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10

Lead with Purpose

"The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why."
—*Mark Twain*

After working through the previous chapters in this guide, you are now prepared to understand and lead from your purpose. Your leadership purpose is the unique gift that you bring to the world. No matter what job, title, or occupation you hold, your leadership purpose is the magic that defines who you are as a leader. Although your leadership *style* may vary as you change roles from parent to manager to community volunteer, your leadership *purpose* will remain unchanged. All of the people you lead, regardless of age or title, see the same unique value you bring to their world: your purpose.

Probably the simplest way to understand your leadership purpose is to ask the following question: "If I were to disappear from my current job/role in life and someone else with equivalent skills were to take my place, what would people miss?" The answer to that question would be a clear expression of your leadership purpose.

Since writing the original version of this book, there has been an explosion of interest in purpose. Martin Seligman, the father of positive psychology, has described purpose as a pathway to flourishing in one's life. Daniel Pink argues in his book *Drive* that purpose is one of three keys to exceptional performance in the twenty-first century. Harvard Business School research on what helps female leaders make it to the top concludes that clarity of one's purpose is essential. Doctors have even found that people are 2.5 times less likely to experience the symptoms Alzheimer's disease if they have purpose in their lives.

As Viktor Frankl wrote in *Man's Search for Meaning*—one of the 10 most significant books ever written, according to the Library of Congress—happiness cannot be pursued; it ensues as the result of living a life of meaning and purpose.

How do you discover your purpose? You cannot merely adopt someone else's purpose and follow your True North. You can be inspired by others' sense of purpose and work with others to pursue common goals, but ultimately, your purpose is unique to you.

We will be going on a journey through your past, present, and future to visit the times when you were most operating from your purpose. The outcome will be the discovery of words that paint a picture of your unique gift to the world (your purpose). The words you generate should be both intimidating and exciting, while providing you with an inner wisdom to make critical decisions.

Also, we will help you discover how your purpose as a leader aligns with the larger purpose of the organizations you devote your time and energy to.

REDISCOVERING YOUR PURPOSE

What if your deeper purpose as a leader has been staring back at you all this time waiting for you to discover it?

After working with thousands of participants in programs around the world, we can comfortably say that the challenge isn't to *find* your purpose; rather, it's to rediscover and own the purpose that has always been there. Your unique purpose is so essential to who you are that you have most likely been too close to it to see it. The good news is that your purpose has shown up many times in your life. What we want to do now is give you the perspective and distance needed to say, "I see you now."

There are three areas of your life journey that can help you to rediscover your purpose. The first two listed below are related to your passions. Where there is passion, purpose is usually nearby:

I. Magical moments that you experienced as a kid when you were lost in the pure joy of an activity before the world told you who or what you should or shouldn't be.

II. Things you love to do that will always be a part of who you are (skiing, singing, etc.)

III. The third area is related to your crucibles—times in your life when everything else is stripped away and your purpose reveals itself.

We have also included prompts that either help fill in the gaps or in some cases are the tipping point to rediscovering your purpose. Remember we are looking for the patterns over time that are an expression of your purpose.

EXERCISE 10.1: REDISCOVERING YOUR PASSION AND PURPOSE

This exercise will draw on your life story work in Part One of this fieldbook.

First, review your life story, then answer the following questions:

When you were a child, what did you most love doing?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Describe one of those moments.

_____

_____

_____

_____

What elements are central to the story?

_____

_____

_____

_____

How did you feel in that moment?

When you were a teenager, what brought you the most joy and satisfaction—especially when things were challenging? Describe a particular moment, including how you felt and what was happening.

What unique or special talent did influential mentor(s) in your life see in you (i.e., why did they invest their time and energy in you)?

If you had no limitations on your life—no concerns about money, family obligations, or work requirements—how would you spend your time and energy?

What can you learn from your crucible stories that might relate to your purpose?

What is something you have been passionate about for an extended period of time in your life (e.g., playing the violin, sailing, painting, etc.)? How do you feel when you are doing it?

In the last year, describe your most enjoyable, satisfying, and energizing moment. What happened and how did it make you feel?

EXERCISE 10.2: DEFINING YOUR PURPOSE

Our hope is that as you answered the questions in exercise 10.1 you smiled a couple of times as you recalled moments when you were operating from your purpose.

Our goal in this section is to identify a unique set of words that help you access your purpose as a leader. The words you discover are like a combination that opens a safe. The combination isn't what is inside (living your purpose), but it is the means by which you access your purpose.

Before you define your purpose, we need to clarify a number of misperceptions of what purpose is not.

Purpose is not:

A. **A job, role, or title that you find exciting**
Example: Lead IBM's new markets department to achieve exceptional business results
What happens when this person leaves IBM or changes careers? If you can be fired from it, it's not your purpose.

B. **A cause**
Example: Help to end hunger around the world
Yes, this is a powerful cause and one that all of us should help make happen, but how do you live this purpose with your kids or friends? If you can turn it off, it's not your purpose. It may be a strategy by which you express your purpose, but your purpose sits underneath that beautiful cause. Your purpose operates in all parts of your life.

C. **A string of words that serves to cover all the bases**
Example: Be a driver in the infrastructure business that allows each person to achieve their needed outcomes while also mastering the new drivers of our business as I balance my family and work demands
If it sounds like an insurance policy, then it's not your purpose.

D. **All the right words**
Example: Continually and consistently develop and facilitate the growth and development of myself and others leading to great performance.
If HR loves your purpose, it's probably not your purpose.

A good purpose will:

- Work in all parts of your life. Your friends and spouse would all say, "That is really you."
- Make you smile as in the end, it is really you at your best, and how you want to be remembered.
- Has unique language from your life journey that speaks to you
- Each word has significant meaning

Here are some examples of purpose statements that have achieve the above:

- To catalyze people who fly a kite to imagine the rocket
- With tenacity, create brilliance
- To always be the lead violinist in the orchestra of life
- To be the inquisitive shit stirrer that helps you step into your deeper wisdom
- Find the elephant and ride it out of the room
- To be the behind the scenes gentle kick in the ass reason for success
- To be the wuxia master who saves the kingdom
- To never chooses the half-truth when the whole truth can be one

Our article "From Purpose to Impact" from the May 2014 issue of *Harvard Business Review* has good examples and stories that may help as you begin to think about your own purpose.

Finally, don't worry about, "What will others think if they hear these crazy words of mine?" Let's get it to sing for you, and then we can worry about how you package it for the world. As Oliver Wendell Holmes so poignantly wrote: "Most of us go to our graves with our music still inside us, unplayed."

Time to hear the music.

Step 1: Using your answers from exercise 10.1 as raw material, write down elements of your purpose in the space below. Do not worry about complete sentences; just make a list of thoughts, impressions, and words that speak to you.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Step 2: Now summarize those elements uncovered in Step 1 into one, single, declarative statement in the following form:

"My leadership purpose is _____!" (fill in the blank as your first rough DRAFT purpose statement).

Step 3: How would you describe your purpose to a 10-year-old?

Step 4: What is it about the purpose phrases above that describe your unique gift?

Step 5: Taking the words that best capture your unique purpose, once again complete the following sentence: My leadership purpose is:

LEADING WITH PURPOSE

The more consistent your actions are with your purpose, the more authentic you are as a leader. In other words, once you embrace your purpose, you can bring that purpose to your leadership.

> This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the trash heap; the being a force of Nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.
>
> —George Bernard Shaw, preface to *Man and Superman*

EXERCISE 10.3: LIVING YOUR PURPOSE

Using the purpose statement you crafted in the previous exercise, make a list of situations or moments when you were fully living your purpose. Include everything you can think of from the past to the present, even if the event or situation lasted for only a short time.

When in the past have you been operating from your leadership purpose?

Where in your life today are you operating from your leadership purpose?

List some examples of situations in the future that might enable you to fulfill the purpose of your leadership.

1.
2.
3.

What are you going to change today so that tomorrow you are better aligned with your purpose?

ALIGNMENT OF INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL PURPOSE

We now look at the alignment between your purpose as a leader and the organizations where you contribute your time (school, job, volunteer work). Every organization has a purpose, whether it is a company that makes life-saving drugs or a grocery store chain. Having a clear sense of the connection between you and the organization is one of the key steps to owning how you express your leadership purpose over time. Now let's help you make the connection.

What is the purpose of the organization you are currently working for or involved with?

How does the organization's purpose connect to your purpose as a leader?

What part of what you do within the organization is most aligned with your purpose?

What can you do to increase the alignment of your purpose and that of your organization?

A LIFE OF PURPOSEFUL LEADERSHIP

In this chapter, you have looked through the lens of your life story to discover your passions and the purpose of your leadership.

Now that you have articulated your purpose, you will be a better leader because you know why you are leading. With this clarity of purpose, you can find others who share your passions thus building a community or team and multiplying the impact of your actions. In the next chapter, we turn to empowering other people to step up and lead by inspiring and aligning them with a common purpose.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- To become an authentic leader, it is essential that you understand the purpose of your leadership.
- By examining your life story and your crucibles, you can uncover your unique gift as a leader and thus discover the purpose of your leadership.
- Living your purpose enables you to empower others to step up and lead.
- Aligning your purpose with your organization's purpose helps to maximize the impact of your leadership.

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11

Empower Others to Lead

As we look ahead into the next century,
leaders will be those who empower others.
—*Bill Gates*

Authentic leaders expect outstanding performance from themselves, from others, and from their teams in order to achieve outstanding results. But high expectations and high standards are not enough to achieve these results. There must also be a climate in which others are empowered to lead and to assume responsibility for achieving the organization's goals and objectives. Authentic leaders empower others in their organization by aligning them around a common purpose and set of values and encouraging them to step up and lead. Thus they create organizations of empowered leaders at all levels.

EMPOWERMENT

By empowering leaders throughout their organizations, authentic leaders create high-performance organizations because all members are encouraged and inspired to reach their full potential. First, you must be an authentic leader yourself, and then foster a climate of mutual respect by treating people as equals, listening to them, and learning from them. To do so, you must be genuine in your interactions and encourage openness and authenticity in conversations. You must expect—not just endure—debate and constructive criticism as you empower your teammates.

Being an authentic leader requires you to have those hard conversations that give others the knowledge, courage, and confidence to step up and lead. Empowered leaders will continue to step up because they have the confidence that they will be supported, even if things do not work out well. As an empowering leader, you must help others