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How

Why How We Do Anything Means Everything...in Business (and in Life)

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sonal sphere of influence. It helps you to reach out to others, to create the kinds of strong interpersonal synapses so crucial to thriving in a hyperconnected world, and to inspire those around you to do the same.

LEADERSHIP

Let's talk for a moment about leadership. On May 25, 1961, U.S. President John F. Kennedy stood before a special joint session of Congress and asked for a number of special appropriations to address "urgent national needs." He spoke for about 45 minutes, but few remember most of what he said. What the whole world remembers, in one way or another, is that for about eight of those 45 minutes, JFK shared his vision for landing on the moon. In about a thousand words, he launched an effort that would involve hundreds of thousands of people for the next decade and more. On that night, and in the days that followed, people coalesced around this common idea. He did not say it would be easy. "It is a heavy burden," he said, "and there is no sense in agreeing or desiring that the United States take an affirmative position in outer space, unless we are prepared to do the work and bear the burdens to make it successful. . . . This decision demands a major national commitment of scientific and technical manpower, material, and facilities, and the possibility of their diversion from other important activities where they are already thinly spread. It means a degree of dedication, organization, and discipline which have not always characterized our research and development efforts." But JFK spoke not just for the scientists, contractors, and astronauts who would make the journey. He spoke for the nation. "In a very real sense," he said, "it will not be one man going to the moon—if we make this judgment affirmatively, it will be an entire nation. For all of us must work to put him there."² In just eight minutes, JFK changed the world.

That is leadership: not simply having the vision of landing on the moon, but doing everything it takes for the roughly one million people who came together around this effort to speak the same language, to have a common consciousness, and to pursue a mission that is greater than any individual. Would America have landed on the moon if most

people had said, “I’m interested in going to the moon, but it *depends*. I would go to the moon if I could sit in the spacecraft, in the front row, on the right side. Where I sit matters more than landing on the moon.” If everyone wanted to jam into the spacecraft but no one wanted to work at Cape Canaveral and do a different job, we would not have reached New Jersey, let alone the moon. So a million people had to come together in a mutually reinforcing system to convert that vision into reality.

An organization, as we have said, is simply that: a group of people who come together in a mutually reinforcing system to accomplish something greater than any individual. So leadership is not just for people who have “president” in their title. Leadership is an attitude, a disposition, and a way of approaching the challenges you face every day. It is not a title on your business card. Though many people are formally empowered to lead others, many more of us—and in our increasingly horizontal world that number grows every day—work in teams without formal hierarchical structures. And this trend is bound to continue, with more and more of our achievements the result of our ability to be effective in groups of relative equals. Self-governance is also a leadership orientation; it begins by leading yourself. To become more self-governing and to participate in and foment more self-governing cultures around yourself, you must accept the challenge to become your own legislature, to look inside for answers and be guided by your alignment to the values you find there. This framework can help you develop the orientation to do this well.

As we go through the elements of the framework in the pages that follow and hear from many people who lead, remember that great leaders became leaders precisely because they either consciously or by their very nature embodied those behaviors that make Waves, that move those around them to do great things, and that work powerfully with others for change. That is the essence of leadership, and it begins with leading yourself.

We began this book with a story about a person I think is one of the greatest leaders ever, Krazy George Henderson, the man who invented the Wave. To thrive in the internetted world of twenty-first-century business, you don’t need one big Wave; you need to make Waves every day, and like that stadium cheer, anyone can make

one at any time. It could be a question in a town hall meeting that would make it a better meeting, or an e-mail that inspires others to take up the cause at hand. Leadership is getting your HOWs right, and you can look at anything through the prism of leadership. You can brush your teeth because it is something your parents made you do as a child, or you can brush your teeth because you have a vision of dental health and a winning smile. Leadership is about starting and making Waves contagious in everything you do.

The Leadership Framework is not a set of rules or edicts you must memorize or comply with, *cans* and *can'ts* that live outside of you; the Leadership Framework lives in the world of *shoulds*. It begins with core values and then gives you ways of approaching each decision or action to bring those values to bear on others. It provides a foundation from which to make decisions every day and brings values to life in behaviors. These behaviors, consistently done, reinforce each other to create an upward spiral of energy that propels endeavor. If you divide life into WHAT you do and HOW you do it, the Leadership Framework describes an approach to HOW: how you communicate, how you work, how you treat others, how you make decisions, how you interact in the marketplace, and how you can act consistently. It governs, guides, and inspires HOW we do things. A framework is another way to describe a system; each part mutually enforces every other part. Like the studs, rafters, and beams of a house, or pieces on a chessboard, the strength of each is magnified tenfold when they work together.

Though I call it the Leadership Framework, you can also think of it as a lens, the Lens of How. When you see the world through it and act accordingly, you will engender more trust, build a stronger and more enduring reputation, become more actively transparent, think more clearly, act more spontaneously, and make more Waves with those around you. You won't have to worry about all those things individually, because they will make perfect sense when seen as a whole. You will begin to affect culture, to lead and model a standard of conduct that will speak to the higher selves of those around you, and lift their efforts as well. The lens of HOW will inspire you by rendering clear the terrain you must navigate on your journey to climb the Hill of A, and many hills beyond.

This framework is not the only possible framework you could construct for this journey; it was designed for the types of high-information, person-to-person efforts that go on at LRN every day. It represents the amalgamation of many of the thoughts and concepts I have picked up or developed over the years, and that apply well to our core activities.³ If you work on a shop floor or in some other specific environment, some of the ideas here might be superfluous to your efforts. No matter what you do, however, understanding the behaviors and dispositions described here will begin to give you a visceral experience of what getting your *HOWS* right is all about.

WALKING THE TALK

Perhaps not surprisingly, the Leadership Framework draws some of its power from a disposition toward language. We know from the research we discussed in Chapter 5 that language exerts a powerful influence on the way we think about things. There is, for example, a vast difference in the influence of the word *enlist* versus the word *sell*. When you sell, the object in play is the product, a thing that lives outside both you and the buyer; when you enlist, you invite a relationship in which the product is but one stage today on a journey of innovation tomorrow. The behaviors, thoughts, and consciousness that follow from being in touch with *enlist* are entirely different from embracing *sell*. Similarly, do you have *customers* or do you have *partners*? What does the word *partner* say about that person across the table from you differently than the words *customer*, *vendor*, or *supplier*? Will that affect how you negotiate? How you define success in that negotiation?

Like *can* versus *should*, language has the power to contain or inspire, and the language you adopt and employ either locks you in rigid relationships or frees you to new possibilities of connection. In other words, if we broaden our vocabulary, we have access to a bigger world with more options. I also believe that the people who will become the leaders of tomorrow—those who will thrive and excel in our hypertransparent, hyperconnected world—will be the ones who embrace this language and unlock its transformative power.