

# Igniting Performance and Personal Growth

*3 Foundations for Successful Continuous Improvement; We, I, It*

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inspired agility

for Upperhand.org



Jack finally had the opportunity to pick his own team and execute on a “make or break” project for the company. He had strong upper management backing on this highly visible project. After the start-up enthusiasm wore off, the project was a mess with infighting, little ‘team’ spirit, too many hours and not enough results. They were trying all the latest development methods and now stalling and even arguing about how to implement the methodologies. He tried everything; team building exercises, pep talks, competitions, ... None of it worked for more than a few days. He kept asking himself; “What is wrong with these people?” “Why can’t they all just work well together and get this thing done?” “What is the matter with them?” He wondered if he had chosen the wrong team, maybe they just were not the A+ players he had thought they were...

*Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved.*

*Helen Keller*

Do you, as a leader or manager, already have conditions for high performance, personal growth, and/or successful continuous improvement, or are you struggling a bit like Jack? What truly influences behaviors in your organization? How much do you really effect what is happening?

This essay cites many references of convenience. The books, websites, articles, and information that is referenced throughout is not an evaluative or exhaustive study or even a critical analysis. It more casually comprises information of interest that supports conveying the core concepts. I invite you to synthesize the information and harvest what serves you. The underlying concepts focus on organizational and personal growth and development. Buckle your seatbelt as we take a flight together through this rich territory with the expectation that you will collect what you want and need for applying to your unique situation.

This document is for leaders and managers. What does it mean to be a leader or a manager? Often you will hear “leaders lead people” and “managers manage things.” Here is a handy table (content from HBR article by Vineet Nayar)<sup>1</sup> that points out three differences:

<b>Leaders</b>	<b>Managers</b>
<b>Creating</b> Value (collaborates toward goals)	<b>Counting</b> Value (measures against criteria)
Circles of <b>Influence</b> ( <i>followers</i> - people ask for advice/support inside and outside of your reporting hierarchy)	Circle of <b>Power</b> ( <i>subordinates</i> - your influence is inside your reporting hierarchy; positional power)
Leading <b>People</b> (inspiration and innovation)	Managing <b>Work</b> (objectives and deadlines)

<sup>1</sup> Nayar, Vineet. "Three Differences Between Managers and Leaders." *Harvard Business Review*. N.p., 02 Aug. 2013. Web. 21 Aug. 2015. <<https://hbr.org/2013/08/tests-of-a-leadership-transiti>>.

Both are important. Your level of influence and circle of power are also important. This paper is for you, if you are the leader of yourself and others and/or managers who want better results.

The three foundational legs of our stool are:

1. “We” = the groups in which you lead, manage, or are involved,
2. “I” = you, yourself, and
3. “It” = the environment, organizational structure, the external situation in which your ‘I’ and ‘we’ operate<sup>2</sup>

Let’s start with the ‘we’ and look at progression of responsibility and influence to get a perspective on where your interests might be focused. Then we will drill down into the lowest level of a group and absorb a model on team performance. We also look at the power of culture on teams and organizations. Next we will consider larger groups (referred to as tribes) and include the notion of maturity models. All this to provide you with lenses in which to view your ‘we.’ The ‘we’ section wraps up with a view from the balcony in light of a couple studies on the state of the 2015 workforce.

We will then transition into the “I” section and zoom in on you, the person looking back at you in the mirror. Here we see and understand that the best way to increase leadership and development is to start with ‘I’ first. It next reminds you of the fundamentals of emotional intelligence and an invitation for you to step up and become that person who is necessary to create the conditions for what you want.

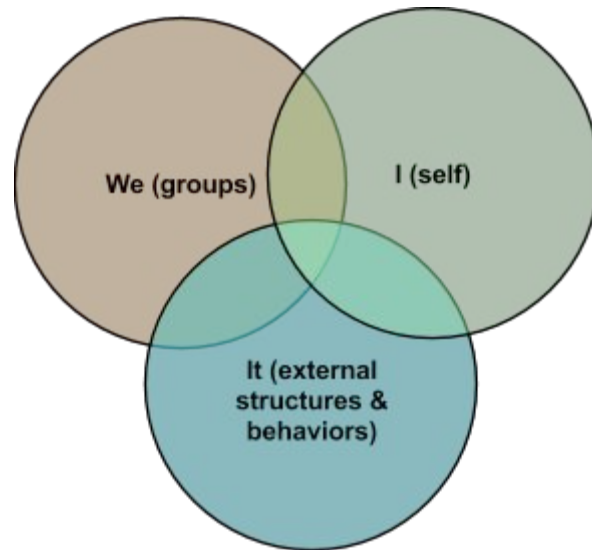
*“The Precept, “Know yourself,” was not solely intended to obviate the pride of mankind; but likewise that we might understand our own worth.”*

*Marcus Tullius Cicero*

The final section is a wrap up with the “it” which covers the external, observable environment including rules, structures, policies, etc. It covers what can be seen, both inside your control and outside of it. Of course ‘it’ is necessary to create conditions for performance, personal growth, and continuous engagement and improvement.

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<sup>2</sup>See Figure 2, associated quote: “These three domains of reality are discernable in all major languages through pronouns that represent first-, second-, and third-person perspectives and are referred to by Wilber as “the Big Three:” I, We, and It/s.” Esbjorn-Hargens, Sean. "An Overview of Integral Theory." *Integral Life*. Integral Post: Transmissions from the Leading Edge, 12 Mar. 2009. Web. 27 Aug. 2015. <<https://integrallife.com/integral-post/overview-integral-theory>>.



This essay includes a lot of reference material and, instead of providing you with solutions, it invites you to apply the concepts to your unique situation and follow those items that spark your interest or your ire. You are invited to use this as a learning tools where you jot down items that might be candidates for your personal growth plan.

Okay - let's go.

## We

Here we look at those around us. Groups of individuals whether they are our direct reports or people we influence. First we will cover teams and then groups that may contain functional or dysfunctional teams. In this section we explore group constructs, behaviors, and statistics of those we want to change.

Let's adopt the definition of a team from Lencioni's *5 Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable* where he defines a team as being made up of 3 to 12 members. Next we will look at the next larger grouping of the 'we' and use Logan, King, & Fischer-Wright's *Tribal Leadership: Leveraging Natural Groups to Build a Thriving Organization*, defining a tribe as anywhere from 20 to 150 people. This 150 "limit" is interesting and associated with the British anthropologist Robin Dunbar's correlation between primate brain size and average social group and labeled "Dunbar's number." Per Wikipedia:<sup>3</sup>

**Dunbar's number** is a suggested **cognitive** limit to the number of people with whom one can maintain stable **social relationships**.

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<sup>3</sup> "Dunbar's Number." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web. 22 Aug. 2015. <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dunbar%27s\\_number](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dunbar%27s_number)>.

The following excerpt is from Wikipedia, under “Popularization,” from Malcom Gladwell’s *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*:<sup>4</sup>

Malcolm Gladwell discusses the Dunbar number in his popular 2000 book *The Tipping Point*. Gladwell describes the company *W. L. Gore and Associates*, now known for the *Gore-Tex* brand. By *trial and error*, the leadership in the company discovered that if more than 150 employees were working together in one building, different social problems could occur. The company started building company buildings with a limit of 150 employees and only 150 parking spaces. When the parking spaces were filled, the company would build another 150 employee building. Sometimes these buildings would be placed only short distances apart. The company is also known for the open allocation company structure.

So, 150, actually 100 - 200, is an fascinating number associated with our human ability to ‘connect.’ In true *The New Yorker* fashion, Maria Konnikova writes about the Dunbar findings and how they might be impacted by social media.<sup>5</sup> The following paragraph, copied from her article, hints to a size pattern for human group constructs; 10-15 => 50 => 150 ... 550 => 800 => and on up...

When Dunbar consulted the anthropological and historical record, he found remarkable consistency in support of his structure. The average group size among modern hunter-gatherer societies (where there was accurate census data) was 148.4 individuals. Company size in professional armies, Dunbar found, was also remarkably close to a hundred and fifty, from the Roman Empire to sixteenth-century Spain to the twentieth-century Soviet Union. Companies, in turn, tended to be broken down into smaller units of around fifty then further divided into sections of between ten and fifteen. At the opposite end, the companies formed battalions that ranged from five hundred and fifty to eight hundred, and even larger regiments.

In addition to this information being entertaining, you might want to pay attention to sizes of human groupings in your organization and spheres of influence.

Now, let’s start with our 3 to 12 person teams, what are the necessary useful ingredients for high performing teams?

## High-Performing Teams

What are the necessary ingredients for healthy relationships and good teams? Thanks to Patrick Lencioni’s work on teams, the list below are the underlying antidotes to the 5 team dysfunctions:<sup>6</sup>

1. **Trust** - trust built on vulnerability that includes courage to risk - it requires emotional safety

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<sup>4</sup> Gladwell, Malcolm. *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. Boston: Little, Brown, 2000. Print.

<sup>5</sup> Konnikova, Maria. "The Limits of Friendship - The New Yorker." *The New Yorker*. N.p., 07 Oct. 2014. Web. 24 Aug. 2015.

<<http://www.newyorker.com/science/maria-konnikova/social-media-affect-math-dunbar-number-friendships>>.

<sup>6</sup> Lencioni, Patrick. *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002. Print.

2. **Conflict** - embracing conflict as a form of creative tension, ability to speak one's opinion without fear of retribution - it requires embracing diversity of opinions and preferences
3. **Commitment** - commitment built on being heard, plus clarity on shared understanding, buy-in on team goals and objectives - it requires a foundation of trust and healthy conflict
4. **Accountability** - personal and team accountability, making and meeting commitments individually and as a team - it requires personal responsibility and team ownership
5. **Results** - building and delivering measurable results - it requires the team to be focused on shared expected outcomes, as a team they learn and adjust along the way to achieve results

These practices make for a healthy team. They also apply to healthy personal relationships. They are more like building blocks, where trust is the underlying platform creating conditions where conflict can be of benefit. In turn, they create the conditions for clear and achievable commitments. It is much easier to be fully accountable with achievable commitments. All of these pieces can then create the conditions for measurable results.

Years ago, Tim Miller, CEO of Rally Software Development Corporation, before joining Rally, would sum it up with; "Make and meet your commitments." Culture continued to be his focus at Rally. In a Denver Post article<sup>7</sup> he states: "'Having a great culture to me is fundamental to building a great business.'" Their attitude and focus on culture has paid off as evidenced by their [awards webpage](#) that includes awards for their culture, social responsibility, and their products.

Organizational culture is very powerful and include the "norms" of a group. They are those things that are assumed and not really observable, like the norm of wearing a shirt in a professional setting. Things we just do. In other words, would you show up as a professional, in a professional setting without a shirt? Not that kind of professional! ;-)

Before looking at tribes, let's consider how one goes about changing team and organizational culture. A team adopts norms based on their shared, typically unconscious or unquestioned agreements. How much influence does a single individual have on a team? Of course, the team culture is made up of all of the shared spoken and unspoken agreements within which the team operates. It is also strongly influenced by the overall company culture which is typically the underpinnings or overlay on specific team cultures.

What about individual team members? The best teams are made up of the best people who in turn have the highest performing teams. I heard the following story based on results of research (for which I cannot find a reference), yet it is still a worthwhile story to consider. Maybe you will try this in your organization and see what happens.

There were two teams; Team A and Team B. Team A was filled with the smartest people and the highest achievers. The bar was set high and they continually exceeded expectations. It was a great honor to be on Team A. They were the highest performers and were tasked with the best projects.

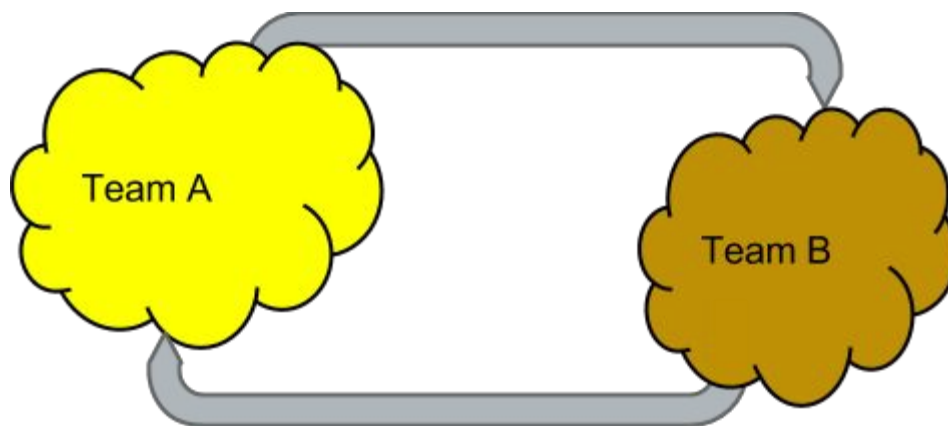
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<sup>7</sup> Vuong, Andy. "Rally Software Provides a Culture of Collaboration." - The Denver Post. N.p., 11 Apr. 2012. Web. 24 Aug. 2015. <[http://www.denverpost.com/topworkplaces2012/ci\\_20358215/technology](http://www.denverpost.com/topworkplaces2012/ci_20358215/technology)>.

The other team, Team B, were the mediocre performers and would consistently provide mediocre results. They would often make their deadlines, but not without extensions and excuses. This team was considered a low performance team and was typically tasked with unimportant projects.

So the experiment... over the course of one year, 365 days, about once a month (but not with noticeable periodicity), a person from Team A moved to Team B and a person from Team B was moved to Team A. By the end of the year, every single member from Team A was now on Team B and all the Team B members are all on Team A.

What do you think happened with team performance at the end of the year?



If you guessed the following, you are correct:

Team A continued to be the best team, making and meeting their commitments and faithfully exceeding expectations. Team B continued to have mediocre performance and results. It was still a great honor to be on Team A and Team B continued to perform poorly, despite having all the smartest people from Team A one year prior.

The great thing about this experiment is that it demonstrates the power of group culture. You can see it happening. Jennifer gets moved from Team A and is disheartened to have to work with all the “losers” and Joe gets moved to Team A and is thrilled for the positive reinforcement. Joe rises to the occasion and Jennifer’s performance degrades as a move like this is often viewed as a form of negative feedback. This type of transition happens throughout the year, and guess what? You get what you had. There are many studies about expectations of teachers directly related to student behavior and grades. There might be something interesting here associated with Carol Dweck’s work on mindsets, covered later, and how you as a leader hold individuals and teams, including your expectations regarding performance.

## Tribes and Centers of Gravity

In Seth Godin's book *Tribes; We Need You to Lead Us*,<sup>8</sup> he defines a tribe as: "a group of people connected to one another, connected to a leader, and connected to an idea." I recommend his book for an inspirational leadership boost. He says:

*"Leadership is scarce because few people are willing to go through the discomfort required to lead. If you're not uncomfortable in your work as a leader, you're not reaching your potential." Seth Godin*

We will cover more of his pearls in the section focused on you. In this section, we are turning to *Tribal Leadership: Leveraging Natural Groups to Build a Thriving Organization*.<sup>9</sup> The model these authors offer, see diagram below, provide a useful framework and a good example of stages (or possibly 'levels of maturity' - in my opinion). This is an invitation for you to step back and observe how your groups of 20 to over 150 people mostly behave. It is about group culture and how the majority of individuals behave.

Where your organization "typically" operates, is their center of gravity. As with any of the developmental and maturity models, a system may exhibit multiple stages, or levels, at the same time. Each level builds upon, or includes, the previous level. Also one can witness a regression of the center of gravity when the organization is under stress, or dealing with major environmental and cultural changes. Understanding center of gravity should help you appreciate and respect the transient nature of life, systems, organizations, processes, natural world, etc.

*"The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new." Socrates*

Tribal leadership introduces five stages, each one has a language, a primary behavior, and a 'relationship to people.' The first three are low performing and the last two are high performing. See the chart below for a visual summary. This model can be seen as a progression and the percentages in each stage show that overall, at this point in history, we are making progress. Stage 1, which is the "Life Sucks" stage, only represents 2% of their studied population. This is the alienated angry stage and it is a tough, unfriendly, possibly violent stage where every member is out for her or himself (an eye for an eye culture). Stage 2, which is the "My Life Sucks" stage, represents 25% of the population. Workers feel separated and behave like apathetic victims. Since this is a progression, no stages can be skipped, so the role of the leader is to move your tribe(s) from stage two to stage three by providing opportunities for individual achievement and a more empowered attitude.

The majority of the population at 49%, are functioning as Stage 3, which is the "I'm Great! ... and you're not" stage. These are your competitive personal achievers, who like to dominate others, and

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<sup>8</sup> Godin, Seth. *Tribes: We Need You to Lead Us*. New York: Portfolio, 2008. Print.

<sup>9</sup> Logan, David, John Paul King, and Hallee Fischer-Wright. *Tribal Leadership: Leveraging Natural Groups to Build a Thriving Organization*. New York: Collins, 2008. Print.



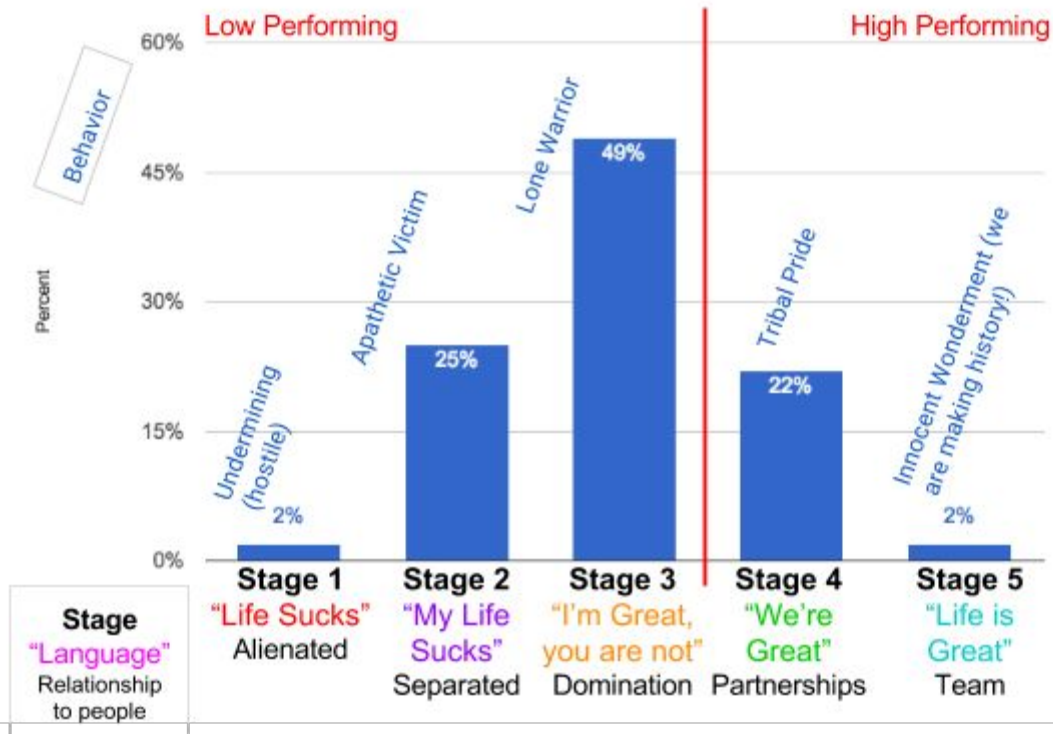
who may not make very good team members. This is not the population with an interest in being vulnerable in order to build team trust. Moving these lone warriors to Stage 4 is associated with helping them learn to connect in triads and to eventually adopt group goals and objectives. Helping them understand that the team's objectives, even if they are not in alignment with their personal opinions, are worth achieving - together. The antidotes introduced above are useful across all of these transitions, particularly this one.

The chart below shows an interesting normal distribution and provides encouragement as 22% of the studied population are functioning at Stage 4 in high performing organizations and teams. Stage 4, which is the "We're Great" stage exhibits tribal pride and partnership relationships. The remaining 2% of the studied population are at Stage 5, which is the "Life's Great" stage. These are those organizations and teams who believe they are making history. Each member is connected and focused on achieving something as an overall group. They are not concerned about competitors, but focused on their shared objectives. They are totally identified with the success of the overall team and even have a behavior of innocent wonderment. Moving teams from Stage 4 to Stage 5 requires conditions and support from the overall larger organization and environment. I am not clear if it aligns 100%, but employees of the companies studied in Frederick Laloux's research and reported out in his book; *Reinventing Organizations*<sup>10</sup> appear to very much exhibit the behaviors and profile of Stage 5. There might be some hints in there regarding organizational structure, culture, development, leadership, decision making, etc. associated with moving teams from Stage 4 to Stage 5.

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<sup>10</sup> Laloux, Frederic. *Reinventing Organizations: A Guide to Creating Organizations Inspired by the next Stage of Human Consciousness*. Brussels Belgium: Nelson Parker, 2014. Print.

## Stages of Tribal Leadership



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Does this model resonate with you at all? Do you see a particular center of gravity at which your organization is operating? Good news if your organization is still in the low performing groups as you have great opportunity to become a leader who takes responsibility for, and truly influences, your organizational culture.

These stages also provide us a model for which to aim. Imagine your organizational tribes of 20 - 150 members who are working together to make a global impact, to change the world. What kind of a leader would you need to be to lead that powerful tribe?

### Positional Power and Organizational Culture

Never underestimate the power of your organization's culture or the influence of those with positional power. In the mid-nineties, I worked for StorageTek (a software tape and disk storage company that was a spin-off of IBM in Louisville Colorado) and later consulted there prior to them being sold to Sun Microsystems in 2005. Over the course of those years StorageTek (STK) had three different CEOs; Ryal Poppa, David Weiss, and Patrick Martin. It was amazing to see how quickly a change in leadership at the CEO level rippled through the entire organizational culture.

<sup>11</sup> Logan, David, John Paul King, and Hallee Fischer-Wright. *Tribal Leadership: Leveraging Natural Groups to Build a Thriving Organization*. New York: Collins, 2008. Print.

When Poppa was the CEO, there was a major focus on getting innovative products to market, particularly the automated tape library and RAID (Redundant Arrays of Inexpensive Disks) disk-array storage subsystem. The culture was focused on engineering, manufacturing, and delivery. The buzz was all about how well they were doing, often observable by learning about Ryal Poppa's new camper bus and where his family was going for vacations. Layoffs were common place. When I was there, the terminated employee's manager and a security guard carrying a cardboard box, would show up at the employee's desk. The person was inform of their status at that moment, and invited to log off the systems and load their box with personal belongings before being escorted to the door. You can probably imagine the impact this practice had on the entire company.

When David Weiss took over, he focused on company culture and funded a lot of management and leadership programs. In an all managers off-site, Warren Bennis was featured on the program. He interviewed Weiss in a fireside chat format and asked "What is your biggest motivator?" David Weiss answered (from what I remember): "Fear of failure." These were much better times for employees without the, previously described, layoff practice and many development, training and cultural leadership programs. We were able to try new ways of behaving and working together. StorageTek also invested in a sizable art collection during those years. The pendulum had truly swung, but there was a lack of focus on the bottom line.

When Patrick Martin took over, the pendulum swung again strongly to the other side. He was a CEO with a temper who did not tolerate much and often raised his voice. This behavior quickly rippled throughout the culture. My work there at that time was limited, and the stories I heard included making jokes about how employees had to pay a nickel to buy a cup if they wanted a drink of water. Martin was very successful in preparing for, and ushering STK through the \$4.1B sale to Sun Microsystems (later bought by Oracle).

The point of that reflection is that the person in charge, or who is recognized as the leader/owner of the company, does matter. All groups have cultures and many are influenced by the behaviours and unconscious neuroses of their leadership and/or line of management. Understanding and truly taking responsibility for yourself and your influence within the culture, and the culture itself, is paramount to creating conditions for performance and personal growth.

## Balcony Perspectives

Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky published *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*<sup>12</sup> in 2002, emphasized the necessity of leaders to take a balcony perspective. In their words:

"The observational challenge is to see the subtleties that normally go right by us. Seeing the whole picture requires standing back and watching even as you take part in the action

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<sup>12</sup> Heifetz, Ronald A., and Martin Linsky. *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School, 2002. Print.

being observed. But taking a balcony perspective is tough to do when you're engaged on the dance floor, being pushed and pulled by the flow of events and also engaged in some of the pushing and pulling yourself.

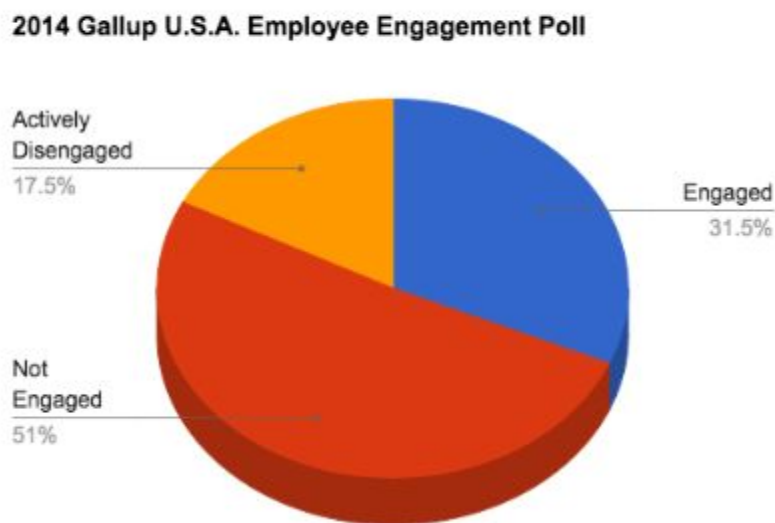
Achieving a balcony perspective means taking yourself out of the dance, in our mind, even if only for a moment. The only way you can gain both a clearer view of reality and some perspective on the bigger picture is by distancing yourself from the fray.”

What do you see from the balcony of your circumstances?

Let's stay on the balcony and turn our attention to a couple of studies;

1) U.S. Employee Engagement,<sup>13</sup> and 2) Global Workforce Leadership Survey.<sup>14</sup>

Gallup has been conducting an U.S. Employee engagement poll since 2000. The good news is that engagement is up, the sobering news is that it is at 31.5%. This means that 51% of employees are “not engaged” and 17.5% are “actively disengaged.” Of the engaged population, the most engaged job category is “manager, executive, or officer” at 38.4%.



<sup>13</sup> Adkins, Amy. "Majority of U.S. Employees Not Engaged Despite Gains in 2014." *Gallup.com*. Gallup, Inc., 28 Jan. 2015. Web. 23 Aug. 2015.

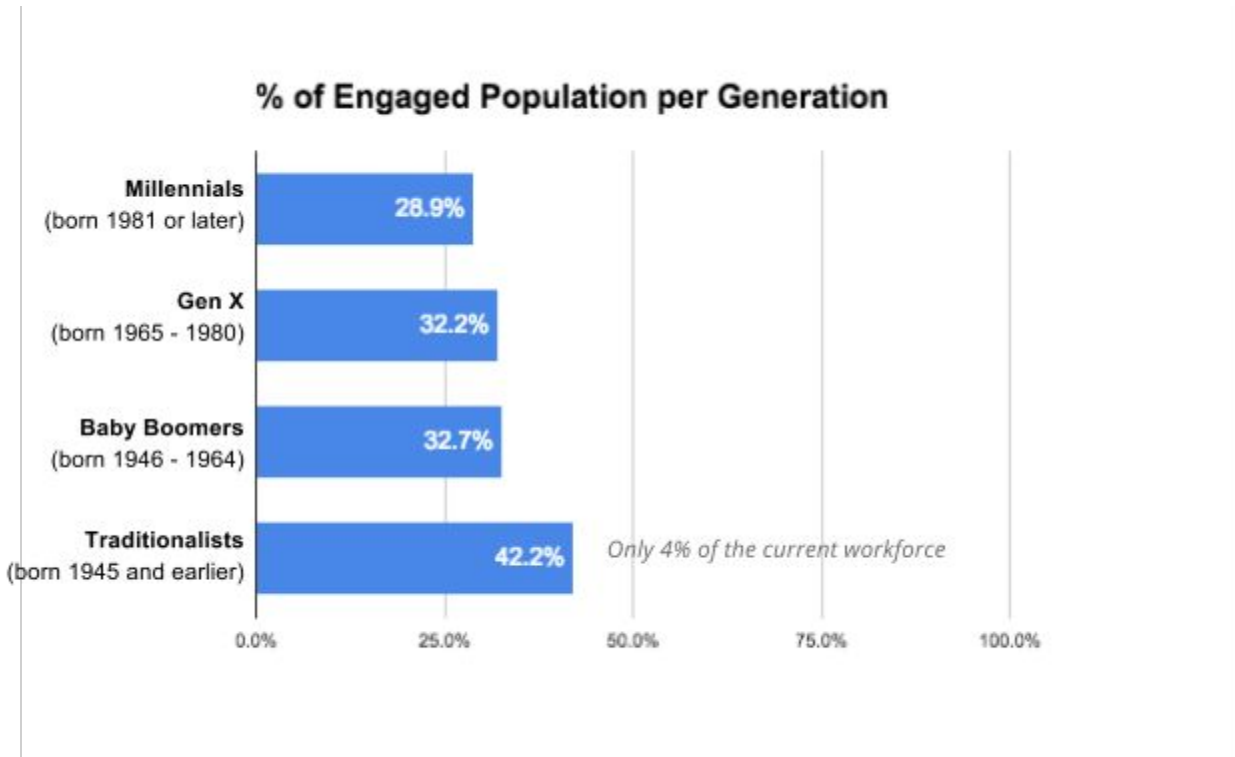
<http://www.gallup.com/poll/181289/majority-employees-not-engaged-despite-gains-2014.aspx>.

<sup>14</sup> "The Global Workforce Leadership Survey." *Workplace Trends*. N.p., 31 Mar. 2015. Web. 23 Aug. 2015.

<https://workplacetrends.com/the-global-workforce-leadership-survey/>.

Over 2/3 of the U.S. employed population are not engaged. How does that strike you? How many are working for you? Do those statistics reflect your organization? How engaged are those you influence?

Let's look at this with our generational lens. Gallup reported that the "millennials" (born in 1981 or later) are the least engaged coming in at 28.9%, compared to "generation X" (born 1965 - 1980) and "baby boomers" (born 1946-1964) that are each just over 32%. "Traditionalists" (born in 1945 or earlier) are the most engaged generation, at 42.2%, and only represent 4% of the U.S. workforce.



From your balcony view, what is the age distribution of your group's population? How engaged are they compared to this Gallup study? What is your age distribution regarding your organization's leadership? How do you see it changing five and ten years from now? Your traditionalists and baby boomers will probably be moving on... Who is being groomed to take their place? Do you have a good succession planning program and leadership development, or at least employee development, program in place?

It is not surprising that per a Harris Poll study from Saba Software, Inc.,<sup>15</sup> states 36% of employees are looking for a new job. Disengaged employees have no interest in sticking around, let alone aspiring to get the experience necessary to eventually assume leadership positions. This brings us

<sup>15</sup> "US Workforce Expected To Experience Massive Shift In 2015." *US WORKFORCE EXPECTED TO EXPERIENCE MASSIVE SHIFT IN 2015*. Saba Software Inc., 27 Jan. 2015. Web. 23 Aug. 2015. <<http://www.saba.com/us/press-releases/go/2015/us-workforce-expected-to-experience-massive-shift-in-2015/>>.

to the next study, the Global Workforce Leadership Survey.<sup>16</sup> Saba and WorkplaceTrends.com released their global findings of the first “Global Workforce Leadership Survey” highlighting:

**“Looming Leadership Gap: One-Third of Global Companies Struggle to Find Senior Leaders and Only 12 Percent of Employees Aspire to the Corner Office”**

Basically they are putting the numbers together and see that the combination of disengaged employees, baby boomers shifting out of the workforce, and lack of succession and development programs may lead to corporate leadership gaps in the near future. These issues are not quickly resolved, so it is better to do something sooner to avert them as opposed to trying to react later.

Dan Schawbel, founder of [WorkplaceTrends.com](http://WorkplaceTrends.com), a research and advisory membership service for HR professionals, researches and reports on millennials. At this time, there are 165 videos on his YouTube channel<sup>17</sup> that include various interviews about balcony and other topics that are interesting and entertaining. One of the 3+ minute videos is on “[The Leadership Gap And What Companies Can Do About It.](#)” It summarizes his research mentioned above. Here are some highlights:

- 52% of companies surveyed perform annual performance reviews - *millennials want more regular (quarterly or even weekly) feedback, plus personalized development and mentorship*
- 58% of companies are using spreadsheets to track their performance metrics - *millennials want accessible tools and tracking systems and a focus on redefining and re-engaging leadership*
- 11% of those polled are aspiring to C-level positions, of that small amount, 64% are male and 36% female - *millennials are looking for meaningful work over title and money*

Are you a millennial? How many millennials are in your sphere of influence? Do these results track? Do you have meaningful work for them? Do you provide feedback more often than once or twice a year? What type of development programs do you have in place? How about succession planning? Do you have a strong succession program? Is your organization at risk for a leadership gap?

Time to get off the balcony and back on the dance floor. Well, actually, time to look in the mirror before going back to the dance. Let’s look at your “I.”

## **I (me, myself, and I)**

*“Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself.” Rumi*

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<sup>16</sup> "The Global Workforce Leadership Survey." *Workplace Trends*. N.p., 31 Mar. 2015. Web. 23 Aug. 2015. <<https://workplacetrends.com/the-global-workforce-leadership-survey/>>.

<sup>17</sup> Schawbel, Dan. "The Online Power Of Millennials." *Dan Schawbel YouTube Channel*. YouTube, 20 Aug. 2015. Web. 23 Aug. 2015. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u7Gc7S5M-pE&list=UUzZPYhfF7HoLTUJoXUHHHvA&index=1>>.

Just as you stood on the balcony and looked out at your organization and teams and what is happening with the U.S. workforce, it is time to jump out of your own skin and have a look at yourself. That is your “I” foundation for improvement. This is the area where you can learn and try a lot of new things typically without needing to coordinate with others. There are a few fundamentals that you simply have to totally understand and possibly choose to master.

These fundamental concepts are useful (and, I believe, necessary) for being in a position of management and/or leadership - or maybe for simply being an adult human. This may be old hat or new territory, in any case, please see what sparks your interest (both excitement and resistance wise) and note it down. This overall section is about you getting to know yourself.

*“The most difficult thing in life is to know yourself.” Thales*

## Emotional Intelligence: Self Awareness, Self Regulation, Motivation, Empathy, Social Skills

Emotional Intelligence (often referred to as EQ) should be a fundamental understanding for you as a leader. Daniel Goleman published *Emotional Intelligence*<sup>18</sup> in 1995, twenty years ago. It is excellent work as you may know. If you disagree, I would love to know why. If not, as a person in an influential position, it would be wise for you to have it as a well used tool in your toolbox. The main components of Emotional Intelligence at Work<sup>19</sup> are:

- **Self Awareness**; the ability to recognize and understand your moods, emotions, and drives, as well as their effect on others = Self-confidence, Realistic self-assessment, and Self-deprecating sense of humor
- **Self-Regulation**; the ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods the propensity to suspend judgment to think before acting = Trustworthiness and integrity, Comfort with ambiguity, and Openness to change
- **Motivation**; a passion to work for reasons that go beyond money and status, a propensity to pursue goals with energy and persistence = Strong drive to achieve, Optimistic even in the face of failure, and Organizational commitment
- **Empathy**; the ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people, skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions = Expertise in building and retaining talent, Cross-cultural sensitivity, Service to clients and customers
- **Social Skills**; proficiency in managing relationships and building networks, an ability to find common ground and build rapport = Effectiveness in leading change, Persuasiveness, and Expertise in building and leading teams

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<sup>18</sup> Goleman, Daniel. *Emotional Intelligence*. New York: Bantam, 1995. Print.

<sup>19</sup> Goleman, Daniel. "EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE What Makes a Leader?" Harvard Business Review. N.p., Jan. 2004. Web. Aug. 2015. <<https://hbr.org/2004/01/what-makes-a-leader>>.

These components have an interesting invitation hidden within. It is to cultivate your ability to become your own observer. So, in the spirit of observation of self and others, let's look at research associated with; mindset, development, mind/body/spirit/shadow, and blindspots.

## Mindset

*“For twenty years, my research has shown that the view you adopt of yourself profoundly affects the way you lead your life.”* Carol Dweck

Carol Dweck researched and wrote about mindset and published *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*.<sup>20</sup> It explains the notion of a “fixed mindset” versus a “growth mindset.”

A fixed mindset is associated with the notion of being the “smartest” and “best educated” and typically always living in a world full of success. This mindset sees intelligence, personality, and creativity as something that is fixed, something you were born with.

A growth mindset believes that if you do not have it naturally, you can do your best through effort to learn it and grow through application and experience. [Jennifer Bricker](#), is a fabulous and inspiring example of the growth mindset. I invite you to spend 5 minutes watching this [Video](#) (or any other one that you find on her) to see the growth mindset in action.

So, in the spirit of looking at oneself, do you know what you have? Are you more oriented toward a growth or a fixed mindset? You can check out more information and articles and [test your mindset on the mindsetonline.com website](#).<sup>21</sup> At this time, with the trend to embrace failure, it seems there is a strong bias toward the growth mindset. I believe in getting away from the notion of winners and losers and focusing on minds that can learn and grow as well as seeing the true complexity of life is a very good thing. I am skeptical when it comes to strong “this is good” and “that is bad.” Having a growth mindset is an important fundamental concept and a good area to watch for future research. It can be applied to your teams and organization (not to mention your children) as well. Do you see your ‘we’ as more fixed or growth oriented? How do you advertently or inadvertently promote one or the other? Most importantly, it is about clearly understanding what is at play by keeping your eyes and ears open and, just like EQ, this should be a useful tool in your tool box.

Also, the research and work of Malcolm Gladwell has resulted in many important concepts. If mindsets has sparked your interest, understanding success through Gladwell's book *Outliers; the Story of Success*<sup>22</sup> is another rich source of learning. It helps us understand that many of those we see as “successful” and possibly a special case of nature, often had special opportunities and circumstances, an appropriate attitude, as well as plenty of effort. He shows how it takes at least 10,000 hours to become a master at a craft. His book skillfully illustrates how success has a

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<sup>20</sup> Dweck, Carol S. *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. S.l.: Random House, 2008. Print.

<sup>21</sup> Dweck, Carol. "MINDSET." *Test Your Mindset*. N.p., 2006. Web. 24 Aug. 2015. <<http://mindsetonline.com/testyourmindset/step1.php>>.

<sup>22</sup> Gladwell, Malcolm. *Outliers: The Story of Success*. Print.



component of a lot of hard work. I believe this hard work feels a lot less like drudgery when accomplished with a growth mindset. Of course intelligence and natural talent play a role as well.

### *Recommendation to use a personal growth plan -*

We have covered a lot of territory. If you have been jotting things down, consider putting them in your personal growth plan, if you have one. If you do not, consider creating one. Instead of being overwhelmed by too much to learn and apply, you can create a backlog of personal growth goals, and concepts that you can continually prioritize. Borrowing from the Agile software development approach, you can use the notion of iterative and incremental. So, every day, see how you are doing and every 1-2 weeks, review and reprioritize your growth backlog based on what is currently important in your life. As you master your goals they can become good habits. Good habits support you and your organization in sustaining high performance without a lot of effort.

Let's move on to have a look at the nuanced definition of development, particularly compared with training.

### **Development Compared to Training**

What is the difference between expanding your skillsets and developing your capabilities. In an Immunity to Change<sup>23</sup> facilitator training I attended by Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey, he used the analogy of a vase or vessel. He taught that when you increase your skills through training and experience, you become more and more qualified to accomplish something using those skills. When you want to expand your capacity, ability to handle uncertainty, and possibly increase your resilience, that is where development comes in. So, back to the vase example:

Training is like filling the vessel with water, when it is full you are at your highest proficiency. Development is where you actually create a new vessel, where you expand its capacity and it is now able to hold more water.

He points to attending college and attaining a degree as an example of a developmental experience. Often young people go in with a different maturity, outlook, and capability than when they come out. This is sometimes referred to as horizontal (training example) and vertical (development example) development. Of course, if we want to improve, we need both.

An important point is to notice your relationship to “if we want to improve.” Do you see yourself and your role as doing great without a need to improve? Do you see everything as broken and do not know where to start? Is it somewhere in between or something altogether different?

Sometimes people in your ‘we’ are not interested in training or development, which is good to note. The world is full of people at all levels of horizontal and vertical development. I invite you to start to see where you are and the center of gravity of those around you. Sometimes when you cannot understand another person or a situation, it might be associated with their or your vertical and

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<sup>23</sup> Kegan, Robert, and Lisa Laskow Lahey. *Immunity to Change: How to Overcome It and Unlock Potential in Yourself and Your Organization*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business, 2009. Print.

horizontal centers of gravity. As you saw in Tribal Leadership earlier, helping yourself and others move one stage at a time is the best approach as each stage is a foundation for the next.

Okay, back to your “I.”

## Current State - Mind, Body, Spirit, Shadow

So, let's take inventory. How do you see yourself at this moment in time? A useful approach is to look at four areas; mind, body, spirit, shadow. These areas have proven useful if you want to take a comprehensive view of yourself.

1. Mind - covers how you think, what you know, your abilities and capabilities, all things cognitive. How are you doing in this area? This paper is heavily biased toward the mind. It also includes topics you might need for all aspects of the life that you are living.
2. Body - covers your physical health and wellbeing. How good is your nutrition? How strong are your muscles? How are your aerobic and anaerobic abilities and capacities? Do you have goals in this area? How do your daily, weekly, quarterly, and yearly habits increase or decrease your physical health and wellbeing?
3. Spirit - covers your spiritual, religious, even atheistic beliefs and associated behaviors. How is this area of your life? Are you clear and well supported in what you believe? Do you have a strong philosophy and belief system in this area? Do you have weekly or daily practices that bolsters you up and gives your life meaning and purpose? This area is not covered much in this paper, and is worthy of mentioning as it is important for personal growth, development, health, and wellbeing. Much of what we cover might have worthwhile applications in your spiritual life. Maybe experiment a little and find out?
4. [Shadow](#) - as defined in Jungian psychology, covers aspects of one's personality that are typically negative and our egos do not want to see. This aspect of you, me, and every human on this planet is a rich source for each of our development. In addition to being about how we handle conflict, express anger, are judgemental, etc. it includes projections. In Christopher Perry's article; [The Shadow](#) (which does a nice job of defining the shadow in the Society of Analytical Psychology<sup>24</sup>) he states:

“How is the shadow encountered? Almost always in projection onto some other individual/family/group etc. This means that I see in an other something I do not like; this tends to keep happening. I may begin to notice that a lot of other people are rather greedy, for example. And I may begin to feel censorious or judgmental about their greed. But, with luck, it may dawn on me that, what I am disliking in others is actually something with which I struggle within myself.”

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<sup>24</sup> Perry, Christopher. "The Shadow." *The Society of Analytical Psychology (SAP)*. The Society of Analytical Psychology (SAP), n.d. Web. 19 Aug. 2015. <<http://www.thesap.org.uk/the-shadow>>.

You might choose to spend some time considering yourself with respect to these four areas. What is working for you and what is not? Where are you doing very well and how does it benefit your overall life and wellbeing? Do any aspects of these areas evoke an emotional reaction? Whether is it a positive or negative emotion, that is your indicator as to which areas you should focus.

## Blind Spots

In addition to our shadows, blind spots are another rich area in service of personal growth. As we have a blind spot in our vision (insensitivity to light where the optic nerve joins the retina in the back of the eye) and in cars (where the driver's view is obstructed), we also have personal blind spots. I like this definition from [Merriam-Webster](#): "a tendency to ignore something especially because it is difficult or unpleasant."

The interesting thing about blind spots are that we typically cannot see them without a bit of help AND an open and willing attitude, hence the need to receive and give feedback. Feedback is an important aspect of our journey and is present throughout this paper. Let's take a quick glimpse into common leadership blind spots. I very much enjoyed, and benefitted from, the information shared in Loretta Malandro's *Fearless Leadership: How to Overcome Behavioral Blind Spots and Transform Your Organization*.<sup>25</sup>

In this book she spells out ten leadership blind spots. They are included here for supporting your look in the mirror. Might you have any of these? These 10 blind spots are:

1. Going it alone
2. Being insensitive of your behavior on others
3. Having an "I know" attitude
4. Avoiding the difficult conversations
5. Blaming others or circumstances
6. Treating commitments casually
7. Conspiring against others
8. Withholding emotional commitment
9. Not taking a stand
10. Tolerating "good enough"

She recommends a 100% accountability culture. Accountability of yourself to yourself and creating a climate of accountability is a high performance habit.

How do you learn about your blind spots? Feedback, maybe? We will take a look at feedback in the last section on your "it." Feedback is often a very difficult area for most of us to deal with. That is probably why we see it happening once a year, or avoided altogether.

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<sup>25</sup> Malandro, Loretta A. *Fearless Leadership: How to Overcome Behavioral Blind Spots and Transform Your Organization*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009. Print.

## “What do you do for personal development?”

To wrap up this section on “I,” well, you, let’s look at a Forbes article by August Turak titled; “What Every Leader Must Know About Personal Development.”<sup>26</sup> Here are a couple of telling paragraphs:

“This entire world view tragically puts the proverbial cart before the horse. Whether you call it personal development, personal growth, self-actualization, self-transcendence, or spirituality does not matter. What matters is realizing that the reason you were born is to become the best human being you can possibly be. Personal development is not a tool for reaching a bigger goal. Becoming a complete human being is already the biggest and most noble goal you can aspire to.

...

The secret to the amazing business success of Trappist monks is not that they have managed to establish the mythical “healthy balance” between their personal and professional lives. The secret is that their personal, organizational, and business lives are all subsets of their one, high, overarching mission- becoming the best human beings they can possibly be. Business success for the monks is merely the by-product and trailing indicator of living for a higher purpose. Trappist business success is living proof that when we seek first the kingdom of personal development everything else will take care of itself. And this is true of our personal lives as well.

So back to the question: What do I do for personal development? On one hand I don’t do anything for personal development. Like the monks I simply live my life. Yet on the other hand I’ve built my whole life around personal development, and it remains to this day the only thing I truly care about. It is just that pursuing personal development has become so habitual that I never think about it. In this sense everything I do is filtered through the screen of personal development.”

How about that for a flip on work-life balance? Isn’t work a major part of our lives? In the spirit of seeing work as an expression of oneself, I have been enjoying Simon Sinek’s offerings in this area, particularly in getting clarity on my personal why. You might want to spend a little time on one of his [TED talks](#) or review his 2009 book; *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*.<sup>27</sup> What is your personal “why” and how does it bring you alive and support you in becoming a “complete human being?”

*“He who has a why to live can bear almost any how.”*

*-Friedrich Nietzsche*

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<sup>26</sup> Turak, August. "What Every Leader Must Know About Personal Development." *Forbes*. Forbes Magazine, 10 Jan. 2014. Web. 19 Aug. 2015.

<<http://www.forbes.com/sites/augustturak/2014/01/10/what-every-leader-must-know-about-personal-development/>>.

<sup>27</sup> Sinek, Simon. *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*. New York: Portfolio, 2009. Print.

Okay, you now have a wealth of useful tools (of course there are so many more that you will acquire and use along the way). Let's take our focus from your "I" in the mirror, and turn to your third foundational leg of this stool, your "it" all around you. Back onto the dance floor we go...

## It

Your "it" constitutes your external environment, everything that you can observe and measure. Where do you dwell on the planet? Where does your physical body show up each day? How about across the year and throughout your lifespan? This is your "it," everything that is external to you and of which you are aware. Some of 'it' you have control over, some of 'it' you can directly modify, and some of 'it' you cannot and do not modify or have control over.

This third foundational leg is where you will look at the systems, environments, rules, and structures around you. You are invited to determine what is, or is not, working for you... and of those, what is, and is not, subject to your influence or under your control.

We are going to start with feedback processes and systems, then cover organizational habits over time, take a peek at deliberately developmental organizations, and wrap it up with considering meaningful work and honorable work environments.

So earlier we learned how millennials want more often feedback and strong mentoring. It seems like those could be a valuable part of a succession program. We will not cover succession planning and programs here. Please do go learn about succession planning/programs, if you are not yet savvy in this area.

## Feedback

Feedback is a vast and very important topic. Although it is here, in the "it" section, there are plenty of "we" and "I" aspects associated with feedback. The information in this section should be enough to provide a sketch of the subject, but certainly not enough to do this topic justice. It warrants its own dedicated essay. The Harvard Business Review has compiled a list of their [feedback-related articles at this link](#).

First off feedback is an important leadership skill and one that is most often avoided. There are many recommendations regarding how, when, private or in the moment in front of whom, positive or negative, for development or performance review, etc.

The information shared in the "we" and "I" sections should come in useful regarding framing communications, listening well, and being present and participating in a leaderly manner. Becoming masterful at giving and receiving feedback is the superpower of an excellent leader.

Studies have shown<sup>28</sup> that honest feedback positively affects employee engagement and leaders who actively look for opportunities to provide and seek helpful feedback have increased percentiles in their leadership effectiveness ratings. So plenty of growth opportunities in the area of feedback.

For now, let's focus on processes and systems set up in the environment to create a culture of helpful constructive feedback. Do you have a feedback system and program in place? How often is it used? Is it manual or automated? Is it used for performance appraisal, or for development, or both? Who participates?

### 360 Degree Feedback

Have you established, or are you considering, a 360 degree feedback process and system? Feedback from a single source is limited and possibly outdated thinking. It is certainly not flexible for various types of organizational structures.

To truly affect the conditions for performance, you need to take some time to determine the environmental structure, processes, and support systems that you want to have in support of healthy, constructive, and beneficial feedback. Maybe you implement more than one system for more than one purpose, possibly separating the one that is for bolstering communication and increasing honest transparency from the one that is associated with remuneration? Maybe you design it so that they are loosely coupled.

Nicole Thompson of Northwestern University wrote a paper on *Improving Team Performance Through 360-Degree Feedback* and provides us with the following key points:<sup>29</sup>

- You must “ask the right questions” that are linked to the team and the organizational goals. How questions are worded also matters and found to have a ‘demoralizing’ effect.
- Feedback participants (raters) must have a clear understanding of why the system is in place, how the information will be shared and how the results are to be used.
- Rater anonymity is important as if that is compromised, it will impact the content and quality of answers.
- There is complexity and costs associated with managing the input, keeping it anonymous, tracking responses, and reporting the results to the right users over time.

It is important to be clear about how often, when, and why use the feedback process and/or tool. Use of 360 feedback systems pay off if they are framed, setup, and managed properly. All of this takes an investment. This research also showed the positive impacts of successful 360 Feedback Programs that include:

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<sup>28</sup> Folkman, Joseph. "The Best Gift Leaders Can Give: Honest Feedback." *Forbes*. Forbes Magazine, 19 Dec. 2013. Web. 24 Aug. 2015.

<<http://www.forbes.com/sites/joefolkman/2013/12/19/the-best-gift-leaders-can-give-honest-feedback/>>.

<sup>29</sup> Thompson, Nicole. "Improving Team Performance Through 360-Degree Feedback." *Master's in Learning & Organizational Change at Northwestern University* :: Northwestern University, School of Education and Social Policy, May 2012. Web. 24 Aug. 2015.

<<http://www.sesp.northwestern.edu/masters-learning-and-organizational-change/knowledge-lens/stories/2012/improving-team-performance-through-360-degree-feedback.html>>.

- increase communication,
- foster employee development, and
- increase productivity and efficiency on a team.

In order to have an impact and create conditions for increased performance and personal growth, you must be prepared to invest your time, attention, and budget into a system that can reflect and reinforce the culture that you are creating and/or influencing.

### **Intent and questions matter**

Clarity and communication on organizational goals are imperative. A study titled: *Feedback: The Powerful Paradox*, by Jack Zenger and Joe Folkman<sup>30</sup> mentioned Carol Dweck's mindset work associated with wording your organization's questions:

“Carol Dweck, a professor of psychology at Stanford University, has noted people basically have one of two differing mindsets; “**proving**” or “**improving**”. (Covered previously as ‘fixed’ and ‘growth’ mindsets.) If someone has been told that they are extremely intelligent, highly creative, or an exceptional athlete, then much of their effort can be focused on preserving that image and self-concept. The person who possesses a proving mindset is less apt to take on a more difficult challenge that may bring about failure. Instead, they will repeat the behaviors and practices that succeeded in the past.

The individual with an improving mindset, on the other hand, believes that intelligence, creativity, athletic ability, and virtually any skill can be acquired. Armed with this “improving” mindset they are far more apt to take on challenging tasks and seek out opportunities to continually learn and develop. ...

The same principle applies to a senior manager telling a subordinate that she is highly creative or that he is an extremely intelligent analyst. That message encourages these individuals to only take on assignments that will reinforce the way they are currently perceived.

If, on the other hand, the senior manager had provided positive reinforcement about the hard work exhibited (the willingness to explore differing approaches or the flexibility with which they approached the task) that reinforces a continual desire to learn and develop and take on ever more difficult assignments. This may sound like a small distinction, but it has huge long-term consequences.”

Everything matters, so it is imperative to truly determine the set up the conditions that support and reinforce all aspects of you, your organization's culture, and the systems and structures that establish the boundaries and ground rules.

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<sup>30</sup> Zenger, Jack, and Joe Folkman. "FEEDBACK: THE POWERFUL PARADOX." *FEEDBACK: THE POWERFUL PARADOX* (n.d.): n. pag. 2014. Web. 23 Aug. 2015. <<http://zengerfolkman.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/ZF-Feedback-The-Powerful-Paradox.pdf>>.

Consider improving your organization's conditions as a team activity. Why not engage various team members or create a specific team, or set of teams, who are focused on this critical activity. This is a good place to run safe-to-fail experiments when they are determining the proper feedback process and tools that match the overall goals and objectives. The activity can include wording of questions, testing out processes and tools, and learning what is best for creating the most effective, efficient, and healthy conditions for your/their organization.

## Leader assessment and self-assessments

Caution, this is not a program for "them." You, as the leader, manager, influencer must set the standard by participating in the program yourself. If you truly want to create conditions for a healthy vibrant sustainable and profitable organization, you must be involved. You set the standard. You need to model what you expect from others. They will be as transparent and vulnerable as you let yourself become.

Back when Jeffrey Hollander was CEO of Seventh Generation he, joked during a speech I attended about how their company's annual 360 degree feedback process was keeping his therapist fully engage all year round. He said as soon as he worked through all the feedback and regained his self-esteem, it was time for a new appraisal.

Also, remember to include self-assessments over time as part of your programs. It is a strong best practice for individuals to assess themselves and compare their self perceptions to collected feedback, particularly over time.

Your biggest friend on this journey is compassion for self and others. When you consider your personal growth plan, do you hold it with deep self compassion? Can you make space for your blind spots and invite in feedback?

## Goals, Habits, and Time

Goals are a mainstay and typically commonplace. Goals are what we rally around or rally oneself with, say as a carrot or desired outcome. They are also how we connect as a 'we' and achieve results.

We can have goals at all levels from the individual "I," to the "we" team of 2 - 12, the "we" tribe of 20 - 150, to the overall organization. It is useful and good practice to share and be transparent with goals. Buy-in is a key factor regarding goals. It would be best for when you set your conditions for high performance and growth, if the goals can be written down, shared, measured, and tracked over time.

How do you currently handle your personal and organizational goals? How are goals handled in your "it?" Do you cascade goals through your organization and teams? Do you expect all the individuals within your influence to have personal goals? Goals that are private to each person? This is an area of consideration when engineering your "it" over which you have control. Goals can



be a useful and powerful tool. Tracking goals over time supports a culture of 100% accountability and making and meeting commitments.

How does achieving organizational and personal goals associate with how one spends their time? Might you provide a support system where individuals can see and map actionable aspects of their goals to their daily calendar? Might this be part of your environment where people understand that goals translate into behaviors and behaviors occur in time (scheduled or not scheduled)? How do you see the relationship between goals, one's planned activities, and habits?

Yes, finally time to cover habits...

Let's go back up on the balcony. When looking at your "I," do you see your habits and rituals? Possibly your coffee ritual where you habitually go to your coffee shrine and perform an activity that might happen most every day of your life? What are some other rituals that you habitually perform? Which of your habits are healthy and which ones are not?

How about looking from our balcony position at the rituals and habits of your family and organizations? They are most easy to spot around food and drink. These typically take a long time to learn. If you want to take a deep dive into habits, Charles Duhigg wrote; *The Power of Habits: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business*.<sup>31</sup>

You can set up your "it" to support seeing, changing, and/or reinforcing individual and group habits. Part of it is the journey we have been taking, which is the invitation to see things that maybe we were a bit too busy to see. Then to make decisions about the boundary conditions, what is working and is okay, and what is not working and needs to change.

It is when we go to change habits where the environment and simple practices can be so very useful. Often, it takes simple repetition to develop a new habit or drop an old one. Mini-rewards along the way are very helpful as it connects together a good feeling with the repetitive act. If we are continually doing something and feel drudgery instead of reward, it will not stick. So, be sure to include good feeling rewards and positive feedback as you create conditions for performance and success for yourself and others in your "it."

Regarding goals and habits, let's be sure to include habit number two and three, and why not include Stephen Covey and all the habits of his famous *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*.<sup>32</sup> When covering "goals, habits, and time" these 7 habits apply here and throughout this essay:

1. Be proactive
2. Begin with the end in mind
3. Put first things first

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<sup>31</sup> Duhigg, Charles. *The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business*. New York: Random House, 2012. Print.

<sup>32</sup> Covey, Stephen R. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*. N.p.: Simon & Schuster; Anniversary Edition Edition, 2013. Print.

4. Think win-win
5. Seek first to understand, then to be understood
6. Synergize
7. Sharpen the saw

Tooling up your “it” to expect good habits, high performance and personal growth might be something to try on, with the support of your “we,” of course.

## Meaningful Work and Honorable Work Environments

Does your organization offer meaningful work?

As Fast Company’s Co.EXIST’s article *4 Tips To Help Millennials Find Meaningful Work* by Adam Smiley Poswolsky states:<sup>33</sup>

“Every generation probably feels like it has gotten the short end of the stick, but critics really love to hate on millennials. They call us the lazy generation, the entitled generation, and the “me me me generation.” Based on the young people I know, these stereotypes couldn’t be farther from the truth. Millennials want to work—and despite being shackled by debt, recession, and the jobs crisis—they aren’t motivated by money. Rather, they’re driven to make the world more compassionate, innovative, and sustainable.”

Well, do you ‘not’ want to make the world more compassionate, innovative, and sustainable? Can you see creating conditions for high performance and personal growth, similar to creating meaningful work? Do you know your “why?”

How about an honorable work environment? Have you created a culture where people feel valued and look forward to coming to work?

Is it possible for people in your “we” to live a life that supports the Trappist Monk ideology that August Turak shares (repeated here)?

“The secret is that their personal, organizational, and business lives are all subsets of their one, high, overarching mission- becoming the best human beings they can possibly be.”

How would you define an honorable work environment? Is your definition big enough to welcome all generations? Will it also learn and grow over time? You can create these conditions. As Seth Godin says in his book *Tribes: We Need You to Lead Us*:

*“Leaders lead when they take positions, when they connect with their tribes, and when they help the tribe connect to itself.” Seth Godin*

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<sup>33</sup> Poswolsky, Adam Smiley. "4 Tips To Help Millennials Find Meaningful Work." *Co.Exist*. Fast Company & Inc, 16 Apr. 2014. Web. 24 Aug. 2015. <<http://www.fastcoexist.com/3029111/change-generation/4-tips-to-help-millennials-find-meaningful-work>>.

*“Life's too short” is repeated often enough to be a cliché, but this time it's true. You don't have enough time to be both unhappy and mediocre. It's not just pointless, it's painful. Instead of wondering when your next vacation is, maybe you ought to set up a life you don't need to escape from.” Seth Godin*

## Deliberately Developmental Organizations

Robert Kegan, Lahey, and Fleming in their research on what they call “deliberately developmental organizations (DDO)” identified successful organizations that view “work life balance” as a false trade-off. They even take it a few steps further and see work as a place of development. As stated in a recent [Harvard Business Review](#) article:

“The companies we call DDOs are, in fact, built around the simple but radical conviction that the organization can prosper only if its culture is designed from the ground up to enable ongoing development for *all* of its people. That is, a company can't meet ever-greater business aspirations unless its people are constantly growing *through* doing their work.”

How do we as adults develop? Most of it is sheer force of effort for those to whom it is essential, as you can see by the large improvement techniques, books, seminars, training, etc. markets. What about seeing the workplace as a place that fosters development? Might one intentionally design environments that are containers for development? DDOs foster environments and conditions to honor and support current human capacities and to also help increase adult capacity.

## What? So What? Now What?

This concludes our journey together where you were exposed to tools for each of your foundational proverbial legs of your stool. We visited the “we” for which you influence, or are responsible, and looked at different ingredients for creating conditions for performance and growth. First we focused on a small team ingredients and then used a lens to look at progressive stages of tribes. Throughout we got glimpses into the power of culture and your possible conscious or unconscious impact on your ‘we’ cultures. From there, we climbed up on the balcony and looked at U.S. employee engagement and a possible leadership gap.

The second section covered your “I.” Where you collected more useful tools that included; emotional intelligence, mindsets, the comprehensive mind, body, spirit, shadow lens, and the notion of blind spots. We wrapped up your “I” with inviting a flip on the notion of “work-life balance” to a simple life of continuous “personal growth and development.”

In this final and third section that covered your “it,” we focused on environment and all things observable and external. Specifically we covered feedback systems, organizational habits, offering

meaningful work and honorable work environments, the notion of a “deliberately developmental organization.”

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Upperhand.org commissioned and collaborated on this paper with Christine A. Brautigam of Inspired Agility, an organization dedicated to <....>. August 27, 2015.

## About



**Christine A. Brautigam**, founder of Inspired Agility, consults with organizations and leaders on effectiveness, improvement, and technology adoption. Christine recently moved to Portland Oregon where she is founding Inspired Agility, a Pyxis Technology network member, offering leading edge training programs. Christine’s many years of software, process improvement, and project management experience include employment and/or consulting with Lockheed Martin, IBM, BEA Systems, StorageTek, and the Veterans Health Administration. She holds a MS in Information Technology from Carnegie Mellon University and a BS in Industrial and Operations Engineering from the University of Michigan.



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Upperhand.org is a platform for personal and professional growth that’s built on contemporary research and provides a turn-key, yet flexible framework for putting the principles of effective habit development, productivity, self-awareness, and leadership using technology.

For individuals, [Upperhand.org](http://Upperhand.org) provides an easy-to-use platform for managing one's personal development including career, professional and personal growth, managing reputation, creating career opportunities, and in general maximizing one's potential and career satisfaction.

For managers and mentors, Upperhand provides an efficient tool for helping people stay the course and grow.