

EN GAGE MENT

HOW GREAT LEADERS **IGNITE**
A-GAME PERFORMANCE

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DEDICATION

*This book is dedicated to my wife,
Marilyn, and to our children, Amy
and Scott. They are and always have
been my reason.*

PREFACE

What If...?

What if you could . . .

1. Get more of what you want and less of what you don't want?
2. Live your fully empowered life—*all* of it?
3. Make a positive difference in the lives of others?

The first and third points are self-explanatory. But that second “what if”—well, that deserves a little explanation.

In the game of life, there are times when people—perhaps most people—sit in the stands watching it happen. It is “life as a spectator sport” and I don't recommend doing that.

I invite you to get onto the field of play for the entire game of your life. That is where everything takes place—life never happens anywhere else. *It is also where your greatest leadership effectiveness lies and where and how you can most powerfully influence others to deliver their full engagement — their greatest followership.*

This book is for you if . . .

- You have the simple yet powerful clarity to be a lifelong learner.
- You have found yourself in a position of leadership but your formal education somehow omitted guidance for success in that job.
- You believe you could get more of what you want and less of what you don't want, if only someone will hold a lantern to light the path.

This lantern is for you.

Jack Altschuler
Founder, Fully Alive Leadership
2015

*There are wide margins throughout **ENGAGEMENT** for your ease in making notes as you read, as well as lined note pages at the back of the book. Use page 163 to list the specific actions you will take to get more of what you want and less of what you don't want.*

CHAPTER 1

Leadership Clarity from West Point

“Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it.”

GENERAL DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER
WORLD WAR II SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER
WEST POINT, CLASS OF 1915

The Hudson River Valley in upstate New York is stunning in its beauty. Its rolling and often steep hills are heavily wooded. Even with modern towns nearby with paved roads, beautiful houses, and satellite radio, the area retains a primal majesty of strong shoulders and of timelessness, hinting that Chingachgook, the last of the Mohicans, may be just around the next bend.

In this setting is found the United States Military Academy at West Point. Its spacious

and stately grounds contrast dramatically to the thick forests all around, yet somehow the Academy seems to fit there.

Every autumn, a fresh group of 18-year-old high school graduates arrives to start their new path as West Point cadets. Each cadet comes with a notable pedigree, having excelled in high school academics and sports. They all bring glowing testimonials from people who declare the quality of their character, as well as letters of recommendation from their congressmen. These are, indeed, high-performing individuals, the cream of the crop.

These cadets will be pushed for four years to be the very best they can be, to excel in academics and sports and to learn things they didn't even know existed before becoming cadets. They arrive knowing they will receive a first-class college education, yet that is not the primary reason they are there.

West Point exists for exactly one purpose: To produce new leaders for the United States Army. That is why that first-class college education, as deeply important as it is, remains secondary for these cadets.

There is a tradition of leadership in the Army that traces itself all the way back to General George Washington. No army can succeed without great leadership, and understanding leadership is both scientific and artful. That is why great leadership is defined in so many different ways.

Many charts have been designed to help understand leadership and to clarify its difference from management. They tell us that leaders do “this” while managers do “that,” all expressed in neat columns and starkly differentiated terminology. As well-meaning as the creators of such charts may be, they typically leave their readers with a sense of confusion and no clarity to help them on Monday morning.

The charge issued to the men and women who instruct cadets at West Point and who forge the Army’s new leaders-to-be is to produce “Leaders of Character.”¹ In pursuit of that they have done a much better job than most of defining what makes a great leader. Instead of multiple columns and lots of confusing terminology, they have boiled it down to just four words.

BILL’S OFFICE

I learned about that in (let’s call him) Bill’s office one day as we met for his monthly coaching session. In my mind’s eye, I can still see him explaining the performance of his sales team, about how they had responded so enthusiastically and successfully to his leadership. The starkly clear comment he made stunned me and became instantly memorable. I immediately raised my hands in a “time out” gesture and said, “Whoa. What did you just say?”

This West Point graduate said to me what he and the thousands of military academy students are told repeatedly. It is a fundamental law of leadership

about which they are exquisitely clear at our military academies and it is a leadership mantra. I have adopted it as *Engagement Practice #1*:

ENGAGEMENT Practice #1

Manage Things; Lead People

These cadets are taught to manage things (policies, procedures, task performance, etc.) but to never manage people. The common term is “micromanage” and people don’t like being micromanaged.

Yes, the United States Army has a long tradition of being authoritarian. Anecdotes depicting brainless leadership are legion. But that was then, and this is now.

The people who train our new generation of leaders for the Army have figured out that soldiers are human beings. They understand that micromanaging them is likely to produce both sub-optimal effort and sub-optimal results. That is why those being trained as new leaders for the United States Army are taught to manage things and to lead people.

The Army trains that way because that produces the best results—hard, pragmatic results created by drawing out the best people have to give.

If that authoritarian institution—the United States Army—has figured this out, surely others, including those in the business world can understand that, too.

THE MANAGING PART

In my *Engagement* keynotes, I often ask for a volunteer, specifically someone who has been micromanaged at any time. Then I ask, “How did you like being micromanaged?” The response is usually “I HATED it!” Regardless of the specific words they choose, their responses are always laced with passion. That is because they felt controlled and manipulated, sometimes even humiliated, when they were micromanaged. Their sense of being in charge of themselves was assaulted daily and they were frustrated, even dispirited.

That is how we humans typically respond to being managed or micromanaged. Most of us extricate ourselves from that decidedly unpleasant situation as fast as we can. Those who don’t move on often simply disengage and become poor performers.

Perhaps you were micromanaged at some time. If so, then you probably didn’t care for it any more than my keynote and workshop attendees do. It is likely you “HATED it!” too. As a result, you didn’t give your best effort to your tasks. That made things worse, both for you and for your leaders.

It is a simple extrapolation, then, that if you didn't like being micromanaged and if you responded with less than your best, it is highly likely that those who look to you for leadership will respond in a similar fashion if they are micromanaged. So if you want to get more of what you want and less of what you don't want, don't micromanage your people. Instead, be a great leader for them.

Noted researcher and author Daniel Pink, author of *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, tells us, "Traditional notions of management are great if you want compliance. But if you want engagement, self-direction works better."² Even more simply stated, Pink tells us, "Control leads to compliance; autonomy leads to engagement."³ And no leader thinks effort limited to compliance is acceptable.

To be sure, the role of managing is critically important and, therefore, so is the role of managers. They create structure and, without that structure, we would have chaos. So, this is not meant to disparage managers or management. Rather, it is to clarify what goes where.

THE LEADING PART

The second part of *Engagement Practice #1* is to lead people. If you ever had a great leader in any venue of your life, it is a near-certainty that person did not micromanage you. You probably felt a special connection to that person, and had

the sense that he or she saw you clearly and perhaps even cared about you. Furthermore, you undoubtedly loved being a follower of that great leader and you gave your best. You may have been inspired to do things you didn't even imagine you were capable of doing.

And so it is for those who look to you for leadership. Your success is directly tied to your people giving their best, their full engagement. And to get their engagement—their commitment—requires you to be a great leader for them.

Richard Hadden of Contented Cows Partners, LLC and coauthor of *Contented Cows Still Give Better Milk*, offers a most useful definition of leadership. He tells us that leadership is “The earned commitment of followers.”⁴ Nobody follows you and gives their commitment because you're a nice guy or because you're smart or good-looking. There are other very human reasons why people commit to you, and you have to earn their commitment every day. That is what great leaders do and that is what inspiring employee engagement is all about, because that is what produces the very best results.

To make the *Engagement Practice #1* distinction a bit sharper, consider that most people like to be in control. Indeed, when we feel out of control, we humans become profoundly uncomfortable. Yet as Daniel Pink cautions, getting the best results, creating engagement, “...requires resisting the temptation to control people...”⁵ So, the trick for

you is to refrain from extending your wanting to be in control to attempting to control the people who look to you for leadership. That is because the more you try to control, the less influence you will have. Go ahead and underline that last sentence; it is that important.

Thus, the first Practice—and the continuing focus of *Engagement*—is to always Manage Things and to Lead People.