemistry' between individuals, and find new roles for individuals in new team or

business units where their strengths can be better applied. You have to believe that people can work together by improving relationships, focusing on operations and stepping up to meet challenges, but sometimes a divorce is best. On a higher level, a company with offices in several markets with a central approach to organization might consider decentralizing autonomy to each country. Think about how structure can be productive as well as an obstacle. (See also Release The Energy #060 RTE.)

#071 Too Many Chefs (TMC)

Who's in charge?

There are two situations that potentially create confusion in an organization:

- There are several people responsible for the same task.
- One person has several different roles.

It happens that a company has two CEOs, or co-CEOs, who run the business together. For example, Research in Motion (RIM), developers of the BlackBerry, famously had two CEOs, Jim Balsillie and Mike Lazaridis, who founded the company in 1984. The reason behind the dual CEO set-up was that the two founders combined their skills in sales and technology. Eventually, it did not work because they failed to respond to the fast changes in the mobile market, so they were replaced by one CEO.

When you have two (or more) co-heads of a business, operation or department, I think you still have to make sure that responsibilities and expectations are clearly defined to avoid a mess. As a rule, I always prefer that one person is accountable for a defined area, for the sake of simplicity.

There can be situations where you have too many 'bosses', or 'chefs'. One example of this is a situation in which there is a proper CEO, accountable for the ultimate results, and a management team with various different opinions about how to run the business. Here is a potential conflict between the Formal Leader and the Mindset Leaders (who are department heads, but not the formal leader of the company) if they are pulling in different directions. This is a delicate balance between engaged and passionate team members on the one hand and on the other hand destructive conflict from too many opposing views. Each meeting will then risk using much time and energy discussing the direction and strategy of the business. When there are too many chefs in the kitchen, eventually the business will suffer from in-fighting. You always want to encourage discussion, but there is a fine line between healthy

debate and destructive disagreement. Mindset Leadership works best when there is a shared vision and direction, and the Mindset Leader can very well be the originator of that vision.

The other potentially problematic situation is when one or more people in your organization have several roles at the same time. A CTO in a company had three roles at once: besides being CTO, she was also the head of a new geographical market (Managing Director of the local company) and in parallel partly responsible for a new online business area. The end result was that all three areas ended in failure. She later became the Marketing Director, at the same time as being CTO, with equal confusion and lack of focus. Simplicity, and having one role per person, allows people to focus on what they do best while still allowing for Mindset Leadership.

The way people can and are supposed to step up and show leadership will depend on the structure and culture of the organization. In the traditional hierarchy it can be confusing when strong Mindset Leaders takes initiatives, while the flat company expects people to step up and be responsible while self-organizing around ideas, projects and results. You want clarity, not a kitchen with a bunch of chefs running around cooking their own individual soups.

#072 Avoid Lazy Meetings (ALM)

Don't waste time.

Meetings. For better or worse, we spend much of our time in meetings. But sitting down and talking things through is a necessity in most operations. It goes without saying that you should run efficient meetings. The cardinal sin of meetings is wasting people's time. Of the original seven sins – Lust, Gluttony, Greed, Sloth, Wrath, Envy, Pride – it is sloth that is most relevant to the issue of bad meetings.

Sloth is laziness, and in meetings it appears in many forms:

- Not arriving on time to the meeting
- Having no agenda or purpose
- Long discussions about unimportant things
- Making no decisions, reaching no conclusions
- Ending meetings without summarizing what was discussed
- Not taking minutes – nobody will remember what the meeting was about
- No action points, or anyone responsible for following up
- Not ending the meeting on time
- Booking a new meeting to waste even more time

To run efficient meetings requires a mindset which is all about fighting laziness. And asking: 'Do we really need a meeting at all?'

#073 Clear On Process (COP)

Where you start, where you go and what will happen along the way

You have the more or less static structure and 'set-up' of the business or organization, but you also have the more dynamic and evolving characteristics of projects and ventures moving forward within that structure. A process can take many forms, for example:

- Establishing a company in a new market
- A software development project
- Planning next year's budget and targets
- Recruiting new sales people
- Executing a strategy

The common ingredients are that you are going to move from A to B, you want to achieve some desired results and people are involved in various ways. As usual when people are involved, you have to be careful. There are a few things to keep in mind when planning and running a process:

- Show all participants clearly what is expected to happen at each stage
- Be clear on how everybody fits into the process and what is expected of them
- Share the goal and purpose of the process so that you are moving in the same direction
- Involve everybody in planning the process, to create ownership
- After the process, sum it up

At a course at the Stockholm School of Economics our teacher was the Swedish scientist and professor David Ingvar, famous for popular neuroscience and an author of several books on various aspects of human brain function. The workings of the brain, how we think, were also the topic of the course. Knowing a great deal about the mechanisms

of the brain he told us students: 'Now to make you remember and follow my lectures, I'm going to be like a US TV evangelist: first I tell what I'm going to say, then I say it, then I will tell you what I have just told you.'

That's a pretty straightforward process you can follow. When a process gets messy, it is usually the negative result of a lot of people having differing ideas of what is meant to be happening. You can never be too clear on the process. (See Over-Communicate & Repeat #096 OCR.)

#074 Find The Ratio (FTR)

The fifty-fifty rule, the eighty-twenty rule, the ten-ten-ten rule.

'Fifty-fifty' suggests balance, for example giving 50% praise and 50% constructive feedback means that each element has equal weight. 'Eighty-twenty' suggests proportion, for example 20% of the clients contribute 80% of the profits. 'Ten-ten-ten' is a way of thinking about perspective, for example when looking at a decision, imagine how it will feel in the next 10 minutes, the next 10 months and after 10 years.

The latter approach was outlined by Suzy Welsh in her book *Ten Ten Ten* and I think it's a great way of putting things into perspective. What might be a very tough decision in the short term, such as quitting your job, might not look too bad when viewed longer term. Also, when you have set your eyes on what you want to achieve in ten years (for example, having a great relationship with your kids) it guides you in the shorter term (for instance, making a decision now, such as working less, that supports that long-term ambition).

Regarding proportions, it is useful to understand how they appear in your work and organization. For example, imagine that the cost to deliver your company's service is 33% of revenues, but the cost to sell those services to new customers is 200% of revenues. This makes the business unprofitable. Imagine that you spend four out of five days in the office busy with internal administration and staff meetings and just one out of five days with customers. Are you satisfied with the ratio of things in your work and life?

Balance, proportions and perspective all relate to the structure of your leadership in various ways. Think about it. An unbalanced lifestyle, unproportional actions and too short or long perspectives are bad leadership. A good way to think about your leadership is by trying to find the right ratio.

REFLECTION POINTS

1. How is your business or organization set up?
 2. Do you have a clear structure in your organization? Does the structure release or block energy?
 3. Have you seen how leadership is unclear, with too many 'chefs' and confusing roles?
 4. Would you describe your own reality as 'structure' or 'chaos'?
 5. How do you personally make sure that the meeting you plan or attend is not just a waste of time for the participants? What is your idea of a really good meeting?
 6. What is your experience with various processes, such as running projects? In your opinion, what are success factors and risks?
 7. What is balance and a healthy ratio for you?
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CHAPTER 8

IDEAS ARE WORTHLESS

Everything can happen.

Everything is possible and probable.

Time and space do not exist.

*On a flimsy framework of reality, the imagination spins,
weaving new patterns.*

August Strindberg, *A Dream Play* (1901)

The human mind is limitless – we can dream, think and create without boundaries. We can imagine life on a galaxy far far away and make it into a movie, we can create the future out of thin air and we can change the direction of the world by sheer force of the intellect. We can show what life was like when dinosaurs roamed the Earth long before the first humans were born, we can envision how the whole planet is connected and suddenly it actually is, we can turn an idea into a company with products that never existed before and millions of customers, and my children can come up with a story that they turn into a video and potentially show it to millions. A small start-up can launch an app on the global infrastructure of smartphones and become a cultural phenomenon in no time, while the former market leader in mobile phones can become irrelevant in just about the same time.

New ideas are created by combining existing ones in an ever accelerating pace, weaving new patterns that build new fortunes and disrupt old ones.

People have always worked with ideas, turning them into new realities. The caveman making an axe from a stone and the fashion designer working on the spring collection are essentially the same *homo sapiens*. The difference is that much of life today is based on working with ideas. Up until the late 19th century, we lived in an agricultural society; with the industrial revolution the foundation for prosperity shifted to manufacturing in the 20th century. Now, in the new millennium, value creation essentially depends on our skills in developing ideas, turning them into reality, making decisions and strategies about ideas in an increasingly complex idea landscape.

This chapter is about working with ideas, how to realize their value – and how to kill them when they indeed prove to be worthless. Understanding the essence of idea work is a leadership competence: the entrepreneurship to make ideas come true, the management that is administrating the organization where ideas turn into value, and the leadership that is about people working with the ideas and helping them succeed.

#075 Ideas Are Worthless (IAW)

Only the execution makes ideas valuable.

An aspiring entrepreneur was walking in the park when his friend approached him.

‘Hi!’ said his friend, ‘what’s up?’

‘Well,’ said the aspiring entrepreneur, ‘I actually I have this great idea.’

‘Wow, exciting, tell me!’

‘No I can’t. Not yet.’

‘Why?’

‘Because it is so valuable that I don’t want anyone to steal it.’

What is wrong with the story? Well, ideas in and of themselves are worthless. Why can you and should you spread your ideas?

- First, an idea is worth nothing if it is not successfully executed.
- Second, given all the hard work required to make an idea come true, and the fact that most people are already very busy, the probability that someone else will run off with your idea and make it happen is virtually zero.
- Third, it’s fine if they do run away with it because an idea belongs to the person who makes it reality.
- Finally, ideas usually don’t turn out the way they first appear anyway.

By talking about your ideas, the best thing that can happen is that you get useful feedback and comments that will enable you to improve on them. Ideas are always tested in reality, and you may as well start by putting your little baby out there in the cold world. Of course, it is important to exercise a bit of discretion where your established competitors are concerned, but aside from them, and from your friends and family, it is safe to assume that most people will be largely indifferent.

To sum up, to make ideas valuable you need three things:

- The Idea (what you think could be a new and useful thing)
- Resources (capital, time, people, somewhere to work)

- Action (start running, meet with customers and potential collaborators)

To create new realities from thin air is the true magic of entrepreneurship. It just takes that one person believes in the idea – You – and it can and will happen. Then, later, you will be stuck with all the other challenges of management and leadership. Ideas in themselves are worthless. Many entrepreneurs can testify to all the hard work that is needed to make ideas actually become real and valuable. I met a seasoned and wealthy entrepreneur in San Francisco, with a face like a tough cowboy. I asked him about his formula for success. He replied simply: ‘Well, in my alphabet, Work comes before Success.’

#076 Make A Decision (MAD)

Why is it so hard?

Whenever I go to a restaurant I see it as a good training opportunity to make a quick decision. Look at the menu, pick a choice and stick with it. And I try to do it before anyone else has made their choices, as a stupid game. I see it as daily practice. I probably make too many decisions, too fast, and when I shouldn't or don't need to. With increasingly more ideas, the importance of making decisions increases accordingly.

There are two types of people: those who like making decisions and those who dread making them. But decision making is at the heart of any human activity and essential to idea work. There are three parts to it:

1. Making the decision.
2. Taking action on the decision = executing.
3. Reaping the results of those actions, bad or good.

Steps 1 and 2 are the difficult parts to do right.

What you want to do is the Right Thing, the Right Way, but there are other outcomes: doing the right thing wrong, doing the wrong thing right, doing the wrong thing wrong (which can actually lead to the right thing by mistake).

The first step is to define the problem or issue that needs a decision. If you are in a group of people, ensure that you are all defining the issue at hand in the same way. The task can be, for example, to avoid a nuclear war, which means you have to choose between two strategies: respond to a threat with an air strike or seek a diplomatic solution, as in the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. For a company, the task can be to decide whether to do project A or project B.

The second step is to ask, as management guru Peter Drucker suggests, what is the objective of the decision? For a company, a typical objective is to decide whether you want the company to grow, be profitable or both. The growth objective will trigger one type of decisions, the profit objective other ones. That can help you make the right

decisions in order to achieve your objective. It helps to ask 'why?' a number of times when making decisions. Why are we doing this? I have seen that deciding on the objective can be just as hard as making the decision itself.

Should decisions be made quickly or slowly and cautiously? If your gut feeling tells you to go for it and you generally trust your instincts, then go for it. If you are a bit unsure, adopt the 24-hour rule and sleep on the decision before acting. If you have the time, it's never wrong to reflect before decisions. However, don't let your mind control your intuition too much.

The worst mistake is to not make any decisions at all when decisions are needed. That miserable place where nothing happens can be called the 'Non-Decision Void'. Even wrong and terrible decisions are to some extent good because you can learn from them, you get valuable information that will help you to do things differently next time. With Non-Decisions, nothing happens.

Another enemy to decisions is the twins 'Not Invented Here' and 'Tried That Before'. The first one reflects the attitude that any new ideas that are not properly in line with company culture because they come from external sources are bad by definition. The same happens within organizations when one department refuses to adopt ideas from another department, or even see reality any other way, guarding their own ways of doing things (see *Interconnected Sub-Cultures #065 ICS*).

The other one is the resignation that takes hold of a company or culture injured by too many previous mistakes and failed attempts, where indeed much has maybe been tried, and puts people off trying anything new because of cynicism or knocks to the company's confidence. But just because you tried something that did not work, it does not mean that the idea was wrong in itself. It could instead have been the wrong team, timing or tactics. Nevertheless, the company does not feel like trying it again. Both 'Not Invented Here' and 'Tried That Before' are obstacles to making the right decisions.

Finally, it's a good thing for people to be part of the decision in a constructive way, and to feel ownership of the decision because they were involved in making it. Decisions are often surrounded by conflict, competing opinions and differing views. These conflicts can be con-

structive if the relationships and discussions are based on trust, and provide everybody with the opportunity to state their views and opinions. Even if the decision doesn't go their way, everybody must accept it and loyally stand by it, having had their chance to state their views. It feels better to say, 'I'm against it, as you know, but since this is the company's decision I will do everything I can to make it work.' Conflict can create commitment, a point that Patrick Lencioni observed in *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*. The best decisions actually require healthy disagreements.

Decisions are like ideas: in themselves they are practically worthless. Your decision does not become useful until it is executed, and hopefully executed efficiently and with the result you had in mind. All business is about two things: Strategy and Execution. First you decide what you want to do, then you do it. Unless you actually do it, it does not really matter what you have decided.

#077 Right Before Compromise (RBC)

Don't make the compromise the standard.

When a group discusses various options when trying to make a decision, it is common that the outcome of the discussion becomes a compromise – and that compromise then becomes the decision.

Here's a typical case. A software development project will cost \$250,000, require five developers and take about three months. If you want to do the project, this is the budget you should decide on and then ask how to finance the project and find the resources. What usually happens is that a group of decision makers comes to the conclusion that you have only a \$100,000 budget and two developers, and that you have to do the project with these limited resources or not at all. The decision is then made to do the project with what you have, in other words letting the compromise set the standard. The correct way to do it is to decide to do a project with five developers, \$250,000 budget and three months' development time. Then you might have to compromise anyway to adapt to reality, but if you make the compromise the norm you don't know when you're compromising. Decide the thing that is right to do.

#078 Let's Fail Quickly (LFQ)

if you are going to fail, better fail quickly.

Not all ideas that you believe in will fly. Once it has become clear that someone or something is going to fail, it is better that it happens sooner rather than later. Think about it. If you recruit a new key account manager for your sales team, you want that person to be successful. But it may happen that they are not. Would you rather have years of missed sales targets and time-consuming talks before you come to the conclusion that they are not the right person for the job, or come to the conclusion in just a few months? Of course, for you, your company and the key account manager, it's better to know sooner rather than later if a situation isn't working. Would you invest in a new market, project or idea and find out that it is *not working* in one, five or ten years? Of course, if you can be sure in just one year, you don't have to burn more resources. Long roads to failure are painful, unnecessary and a waste of time and money.

The trick, of course, is identifying when something is not working. One of the cornerstones of entrepreneurship is persistence – the ability to push ahead with your idea, ignore failure after failure to finally prove the whole world wrong and show that you were right all along. There are stories like that. But more commonly it happens that entrepreneurs, leaders and their companies spend too much money and time on people and things that they would be better off just letting go.

The best and fairest way to find whether someone or something is successful or not is to adopt a process with a time frame, targets and milestones. If the new recruit or a launched project meets certain criteria within six months, then you go ahead. If it doesn't, you stop. Be very clear about the time horizon and criteria from the beginning so that everybody understands the rules. Then you do everything you can to make that person or project successful. If not, you take your loss and move on. You can make some things work, but if you are doomed to fail, it's better to fail quickly than to waste your life trying to turn it around.

One final note: think about your 'Fail Tempo'. Some people prefer to 'fail' quickly when things do not work and start again (I'm one of those), others like to keep on longer before failing because they believe they will not fail. We have different views on the potential failure. Usually, it is the ones who have invested the most that are the most unwilling to fail and live on hope for a bit longer. The bottom line? Be unsentimental about failing. It's part of the job. Just make sure that you don't fail quickly in all you do.

#079 Win The Game (WTG)

Know what you are playing, and how to win.

How do you win the game? It is one of the smartest questions you can ever ask in business, and I was asked it by Professor Robert Burgelman at Stanford University. I constantly live with this question in the back of my mind when working with my companies. In order to win the game, you must answer a few very straightforward questions:

- What is the game? (What market, industry or product are we in?)
- Who are we competing against? (Competitors, rival products and services?)
- What are we competing with? (What are our products and their advantages?)
- What is winning? (How do we know that we are winning?)

It follows that you cannot participate in more than one game at once, unless you are a very big company with several divisions, each engaged in their various battles – like Google with different ‘games’ in the areas of search, mobile and TV. For the small business and the start-up, concentrating on winning one game is usually more than enough to keep you occupied. Avoid strategic mess where you are trying to do too much at once. Focus creates growth and sets the foundation for success.

For example, if a company is split between being an online marketing agency (delivering a service) and a technology business (offering a product), there will be endless internal discussions about the right way forward. Then it might be better to resolve the issue by dividing the company into two business units or two companies, one being an agency selling services and the other being a technology company selling products (which are two very different businesses) and providing each with the opportunity to win their respective, well-defined game.

If you ask yourself how you and your company are going to win the game, and you have trouble answering questions about the game itself and your part in it, then it is time to reconsider what you are doing – or lose the game. And, adopt a global mindset. The game today is seldom restricted to your local market: games are won or lost on a global scale.

#080 The Slow Company (TSC)

Dare to be slow, most things are. Success takes time.

The concept of the ‘Fast Company’ was popularized around the turn of the millennium to describe a company that was smart and savvy, that launched fast and equally grew fast, usually thanks to new technological infrastructures and an equally smart and savvy global audience. But I would say that to be fast, you first have to be slow and get things right. Nail it, before you scale it’ as someone said. Yes, companies like Groupon and Facebook were very fast to go global, but not until their model was perfected locally. What defines many successful companies is what they did before getting fast: their strategy and management during the set-up phase when the company was being formed, and how they identified the acceleration point – the moment when they started to grow rapidly.

Slow companies allow for ‘set-up time’ to test and reject ideas, refine the business model and develop a winning culture. This allows them to go on to grow exponentially and fast. They have a disciplined approach to innovation. Slow companies focus on a few products and become leaders in their niche markets – then explode into new innovative customer offerings. Slow companies build a customer base through the value proposition of their products – then expand through advertising and marketing to reinforce the brand. Slow companies do not attempt to get big until the time is right. When the Slow Company reaches the acceleration point, high-speed expansion comes naturally. The Slow Company can also be called the ‘conscious’ company.

The concept of a Slow Company has nothing to do with age, or the time it takes to reach a certain scale of revenues and profitability. It is more of a mindset, approach and pattern. Slow companies are about a common growth curve: reasonable set-up time and fast exponential growth.

IKEA needed 30 years’ set-up time before defining the concept that made it grow into the world’s largest furniture retail company. Fashion company H&M opened its first shop in Sweden in 1947, then expanded abroad to Denmark 20 years later. It continued to launch stores in three more countries during the next 20 years and then finally took off,

opening stores in 16 countries, rapidly reaching more than 1,000 stores worldwide. Today, there are around 2,600 H&M stores in more than 40 countries.

A much younger company, Google, spent around four years of set-up time perfecting the search engine and advertising technology that made it the global number one before letting its creativity explode into numerous user tools, applications and services around the mission of organizing the world's information. Amazon.com first made sure it had the world's greatest online bookstore and a culture obsessed with customer experience before attempting, and eventually succeeding, to sell virtually everything online. Apple needed to be a struggling computer company for almost 20 years before it finally re-emerged as a brilliant consumer and electronics company, with the iPhone at the core. Other examples of slow companies are the German retail chain Aldi and coffee chain Starbucks. Facebook started in 2004 but it was not until about three years later that it opened up the social network to everybody, having perfected the culture, style and features of the web tool. Groupon went global almost at once, but its model was also much easier to copy and that's why it needed to move fast. The same goes for Swedish mobile gift card app and start-up Wrapp – it very quickly needed to establish global presence and fend off imitators.

Slow is a metaphor for letting businesses develop organically and moving at the speed of the customers and users. Being 'slow' is being committed long term, and eventually being faster and more successful in the same way that the tortoise beats the hare in the fable. The paradox is that you rarely get fast by running fast. Challenge the concept of high speed in business! Think instead of 'basic speed', which makes the company competitive by staying focused, keeping things simple and reducing cost and complexity. What can we learn from the success of slow companies?

- Don't be too creative – focus, say no to new ideas (too many ideas can destroy you).
- Don't advertise to build a brand (build it by acquiring customers).
- Scale down to scale up (you have to be lean and focused to grow).

You need to be careful about the underlying assumption that speed is good and that growing rapidly is the ultimate sign of success. Coming to re-think the concept of 'fast' and 'speed' when founding new companies, I started to define the idea of the Slow Company, meaning a company that is fast in a way other than just doing everything at high speed. In an article in *Brainheart* magazine in 2002 – *The Limits of Speed* – journalist Marta Sandén invited me along with Bodil Jönsson, Professor at the Department of Design Sciences at Lund Institute of Technology, to discuss the question of time. The interview also touched upon the personal aspects of business, of how we work:

Jönsson: 'We need set-up time to leave one activity and switch to another, a kind of time to think things over or let them mature, in order to do our own or the collective work, but also to have shared experiences and to create frames of reference.'

The conclusion, that will guide your leadership, is to adopt a reasonable perspective on the speed of the development of your business. Do hurry, have a basic speed and don't waste time, but there is no need to burn out your organization. You will accomplish amazing things with time.

Also think about 'set-up time' as 'transition time', the space where you move from one state to another, for example from one meeting to the next one. Ideally, as my friend Grant Calder inspired me to do: allow yourself a few minutes to make the transition, especially if going from the whirlwind of your office to a nice lunch with a friend you have not seen for a while and you need to slow your tempo and get in the mood. Time is a tool. (Compare the concept of the Slow Company with Never Give Up #039 NGU and Let's Fail Quickly #078 LFQ to get a perspective on time.)

#081 Remember The Bread (RTB)

Don't cut off the hand that feeds you.

It is tempting to go with new ideas – the human mind wants to have fun. New things are always sexy, but it is a mistake for a leader to neglect the bread and butter that is the foundation of a business. Any company that works does so because there is a proven business model that brings in cash flow. That is a good thing. However, it is tempting for the leaders of that company to start to look at new opportunities, exciting things that are fun. Sometimes companies are forced to change and enter new areas to stay alive, since the old core business is declining. Sometimes companies pursue new ventures just because the opportunities are there and they provide the chance to grow further.

In any case, change will usually not happen overnight. Unless you are in the extreme situation of having to shut down a business, you will more likely be facing a transformation – a process where you want to turn around a company in one way or the other.

One example is directory companies. Their old business was to provide addresses and telephone numbers to people and companies through printed catalogues and sell advertising space in those directories. In most countries, the telephone directory was a monopoly, and hugely profitable. With the advent of the Internet, the searches moved online and most directory companies became web-based. Still, even with all the online search options available, printed directories continued to be in demand and deliver great gross profits. If you were running a directory company, it would be unwise to simply say that the future is online and print is dead, even if the long-term trend is indeed a shift from offline media to online, digital and mobile.

Say a company starts a new business called Products, with the purpose of offering web-based and affordable online advertising tools to customers globally. The new business is launched internally with much fanfare, in the belief that it would motivate and excite staff. However, the bread-and-butter business was the original Services: managing online campaigns for advertisers. With all the new focus

on Products, the revenue, profits and motivation in Services quickly dropped. Two bad things happened:

- First, by losing focus on your bread-and-butter business, you risk that business. Whatever you work with, you need to nurture that business every day to stay ahead, or at least to stay around. If you turn your focus on to something new, you can be sure that your old business will start to suffer sooner or later.
- Second, by losing focus on your main business you risk losing the motivation of the people working with that business. If the people hear every day that their work will soon be redundant, it is sure to be demotivating. People need to hear that they are doing something important. You will then be hit from two sides: a business suffering from your lack of focus and people suffering from lack of motivation. The smart leader will change a business by focusing not on the new things but on the old things (while building the new things).

#082 Living Parallel Worlds (LPW)

The confusing but necessary task of executing ideas, while questioning them.

Business is essentially two things: decide where you want to go (strategy) and then go there (execution). The first part is really the idea about your existence and your future, what you are and what you could be.

So, when you run a company, you live in two parallel worlds. One is the execution of the current strategy and the current ideas, the other is the ever-evolving strategy going forward, exploring new ideas (and questioning the existing strategy and ideas). You will have to be comfortable with being in constant motion.

In a company you should dream all the time. And this type of dream is the strategy, vision, long-term ambitions, goals and targets. The difference between this ‘company dreaming’ and regular dreaming is that you dream alongside your daily, waking life – your operations. These are the two parallel worlds that a leader has to balance: the day-to-day execution in a business alongside the ongoing conversation about the company’s future, what could be.

Now, constantly living in two time zones, the present and the future, can be demanding, especially if you require people to spend considerable time thinking about the future and planning ahead, discussing scenarios and various strategic alternatives. Because this will consequently take time from the present, where value is created and people are assessed and paid based on that value creation based in reality. The more time you spend on the future, the more people will feel that you are wasting their time. However, spending too little on the future will create a void of purpose and confusion of direction.

To make things more complicated, as they usually are, the leader’s job is not only to maintain a conversation about the future, and set and execute the strategy, but also to question the strategy itself once it is put in place. This is another way to look at the Two Parallel Worlds: executing a strategy, while at the same time checking whether that strategy is the right one. While necessary, it is also dangerous, because it can appear that you cannot make up your mind. This can undermine

your leadership. Still, you have to be able to keep an open discussion about whether you are really on the right track.

The answer to that dilemma is to look at signals, not the strategy itself. Here, your strategy can be used as a map. Think of strategy as ‘a set of simple rules at the edge of chaos’, as suggested by Kathleen Eisenhardt of Stanford University.

Instead of discussing your strategy all the time, make sure that the strategy is firm and understood by everyone, then spend time asking if anyone has picked up any signals (i.e. shifts in the market place or new opportunities) that may require changes in the current thinking. Just be clear to distinguish signals from noise. As someone said, ‘There’s not a paradigm shift every day.’

#083 Top Line Orientation (TLO)

Is your passion revenues or costs?

What is your personality and mindset? To create bottom-line results, would you rather save costs or increase revenues? For the purposes of this exercise, you are not allowed to say 'both'. If your household economy is off balance, would you rather cut down on the costs, go on fewer nights out and skip that holiday to save money, or would you look for ways to increase your cash flow to pay the bills?

Most entrepreneurs are top-line oriented, since the prerequisite for starting a company or whatever organization is to create some kind of client or user value that delivers revenue from paying customers. Having said that, many fine businesses start with the idea of a low price, and the entrepreneurial challenge is to keep costs low or achieve economies of scale to sustain those low prices. Take IKEA: it is said that they first design the price, then design the product. Would \$3 be a really good price for a bedside lamp? OK, what would we then need to do to design and manufacture that product in order to be able to offer it to our customers for \$3? The entrepreneur behind IKEA, Ingvar Kamprad, has been really good at creating a culture where costs are kept down, so you can then keep prices low, driving customers to your stores, thereby creating fantastic revenues while serving the Many.

From a leadership perspective, think about whether your natural focus is top-line revenues and growth, costs or the ultimate bottom line. What is the nature of your job, the team you are part of or the project you are working on? Top-line or bottom-line focus will direct the way you communicate with other people. Think about what you normally care about: do you get upset when there are unnecessary costs, when you miss customer opportunities (top-line revenues) or when profits suffer? Think about your orientation, it will guide you as a leader.

#084 Adding Up Numbers (AUN)

Business, or any activity, is ultimately a numbers game.

The purpose of leadership is to create results, and the most realistic way to see your business, non-profit organization or local tennis club is a flow of numbers adding up. The idea behind your company, or a new project within that company, will ultimately translate into numbers in one way or the other. It is basically the only way to monitor how well an idea becomes reality: you look at the maths. There are several kind of numbers, for example:

- Revenue, cost, margins, cash, donations
- Customers, paying users, downloads, likes
- Followers, tweets, retweets, views
- Impressions, clicks, conversions of visitors to buyers
- Reviews, comments, posts
- Employees, countries, markets
- Growth rate, sign-up rate, daily orders
- Members, volunteers, participants
- Won games, gold medals, current ranking

As the success of ideas ultimately is tracked by the numbers, it is good to know what numbers, or KPIs, you will use to evaluate your idea. If the business is a mobile app, the number of downloads is one appropriate number. If your idea is a streaming music business like Spotify, the main number is probably the number of paying premium users. If your idea is to mount a revolution against a dictator with a corrupt regime, the number of protesters in the streets is a key number. The way you add up the numbers tells the story about the idea.

#085 Vision, Mission & Goals (VMG)

Putting your idea into words and goals.

Some of the most superfluous activities in a new business involve drafting visions and mission statements. The probability is that, once formulated, the documents themselves will become redundant. Still, if you build a business on an idea, you have to express it in an efficient way. What is it all about? If you are going to use a vision, mission and goals, make sure you put them in the right order. This is what it can look like for this book:

- **The vision** ('We are all leaders')
- **The mission** ('To make you a better leader')
- **The goals** ('Turn X people into better leaders; sell X copies of this book')

The vision is a general thought that is the foundation for what you do. For Microsoft it was 'a computer on every desk'. The mission, meanwhile, is what you will do for the customer, like Google's 'organising the world's information'. The goal is the way you capture your ambitions in numbers. There is not an absolute rule for this, of course, but I have seen how this simple structure works. Vision, mission and goals can serve as a practical way to explain what you do. The mission has also been called a 'mantra'.

Or you can just describe it: 'This app lets you listen to all the music in the world on your mobile phone.' Either way, to make your idea fly, you have to be able to communicate it in a way so others understand it and the value it brings.

#086 Here To Stay (HTS)

Show competitors that you will not move.

It was my Israeli mentor who taught me that your job as a leader is to show the competition that you are here to stay. New ideas, like new businesses, will sometimes provoke aggressive reactions from competitors. In one case, my company was suddenly heavily attacked by a competitor that seemed to want to kill us. The company supplied us with the tracking technology that is necessary to measure performance of online marketing, which in turn was the foundation for the performance-based pricing model of the business. We realized that our competitor (which was also our long-term supplier that we had trusted) was going to shut down the service at the latest possible time, according to the contract, leaving us with no time to find another solution. If this happened, it would hurt us badly.

I was surprised by the aggressive tactics and turned to my board to discuss the issue. Eventually I got in touch with a mentor to get his view on the challenge.

My first reaction was an impulse to fight back, but I learned that the right thing to do (in this case anyway) was simply to show that we were there to stay. Competition is a fact of life. Your job is to survive and make sure you don't let the competition get you. When the competition realizes that you and your company are indeed here to stay, they will start to cooperate. And that is exactly what happened in the case of my company.

We accordingly implemented another solution with much effort, assuming that our competitor/supplier would act to do as much harm as possible. When they indeed terminated the contract in a very bad way, we already had a new solution in place and carried on. We showed that we were there to stay. And then they started to cooperate, the aggressive CEO of the competitor was fired, the fight stopped and we eventually entered into a new agreement instead.

The pattern has often been the same in my various companies. Existing players in the industry, with nothing to gain and everything to lose from your success will try to stop you. And if you are going

to fail, make sure it's you who decides when and how – not the competition.

An idea can start out being worthless (because it has not yet started to add up the numbers), turn valuable when it proves to be successful and then eventually die when it is replaced by something better (pushed out by an aggressive competitor). It is the circle of market capitalism's 'creative destruction', popularized by economist Joseph Schumpeter. On this ever-spinning carousel, once you have launched a new idea, your job is to show that you are here to stay.

REFLECTION POINTS

1. Have you ever pitched an idea to colleagues, friends or maybe venture capital investors? What was the outcome? Have you turned an idea into reality? Do you agree that ideas are, after all, worthless until they become real?
 2. Have you experienced ideas that failed? What happened?
 3. What's your approach to speed: do you prefer working 'fast' or 'slow'?
 4. Do you like or dread making decisions? What does your decision-making process usually look like?
 5. What is your game and do you know how to win it?
 6. What are the relevant 'numbers' that you add up in your business?
 7. Can you think of a situation when you kept working on an idea or a project when you knew you should really have shut it down?
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CHAPTER 9

BUDDIES WITH BRAINS

In his classic book *Confessions of an Advertising Man*, David Ogilvy outlines his philosophy of recruiting ‘gentlemen with brains’. The reasoning behind the principle was that given the nature of the advertising business, success in the field demanded social skills (maintaining and developing relationships) and a talent for producing creative advertising that sells. Therefore, an advertising agency was looking for people who were clever and creative, but also diplomatic and personable – gentlemanly. And yes, in the early days of the advertising industry, most of the copywriters and art directors were indeed men. In the TV series *Mad Men*, set in a New York advertising agency in the 1960s, advertising is very much a man’s world, populated with decorative secretaries and trophy wives, and set against a backdrop of glamorous restaurants and offices. Now, business is, or should be, more equal.

This chapter is about recruiting, and that strange expression ‘human resources’, which categorizes us together with other resources such as capital and computers. We will explore your approaches to hiring and working with people.

#087 Love Your Work (LYW)

Love what you do. And what if you don't?

Just like leadership in general, everything related to human resources – whether that's recruiting, developing people, training, or formulating staff policies – starts with you. You have to ask yourself whether you love your job, because you want the people you work with to love theirs. If you don't love your job, this will be evident in anything that is related to people in your work; you will not recruit with passion and you will not care as much as you should about how people develop or how they are treated. By loving your job, you will seek and foster the passion in others. If you don't love your job, you will not be motivated to *do* a good job.

Now, we all have our ups and downs, and you don't have to love your work every day, so long as you're happy on the whole with what you do. I love being an entrepreneur, working with companies, starting them from scratch, building them, growing with great people, making a difference. Do I love my job every day? No. I can get so tired, disillusioned and fed up with what I do that I'm thinking of quitting and doing something else. That's why I make a distinction between what I do (entrepreneurship) and my job (having a specific role at a company). The former is essential, the latter changes.

I had a simple but profound insight: people do a better job if they like their work. That might sound pretty obvious. But given all the people who actually work in places they don't like, and with people they don't get along with, it is strange that so many workplaces don't do more to make the environment likable. One of the things that makes work enjoyable is working with people you like. It then follows that the wise human resources manager should employ likable people. Do most hiring managers make this a priority in their recruitment process? Probably not. I would guess that it is much more common to hire people based on their CVs and career ambitions, which will make them more likely to compete with their colleagues instead of liking them. As a leader, look instead for ways to recruit and build the workplace so it becomes something to love, which will make the job easier to love.

#088 Roles And Objectives (RAO)

Living up to your title.

The Formal Leader's role in the organization should be well defined, with clear responsibilities, making it easier to relate to in an organization and understand how the part fits the whole, both for yourself and for the people you work with. I have worked in companies where everybody could put whatever they liked on their business cards, and that's fine. It still means that you have to be clear about your role and what it means.

A role, job, assignment or mission exists for a reason: in order to accomplish something. This is why every role should have objectives, and these objectives can be at a number of levels, from overarching responsibilities to task-based action points. For example, a head nurse might have an overall objective to manage a team of nurses in a hospital's emergency department, with the sub-objective for the year to reduce waiting times.

There is magic in setting objectives for a given time frame. The power lies in thinking through what your goals are, thinking about how to reach them and embedding them in your subconsciousness.

What is a good time frame? I suggest a quarter. Why choose a *quarterly* objective? Why not an objective for the day, or for the next hour, or for the year – or for the next ten years? Well, it does not really matter, it is more a practical question. When you run a business, a quarter is a pretty useful period, and much of the business world is run in quarterly chunks, for better or for worse.

When you have a team to look after, a quarter is a useful period to follow up on. A month is too short to make any difference, and following up with your teammates once a year is really not frequent enough. So, set quarterly objectives. If you have a formal leadership role and work with a team, make the quarterly objectives part of your routine – and if you are an informal leader, why not set yourself objectives and check your progress every quarter? This will give you a sense of accomplishment and something to strive towards.

This is how it works. Before each quarter, *write down* what your objectives are. It is very simple, yet powerful. If you have a team, ask each and every team member to write down their objectives. Then before each quarter, and after each quarter, sit down and discuss both your and your colleagues' objectives. Then everybody will know what everybody is focusing on. Things might change along the way, but you enter each new period with your eyes on your destination.

To create clarity for yourself and the organization you work for, the basics are to be specific about your role and your objectives. In essence, this is my job and this what I want to achieve during the next few months. Why would you write it down? If you are the CEO of a company, it can be useful to show what your role really means in practice for you and for everybody. Most of your colleagues probably have a general idea about what you do, in the same way that you have a general idea about other people's jobs. But let's make this very specific because clarity releases energy. This is what it can look like:

Ideally, the Roles & Objectives of everybody should be transparent to everybody. For example, you can put it on the company's intranet. Imagine an organization where each and every one had thought through the goals they wanted to achieve for the next period, creating powerful individual mental maps of the future, and these objectives were also transparent and shared with everybody else. So instead of saying, 'Hi, so you are the new sales guy', you can say, 'Hi, you are the one who will bring in ten new clients in the next three months, great, good luck!' This is normally not the case. You see all these people every day in your job, but you are not really sure what they are working on or want to accomplish.

It is practical if the structure and goals of the Formal Leaders are clear, but also the Mindset Leader will benefit from setting objectives. Now, try Role & Objectives for yourself: what does your role look like, and what are your responsibilities and objectives for the next quarter?

My Role & Objectives

Barbara Smith, CEO at the Slow Company, Inc.

I'm the CEO. These are my responsibilities:

1. Results

- Accountable for targets on plan or better, main focus: Grow net revenue 40% YOY

2. Management Team & Board

- Set the leadership structure, support the department heads
- Forums: board meetings, monthly management meetings/off-sites, weekly meeting
- Quarterly follow-up meeting with all team members, based on Role & Objectives

3. Culture

- Inspire all staff to be leaders, every day. Special forum: All-hands Monthly Meeting

4. Clients

- Maintain relations with major clients

5. Shareholders

- Quarterly reports and frequent updates

6. Other responsibilities

- Strategy and execution review
- Running the budget process
- Public relations, make at least one interview per quarter
- International expansion plan

7. My objectives for the second quarter

- Second quarter net revenue on plan \$7m
- Establish the new Product business unit – route to \$100k monthly revenue
- Start New York operations – 2 new people on the ground by 1 July

#089 Buddies With Brains (BWB)

Recruiting with a philosophy.

This is about *your* recruitment philosophy. It is not unlikely that at some point you will be in a situation where you need to recruit someone. The situation is familiar: you are sitting across the table from a candidate who is trying to make a good impression. Sometimes this is a person you really want to recruit, in which case it's up to you to sell the job. Sometimes, the person in front of you is the one selling themselves. Either way, a potential transaction will take place, where the organization offering a job will do a deal with a person who might fill the empty slot. The challenge, in essence, is to find the right person for the right job. That is why most companies conduct a number of interviews, combined with tests and taking references. You want to be as sure as possible that the new recruit will be successful in their job, be happy and motivated to do great things, contribute value to the company and stay long term, grow as a person and be able to take on more responsibility.

So there you are, at the table, the candidate's CV in hand, looking at the person across from you. In order to determine whether this is the right person for the job you are offering, you use your gut feeling, the CV, and the person's experience, skills, education and references. You have seen the test results and are trying to draw conclusions from them. You have probably already got some feedback from teammates who have also met the candidate. You have all this information, but still you are normally facing uncertainty. This is when you need a philosophy.

At Keybroker, we developed a principle that we called Buddies With Brains. Just as David Ogilvy explained in *Confessions of an Advertising Man*, we were looking for talented people who could contribute to the business, but we also wanted people who could contribute to the culture and spirit of the company and make it a fun place to work. Remember, people do a better job if they like their work. To like your work, you have to like your colleagues. That's why our emphasis is on recruiting people who are not just smart but also great personalities. The ideal

colleague should be a buddy who helps you out when you need it, enjoys an after-work party and makes you laugh.

When we got together after a round of interviews, we didn't ask, 'Is this person right for the job?', we asked, 'Is this a Buddy With Brains?' We would all know what we were talking about. We recruited from a philosophy and culture, not for a job. See the difference?

Shackleton, the famous Antarctic explorer, looked for 'cheerful, optimistic people', a necessity for enduring the hardships of polar expeditions. So that was an important part of his recruitment philosophy.

Valve, the game software company, is hiring what it calls 'T-shaped' people, described in the employee handbook: 'People who are both generalists (highly skilled at a broad set of valuable things – the top of the T) and also experts (among the best in their field within a narrow discipline – the vertical leg of the T).'

Furthermore, when they interview a potential hire, they look not only for whether they're talented and collaborative but also if they're capable of literally running the company. In short, they want leaders who can take responsibility in a boss-less, flat company.

Decisions to do with people, such as who will join the company and who will not be part of it any more, are some of your most important decisions. They are also terribly difficult decisions, because you can never predict with certainty how someone will fit in when you have complex interpersonal dynamics in a company that is itself always evolving, and in a market that is changing every day. Nonetheless, make these people decisions your priority.

Many successful companies have made it a key success factor to be the very best at recruiting, to be able to recruit the very best. Please note that 'best' is always in relation to the task at hand, the company culture and the current challenges that need to be addressed. That is why you cannot only look at the candidate's CV when recruiting but also need to address the bigger picture.

When it comes to people decisions it is also an area where consensus is helpful. For example, it is useful if all members of the management team meet with all new recruits and discuss their impressions afterwards. Ideally, everyone should be in favour of the appointment; if not – don't make it. The reason you should let several people interview

the candidate is that we all have our individual perspectives – and thereby questions – when conducting an interview. When discussing the candidate with others, you can pool these different perspectives to get a better picture of the person and how they might fit in than you would from just a few interviews with like-minded people.

Recruit from a philosophy, but also for the type of job and the type of person that is right for the task. Make sure that the role you are advertising is named and described in a way that will attract the people with the skills and the mindset you want. For example, if you are going to recruit a ‘Country Manager’ to run your office in a new market, and the main responsibility for that manager is to sell your products to new clients, then actually ‘hire for sales’ and be clear that you are looking for a sales person. Better, then, to call it Head of Sales or Sales Director for Country X. I have seen many times where your view of the task – to sell – differs from the candidate’s view – to manage a country office – with the resulting focus on precisely administering a subsidiary, recruiting a secretary, getting a company car, printing business cards, doing marketing and a lot of management tasks – anything but selling.

Besides that, your best approach to recruiting is to simply be a good company that attracts qualified people. It’s sometimes called to have an Employer Brand. And that is usually the result of taking care of the people already working in your company, your existing buddies. Business can be Buddiness.

#090 Set Clear Expectations (SCE)

We don't get what we deserve – we get what we expect.

Sometimes things do not turn out as expected and someone you recruited will have to leave the company. It's sad but a fact of every business. This problem often arises when the parties involved do not share the same view about exactly what was expected from a particular role in the organization. The employee who is let go believes they did a great job, but their boss or colleagues don't agree. If the expectations were not discussed, agreed upon or made very clear, this is the leader's fault – and the result is that they can be regarded as unfair, both by the departing member of staff and by their teammates.

So to make it simple:

- Always set clear expectations together and make sure they are shared
- When following up, don't make it personal – focus on performance
- When setting the expectations, build on the strengths of the individual

#091 Focus On Operations (FOO)

The organization and the task come before the individual.

The job is supposed to be the main thing, but a lot of other things can get in the way. Take a sales person's job, for example. It may sound straightforward: 'Go out and sell to customers, that's your job.' But in reality much time is given over to other issues, such as deciding which customer to prioritize, establishing which sales person has the right to sell to a given customer, negotiating the bonus or commission, mediating between conflicting team members, dealing with complaints that the sales tool is too complicated, working out why sales are declining in a given market . . . and it can end up with nobody selling anything (see also Reduce The Noise #093 RTN).

When nothing else works, focus on operations. What is 'operations' anyway? It is another word for a job. In a company, organization, or even in a family for that matter, there is a job to be done. Producing things, selling things, organizing things, buying things, fixing things. Often, the focus drifts from the job at hand because people aren't getting along. There are different views on how to produce, sell, organize and buy things, which is good, but this can become distracting and destructive when it turns into a conflict that prevents people from achieving things.

When a conflict arises, you should address it and try to solve it, give it the attention that it requires. That's also a job. But what if you spend too much of your time solving conflicts? Then you must refocus everyone's attention, stop discussing the problems and ask how to get the job done. This may require bringing new hands on deck, or asking for input from other departments, but the priority is to deal with the task at hand. If there is a sales target for the quarter, ultimately focus on that task and ask how to get it done.

Ask the disagreeing parties to make action points to follow up on, set agendas together for operational follow-up meetings and discuss business issues. This will not automatically create trust and new positive feelings between the people in conflict, but it will shift the focus and

give everyone some breathing space. Eventually, if the parties have a constructive and professional approach, they will not let politics and intrigue interfere with the job at hand. With some water under the bridge, any interpersonal problems may come into perspective a bit more. Sometimes a focus on operations will allow enough critical distance from a conflict that it will disappear altogether and people will look back and wonder whether they really argued over something that now seems so trivial. You cannot ignore destructive conflicts and other personal challenges, but you can re-focus and set priorities.

A good approach is to put the task before the person, and the organization above all. The purpose of the organization is ultimately to provide a certain product or service that is of value – whether that's commercial, charitable, educational, or what have you. If you make decisions solely with the purpose of making certain individuals happy, rather than supporting your organizational aims, you are doing something wrong. When in doubt, think about the purpose of your organization, and your job.

REFLECTION POINTS

1. Do you love your work, what you do?
 2. Do you have a recruitment philosophy?
 3. How would you like to be treated by your company?
 4. Do you and your colleagues have a clear understanding of your job and what you do and what you want to accomplish?
 5. What are your objectives, long and short term, in your current job?
 6. What do you do when things in your team or organization do not work?
 7. Are your expectations of others clear? Are the expectations of you clear?
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CHAPTER 10

OMIT NEEDLESS WORDS

Ever since I read Po Bronson's *The Nudist on the Late Shift*, where one of the chapters is about a Silicon Valley programmer who preferred to work without clothes on, I have wanted to include a story about a naked guy. Why? I guess it's just because in most business books you assume people are wearing something, usually a suit.

So here's the story about the deaf guy in the sauna. I was sitting in the sauna, a Nordic tradition, at a ski resort in the north of Sweden, after a day of cross-country skiing. I had gone up there to train for a long-distance race later in the season, the Marcialonga in Italy. An older guy enters the sauna, naked, as I am. He begins to talk in a rather loud voice and it soon becomes clear that he is deaf. I tell him (by talking a little louder and by making sure he can read my lips) that I'm in town for cross-country skiing.

He then goes on to tell me how much he enjoys skiing but he has not been able to ski for many years because of injuries, including a lost finger. He is obviously sad that he cannot engage in sports the way he used to, on doctor's orders. I would like to tell him that he shouldn't listen too much to doctors, but I resist the temptation to give unsolicited advice. So I continue to listen and finally tell him what I feel – that he seems to be a pretty healthy guy to me. He tells me he's 61.

He then asks how old I am, and guesses that I am 35–40 years old. The lighting must have been pretty dim in that sauna. I tell him my age. He goes: 'Wow, astonishing!' Now, I'm in pretty good shape since

I work out regularly, but his surprise still seemed slightly excessive. I later understood that he had misheard me as saying that I was 76 years old. I then set a new target for how to look when I'm really 76.

You have to change your communication depending on the context, for example when you speak with a deaf guy in a sauna. You have to check that you are really understood. If you suspect miscommunication, follow up on it. Among other lessons from the story, communication is difficult. This chapter is about how to get your message across. Communication is at the core of leadership.

#092 Outside-In Perspective (OIP)

See things through the eyes of others.

When you run a business on the Internet, like an e-commerce website, you are forced to view your company from the perspective of the customer. The only thing they ever see of you is the web page or app on their screen. To ‘think web’ is to see things from the outside looking in. When I launched my first web company, Fondex (the Scandinavian online fund supermarket), we had a big sign on the wall in the office saying, ‘Think Web!’ You are in an extreme business when the main interface you have with your clients is just a screen. Everything gets amplified. Every link and button must be self-explanatory, there can be no spelling errors and the site or app must work perfectly. You have to see the world from the user’s perspective, from the outside.

Walking into a branch of your bank, everything is much more obvious: there is an entrance door, there is a front desk, there are people working and there is a queue where you can wait. You will instantly orientate yourself without having to think about it. Websites, apps and software should be just like that, as Steve Krug says in his classic, *Don’t Make Me Think*. This quick and intuitive process is ‘System 1 thinking’, as described by Daniel Kahneman in *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. An example is driving a car, when you know how to drive – you just drive. ‘System 2 thinking’, meanwhile, is the contemplative reasoning you adopt when you are trying to figure something out – for example when you arrive at a new website. How does this work? Where do I click? What happens next?

When you work at an organization you naturally view the world from the inside looking out, while the rest of the population on the planet not working at this company will look at it from the outside. Some of that outside population will be your customers or service users and you will need to adopt their perspective in order to succeed.

Imagine Amazon, a huge online retailer with revenue of US\$50 billion in 2011, data centres and warehouses all over the world, and complex physical infrastructure logistics and distribution. The only thing you ever see when shopping at Amazon.com is a web page (or

an app if you use your phone) and the parcel when it arrives. But behind that computer screen is a giant operation that is the everyday workplace for more than 43,000 employees around the world. The company's success is based on the fact that it is looking at the company from the perspective of over 140 million active customers and constantly thinking about how to provide great customer experience.

It's easy to become terribly near-sighted in the organization where you work, and to assume that the rest of the world sees things your way. Instead you must assume that nobody understands, or even cares, what you do. With an outside-in mindset you constantly ask questions like, 'Is this simple enough?', 'What kind of experience does the customer get?', 'Do we deliver delight?', 'Is it clear how we provide value?'

One of the best things a business-person can do is to explain in a simple way what he does for a living. The same goes for any politician, scientist, academic, lawyer or carpenter who works with something that might not be crystal clear to someone else.

For ten years I was the chairman of a non-profit organization I founded in Sweden called Transfer. The purpose of Transfer is to bring speakers from the business world (or any working life) to schools and speak about what they do. There is a huge demand in schools to understand things ranging from marketing and law to entrepreneurship and how to start a company. The idea behind Transfer was to 'transfer' knowledge from one group (people with working experience) to another group (schools and students), thereby creating an intellectual infrastructure that did not exist before on a larger scale. Transfer became Sweden's largest speaker bureau, providing speakers for free to schools. The value for the schools and the students was obvious, but there was also great value for the speakers. Highly skilled people shifted from the comfort zone of the workplace with a common understanding based on a shared terminology and knowledge about how things work, to a classroom in the suburbs and students with a completely different frame of reference. Being forced to articulate what you do, for a group of people with very limited understanding of your business, was for many speakers both a welcome experience and a frightening one. It helped the knowledge worker to think in new ways about their work through describing it in

a simple and inspiring way. Realize that speaking to a teenager about your job is not much different from talking to the average customer.

Even if your audience is not a classroom full of students, it helps to imagine they are. If, for example, a meteorologist was to describe their work to me, the presentation would benefit from seeing me as a totally ignorant 16 year old with no knowledge of how the weather works.

Everything is complex in its own ways. View yourself and what you do from the outside and assume that the rest of the world will have very limited patience with understanding you.

#093 Reduce The Noise (RTN)

In personal communication, stick to the issue, and see the non-issues.

Has it ever happened that you are discussing a particular issue with a colleague, but it seems like the conversation is about something else entirely? Consider this dialogue:

‘Hi, Johnny,’ you say cheerfully. ‘Can you please help me with this report?’

‘No, why don’t you do it yourself?’ Johnny replies coldly.

Here you have layers of sub-context. The task at hand is about getting a report done, but the issue seems to be something very different here. The task will not get done because there is something else in the air, ‘noise’. What is this noise? Johnny may be fed up with you because you always get him to do your work for you. Or you were promoted over him and he feels his career has stalled. Did you treat Johnny badly at some stage and this is his revenge? Or is he tired? Problems at home? Or is it simply because he has no time? Whatever the case, there are circumstances that make it hard for you to discuss the actual task (the report) – things are in the way, noise that disturbs the atmosphere. Communication does not work.

As a leader you should try to identify this noise, listen ‘beneath the surface’ and understand what is going on. If Johnny refuses to help you with a task, and he is supposed to because he is on your team and because it is general courtesy to help each other, you should immediately focus on the ‘noise’.

Noise might sound as if it is something ‘bad’, like irrelevant feelings that get in the way of the job you want to be done, but it is really something quite important. The noise tells you what is really going on. If, by identifying noise, you realize that your colleague is angry with you, that is now the real challenge, not the report you needed help with: to sit down and talk about your colleague’s negative feelings. If you sort it out, you have reduced the noise and can get back to the work. To ‘reduce the noise’ is not to treat feelings and other aspects of being human as obstacles, but to listen to what’s in the air and give it atten-

tion. Too much noise can really be a threat to the workings of any company; in anything you do, decide or plan there will then be a 'communication distortion field' blurring relations. I have seen management teams where there is so much noise (anger, disappointment, frustration, insecurity, paranoia, revenge) that it becomes impossible to get things done. Everything is infected. You then need to reduce the noise, by giving it attention. (See also Focus On Operations #091 FOO.)

#094 Stick To Three (STT)

Not everything can be equally important.

When communicating what's important to the organization, make it simple:

- Have only a few major things, or preferably just one
- Make sure the few things are simple to understand
- Don't change the major things every week
- Repeat them as often as you can
- Notice when the few major things are not respected or ignored

In my humble opinion, a few means a maximum of three major things (even if the bullet list above actually contains five points), defined on either the company level or on your personal level. Three major things are about all I can keep in my head anyway. The same goes for the number of bullets on a PowerPoint slide, if you need to use a slide at all to get your message across. In any case, stick to three. Maximum.

#095 Beware Of Sharkfins (BOS)

Setting targets that you can achieve – or aspire to?

Your major thing can be something you want to achieve, a goal. If your target is to break even this year or achieve a billion-dollar revenue next year, that might be the major thing for you and your company. Or to reach the goal that your ski club wins the regional championships, or to spread laughter in the most disastrous places on earth, as the non-profit organization *Clowns Without Borders* does.

Now, the next question is, should you set big, audacious goals – or realistic ones? There are two schools of thought here. One thinks that challenging visionary goals is inspiring, while the other believes that realistic goals are better because you can actually reach them, and the people you work with will believe in them if they are possible. Your preference will probably depend on whether you are an entrepreneur (inspired by visionary goals and good at communicating them) or a manager (happier with realistic goals that can be achieved). The difference can be striking.

At Keybroker, we first had audacious, aggressive goals with a revenue forecast curve that went straight to heaven, driven by new venture capital. We then changed the budget for the next year to a more realistic one, and the resulting line that we tracked our results against looked like a shark fin – first a strong upward curve and then a sharp drop (when the forecast was revised). We adopted the expression ‘Beware of Sharkfins’. It can be inspiring to communicate grand ideas and visions, but if you never reach them or have to revise your goals, the inspiration can quickly turn into despair and disillusionment instead.

Imagine that you are raising funds for a charitable cause. You have set goals for how much you and your team are going to raise each month. At the beginning of each month your group meets to follow up on the previous month’s results. Since you are the leader of the pack, you are the one making the presentation. Now, when communicating your targets and the outcomes, should you compare them with the past (and see them in terms of growth: *wow, this month we raised more than*

last!) or the future (in terms of budget: in a few months' time our goal is to raise twice as much)?

Communicating your progress in a historic perspective is useful, especially if you are growing and can inspire your team by showing how you have improved since the last period. Communicating future targets is better if you want to point to where you are going and spend less time on where you have been – to create a shared goal. A note of caution, though: if your future plan is very ambitious with aggressive monthly targets, it can look like a tiresome uphill journey. A steep hill is great to look back on once you have climbed it, but it can be demotivating when you are still at the bottom.

Dag Hammarskjöld was a Swedish diplomat, economist, author and the second Secretary-General of the United Nations, serving from 1953 until his death in a plane crash in 1961. In his book *Markings* (*Vägmärken*) he concludes:

‘Never measure the height of a mountain until you have reached the top. Then you will see how low it was.’

#096 Over-Communicate & Repeat (OCR)

You can never be too clear or repeat too often.

You should always ‘over-communicate’ the messages that you want to stick. It is a very common problem that things get under-communicated. It is not enough to say it once, if it matters, but several times, and every day if possible. The reason is that what is clear in your mind probably looks very different in somebody else’s mind. Don’t make the mistake of assuming that what is in your head also is in other people’s heads.

In an organization, never take for granted that everyone:

- Shares your view of a decision you have taken
- Is working towards the same targets
- Sees the vision and the mission of the company in the same way
- Understands the plan that you have worked out together
- Shares the purpose of a project you run
- Is executing the same strategy
- Has interpreted the details like you do
- Has the same time frame
- Views the Formal Leader as the real leader

The reality is that there is a high probability that no one has the same view of anything. If you want to be clear about the decision to shut down a country office, for example, or recruit a marketing manager or launch a new organization, or start the new project – be sure to repeat it often and check that you have the people with you. It is not only that people just hear what they want to hear or forget, it’s because communication easily gets lost. When you think you are communicating and repeating way too much, you are still not doing it enough. Keep communicating, but balance your talking with the importance of listening in leadership (see Listen Without Commenting #030 LWC and Lead By Questions #042 LBQ).

#097 Show Whole Picture (SWP)

Seeing the whole makes the parts more motivating.

I'm a strong believer in being transparent about as much as possible in an organization. If you can show the whole picture – results, plans and strategies, as well as failures, mistakes and painful truths – it is more likely that people will feel more involved and motivated. If you want to make people think like leaders, it is absolutely necessary to show the whole picture. If people are to be able to be proactive and take initiatives, they need to see the bigger picture, not only their own part.

A useful forum for showing the whole picture is the monthly meeting, if you have one, which is ideal for sharing the latest results. Growing numbers and profits are good for the spirit in a company, of course. What do you do when numbers are bad, growth slow and no profits? Well, you have to show that, too. If you have an organization where everyone is a leader, chances are that people will come up with initiatives to fix the bad numbers. Of course, different leaders will have different forums. The head teacher will summon the students and their parents to the school auditorium to let everybody in on the new plans, and the preacher will call his parish to the church to show God's bigger picture.

#098 No PowerPoint (NPP)

Make it personal.

When I did actor training, taking lessons from a theatre director to be a more efficient communicator, I learned that one of the most dramatic things you can do is to enter a stage and do nothing, just stand there. The effect is overwhelming. Then, when you finally start speaking after a few seconds (that will feel like an eternity, especially for you), the audience is yours.

From this minimalist perspective, you would be reluctant to add any unnecessary components that get in the way between you and your message. Still, most presentations start with a massive attack of slides, killing the audience with information overload before you have barely begun.

Before making a presentation you should ask yourself: ‘What is the bare minimum of presentation tools I need to support my message? Do I need presentation software and slides to get my message across?’

Imagine Winston Churchill using a slide presentation to communicate his message with bullet points:

We shall fight:

- On the beaches
- On the landing grounds
- In the fields
- In the streets
- In the hills

To think ‘no PowerPoint’, as in the popular presentation software, is to *not* let technology and tools get between your message and your audience. If you are to communicate the monthly income statement or

the growth of smartphones in the last five years, sure, showing a PowerPoint slide with a graph can be useful. But if you want to inspire your organization, say it from the heart!

And if you are doing a demo – for example, showcasing an app, or role-playing a sales meeting – then you should never, ever consider using any slides. Show by doing!

#099 Things On Wall (TOW)

In sight – in mind.

The saying goes: ‘Out of sight, out of mind.’ The proactive use of that insight is: ‘In sight – in mind.’ So, how do you keep something in sight? It’s easy – you put it on the wall, about the average height of the eyes. I’m a great fan of putting things on the wall, not to the point where walls get cluttered with information but as a way of highlighting the few major things that are important at any given point.

At one of my companies, the online mutual fund supermarket, the goal was to add all the mutual fund products in the market. Consequently, we had a big ‘thermometer’ on the wall with the temperature rising as we approached the goal. In another company the goal was to achieve a certain number of a particular type of customer, and we put up a simple scoreboard with the results stuck up on sticky notes. In most systems developments departments, there are boards showing the progress of various software projects. You can also have displays showing real-time information such as sales results and order volumes. At home, you might stick a scoreboard on the refrigerator, awarding points to your children that can lead to earning a prize or treat for the achievement of various household chores. A non-profit organization might track the number of free lectures delivered to schools, as we did at my charity, and highlight the number as a ticker on the website, which can also serve as a ‘wall’.

The point is that if you put it up somewhere public, in the environment where your team spends most of their time, it will be noticed. In most organizations, all the information you need exists in one way or another. The problem is that it is not accessible, understandable, shared or prioritized. It just sits there in databases, on individual computers or in binders. If there are a few major things that you think everybody should think about, make those things visible by putting them on the wall – ideally supported by evolving data.

To put things on the wall is about:

- Being transparent
- Visualizing what can be visualized – bring information to the surface
- Giving access to data – it means more if the information is shared
- Inspiring the whole organization by creating entertaining graphics
- Highlighting a few major things so they are remembered

#100 Omit Needless Words (ONW)

Say it economically, so your message gets through.

Communicate at the most economical level, not using more than enough to get your message across. You can often reduce up to 50% of the words in a text, without reducing the essence of what you want to say. That is to communicate economically. And be careful when using the abundance of digital tools at your disposal (words, images, text, slides, boxes and arrows, illustrations, etc.) since they risk being obstacles to what you want to say. The communication gets in the way of the message.

William Strunk Jr and E.B. White introduced the concept of omitting needless words in their classic *Elements of Style*, a book on good writing, originally published in 1918. Carry this timeless advice with you in all your communication. How can you say what you want to say in the most efficient way? The point is not to be economical in a financial sense, because there are endless free resources at your disposal. After all, it does not cost you anything, except time, to add ten more PowerPoint slides. No, the advantage to omitting needless words is to communicate with more impact. If you can distill what you want to say into three Major Things, and present it standing, using just your own words and maybe your fingers (one, two, three), it is so much better than consuming your audience's attention with ten slides packed with images, boxes and text. The idea with omitting needless words is to say what you want to say, without polluting your presentation with too much stuff, so that people will understand and remember what you just said, the useful and needed words. A final note: the most efficient way to communicate can be to use no words at all. The best leadership communication advice? Just smile!

Communication, discussion and dialogue are at the heart of human activity. We would have a hard time surviving without them. They are also the backbone of any business and organization. They are at the core of leadership. If you believe by now that we are all leaders, that we should be and could be, then inspire people to communicate. Let your colleagues talk, give the stage to people, help make presentations

more efficient and give constructive feedback. Communications skills and experience also give people self-confidence to enter the scene and speak up, take charge. That is how communication relates to the all-leadership vision of this book, and essentially what you as a leader – supporting others to be leaders – want to do: inspire to step forward to lead.

REFLECTION POINTS

1. How would you describe your communication and presentation style?
 2. Are you actively trying to look at yourself and your business from the outside?
 3. Can you think of different forms of ‘noise’ that can be part of a relationship?
 4. Where do you see your main communication challenges? Are you communicating at the most economical level, using only the necessary words and appropriate tools? Have you experienced how the message gets lost?
 5. Are there ‘communication distortions’ where you work?
 6. What are the few major things that are important in your business? What is your approach to setting goals and targets?
 7. How do you inspire others to speak up and lead?
-

THE LEADERCHART TEST

The idea behind Leaderchart (Leaderchart Corporation) is to make leadership development simple, fun, useful and accessible for everyone, even the smallest business and start-up. It is based on the three leadership styles – Entrepreneur, Manager and Leader – and the belief that we all have these skills in us according to our own profile. The purpose of Leaderchart is to give you a tool to help you develop yourself, your team and your company in a proactive way. Equipped with a better understanding of your leadership, and that of others, you might want to ask questions such as:

- What strengths and core skills would I like to develop further?
- What weaker sides would I like to improve?
- How can I proactively look for people who can complement me?
- Is our team the right balance of Entrepreneurs, Managers and Leaders?
- What is the aggregate profile of the whole company?

Ideally, you sit down with your team to discuss leadership issues together, using the insights you got from Leaderchart.

How the test works

The purpose of the test is to compile your individual Leaderchart, which contains the following four components:

- **Leadership Score.** Your total leadership strength.
- **Skills Levels.** Your skills level as Entrepreneur, as Manager and as Leader.
- **Leadership Profile.** Your profile out of 27 profiles, with Core and Secondary Skills.
- **Leadership Category.** Your category out of six categories.

To get your own Leaderchart you rate yourself – how strong you are as an Entrepreneur, Manager and Leader on a scale from 0 to 100. Preferably you let others rate you, too. From this you will then get a total **Leadership Score**, determining your overall strength, and a **Skills Level** for each of Entrepreneur, Manager and Leader.

There are three Skills Levels:

- Score 0–33 = Basic Level
- Score 34–66 = Average level
- Score 67–100 = Star Level

Based on your Skills Level, you will get an individual **Leadership Profile**, matching one of 27 different profiles, organized into six different **Leadership Categories**. Together, this information will provide an understanding about where you are in your leadership, what your Core and Secondary Skills are, and how you could improve and develop.

Now, how do you score yourself as an Entrepreneur, Manager and Leader? You can either answer a set of questions determining your score (not supplied here), or simply mark your score on a scale.

To determine the score, you can think in terms of *identification*, i.e. how much of an Entrepreneur, Manager or Leader you and others feel that you are – to what extent this is ‘the real me’. Or, you can think in terms of *strength*, i.e. how good/skilled/experienced you are, and are viewed by others. By the way, the potential disparity between how you

and others rate you can in itself be a powerful learning tool if you are open to the feedback.

So, how much of an Entrepreneur are you? If you're the visionary break-all-the-rules go-getter, mark 100. If you haven't had a single idea in your life, then write 0. If you're in between, pick a number that reflects where on the scale you think you belong. As a way to figure out, try to think of a person, someone you know personally or someone you know of, who you admire as a great Entrepreneur, and how you measure up to in comparison, or how you identify yourself with this person.

How much of a Manager are you? If you're the perfect management consulting-style project organizer, mark 100. Or, if you can't even manage your own to-do list, write 0. If you're in between, pick a number that reflects where on the scale you think you belong. Also here, it helps to think of a person you admire as a fantastic Manager and score yourself in comparison, or to which degree you identify with this person.

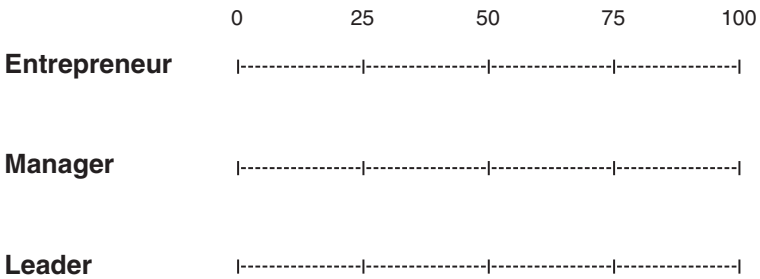
How much of a Leader are you? If you're something like Nelson Mandela or a beloved football coach-style people-person, mark 100. Or if you're a hopeless mess who ends up in fights with everyone you meet, write 0. If you're in between, pick a number that reflects where on the scale you think you belong. Again, think of someone you see as a strong Leader and how you would view your own strengths compared with that person, or to what degree you feel you are like that person.

If you still can't really grasp the three different characteristics of your leadership style, try instead to reflect about to what extent you 1) involve others in your dreams, 2) find delight in plotting tasks in spreadsheets and 3) can relate to other people's feelings. The higher you rate yourself on each, the higher you rate yourself as an Entrepreneur, Manager and Leader respectively. Of course, your profile is not that black or white, but the purpose is rather to start thinking about your strengths and be able to build on those strengths, and improve where you are relatively weaker.

Take the test!

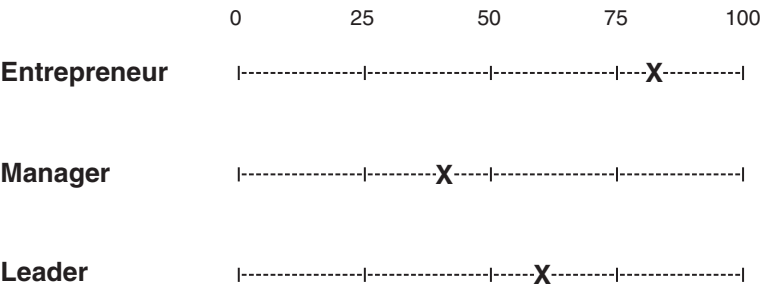
Mark your score! You can mark 0, 43 or 97 or whatever on each of Entrepreneur, Manager and Leader. It does not have to add up to a

total of 100. The minimum total Leadership Score is 0 and the maximum score is 300.



A theoretical maximum Leadership Score of 300 indicates you are a god-like leader who masters all skills, while a theoretical bottom score of 0 implies that you have some things to work on. The resulting Leadership Profile puts your score into a matrix showing your individual profile, and you can then compare it to 27 standard profiles.

This is one example test:



In this case, the 80 Entrepreneur points translates into the Star Skills level, while the 40 Manager points and the 60 Leader points represent the Average level, together providing a distinct profile, 'All-round Entrepreneur'. Your Core Skill is Entrepreneur, and you have

two Secondary Skills, Manager and Leader. Your profile belongs to the All-rounders category.

Leadership Score: $80 + 40 + 60 = 180$ points

Skills Levels:

- Entrepreneur Score, 80 = Star
- Manager Score, 40 = Average
- Leader Score, 60 = Average

Leadership Profile: Profile 18. 'All-round Entrepreneur'

	Basic 0-33	Average 34-66	Star 67-100
Entrepreneur			
Manager			
Leader			

Leadership Category: All-rounders

You can find out more about this test at arnander.com.

Leadership Profiles and Categories

Leadership Profiles are grouped into six Leadership Categories, determined by your Leadership Score, Skills Levels, Core Skills and Secondary Skills. The Entrepreneur, Manager and Leader are three different leadership styles, but can also be viewed as different skills (experience in working with ideas, administration and people). Your Core Skill is where you have your highest Skills Levels, and the Secondary Skills are your other skills.

The six categories are:

1. Developers
2. Rising Stars
3. Pure Players
4. Skillers
5. All-rounders
6. Superstars

A higher Leadership Score is better (meaning that you are stronger as a leader because of your skills and self-confidence) and it is based on the following assumptions:

- You can have none, one or several Core Skills
- You can have none, one or several Secondary Skills
- It is better if you can combine several Core Skills
- It is better if you have several Secondary Skills
- More skills and higher Skills Levels translates into a higher Leadership Score

1. Developers

Developers have Basic skills in all three leadership styles, and maybe one Core Skill (Entrepreneur, Manager or Leader) at the Average level. Thereby they have an exciting opportunity to develop their strengths further. Watch out for the evolving strengths and talents in these leaders. Do you know any Developers?

Leadership Score range: 0–99

Leadership Profile 1. 'Basic Developer'

	B	A	S
E			
M			
L			

- Entrepreneur Score, 0–33 = Basic
- Manager Score, 0–33 = Basic
- Leader Score, 0–33 = Basic

Profile 2. 'Developing Entrepreneur'

	B	A	S
E			
M			
L			

- Entrepreneur Score, 34–66 = Average
- Manager Score, 0–33 = Basic
- Leader Score, 0–33 = Basic

Profile 3. 'Developing Manager'

	B	A	S
E			
M			
L			

- Entrepreneur Score, 0–33 = Basic
- Manager Score, 34–66 = Average
- Leader Score, 0–33 = Basic

Profile 4. 'Developing Leader'

	B	A	S
E			
M			
L			

- Entrepreneur Score, 0–33 = Basic
- Manager Score, 0–33 = Basic
- Leader Score, 34–66 = Average

2. Rising Stars

Rising Stars have two Core Skills at the Average level, combining, for example, the skills of the Entrepreneur and the Manager. They have a Basic Secondary Skill. These leaders, having two skills at the Average level, are on the rise to becoming All-rounders or even Superstars. They will not yet stand out in any discipline, but get things done. Do you know any Rising Stars?

Leadership Score range: 68–165

Profile 5. 'Rising Entrepreneur-Manager'

	B	A	S
E			
M			
L			

- Entrepreneur Score, 34–66 = Average
- Manager Score, 34–66 = Average
- Leader Score, 0–33 = Basic

Profile 6. 'Rising Manager-Leader'

	B	A	S
E			
M			
L			

- Entrepreneur Score, 0–33 = Basic
- Manager Score, 34–66 = Average
- Leader Score, 34–66 = Average

Profile 7. 'Rising Entrepreneur-Leader'

	B	A	S
E			
M			
L			

- Entrepreneur Score, 34–66 = Average
- Manager Score, 0–33 = Basic
- Leader Score, 34–66 = Average

3. Pure Players

Pure Players have one Core Skill at the Star level, for example being a successful Entrepreneur. However, their Secondary Skills are at the Basic level, making their leadership the most distinct and single-minded of all the categories. Here you will find the effective chief financial officer who is great with numbers but does not innovate and cannot manage human relations. Do you know any Pure Players?

Leadership Score range: 67–166

Profile 8. 'Pure Entrepreneur'

	B	A	S
E			
M			
L			

- Entrepreneur Score, 67–100 = Star
- Manager Score, 0–33 = Basic
- Leader Score, 0–33 = Basic

Profile 9. 'Pure Manager'

	B	A	S
E			
M			
L			

- Entrepreneur Score, 0–33 = Basic
- Manager Score, 67–100 = Star
- Leader Score, 0–33 = Basic

Profile 10. 'Pure Leader'

	B	A	S
E			
M			
L			

- Entrepreneur Score, 0–33 = Basic
- Manager Score, 0–33 = Basic
- Leader Score, 67–100 = Star

4. Skillers

Skillers have one Core Skill at the star level, combining it with a Secondary Skill at the Average level. These leaders distinguish themselves by getting results done through a Core Skill, while balancing it with more skills. For example, here you find the hard-driving Manager who is also a good listener. Do you know any Skillers?

Leadership Score range: 101–199

Profile 11. 'Star Entrepreneur with Manager Skills'

	B	A	S
E			
M			
L			

- Entrepreneur Score, 67–100 = Star
- Manager Score, 34–66 = Average
- Leader Score, 0–33 = Basic

Profile 12. 'Star Entrepreneur with Leader Skills'

	B	A	S
E			
M			
L			

- Entrepreneur Score, 67–100 = Star
- Manager Score, 0–33 = Basic
- Leader Score, 34–66 = Average

Profile 13. 'Star Manager with Entrepreneur Skills'

	B	A	S
E			
M			
L			

- Entrepreneur Score, 34–66 = Average
- Manager Score, 67–100 = Star
- Leader Score, 0–33 = Basic

Profile 14. 'Star Manager with Leader Skills'

	B	A	S
E			
M			
L			

- Entrepreneur Score, 0–33 = Basic
- Manager Score, 67–100 = Star
- Leader Score, 34–66 = Average

Profile 15. 'Star Leader with Manager Skills'

	B	A	S
E			
M			
L			

- Entrepreneur Score, 0–33 = Basic
- Manager Score, 34–66 = Average
- Leader Score, 67–100 = Star

Profile 16. 'Star Leader with Entrepreneur Skills'

	B	A	S
E			
M			
L			

- Entrepreneur Score, 34–66 = Average
- Manager Score, 0–33 = Basic
- Leader Score, 67–100 = Star

5. All-rounders

All-rounders have several Core Skills at the Average level, or one Core Skill at the Star level, with their Secondary Skills at the Average level. Their leadership is thereby more complete. An example is the Leader who is great at supporting his staff, while also knowing how to organize and innovate. Do you know any All-rounders?

Leadership Score range: 102–232

Profile 17. 'All-Rounder'

	B	A	S
E			
M			
L			

- Entrepreneur Score, 34–66 = Average
- Manager Score, 34–66 = Average
- Leader Score, 34–66 = Average

Profile 18. 'All-round Entrepreneur'

	B	A	S
E			
M			
L			

- Entrepreneur Score, 67–100 = Star
- Manager Score, 34–66 = Average
- Leader Score, 34–66 = Average

Profile 19. 'All-round Manager'

	B	A	S
E			
M			
L			

- Entrepreneur Score, 34–66 = Average
- Manager Score, 67–100 = Star
- Leader Score, 34–66 = Average

Profile 20. 'All-round Leader'

	B	A	S
E			
M			
L			

- Entrepreneur Score, 34–66 = Average
- Manager Score, 34–66 = Average
- Leader Score, 67–100 = Star

6. Superstars

Superstars are more rare since they combine two (or even three) Core Skills at the Star level. They have a Secondary Skill at the Average level, or sometimes at the Basic Level. One of my friends is a super-Entrepreneur and a great people's person Leader, but he is not that skilled when it comes to organization and administration, so he has to surround himself with capable Managers. Superstar leadership implies that you master all skills, but also Stars have relative weaknesses to admit, develop and handle. Everybody knows that Steve Jobs was a legendary Entrepreneur, but it is also said that he was a skilled Manager. In any case, many can testify that he was not that good with people. That would imply that Steve Jobs matches the 'Star Entrepreneur-Manager'. Do you know any Superstars?

Leadership Score range: 167–300

Profile 21. 'Star Entrepreneur-Manager'

	B	A	S
E			
M			
L			

- Entrepreneur Score, 67–100 = Star
- Manager Score, 67–100 = Star
- Leader Score, 0–33 = basic

Profile 22. 'Star Entrepreneur-Manager with Leader Skills'

	B	A	S
E			
M			
L			

- Entrepreneur Score, 67–100 = Star
- Manager Score, 67–100 = Star
- Leader Score, 34–66 = Average

Profile 23. 'Star Manager-Leader'

	B	A	S
E			
M			
L			

- Entrepreneur Score, 0–33 = Basic
- Manager Score, 67–100 = Star
- Leader Score, 67–100 = Star

Profile 24. 'Star Manager-Leader with Entrepreneur Skills'

	B	A	S
E			
M			
L			

- Entrepreneur Score, 34–66 = Average
- Manager Score, 67–100 = Star
- Leader Score, 67–100 = Star

Profile 25. 'Star Entrepreneur-Leader'

	B	A	S
E			
M			
L			

- Entrepreneur Score, 67–100 = Star
- Manager Score, 0–33 = Basic
- Leader Score, 67–100 = Star

Profile 26. 'Star Entrepreneur-Leader with Manager Skills'

	B	A	S
E			
M			
L			

- Entrepreneur Score, 67–100 = Star
- Manager Score, 34–66 = Average
- Leader Score, 67–100 = Star

Profile 27. 'Superstar'

	B	A	S
E			
M			
L			

- Entrepreneur Score, 67–100 = Star
- Manager Score, 67–100 = Star
- Leader Score, 67–100 = Star

PLAY LEADERSHIP POKER

The vision of this book is that all are leaders. The mission is to make everybody a better leader through simple concepts and tools. As a way to practise and improve your leadership skills in a group (which is always the best way to practice), try the deck of cards with 52 of the leadership concepts you find in this book.

This is how you play Leadership Poker. First read through the book to get an understanding of leadership and the various tools. Then get 3–6 team members together round a table, put some nice music on, serve something to drink and eat. Shuffle the cards and put the deck in the middle of the table. Someone takes the first cards and starts.

1. Read the concept on the card out loud and explain what it means.
2. Say who (in the group) you think is really good at this. Get comments from group.
3. Say who (in the group) you think could improve. Get comments from group.
4. How am I? Get comments from group.
5. How valid is this concept and is it something we should work on together?

Move on to the next person, who then takes a card and follows the five steps. Continue around the table until all cards – or the drinks – are gone. You can order the deck of cards online at arnander.com.

MORE RESOURCES YOU WILL LIKE

Here are some more resources that can help you to become a better leader.

Author website

At the author website arnander.com you will find useful tools and resources that can help you become a better leader:

- Take the Leaderchart test and find out your Leadership Profile.
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ABOUT FREDRIK ARNANDER



Fredrik Arnander, the CEO of Keybroker Group is a Swedish technology entrepreneur and venture capitalist. He is the founder of several companies and organizations. He makes venture capital investments from his holding company Standard Ventures.

Fredrik started his career as a management consultant working for an international firm, helping established companies making the leap into the Internet age. He then joined Icon Medialab, a digital agency that fast grew to become an international group.

In 1998, he left Icon Medialab to start Fondex, the first Nordic online fund supermarket, a company that made the consumer market

for fund investments transparent while disrupting the bank oligopoly. Fondex was sold to a listed British company in 2000.

Later in 2000, he founded Transfer, a non-profit organization for bringing business speakers to schools to share experience and knowledge. Transfer, a 'new infrastructure for intellectual transfers' between groups in society, grew to become Sweden's largest speakers' bureau, with one customer – schools – and completely free.

In 2001, Fredrik started Sidewalk Express, the largest chain of Internet access points in Northern Europe offering a cheap and simple way for people to get online.

In 2005, he went on to co-found Keybroker, an online advertising technology company. Keybroker pioneered search marketing with automated and performance-based solutions, and is a Deloitte Technology Fast 50 Winner and Red Herring 100 Winner. In 2010 Fredrik co-founded Qwaya (a company within the Keybroker group), launching the first freemium, web-based, power-tool for Facebook advertising, offered globally to advertisers at a competitive price. Fredrik is also a board director of Eniro, the Nordic region's largest search company and listed on NASDAQ OMX.

In 2012, Fredrik started the Omnes Foundation, a new non-profit for spreading leadership. Omnes (for *all* or *everybody* in Latin) refers to the vision that we are all leaders. He has also founded Leaderchart, a company that offers web-based software for leadership development at a standard low price.

Fredrik graduated from the Stockholm School of Economics and also studied at Stanford University Graduate School of Business. He lives in Stockholm with his three children.

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