



# NEVER SETTLE

Leading with a **Daring Vision, Plan** and **Winning Mindset**

ARON MARQUEZ

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## CHAPTER ONE

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# INTRODUCTION TO VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

Imagine you've been talked into parachuting for reasons that you can no longer remember, and you're now moments away from leaving a perfectly good airplane in midair. You're sitting on the floor of the plane, decked out with a parachute, a reserve chute, and a helmet. Your parachute straps are incredibly uncomfortable. In fact, the straps around your upper thighs are rubbing so hard that you're starting to wonder if you should loosen them, but that small part of your mind that isn't screaming, "You aren't going to do this, are you?" tells you that it would probably be a bad idea to loosen anything attached to your parachute.

Someone opens the plane door and a rush of air hits you in the face like a bucket of ice water. You look outside, and all you see is wide-open blue sky. Then, like an executioner coming to open a cell door for the final time, the jump instructor crawls over to you. He's smiling as he starts tugging and shaking your chute, harness, and helmet. It's all you can do not to fall over. When he stops shaking, you take a quick look. Fortunately, nothing appears to have come loose

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but the fact that parachuting isn't something you're going to do, it's something you're about to do *right now* hits home. You're seriously considering telling the instructor that you've changed your mind but when you open your mouth, nothing comes out. The instructor leans over and yells in your ear as he connects your static line, "You're good; enjoy the ride!" He then positions you in the door—some might say forcibly shoves—before he shouts, "Go!" and gives you a not-so-gentle push.

You're falling and even though your eyes are truly wide open, you can't see anything beyond a blue blur. The wind is howling in your ears—or is that you screaming? Suddenly there's a tug on your harness and everything slows down. You look up. Mercifully, your chute is open and you're gently falling. Everything slows down and you realize you're still alive! Your heart has slowed down to a gentle ninety-nine beats a minute and your blood pressure is now probably low enough that it can be measured. Everything has become peaceful. The view is breathtaking and it's amazingly quiet. All you can hear is the gentle flapping of the edge of your parachute. Wait! Is it supposed to do that? Before you can panic, you see a bird flying below you. That's so cool. This must be what heaven is like. Wouldn't it be cool if you were a bird and could do this anytime you wanted?

Your time in nirvana is interrupted by a voice coming from the earplugs you'd forgotten about. Someone on the ground is telling you that you look good and is reminding you that they'll talk you through the landing. Oh my God, the landing! You try to remember what your instructor said about how to land, but the ground is coming up awfully fast and your mind goes back into overdrive. Wasn't there something about positioning yourself so that you were headed into

the wind? Or was it downwind? Which way is the wind blowing? Where's the landing zone? Boy, the ground's coming up fast!

A calm, confident voice starts giving you instructions. "Turn right until you're headed to the water tower. Okay, straighten up. Turn right again until you're lined up with the flagpole at the end of the landing zone. Hold it. A little left. Hold it. Look straight ahead. Okay, pull both toggles!" Your mind can barely process the commands because of adrenaline overload, but somehow you manage to pull on the toggles. Just as you do, your feet touch the ground and you try to run as you were instructed, but you trip and fall face-forward. Fortunately, the landing zone has nice grass. You know that because you've got some in your mouth, your nose, and one ear. Thankfully, your parachute lands on top of you, so no one can see your sunglasses spread across your face or how much dirt and grass you managed to ingest.

You start to pick yourself up and then you realize, you jumped out of an airplane! It doesn't matter that you didn't exactly nail the landing. Nobody got that on video, did they? No matter, you just did something that most people only dream about and even if they say that only an idiot would jump out of a perfectly good airplane, they still secretly dream about it. You, however, aren't limited to living life through your dreams; instead you're a doer, and for the rest of your life, you'll be able to look back at this accomplishment with a sense of pride.

Starting your own business is a similar experience. It can be scary because it's risky. When you're an employee, there's a certain amount of security. You know you'll get a regular paycheck even if the business had a bad month. You work in an office or building for

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which you didn't have to sign a lease. Your name isn't on a business loan that must be repaid even if the business fails. On the other hand, when you're the owner, nothing's guaranteed. If the business makes money, so do you. If it doesn't, you don't either, but you still have to make payroll. If your business is small and just starting, it's your name on the bank note, the lease, and every credit application. And if your business fails, everyone will look to you for repayment.

There is also the risk of embarrassment. When you're the owner, you're responsible for everything and if you fail—and most start-ups do—there will be no place to hide. The fact that your business failed will be with you forever. However, just as being willing to take the risk to jump out of a plane separates you from the herd, successfully building a business is something that few are even willing to risk trying and so when you pull it off, it's an accomplishment that you can be proud of for the rest of your life.

There's absolutely nothing like successfully building a business. There are the financial rewards that come from assuming the financial risk and it's definitely rewarding to look around at a thriving business and say to yourself, "I built this." However, it's also a way to make a positive difference. People need jobs and most of the jobs in the US are created by small businesses. The day you become an employer will be one of the scariest days of your life because you now have a payroll to make every single pay period, but it will also be one of the most rewarding days of your life.

When you give a person a job, you make a difference in their lives. Their paycheck allows them to provide for their families which, in turn, gives them a better sense of worth and provides a feeling of security for their families. But beyond that, you give an



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individual a chance to grow by learning new skills or handling greater responsibility. For most people, a large part of our identity is associated with our work. Provide an individual with an opportunity to work with good people and for an organization that they can be proud of, and you've improved their self-image.

To start and build a business, or any other type of organization successfully, you must be a leader. My intent with this book is to make you a better leader by showing how to lead with a Vision. This book illustrates visionary leadership in a business setting, and it describes how we at Wildcat Oil Tools took a Vision and used an Implementation Plan and a collective unrelenting Mindset to achieve a business goal. Although I rely primarily on business examples to make my point, this discussion is applicable to any leadership situation, and it's particularly applicable to any personal challenges that you will face as a leader.

Before we go any further, let's consider what, exactly, is visionary leadership and is this a skill that can be learned or developed? Dictionaries tell us that "leadership" is the action of leading a group of people or an organization to accomplish a common goal. Intuitively we know what that definition means, and we have no trouble identifying a leader when we see one in action. However, identifying someone as a good leader before they take over an organization and prove themselves is more difficult. The problem is as old as history itself. If you had been on Pharaoh's court or an Egyptian living in Cairo, would you have recognized Moses as a leader before the Red Sea split?

Leadership is no less important today than it was in Moses's time. Organizations of every type and size are constantly searching for

better leaders. This quest is in large part because we typically attribute an organization's successes to good leadership and its failures to bad. A football team has a good season and we give the coach a raise and a new contract; but if the team struggles, fans scream for change. The same thing happens in the boardroom. A publicly-traded company exceeds Wall Street's earnings expectations and we heap praise on the chief executive officer (CEO) and senior management team; but if the company fails to meet those expectations, shareholders and financial reporters begin grumbling about the CEO. If earnings don't improve, the company hires a new CEO.

Some will debate whether leaders are born or made. I firmly believe they are made. Undoubtedly, some people are born with the skills that predispose them to be good coaches, business leaders, or elected officials. However, if you ask yourself who are the top three to five leaders that you know of, regardless of whether their fields were business, politics, or sports, I'll bet that for each of these individuals, you'll find defining moments that led them to become a leader—such as Moses and the burning bush—and that their leadership skills developed over time.

I'm not alone in believing that leadership skills can be developed. Every year, the US military and multi-national corporations spend millions of dollars training their people to become better leaders. Colleges and universities across the country offer numerous leadership courses. Private groups offer any number of seminars and training programs on leadership skills. I can't believe so many people and organizations would spend that much time, money, and effort on leadership training if it didn't work.

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I'll use the example of Wildcat Oil Tools' growth from a small oilfield service firm with three employees, four pieces of rental equipment, and a humble location into a multi-national energy services company with a long list of products and services to illustrate the concept of leading an organization with a Vision, Plan, and Mindset. You can use our example and the lessons that we learned to improve your organization regardless of its type or field because when a group of people are motivated and equipped to fulfill a Vision, they will accomplish wonders. I also want to enable you to better realize your own potential. You can do that by adopting better personal habits and by putting the power of your mind to work for you. Everyone knows eating better and exercising are good for you, but too few people realize they're not putting their most powerful tool—their minds—to work for them. I'll show you how.