



7-7-7 to Start Your 2007...

Kevin Eikenberry shares
7 of his articles,
7 blog posts and
7 resource recommendations
from 2006 all selected to help
**Unleash Your Leadership
Potential** in 2007.





7-7-7 to Start Your 2007

Dear Friends...

As you will read on page 4, I believe there is a strong bond between leadership and learning. In fact that is why this resource was compiled—to share that link and to give you some specific ways to strengthen the linkage for yourself and (if you choose to forward this) the linkage for your friends, colleagues and others.

I hope the pages that follow will help illuminate your vast leadership potential. And beyond that, I hope you will be informed in some very specific ways about how to unleash that potential and inspired to do just that.

I wish you the best on your personal leadership journey. If ever I can be of any help to you, please let me know.

Yours in Learning,

Kevin Eikenberry
Chief Potential Officer
The Kevin Eikenberry Group



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Feature Article #1

Why Learning is a Leader's Most Important Skill

Article 3.37 – Originally published September 11, 2006

Ask anyone to give you a list of skills that describe a highly effective leader and I'm guessing they'll give you a pretty extensive list. (Go ahead, make a quick mental list right now.)

Since I've done this many times in groups I am accustomed to what I will hear or read. These lists typically include: Leaders must have vision, they must be compassionate, they must be good communicators, they must build relationships, they must work well in teams, they must be powerful persuaders...and many other similar sentiments. All are excellent observations.

Rarely though do I find someone listing the most basic, underlying skill of all.

Learning.

Highly effective, remarkable leaders must be continuous, lifelong learners.

There are at least four reasons why I believe this is true: the complexity of leadership, the nature of change, the role of leaders to model for others and the overall source of leadership. Let me explain.

Leadership is a complex endeavor. Humans are complex, and a leader is dealing with more than just his or her own complexities. They are

tasked with understanding the complexity of human behavior and interactions across many people. When we put it this way, the role can seem daunting. Something this complex won't be mastered quickly. Remarkable leaders know that the mastery of these complexities is a lifelong journey with no defined endpoint. The result? The need and desire to be in a continuously learning mindset.

The status quo requires no leadership.

Think about it. If everything in the current situation was great – if there was no need for change – how much leadership would be needed? Leadership is required because we want to *move somewhere*. In other words, the need for leadership is predicated on change, and so leaders must be prepared to work under changing conditions. If conditions change, then learning is required to continually adapt to and work under the changing conditions. Remarkable leaders know their job is to move people through status quo. Therefore they know that they must continue to grow themselves to meet the needs of the situations and the people they are leading.

We must model it for others. While the needs and forces for learning are great, leaders aren't just learning for themselves. Sure they are learning for their own competency and confidence as

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Feature Article #1

Why Learning is a Leader's Most Important Skill *(cont.)*

Article 3.37 – Originally published September 11, 2006

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well as to better serve those they are leading, but they also are setting a tone and modeling for those that are following them. When you are a leader, whether by position or reputation, people are looking to you – whether you like it or not, you are a role model. How then, can leaders expect their teams to continue to grow and develop if they aren't doing it themselves?

Better leader = better human. The best leaders are learners for all of the reasons above (and their own other reasons), but they also know something else. They know that in the end, the skills that make them better leaders also make them more highly functioning human beings. Remarkable leaders are learners because they want to be better leaders *and* because they want to be better people. For example, learning how to communicate more effectively makes you more effective in more than in just your role as a leader – that skill development, that growth, spills out into every part of your life. If none of the other reasons above are compelling enough for you, this one should be!

So, if learning is such an important skill, why don't people notice it and/or add it to the list of traits of great leaders?

Precisely because it is the *underlying* skill.

People can become exceptional at the other skills on the list because they are willing to learn, grow, improve and change. They know that to become more effective they must continue to improve. They know that effective leadership is a journey – so they remain focused on becoming more effective, not on arriving and maintaining.

The mindset of being on the path, of constantly being a learner, is the path of the truly remarkable leader.

The good news is that you can choose that path everyday. You can choose to be a more effective leader – and your first choice is to become a learner.

You can make that choice anytime. Today's the day to start.



Feature Article #2

Seven Ways to Improve the Results of Your Leadership Development Efforts

Article 3.21 – Originally published May 22, 2006

Every day we deal with a variety of matters of urgent importance in our organizations. Seldom is leadership development on that urgent list. While perhaps not urgent, few things are of greater importance to the future of our organizations than the conscious and consistent development of our future leaders. Unfortunately, when we do put time and effort into leadership development, all too often those efforts fail.

In this article I will outline seven specific things you can do – as an individual wanting to improve your leadership skills or when thinking about leadership development across an organization. Implementing any one of these suggestions will prove a valuable supplement to what you are already doing. Implementing most or all of them will yield far more confident, competent and prepared leaders than your existing development efforts by themselves ever will.

The Seven Suggestions

Create opportunities for self discovery and to create desire. Learning anything successfully requires a motivated and interested learner. This is especially true for leadership. Often leaders see themselves as technical experts. In many cases they have been promoted because they were good at their previous jobs – which may have had nothing to do with leading. Leaders need to understand how influential they are

and know how they are doing, what the gaps are and have a desire to improve. 360 Feedback processes are one way to raise awareness and create a felt need for improvement. While they can be a powerful tool, the underlying purpose for their use is to create a clear desire for further development. However you accomplish this discovery and desire, it is critical to the development of greater leadership skills.

Set a goal / make a plan. Leaders, either on their own or with assistance, need to set an improvement goal – they need to have a clear picture of the areas they would like to develop. With a goal set, a plan can be put in place to move towards it. While this will often happen during a training event, this goal needs to be in place before attending any training to maximize the value of that training.

Focus on strengths. Too often leaders build a plan based solely on improving areas of weakness. While we certainly want to improve in those areas, an equal amount of effort should be focused on enhancing and further developing areas of greatest strength. While there are several reasons for this, none are more compelling than the fact that less effort is required to improve an area of strength or natural talent than to achieve similar levels of improvement in an area of weakness.

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Feature Article #2

Seven Ways to Improve the Results of Your Leadership Development Efforts *(cont.)*

Article 3.21 – Originally published May 22, 2006

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Find ways to learn. Leaders can be challenged to look for a wide variety of learning resources – encourage them to look beyond the training workshops you might provide. Have them consider podcasts, websites, lectures, books, discussions with other leaders, finding mentors, working with a coach – the list goes on and on. Once people begin to look, they will see many ways they can learn.

Find ways to practice. Learning the ideas and knowledge is one thing, but to become a more effective leader people must practice. Encourage leaders to integrate what they have learned into practice. Help them see that there are opportunities to practice everywhere – and not only at work. People will say they are busy – and they are. Challenge them to consider their leadership development as a integrated part of their work – among their most important tasks – rather than “one more thing to do”.

Get the leader’s leader involved. Leaders can’t do it alone. Having the leader’s leader involved will help keep development as an important priority, but beyond that, the leader’s leader can provide coaching and help remove any obstacles that might be in the way. Most of all, the leader’s leader can provide support and encour-

agement – two things that are critical when we are learning (and practicing) new skills.

Build systems organizationally to support the other six suggestions. We can do the six steps above as a motivated individual. But if we want to create a process for leadership development in our organization we have build ways to systematically provide people with the opportunities and options provided by the other six suggestions.

What is Missing?

Notice that the suggestions above don’t talk about a training workshop, seminar or event as the key to your efforts. While you want any training you provide to be as useful and effective as possible, training alone can only get you so far – which is why your current efforts are less effective than you’d like them to be. The seven suggestions above are meant to be an adjunct to your training efforts – to be a process to layer on top of your existing efforts.

Training alone won’t produce the leaders you need. It is one ingredient. The other seven suggestions in this article will, when added to a valuable, practical and effective training program, produce the leaders you desire – and your organization needs.



Feature Article #3

How Leaders Can Achieve More by Doing Less

Article 3.29 – Originally published July 17, 2006

Every leader I've ever talked with has been busy. Some are more stressed by their workload than others, but the reality of work today is that we all (leaders included) have plenty to do.

Which should make the title of this article of great interest, I mean, who wouldn't be interested in better results by doing less?

What are the better results that you'll see?

If you follow my advice, you'll soon notice:

- Greater engagement. The people that you lead will be more involved in the projects and processes that they work on. They'll definitely feel better about the value that they are adding.
- Higher levels of trust. Want those you lead to trust you more? While my advice won't solve all your trust concerns, it will definitely help.
- More ideas. Do you wish you could generate more ideas when working with a group? This advice will definitely help you create more ideas.
- Enhanced teamwork. People will feel the personal value they add and will be more willing to contribute to the team.

Greater buy-in. If you want people to believe in the projects and changes you are leading, this advice will definitely help make that happen.

That's right, I'm telling you that you can have more of all five of those things by doing one thing less.

Read on.

The Advice

Those are pretty powerful benefits aren't they? Chances are, you would be reading on if you thought there was something you could do to get any *one* of them, let alone getting *all* of them by doing less of something.

Before I continue though, let me warn you. Doing less of this thing may be very hard. It may take you some time to get better at doing less of this. But the effort will be worth it, I promise.

My advice is that you talk less. Or, to put it more bluntly, my advice is to shut up.

In my experience in observing and coaching leaders, there are sometimes when they talk too much, or at the wrong times.

If you are having a meeting with a team or an individual and you are doing most of the talking about the project or task, how engaged will the other person/people be? How likely are they to feel the value they are contributing? Would they be more engaged if you stopped to get their opinion?

You know the answer.

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Feature Article #3

How Leaders Can Achieve More by Doing Less *(cont.)*

Article 3.29 – Originally published July 17, 2006

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So the next time you are in this situation (or hundreds of others), don't say the first thing that comes to your mind, rather stop talking and start listening.

Talk less and listen more.

As the leader you have power – either real or perceived – over those that you lead. Whether you like it or not, because of your position, your words carry weight. And if you start sharing your ideas when you are trying to solicit input from others, they may be less likely to share their possible solutions. Why? They assume you already have a plan or an answer – after all you have been doing all the talking. Besides if you let them share their ideas, chances are one of them will come up with the same thoughts you had – and if that idea comes from the group – instead of you – it will be much more powerful.

Talk less – at least at first.

Remember that you are the leader of the team, but you also are a member of the team. Con-

sider playing that role more often and more effectively. One of the best ways you can do that is to talk less – don't take the floor for too long – and give others a chance to contribute more.

Leaders are often told to communicate more – that communication is an important part of their job. I completely agree with that assessment. There are times when you have a message to deliver, reinforce or support. Great leaders are great communicators. But the best leaders know that there is more to communication than talking. One of the most powerful ways you can communicate is to talk less.

Talk less and let your curiosity show.

Talk less and let your interest show.

Talk less and let others contribute.

Talk less and sometimes you'll communicate more important things.

Talk less . . . get greater results.



Feature Article #4

I Just Wish They'd . . .

Seven Keys to Helping Mediocre Performers

Article 3.46 – Originally published November 13, 2006

Why can't people just get their job done?

Why is it so hard?

Why are some people so difficult?

Do any of these sound familiar? Most of us have asked these questions (or similar ones) many times.

Regardless of our role – as a leader or a team member – we've all worked with people whose performance is . . . well . . . less than we wish it would be. These people are not real performance problems, but they don't perform like stars either. They always seem to do just enough to get by – they never stand out positively or negatively. Yet, on the whole, the performance is definitely less than is desirable.

I believe there are *at least* seven keys to helping these team members change their performance.

The Seven Keys

The right attitude.

First things first. If you are thinking about someone as “a slacker” or as someone who is not really pulling his or her weight or just generally not being a great performer, then how likely are you to really see chances for them to im-

prove? Too often our attitude about someone spirals downward leaving us no mental way to see the other keys you are about to read. We have to remember – and believe – there is a difference between the person and the performance. Keep your focus on people's performance. It is fine to label *performance* as less than valuable, but when we label people that way we leave ourselves little mental space to help them.

The right role.

Have you ever had someone try to change you? How much did you resist those efforts? Ultimately, how successful were they? When you remember these experiences you'll quickly learn that to help others change their performance we have to keep our role clear. Whether we are a supervisor or a peer, our role needs to be one of helping and assisting, not pushing or demanding. This mindset from the start is critical.

The right work.

Sometimes people aren't performing at their best because they aren't doing the work that is best suited for them. Sure, people were hired to do a specific job, but we can help them craft their job to focus on things they are naturally better at – or find other ways to give them chances to utilize their talents more effectively. As a fellow team member that may look like

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Feature Article #4

I Just Wish They'd . . .

Seven Keys to Helping Mediocre Performers *(cont.)*

Article 3.46 – Originally published November 13, 2006

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shifting responsibilities around a bit. As a supervisor, a more drastic measure might be placing someone in a new job with responsibilities that better match their talents.

The right purpose. We all are motivated by doing things that we see have a greater purpose. Too often people are given tasks or a job but they can't see the value or purpose in their work. Help people see a bigger picture of how their work fits into the overall picture, and you might be surprised at the change in their performance.

The right expectations. People tend to rise and fall to the level of our expectations – and these aren't just the things we say, but also the things we believe. Reflect on your beliefs about this person's performance and what you think is possible for them. Once you raise your expectations and sights, theirs may begin to shift upward as well.

The right support. Have you ever been given a task without a lot of training or support? Have you ever wished you would have gotten that support? Guess what? Sometimes people are performing to the level of their understanding

and skills. Once you put some of these other keys in place, help people think about what additional skills or help they need. It might be a small insight or one new skill that makes all the difference in the world.

The right passion. That's right, passion. We can't *give* people a passion for their work, but when we apply the other six keys and help people in those ways don't be surprised if their passion has been ignited (or re-ignited) for their work. Maybe a full fledged flame won't ensue. But considering where this person's performance started, wouldn't you be pleased with a flickering flame?

One More Thing

All of these keys are things that *you can do*. You can't change a person's performance by brute strength or force of will. But you can, regardless of your position, find ways to help the person improve performance on their own.

In the end then, the biggest key is to recognize what we can do to help and provide that help. We'll be happier and more productive, and chances are so will the other person.



Feature Article #5

To Team or Not to Team

Article 3.14 – Originally published April 3, 2006

Everyone thinks teams are a good thing. Leaders like to form teams. People, for the most part believe in the value and purpose of teams.

All of us are smarter than each of us.

$$1 + 1 = 3$$

These are just two common phrases that reinforce and prove how pervasive our belief in teams is. And that belief is justified.

Sometimes.

There are many times in our civic or church groups, and in our businesses and professional associations that we need teams of people to work on an issue or a project. And sometimes we would be better off without a team - with individuals contributing as individuals.

What? No team?

You got it.

At least not the type of team you probably think of, when you think of a team.

Two Basic Types of Teams

To keep things simple, I believe there are two basic types of teams. There are basketball teams and there are track and field teams.

Basketball Teams

Basketball teams (or soccer or hockey) are teams that require, by the nature of their task, that everyone play as one unit. On teams in these sports the players are interdependent. At any moment of any game, in order to be successful, the entire team needs to be working in harmony. The role of each player is designated by their position (which takes into account their innate strengths and acquired skills). However, the situation at any moment during the flow of the game, may require any player to take any role.

And on good teams of this sort, all players are willing to be flexible, to assist, to change roles, to “do what it takes”. Because they know that without working together, they can’t achieve their team goals of victory. The nature of the game forces interdependency among the team members.

Track and Field Teams

Players on track and field teams on the other hand (except in a few relay events) are not interdependent, they are independent. Shot putters have a skill set that is largely unrelated to the sprinters. And the high jumpers can be personally skilled and successful without any tangible help or support from the distance runners.

At the end of the day (or meet), the team can win if enough of the individuals do well. In

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Feature Article #5

To Team or Not to Team *(cont.)*

Article 3.14 – Originally published April 3, 2006

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other words if enough individuals win, the team will win. The most successful of these teams will have highly talented individual contributors, supporting each other to reach their common goal of winning. In this way they are definitely a team. They may feel allegiance to the group. They certainly can have pride in being a part of the group. They want each other to be successful. They know that they can all be more successful when each individual is more successful. They can have a common goal (to win the meet or championship). But the fundamental relationship between the players isn't the same as it is on a basketball team.

What This Means to Us

In our organizations we most likely have both sorts of teams. We have teams that work in a process flow or project where the outputs of one person directly affect the work of the next – where the work and the people are highly interdependent.

We also have teams that look more like the track and field team. In these situations people are working toward a common mission and goal, but their work doesn't intersect in nearly the same ways as for the highly interdependent teams.

Fair enough you say.

But in my experience, we tend to want all teams to think they are basketball teams. If the work or project dictates that focus, great. But if you have a track and field (independent) team, you don't need the same focus on interdependence and traditional "team building" activities.

What Do We Do Now?

If you lead a team or form teams or are just a member of a team, you need to think about and talk about this distinction. Determine across the team (or future team) what type of team you are. Once there is agreement on the type of team you are, you can begin to set the right kinds of expectations for each other and for yourself. You can build more appropriate plans for training, development and team building.

Knowing which type of team your work or project dictates is the first step towards helping that group of people be more successful and the work being done successfully.

So maybe it isn't really, "to team or not to team?", but "which type of team?"

... *that* is the question.

Answer that one first. And, using the answer as a guide, watch all of your teams be more successful.



Feature Article #6

Creating a Powerful Project Vision

Article 3.45 – Originally published November 6, 2006

You walk into your local grocery or market, looking for apples. You see the displays. They are bursting with apples of many varieties. To your left you notice a sea of yellow and red apples – the sign says they are Jonathans. To your right you see bright, green Granny Smiths. But straight ahead, you see the biggest, reddest Red Delicious apples you have ever seen.

You are drawn to the display knowing that is what you want. As you walk closer you can see that the merchant has polished every one.

You pick up a bag and start to select a few of the red marvels. Usually in this process you sort through looking for the fruit with no blemishes or soft spots. Today, though, each of these beauties is perfect.

It is as if the merchant has already done the work for you. As you hold each apple in your hand you notice that each one could be used in a picture postcard or an advertisement.

You smile as you carry your paper bag of apples to the cashier. In your brief, pleasant conversation with the cashier you mention how great the apples look.

He smiles and assures you that they taste even better. He mentions he had one on his break

and he thought it was the best apple he had ever eaten.

When you get to your car and close the door, suddenly all you can smell are apples! Between the sight, touch and conversation about the apples you were already hungry. But once you get the smell, you can wait no longer. Before you even start your car you pick up one of those big red apples and take a bite. The taste is incredibly sweet, and it is so firm that you hear that satisfying snap when you complete the bite and pull the apple from your lips.

So tell me . . .

Are you hungry for an apple?

Can you almost taste the imaginary apple in this short story?

If you can, there is a reason: Our minds can't tell the difference between something *real* and something *vividly imagined*. If this story created a vivid mental image for you, you are likely wondering where you can find an apple.

And in this story of the apple lies the keys to creating a powerful vision for a project team (or any team for that matter).

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Feature Article #6

Creating a Powerful Project Vision *(cont.)*

Article 3.45 – Originally published November 6, 2006

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The Keys

A vision must be real. This story was more real for you if you buy apples, have a car and most importantly if you like apples (especially Red Delicious). When we make a vision for a project real for people – something that they can see happening and seems within the scope of the “possible” (even if it is a stretch) – we will make the vision much more powerful.

A vision must be personal. Notice I talked about the market you go to and your car. I tried to make the story as personal to you as I could. And, as you read it, you likely were embellishing the story yourself. Seeing the market you shop in – whether a Farmer’s Market, roadside stand or your favorite grocery store. We must make the vision of project success personal. People need to see how they will be impacted and how the work and its outcomes will have meaning from them. When we do that, we have created a more motivating vision.

A vision must be desired. Again, if you connected with this story, you probably like big, juicy, red, crisp apples. If not, this story isn’t very desirable to you and therefore the vision

won’t be that compelling. If you don’t like apples (or if you have never eaten an apple) this might not work very well for you. This is important. Often the vision is desired by the leader or the people who start the project (they really like apples) but for that vision to be compelling to others, the others must want to achieve that vision as well.

A vision can be expressed powerfully in a story. Hopefully I’ve illustrated this for you. And, when we can help people *create* the story (rather than telling it to them as I had to do in this situation) the vision becomes even more powerful.

Now What?

You have the four keys now, and you have a story to help you put the keys together. Now it is time to create a vision for your project. Maybe the project is halfway done or maybe it starts next week. Regardless the stage in your project’s lifecycle, you can use these keys to your advantage for the ultimate success of your project and its team members.

Now, go get your apple.



Feature Article #7

It Takes More Than Effort to Get Results

Article 3.4 – Originally published January 23, 2006

Read the title again, carefully. It doesn't say "it takes more effort to get results." It says "it takes *more than* effort to get results." Ah, the difference a word can make.

In the world I grew up and live in, hard work is considered a high virtue. I've read children's books that spoke of the value of hard work. I grew up on a farm and was proud to work hard. Few compliments will be viewed as highly as, "They are a hard worker." And most people I know consider persistence a highly valued trait. And I suspect your world is much the same.

As I continue to learn and observe the world around me, I'm not quite sure this is the whole story.

That doesn't mean I don't think effort is required, that work is necessary, or that action helps us reach our goals. Of course, we need to take action to get results. Of course work is required to achieve anything of value. The quarrel I have is not with the word "work." It's with the word "hard."

Of course some things are hard work and always will be. However hard work, taken to the extreme leads us to the equivalent of bashing our head against a concrete wall, figuring that eventually the wall will crack, and we will break through. Can we break through the concrete wall and reach our objective using our head?

Perhaps, but I believe there are better ways to break through the wall!

While this analogy may be simple, and somewhat painful, I believe it holds an important element of truth for us all. Why? We all know there are better ways to break through a concrete wall than using our head. As you read this I'm sure you can think of many tools that would allow you to do that while more easily and successfully while creating less pain and agony for yourself.

But unfortunately often people feel that hard work is necessary and that sacrifice is required for them to reach the things they desire.

The truth is, what we really need to do is work intelligently. There are many things we can do to work more intelligently, including building our skills, our capacities, our network, and our experience. All of these things are important. But none of them are the *most* important.

What is the Most Important?

The most important key to reaching our objectives, with less "hard" work is within ourselves. The most important key are the natural gifts and talents that lie within us, largely untapped and unrecognized.

In my experience there are two ways to mop the

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Feature Article #7

It Takes More Than Effort to Get Results *(cont.)*

Article 3.4 – Originally published January 23, 2006

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floor: on your hands and knees using a rag or standing in using a mop. When we celebrate hard work, it's like we are celebrating the rag. If all you have is a rag, you can certainly get the floor clean. On the other hand, if you knew there was a mop would you choose the rag?

So it is with our own natural gifts. We have the mop, but we don't often think about it or recognize it and therefore don't use it.

Three Things You Can Do

Here are three things you can do today to begin to work more intelligently.

Identify your gifts and strengths. In order to use the mop, you must know the mop exists. In order for us to take advantage of our unique talents, abilities, strengths, and gifts we must know they are there. This requires us to think about our strengths and ask others what our strengths are. It will require time for reflection. It will require time. This task itself will require some effort. But the effort is worth it. Every time we use the mop, we gain time, save energy and complete a task more rapidly. It's time to find your mop!

Allow yourself to use them. Once we know we have a mop, we have to allow ourselves to use it. Maybe your mentor used a rag. Maybe your mother used a rag. While that might be the

most successful way for them, that doesn't necessarily mean it is for you. Once you identified your gifts and talents, you must allow yourself to use them. You must take the opportunity to use your unique gifts, because in using them, your results will seemingly flow from you.

Work on building them. Many of us when reviewing our skills will identify a list of both strengths and weaknesses. This is an excellent exercise. While it is important for us to recognize our weaknesses and work in many cases to improve them, it is equally important to continue to nurture and strengthen our greatest gifts and strengths. Consider spending *at least as much time* nurturing and building your strengths as you do on improving or fixing your areas of weakness. Again, you will get greater results for these efforts because they will come easier and more naturally.

When you do these three things, you'll begin to make your work easier and more enjoyable. At the same time, you will most likely find that your results will come sooner and more completely.

What could be better than that? The results we want, with less effort and more enjoyment.

Remember, it takes *more than* effort to get results; it takes intelligent, informed, enlightened, effort.

It's time to get to work.



Blog Post #1

Learning Leadership from the Best

Originally published February 21, 2006

There are many ways we can learn new things, including leadership. Two of the most widely used are to read about principles and ideas, and to learn from an expert.

Team of Rivals - The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln, by Doris Kearns Goodwin, can help you do both at once.

Maybe you would prefer to learn from a mentor who is alive, but you would be hard pressed to learn from a leader more extraordinary than Lincoln. President Lincoln is one of the most written about people in history, so you might wonder what new can be learned about him.

While I am no Lincoln scholar, I can tell you I learned a lot about this man, and more importantly in the context of this post I learned much about leadership.

All would agree that leaders need to build alliances and relationships with a wide range of people in order to be most successful. I have trouble thinking anyone has ever done this more effectively than Lincoln.

Here are a few questions to ponder . . .

Would you invite people into your inner circle who had previously ridiculed your professional skills rudely, directly and very publicly?

(Lincoln put at least two of these people on his Cabinet.)

Would you count your chief adversaries among your most trusted advisors?

(Lincoln put all three of the other Republican nominees for President in 1860 and people from other parties on his cabinet too.)

Would you stick with people long after they had become political liabilities (and when they spoke publicly against your policies) because you believed in their ability to get the job done?

(Lincoln did this more than once.)

Would you reject the resignation of a member of your team even when they were openly campaigning for your job?

(Lincoln did it at least twice.)

A Team of Rivals is a book about the history of the United States at its most critical juncture. It is a book that sheds light on the times, sentiments, and forces that lead to the strife and turmoil that was the American Civil War. It is a book about Abe Lincoln, both before and during his Presidency.

(Continued on page 19)



Blog Post #1

Learning Leadership from the Best *(cont.)*

Originally published February 21, 2006

(Continued from page 18)

But this book is much more than that.

This book is also a study of leadership - not just Lincoln's but several of his rivals who became a part of his Cabinet.

Through the lenses of history, and some great writing by Doris Kearns Goodwin, you can learn about the approaches and foibles of one of our greatest leaders. You will learn about many leadership virtues, such as patience, loyalty, consensus building, relationships, vision and much more.

While you could go to the bookstore or click to Amazon and find books written specifically on each of these topics, you won't learn more from them than you will right here.

This book is a history book and a biography, so you won't get leadership models, templates, cheat sheets or checklists.

What you will get is the opportunity to watch, and learn from the lessons of one of the best - and you will have the opportunity to make those lessons your own through reflection and thought.

I'll read other books on leadership this year, probably many.

And while they will each be useful in their own right, I doubt I will learn as much that will stick with me as long as what I learned from a *Team of Rivals*.



Blog Post #2

A Powerful Question and Process

Originally published March 14, 2006

Over time on this blog I have posed questions - questions that I felt warrant thought and reflection.

Of late I haven't been doing that as frequently, and that will probably change. You see, questions are one of the most powerful learning tools we have. They stimulate our brain to search for answers, they send us to research, they provoke us to think.

Today's question may be as powerful as any we could ask about our development, growth and success.

"What is the one skill I could master that would catapult me towards my goals?"

Ask yourself this question today.

Once you have asked yourself the question

though, do more than that - take the steps that will help you take advantage of the question . . .

Reflect on it.

You might have the answer immediately or it might take some time to winnow down a list to the single most important skill.

Once you have the skill identified, write it down.

Then take action.

Do something to begin acquiring the skill, even if it is a very small thing.

Ask. Reflect. Decide. Act.

A powerful question, made more powerful with a powerful process.



Blog Post #3

How Hard Do You Practice?

Originally published April 6, 2006

The Indianapolis Star featured articles leading up to last weekend's Final Four activities in town about some Indiana basketball legends. I read the articles about both Oscar Robertson and Larry Bird.

But it is something in the Larry Bird article that I can't get out of my head.

More specifically, one quote:

"I used to shoot a lot of free throws," he said. "I wouldn't leave until I made a hundred in a row. When I went to the line in the pros, I'd just remember the feeling of the ball coming off my fingers. I'd never go up there thinking, 'Oh, I'm going to miss this.' I'd just go back to being on the court in the summer and shooting all those free throws, and trying to remember the rhythm."

Larry Bird was named one of the 50 greatest NBA players a few years ago, and if they looked at that list of 50 players, most fans would say that Larry Bird came the closest to maximizing his potential.

I have read many times about how competitive he was and how much he practiced. But that one phrase speaks volumes.

Most people would be satisfied with their progress if they shot 100 free throws a day. They would likely be pleased if they made ten in a row.

Bird shot until he made 100 in a row.

So if he missed #98, he started over.

The next time you are working on your coaching skills, perfecting your Customer Service skills, working on being a better team player or rehearsing an important training session, think about Larry Bird.

How many times are you practicing?

How prepared are you?



Blog Post #4

Keep 2 Cows

Originally published May 5, 2006

I recently was traveling on business and had the chance to spend the night with my Dad. We took a walk around the farm I grew up on and ended up in the barn to look at his cows. Off and on for the last several years he has bought feeder calves and raised them to sell to people as beef in their freezer.

On this night, there were five cows in the pen. He explained that three would be leaving later in the week. Then he said something very interesting.

"There is really only one that isn't ready to go, but I'm going to keep that other black one here a couple more weeks too. Because the other one will do better if he isn't by himself."

Dad wasn't thinking about the mental or emotional well-being of this last animal, but is doing it for a more pragmatic reason - the animal will eat better, be healthier and therefore be ready to be sold much sooner.

So while he isn't thinking about the mental or emotional state of the cow (to whatever degree

a cow has one), that is the real reason for his decision.

I'm not suggesting we are like cows, and I'm not suggesting every project or task should have two (or more) people. What I am suggesting is that we think about collaboration, cooperation, companionship and support.

As the project winds down, rather than giving everything that is left to one person, consider a team of two sharing that load (and perhaps starting to work on their next project too).

When designing a new office space consider how the layout will impact social interaction and collaboration.

Think about how you can provide support and social interaction for people on your teams - especially when they are working remotely.

This post isn't meant to provide you with all the answers, but to pose the questions I've been thinking about ever since Dad said, "I'll keep two."



Blog Post #5

Interdependence Day

Originally published July 4, 2006

I'm proud to live in the United States of America and happy to be celebrating our independence today - the 230th birthday of our country.

Our country has long exalted and celebrated the independent person: the lone hero, the cowboy, the winning quarterback. Perhaps that comes from our Declaration of Independence - we declared we were independent.

Of course this isn't completely true. All our forefathers were really doing was declaring we are independent of England. Never were those founding fathers and all the residents of the 13 colonies less independent than on that day. On that day July 4, 1776, they became more interdependent than ever - on each other.

230 years later that fact hasn't changed. In a world with more people, more different countries and more of just about everything else, we are completely interdependent. But don't let the personal significance get lost when considering a global perspective.

We need others. We need the resources they provide us (when was the last meal where you were responsible for producing everything you ate?), we need the perspective they provide us (when did you last ask someone for a piece of advice or counsel?), we need the love they share, we need their ideas, energy, passion, commitment and a thousand other things.

Rather than calling this Independence Day, it would make more sense to me to call it Freedom Day. 230 years ago today a strong courageous group of men signed a document declaring our *freedom* from England, and assuring our interdependence would be stronger than ever.

Spend time today thinking about the interdependencies in your business, in your family, on your team, in your neighborhood, and in your life as a whole.

I think you'll find plenty of reasons to celebrate your Interdependence today (and everyday).



Blog Post #6

Manager or Leader?

Originally published August 17, 2006

People sometimes ask me, "Should I be a manager or a leader?" My answer is "yes."

There are management books and leadership books, management courses and leadership courses. There are people who call themselves managers, and those who call themselves leaders.

The manager/leader question isn't an either/or question; it is a both/and question. Greater management skills make leaders more effective and managers will be more effective when they exercise the skills of great leaders.

Rather than trying to discriminate these skills, let's look at both sides of the coin for some competencies:

A manager thinks short term, tactically, a leader has a longer term, more strategic focus.

A manager plans how and when, a leader asks "what?" and "how?"

A manager looks at the bottom line, a leader looks to the horizon.

A manager knows the business, a leader knows the Customer.

A manager focuses on improving existing products and processes, a leader focuses on the new product and the breakthrough process.

A manager supervises, a leader influences.

A manager builds success through quality, a leader builds success through employees.

A manager sets standards of performance, a leader sets new standards.

You can read each pair as one thing is better than the other, but I'd encourage you instead to see the value in *both sides* of the coin.

We need tactics **and** strategy, we need improvements **and** innovation. I could further define the manager/leader coin with more competencies, but these should be plenty to get you started.

Think about both sides of this coin - think manager **and** leader.



Blog Post #7

Negative Stories

Originally published September 21, 2006

I was directed to an interesting blog post by a colleague Stephanie West-Allen. The post at Anecdote.com.au entitled "What are you more aware of - positive or negative stories?" got me thinking about the stories that we hear and/or share in our organizations.

Our culture - whether our neighborhood, our family, our company, or our country, is in part built through the stories that are told and retold. Some of these stories are positive and some are negative. Our first reaction might be that we would only want positive stories to circulate. ... (But,) is there value in a negative story?

Certainly... a negative story can:

- be a cautionary tale (be aware of these situations if you want to succeed).
- talk about how things used to be (but are different now).
- serve as a source of learning (this isn't what we wanted, what can we do now?)

But a negative story can also cast a shadow over the organization, leaving people to feel helpless and frustrated, assuming that "the way things are" isn't very good, and there isn't much that can be done about it.

Here is an example. In a recent meeting a story was used as a negative example of culture - it described a decision making approach that appeared to be counter to the culture the organiza-

tion is trying to build. In my work in the organization I have heard this story several times. After the story was recounted in this group setting, someone asked when event this took place.

The answer? 1997.

None of the key leadership team members who are championing changes to the culture now were even in place then. And it was, after all, **nine years ago**.

How much positive value is this story adding in the organization? Not much. But, *if it's modified* to say - "and that was something that used to happen here.... 9 years ago..." the overall message is drastically changed!

As a leader, by position or not, we can help stories contribute to the organization's growth and well being. We can see if the stories are real, or urban legend. If they tend to have some legend to them, we can help to change the message. It is not our role to defend the players in the story, but simply to help people use those stories as learning experiences not excuses to disengage.

Pay attention to the stories you are hearing because, positively or negatively, they reflect some truth about the culture in which you hear them. Then recognize that you can help the negative stories create growth, rather than promote cynicism or frustration.

This post was modified slightly for space purposes only.

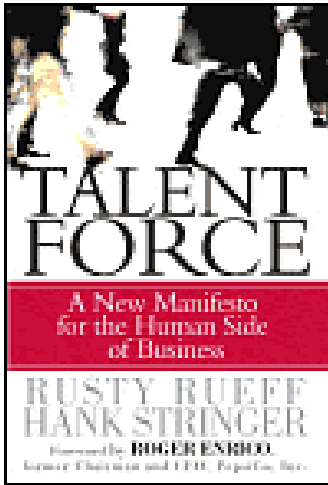


Resource Recommendation #1

Talent Force: A New Manifesto for the Human Side of Business

by Rusty Rueff and Hank Stringer

Recommendation originally published March 6, 2006



I read this book because one of the authors is a friend of mine from college and because I know that demographics are working against us – the amount of talent leaving the workforce as Baby Boomers retire isn't being replaced – in num-

bers, experience, or skills. This trend has vast implications for all of us, yet it hasn't become a prevalent part of business conversation yet. I hoped [Talent Force](#) would help me think about that fact.

Having read the book, I recommend it somewhat different reasons. Yes it helps you understand this trend, and yes Rusty is a great guy.

But you need to read this book because it helps you put your talent in a strategic frame of reference. The skills of the people in your organization are paramount to your success, and this book describes that and reinforces that point in fresh and salient ways.

Initially I thought this book would mostly be for leaders in large organizations with lots of ongoing hiring. I was wrong. As a small business owner, I have many ideas and processes in mind to help me as I move forward. I believe a line manager or leader in an organization of any size will gain value from this book.

If you care about keeping the talent you have and expanding or replacing it rapidly and effectively, you must read this book.

CTRL-click on the book graphic or the link to go to Amazon.com to read more and/or purchase this book.

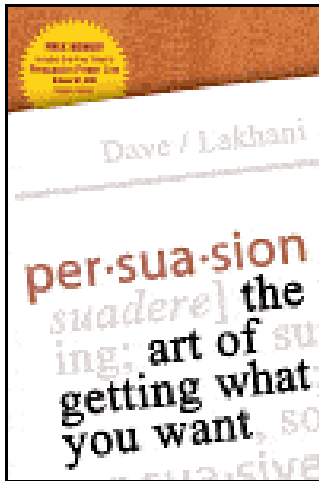


Resource Recommendation #2

Persuasion – The Art of Getting What You Want

by Dave Lakhani

Recommendation originally published March 27, 2006



If we want to be more effective in almost any area of our lives – whether as a leader, teammate, coach, marketer, or parent – being more persuasive can help us be more successful. For this reason I have become a student of

persuasion and influence in the past few years.

[This book](#) is one of my new favorites in this topic area.

It talks about persuasion not from a theoretical perspective but from a real-life, “here’s what you can do” perspective. There are three chapters in particular that lead me to recommend this book so strongly.

The first two chapters contrast manipulation from persuasion and are very insightful and

helpful to you as you consider the motives and intentions that you might have in a persuading situation. In my experience many people feel that if they work on becoming more persuasive in any sort of systematic way that they will become manipulative. These two chapters will help you think that distinction through for yourself.

The chapter on the persuasion formula. By the time you get to this chapter none of the components of his formula will surprise you, but a formula is always a helpful way to summarize things in our head (no, I’m not going to tell you what it is).

If you are drawn at all to the topic of persuasion, I highly recommend reading this book. It is well written, easy to read, and my copy already has marks and comments throughout – a good sign that it will be a well used part of my library for a long time to come.

CTRL-click on the book graphic or the link to go to Amazon.com to read more and/or purchase this book.



Resource Recommendation #3

The Radical Edge

by Steve Farber

Recommendation originally published April 17, 2006



Steve Farber has done it again!

Last year I recommended his first business fable – [The Radical Leap](#) – and as much as I liked that, I believe I like [The Radical Edge](#) better.

Farber weaves another nice story around his key ideas for Stoking your Business, Amping your Life, and Changing the World.

One of the reasons that this book resonates with me is that the techniques he teaches are great for us as humans trying to reach our po-

tential, as well as being valuable to us as leaders.

In other words you don't have to be a leader to love and benefit from this book!

If you've read *The Radical Leap*, he expands on some of the characters and references that story in this new one, but you certainly won't be in the dark in any way by reading this one first.

This book will give you specific things you can do to improve your business results, generate new ideas and give you a true Edge.

At the same time the time will fly by as you read the well written story covering a short 160 pages.

CTRL-click on the book graphic or the links to go to Amazon.com to read more and/or purchase these books.

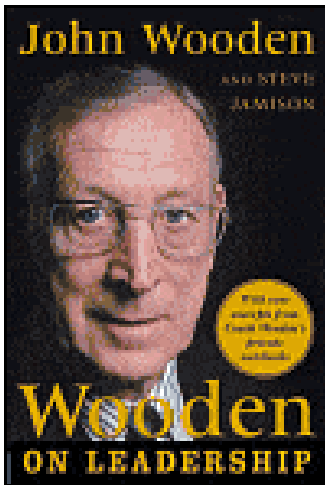


Resource Recommendation #4

Wooden on Leadership

by John Wooden and Steve Jamison

Recommendation originally published July 3, 2006



If you know me at all, you know this book has a lot going for it before I even open it.

Coach John Wooden is a legendary basketball coach. Though he hasn't coached in more than thirty years, his teams

still hold many records – some that will likely never be broken – like winning 88 straight games and ten national championships (in 12 years).

I love basketball and Coach Wooden graduated from Purdue University, my alma mater. So a book with that pedigree has a good chance to be one I would love before I read the first word.

This is [a fine book](#).

You will find references and mentions of basketball throughout, but this isn't a basketball book. This is a well thought out book on leadership. You won't find fancy graphics or diagrams, but you will find snippets of Wooden's journal – hand or type written - sprinkled throughout.

If you want to read a book by a leader about leadership, read this book. It won't include the latest leadership theories – rather it might seem a bit old fashioned and simplistic at times. Don't let that fool you. This is the best leadership book I've read so far this year.

If you are a student of leadership and a basketball fan, this is a must read. But don't be deterred by the basketball connection if that isn't your thing. What made coach Wooden so successful wasn't about basketball, it was about his philosophies and approaches to life.

CTRL-click on the book graphic or the link to go to Amazon.com to read more and/or purchase this book.

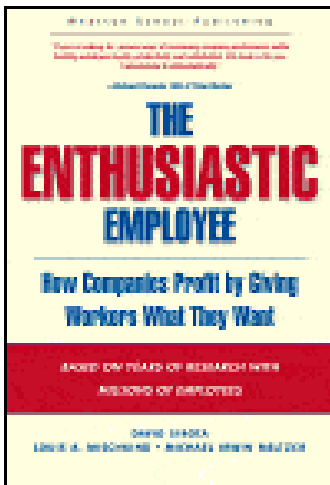


Resource Recommendation #5

The Enthusiastic Employee: How Companies Profit by Giving Employees What They Want

by David Sirota, Louis A. Mischkind and Michael Irwin Meltzer

Recommendation originally published September 18, 2006



I don't know any manager or leader who wouldn't want enthusiastic employees, do you?

[This book](#) takes that desirable, yet vague descriptor and applies vast research over the last twenty years to help describe exactly what organizations can do to create a workplace where people want to be.

The book outlines three foundational points – things that all employees want: equity, achievement and camaraderie.

If you are “data person” you will love this book because the authors back up each of their points with interesting and relevant empirical data as well as anecdotes. The book also takes a very clear line that organizations that do the things they suggest will benefit from enthusiastic employees, but also with lower turnover, reduced costs, greater production, better quality and higher profits.

If you aren't as interested in all of the research details, the book may be a bit slow for you at times, but it is still recommended, because the messages are so clear and valuable.

CTRL-click on the book graphic or the link to go to Amazon.com to read more and/or purchase this book.

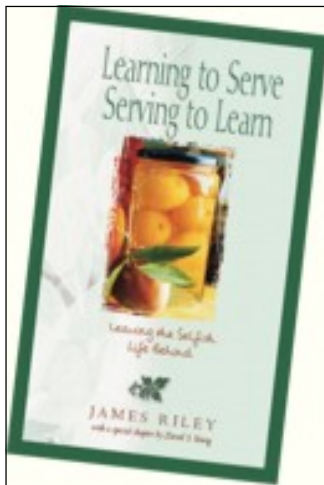


Resource Recommendation #6

Learning to Serve, Serving to Learn

by James Riley

Recommendation originally published October 9, 2006



I'm again pleased to be recommending a book that isn't on the best seller list and isn't a book you would likely run across.

One of the things I hope to do each week is help you find good stuff – especially the good stuff

that flies under the proverbial radar!

This is a book you might not have found without a recommendation, but you will be glad you did.

Reading [Learning to Serve](#) is like sitting down with a very wise person, talking about personal and important things. Riley explores the concepts of leadership, service and learning in a very intimate and compelling way. We meet people in his life through the use of stories – sto-

ries that are well crafted to help him make his points.

He also talks about mistakes that he has made, and how they relate to his thesis that to be an effective servant leader (and to be a continuous learner), we must become less self-centered.

Riley shares one particularly painful and poignant story (I won't ruin it by telling you the details) that we all can relate to, but examines motives in a way that I'll never forget. When you can say that about any piece of writing, whatever the medium, it is something to recommend.

Buy this book and you'll be the first one on your block to own one. Then curl up on a fall Saturday afternoon and read its roughly 100 pages. If you do this, I'll bet you won't long be the only person you know with a copy – because you'll be recommending it to others as well.

CTRL-click on the book graphic or the link to go to Amazon.com to read more and/or purchase this book.



Resource Recommendation #7

The EQ Edge: Emotional Intelligence and Your Success

by Steven J. Stein, PhD, and Howard E. Book, M.D.

Recommendation originally published December 18, 2006



It is hard for me to believe that Daniel Goleman's famous book [Emotional Intelligence](#) was published more than ten years ago. Whether you have read the book or not (and it's worth reading if you haven't), if you are aware of the

term Emotional Intelligence, you can thank that book.

The book I [recommend here](#) has the advantage of being published (and now updated in a second edition) several years after the other book exploded on to the scene. These authors have done long term research into EQ and how it is applied in our lives.

The book starts with a background and history of EQ research and quickly moves into each of

the EQ components, breaking them down very effectively. Readers will leave with a clear understanding of emotional intelligence.

I like this book because it shares stories as examples of the concepts it describes. More importantly though, the chapter on each EQ skill helps you recognize the skill in different situations and gives you specific action steps for improving that skill for yourself and/or to help others as well.

If you have heard of EQ and never learned much about it, this could be your first book on the subject. If you have read about it in the past but would like a refresher, I'd definitely pick this one up. And if you are a coach, trainer or leader, the ideas contained will be helpful to you beyond the value to you as an individual.

CTRL-click on the book graphic or the links to go to Amazon.com to read more and/or purchase these books.



How We Can Help

Additional Resources to Unleash Your Potential from The Kevin Eikenberry Group

The Remarkable Leadership Learning System is an on-going leadership development system designed around the realities of work and life. As a member, you participate in monthly hour-long tele-seminars and guest conversations that focus on one specific area of being a remarkable leader each month. You also receive exclusive learning tools designed to help you incorporate this learning system into your routine rather than having to find time in your already busy calendar to develop your leadership skills. Remarkable is possible; it just takes a little practice. Learn more about this program at: Remarkable-Leadership.com. You're already a leader, why not be remarkable!

Unleash Your Potential is a weekly newsletter that provides ideas, tools and techniques to help people develop their professional and leadership skills. Learn more and sign up today at: www.KevinEikenberry.com/uypw/. All new subscribers also receive a free special report help you Unleash Your Potential right away!

Other tools, resources and learning opportunities on leadership and other topics are available from Kevin and his team at: www.kevineikenberry.com/products. You can learn in whatever format fits you best: daily emails, recordings, books, tele-seminars and much more are available anytime you are.

Kevin Eikenberry is the Chief Potential Officer of [The Kevin Eikenberry Group](http://TheKevinEikenberryGroup.com), a learning consulting company. Kevin believes learning is the underlying competency for all leaders and that when we are learning we are getting closer to reaching our potential. Kevin's students and clients consistently rave about his effectiveness, many calling him "*the best trainer I've ever experienced.*"



Contact us today to learn more or discuss how we can help you and/or your organization succeed at higher levels than ever before.