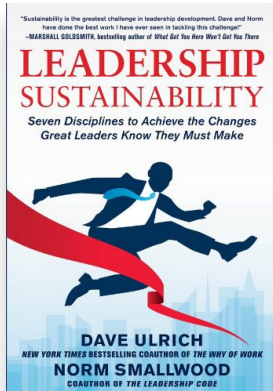


EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

convenenow.com/executive-summaries



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dave Ulrich

Dave Ulrich is a professor at the Ross School of Business, University of Michigan and a partner at The RBL Group.

Norm Smallwood

Norm Smallwood is a cofounder of The RBL Group.

Leadership Sustainability

THE SUMMARY

McGraw Hill Education 2013

Chapter 1: Do Not Walk Home

Over the past 20 years, we have worked to help individuals be better leaders and to build better leadership capability in their organizations. Our work has followed the same process in order to turn ideas into impact. At each step of this journey, we start with a relatively simple question and then scan the latest theory, research, and practice to discover alternative ways to answer the question. Then we use principles of taxonomy, which is the science of finding patterns, to synthesize what we find into a straightforward framework or typology that captures the ideas and enhances their power.

With this taxonomic logic in mind, we believe that the challenges of leadership can be simplistically captured in three phases and questions:

- *Why.* Why does leadership matter?
- *What.* What makes an effective leader?
- *How.* How do leaders sustain their desired improvements?

In the past, we have concentrated on the first two phases. The third phase is the focus of this book. How do leaders sustain their desired improvements? Most, if not all, the leaders we work with know the

Leadership Sustainability

importance of leadership for their organization's success. Most also want to be better leaders, and this leads them to adopt personal improvement goals, to participate in training and development activities, and to invest in the leadership of others in their organization. But we believe that many leaders are at a point of diminishing returns by focusing only on the why and what of leadership. By shifting attention to the how, leaders emphasize finding ways to sustain desired improvements.

None of the initiatives to improve leadership (e.g., training, 360, performance management, and coaching) sufficiently transfer to practice. Well-meaning leadership training, individual development plans, coaching, or 360-degree sessions tend to be energizing events, but the energy dissipates quickly. The action planning done at the end of a leadership improvement exercise is too often an afterthought or simply a bunch of disjointed activities. Today's biggest unmet challenge of leadership is not learning more about what to do, it is learning how to make sure that what is known is done. To meet this challenge, our leadership journey now turns to how to make leadership happen, and to bring focus and discipline to action learning so that leadership aspirations turn into results. We approach this problem the same way we have approached our leadership work about why and what in the past. We began by gleaning lessons from a number of fields that bear on the challenge of leadership sustainability. We have reviewed and synthesized the literature to identify disciplines of sustainable change. These topics come from diverse literatures.

From these various yet related literatures, we have culled seven disciplines that instill leadership sustainability:

- Simplicity
- Time
- Accountability
- Resources
- Tracking
- Melioration
- Emotion

The first letters of these seven disciplines form the mnemonic START ME. We think this is apt because for each of us, sustainability starts with me. These seven disciplines turn hope into reality. Leaders who apply these disciplines go beyond the why and what of leadership to reach the how. Of course, if leaders lack a strong sense of why they should change and what they should change to, leadership sustainability does not matter. But once leaders accept the why of change and understand the what,

Leadership Sustainability

dealing with how will make sure that leadership change happens. These seven disciplines bring order to action planning.

When leaders make commitments to change something in training, coaching, or performance management, the impact increases when participants attend to these seven disciplines as they anticipate how to turn learning into action. When an aspiring leader receives 360-degree feedback, the personal action plan will be more sustainable when it embodies these insights. When an organization's leadership development plan is reviewed, executives increase confidence that leadership investments will have payback when they rigorously apply the seven disciplines. Leaders matter. Leadership matters more. Leadership sustainability matters most.

Chapter 2: Simplicity

Leaders sustain change when they enact the discipline of simplicity in the face of complexity by making strategic assumptions about the future that allow them to take the best course of action today. You can simplify the path forward for yourself and for your organization through three principles of simplicity:

- Focus on what matters most.
- Tell stories.
- Avoid concept clutter.

Focus on what matters most. When you have too much to do, don't try to do it all. It is important to learn how to focus on a few critical ideas. With 10 priorities, 100 units of time, energy, and resources divided equally (10 units to each priority) will be too little to get any of them done. To help leaders sustain their goals, we propose three ways to bring strategic assumptions to life by focusing on what matters most.

First, define the problem. Simplicity arrives when we take the time to accurately define the problems we face. It's seductive to quickly state a problem and then start working on the solution, but as the solution gets complex, we pour on more and more time, money and resources. It is impossible to keep things simple without a clear definition of the problem to be solved.

Second, prioritize. Setting priorities separates the urgent from the important, focuses on actions with high impact and ease of implementation, and emphasizes lead not lag actions. Yet, at the heart of setting priorities is the art of learning to say no to some things and yes to a critical few others. In a world of complexity, leaders have too many things they can change. You don't have to do everything. Instead, the best leaders do a few things really well. By saying no to lower priorities, leaders say yes to the things that are most important and get on the right track toward sustaining relevant changes.

Leadership Sustainability

Finally, filter and frame. When presenting complex information, it's essential to filter the data, identify the critical two or three important ideas, and organize data into patterns. Next, frame a go-forward set of actions that are congruent. When you assemble a big jigsaw puzzle, it's natural to start with the edges because they provide a framework in which the other pieces fit. They simplify a complex activity and allow the picture to take shape. Likewise, when leaders can frame their complex problems by defining boundaries, they are more able to sustain their desired changes. Leaders who see patterns in data constantly look for common themes, messages, or implications. They often draw configurations that capture the patterns. They look for the simple messages.

Tell Stories. Good strategy tells a story that trumps data. Sustainable strategy creates a narrative and puts an individual story into context. If two people present to a group with the intent of persuading the group to do something and one uses data and the other tells a simple, relevant story, the storyteller is almost always more persuasive. People grow up teaching and learning through stories. Stories filter a lot of data because they embed strategic assumptions. They do this because the story conveys what is most important to pay attention to and what happens if the priorities are not considered. Stories make change personal because at their core they teach lessons about people. Stories also do a lot to create a personal desire for change and improvement because they describe a gap between where we are today and where we desire to be in the future. Leaders can sustain change by telling personal stories about who they and who their people could be if they sustain the change. As separate stories weave around common themes, they create a sustainable narrative.

Avoid Concept Clutter. Concept clutter is all around us. When you feed the words leader and leadership into Google, you get 1.2 billion hits. That's concept clutter. Concept clutter builds up about a lot of other things too. Most of your employees face multiple mixed messages about what's important for them to do every day. One tool that stands above others to reduce clutter is the one-page memo. Each one-page memo has five parts:

- *The idea.* A one-sentence proposal about what is desired.
- *Background.* What conditions have led you to this recommendation? This is the basis for discussion, so it must be non-debatable facts.
- *How it works.* The details: What, who, when, where, and how?
- *Benefits.* The why of the idea. There are typically three benefits. First, the recommended action is tied to the business strategy. This demonstrates that you are doing the right thing. Second, it's already proven in a test market or in another business unit. Last, it is profitable. The second and third benefits demonstrate that you are doing things the right way in that you're effective (proven to work) and efficient (profitable).

Leadership Sustainability

- Next steps. Who has to do what and by when?

Anyone who has been through it will tell you that it takes more work to write a one-page memo than it does to write a 10-page memo. A 10-page white paper often obfuscates, whereas a one-page memo simplifies and clarifies. Eliminating clutter is a key discipline for ensuring simplicity by getting to the essence.

If you want to ensure simplicity, we challenge you to pilot one-page memos in your organization. Be the first in your area to introduce the one-page memo to reduce concept clutter. Tell others about your intent to reduce complexity. Find an initiative or a situation that is inherently complex, and describe your approach to your memo in the five steps given earlier. Then get the process started. The process of asking for less clutter and more focus on the priorities directs your behavior and the behavior of others toward sustainability.

Chapter 3: Time

How we invest and spend our time defines who we are, what we believe, and who matters most to us. Malcolm Gladwell proposed that a key to outstanding success in any given field is 10,000 hours of experience and practice. The typical Olympic hopeful will train for about four hours a day for at least 310 days a year for six years before making the national team. Likewise, a leader who really means to get outstanding results must invest time on the things that matter most and not be sidetracked by peripherals. We suggest seven principles on how sustainable leaders consciously master time.

Take a regular calendar test. To develop awareness of how you spend your time, begin by articulating your priorities. Then look back through your calendar to see how much time you spent on those priorities. This is often done with the following steps:

- Step 1: Define success. I will be effective as a leader when I...
- Step 2: Audit the calendar. In the last 90 days, how much time did I devote to the desired behaviors?
- Step 3: Turn intent into action. What behaviors will I see more of and less of as I accomplish my definition of success?

See yourself as others see you. Leadership is accomplished only with and through others. When leaders see how their use of time affects others, they are more able to gain commitment. Observing yourself as a leader increases sustainability because leaders do not do everything alone. They must build a cohort of committed colleagues who support a shared agenda.

Recognize routines. Leaders have routines, or things they do without thinking. Once these routines are identified through the calendar test, they can be adapted. We suggest eight steps in diagnosing and adapting leadership routines:

Leadership Sustainability

- Step 1: Look at your calendar; and identify the routines that you have. We suggest that you focus on two to four routines that you may want to change.
- Step 2: Name each routine. By naming a routine, you give it a label that allows you to talk about, examine, and possibly change it.
- Step 3: Figure out where each routine came from. By knowing when and why you started a pattern, you can see if the conditions for it have changed or not.
- Step 4: Rate the relevance of the routine for your leadership goals. This overall assessment lets you determine if you want to continue or change the routine.
- Steps 5 and 6: Examine the pros and the cons of the routine. The ratio of pro (step 5) to con (step 6) should be about 3:1. That is, you should have at least three reasons to do the routine for every one reason not to do it, or the routine should be further examined and possibly changed.
- Step 7: Name a new routine to replace each of the original routines that you've judged ineffective. Again, by naming a new routine, you will make it easier to talk about and more likely to be changed.
- Step 8: Outline the first steps at implementing each new routine.

See triggers. In business, triggers show up in predictive analytics, where leaders look for leading indicators of future opportunities. For example, if customer commitment is the goal, a leading indicator is the commitment of employees who interact with customers. A leading indicator of employee commitment is the relationship employees have with their immediate bosses. A leading indicator of boss-employee relationships is the boss's set of leadership skills and personal insight. This logic creates a line of sight between leadership competencies ("be, know, and do") and customer commitment.

At a personal level, sustaining new habits requires the same exploration of underlying causes. For those working to lose weight, to keep their temper, or to avoid procrastination, it is helpful to explore the underlying causes of weight gain, anger, and dithering. Psychologists often probe these underlying causes by asking, "What does this behavior do for you?"

Persistence in ill-conceived behavior generally involves some sort of reward. Unhealthy eating can help to overcome a sense of loneliness, loss of temper with some people can help to avoid conflict with others, and procrastination can be an excuse for an inability to deliver high-quality products. To change a routine often requires honest reflection of what causes the pattern.

Leadership Sustainability

Start small, and build to a tipping point. To build sustainable change, effective leaders start with small and simple changes that show up on their forward-looking calendar. When we work with leaders, we brainstorm 8 to 10 things they could do to help reach their desired outcome. We then ask them to prioritize the first two or three based on two questions: Which of these actions are most (1) Easy for you to implement and (2) Likely to have a big payback?

Manage signals and symbols. Leaders sustain change by paying attention to the signals and symbols of their actions. Leadership symbols shape how the public responds to the leader, for good or ill. When Tony Hayward, the CEO of BP, arrived at the site of the Gulf of Mexico oil leak disaster, he walked on the beach wearing formal clothes and said, "There's no one who wants this over more than I do. I would like my life back." By making the disaster about himself, and by looking like a stiff business executive, he signaled his insensitivity to the enormity of the disaster and its impact on others. Leadership symbolism is not just about the leader's time but also about where the message is delivered, how it is delivered, and what the leader communicates through looks and actions.

Be consistent. Consistency is the ultimate time challenge. Often behavior changes are events, not patterns. We do something for a short period, but it does not endure. We encourage the leaders we coach to pick a behavior they want to improve and then turn the desired behavior into actions that show up in their calendar. Many leaders treat these actions as experiments, not commitments. Commitments require consistency and endurance with the new behavior until it becomes a new routine. Our colleague Steve Kerr suggests that in many training programs leaders learn new ideas and even practice behaviors related to those ideas. But he calls this "an unnatural act (a new behavior) in an unnatural place (a training or coaching session)." Sustainability does not occur until the new behavior becomes a natural act (a routine or pattern) in a natural place (the work setting).

It is hard to resist the tendency to see yourself as others see you, so efforts to change the way others see you pay off in improved sustainability. When leaders consistently behave as if they are committed, they will be committed.

Chapter 4: Accountability

Accountability leads to trust. Trust leads to improved relationships. Improved relationships on the job lead to more referrals and better collaboration. More referrals and better collaboration lead to sustained performance. Accountability must occur in both thought and action so leaders must keep their word and do what they say they will do.

Leaders also increase individual accountability throughout the workforce by finding ways to motivate and engage employees. At the organization level, accountability increases when leaders create systems and practices that focus, drive, and reinforce employee behaviors and organization actions. People expect leaders to be accountable and to at least have the intent of making correct choices. When that doesn't happen, stakeholders feel violated. It's a scam when someone who

Leadership Sustainability

should be accountable is not. Any leader who expects sustainable results must ensure personal and organizational accountability.

A tool that helps us to take personal responsibility is to use “I” statements and “we” statements at the right time and under the right circumstances. When you are about to blame someone else, turn the blame statement into an I statement. When you are about to take credit for something, use a we statement. When you become aware of the subtle differences between these two types of statements, you may notice that you have used one at the wrong time. We blame instead of taking personal responsibility, and we take credit instead of sharing credit.

Leaders who take personal responsibility use “I” statements and “we” statements in ways that garner support for what is being done. With practice, they get better at using the right statement at the right time by focusing on results and sustainability rather than taking credit or assigning blame. A leader who takes personal responsibility is easier to be around, and others want to help. If you really want to hold yourself accountable, tell people what you intend. Go public. When leaders go public with their goals, they are more likely to stick with them. One leader told us that when he announced goals, he always tried to avoid providing a lifeboat that would allow him to renege on his commitment.

Sustainable commitment increases when you go public to someone you trust and respect. For years, at workshops we would have participants prepare an action plan of what they would do and then share it with someone in the room, often a stranger. Now we ask participants to synthesize what they have learned and what they will do and send a text or e-mail to someone they know at work or home who will follow up with them. These unexpected texts or e-mails inevitably will create a subsequent conversation that helps the participant to go public with his or her desired improvements.

By using technology in the classroom, we have helped leaders to go public with their commitments. In one company, we asked the senior leaders in a workshop to plan a one-hour staff meeting the morning of the last day of the workshop. On that morning, we had each of the participants in the workshop do a phone conference with his or her staff to share what the participant had learned and how it might affect his or her work going forward. Again, the principle is that when leaders go public with a commitment, it is more likely to be sustained.

Sustainability also comes when others are accountable. By holding others accountable, leaders also become more personally accountable for sustaining their desired changes through four phases. (1) Set clear objectives (2) Identify measures (3) Ensure consequences and (4) Provide ongoing feedback and follow up. Leaders who use these four phases sequentially ensure accountability in both themselves and others. Sometimes leaders make mistakes by skipping one of the phases. For example, some leaders try to build creative incentives (in the consequences phase) without having clear measures. If it is unclear what is expected, it is difficult to enforce consequences. Likewise, it is difficult to have measures without objectives.

Leadership Sustainability

Chapter 5: Resources

Leaders who know why and what they should change are more likely to accomplish their desires when they have the support of those around them. Ultimately, leadership is a team, not an individual activity. Isolated actions are more difficult to sustain because they lack support. Thus the most important resources for leaders to access are human resources, both for themselves and for their organizations. It turns out that when desired behaviors are reinforced by personal coaching and institutionalized in human resources (HR) practices, they are much more likely to be sustained.

Within organizations, unified action continues to outpace individual effort, but the effect is strongest when the organization is set up to promote collective work. Coaching and leveraging human resources are critical ways to sustain desired leadership change. Our experience shows that the transfer of learning from a training program or 360-degree feedback process increases dramatically when supported by coaching. We have found that when a company invests money in a multiday leadership training program, about 20 to 30 percent of what is learned is applied. This impact doubles with personal coaching.

Coaching sustains change because it personalizes and reinforces a leader's intent for the future. To use coaching to sustain change, leaders should answer four questions: (1) What outcomes should I expect from coaching? (2) Who can I work with as my coach? (3) What should I do to receive good coaching? (4) What skills should I expect from my coach? When leaders work with coaches to be clear on their desired outcomes, the changes that they desire are more likely to be sustained because the role of the coach can be defined and tracked. Coaching is a resource to sustain change.

We have identified five coaching archetypes. Each archetype represents an individual a leader can turn to for coaching that sustains change.

- Self-coaching. Leaders coach themselves by being self-aware of their behaviors and desired performance.
- Peer coaching (internal). Leaders find allies or friends inside their organizations who can advise and guide them.
- Peer coaching (external). Leaders join networks of like-minded professionals outside their organizations for mutual help.
- Boss coaching. A leader's direct supervisor coaches behavior and guides changes in results.
- Expert coaching. A leader hires a professional coach who has credentials and experience to inform behavior and improve results.

We find this typology enormously helpful when we advise leaders on how to sustain changes by

Leadership Sustainability

selecting the type of coach that works best for them. Each coaching archetype has strengths and weaknesses. These coaching types are not mutually exclusive; they can work in tandem to achieve desired outcomes.

Two broad issues are relevant to using coaching as a source of sustainability. First, consider who can and should be most open to coaching is a vehicle for sustainability. Second, consider whether the individual being coached is serious about long-term change. Every good coach has walked away from an engagement because the commitment of the individual was not adequate for the change required.

Not all individuals will ever be fully prepared for coaching, but they should be aware that it is more than casual conversation and dialogue. It is serious and hard work to reflect, to define behaviors, to identify required behavior changes, and to sustain those changes. It requires a candor and openness that many hard-shelled executives don't want to admit or face.

Many organization policies that sustain change are found in HR practices. We have chosen to talk about the work of HR as a set of HR practices because a practice is something that is continually being learned (we practice a musical instrument or a sport). A practice is also an activity within a profession (the practice of law). We have summarized HR practices into four flows, each of which can be used to sustain change.

- *Flow of people.* What happens to the organization's people—including how people move in, through, up, and out of the organization.
- *Flow of performance management.* What links people to work—the standards and measures, financial and nonfinancial rewards, and feedback that reflect stakeholder interests.
- *Flow of information.* What links people to knowledge—what they need to know to do their work and how they get the requisite information. Information can flow up, down, or laterally. It can flow from the outside in or from the inside out.
- *Flow of work.* What links tasks to people, which means asking who does the work, how the work is done, where the work is done, and how the work is supported through business and operating processes to combine individual efforts into organizational outputs.

When these HR practices are used to reinforce new leadership behaviors, leaders are more likely to sustain them over time. The simple principle is to make sure that HR practices reinforce the desired behaviors.

Leaders acting alone, even with great desire and good intentions, are unlikely to sustain their desired changes. When they receive support from all types of coaches who are clear about outcomes and processes, and when their desired behaviors are woven into the flow of people, performance, information, and work, they will find themselves able to sustain change.

Leadership Sustainability

Chapter 6: Tracking

You really do get what you inspect and not what you expect. People really do what they are rewarded for, so it is pointless to hope for one thing while rewarding another. These axioms apply to sustaining both personal and organizational change.

To sustain organizational change, it is necessary to track organization processes and their outcomes and see if they lead to desired outcomes. In personal and organization settings, tracking data has moved from information (e.g., data bases that report stand-alone metrics) to analysis (e.g., summaries and trends) to insight and prediction (e.g., discovery of what might happen next). For personal change, leaders must measure their behavior and its results. Without solid metrics that specify what should be happening in terms that can be counted and tracked, your aspirations for the organization you wish to lead or the leader you wish to be are just something that would be nice to have but is not likely to become a reality.

While most leaders would agree that data improves decision making, there are some common mistakes made in using data to drive sustainable improvements, including:

- Building scorecards or reports more than predictive analytics
- Using too much or too little data
- Relying on historical data for future trends
- Isolating performance data from rewards
- Collecting data without first specifying decisions that need to be made

For leaders to sustain the right changes, they need to move up an analytics hierarchy from information and reports (What happened?) to analysis and alerts (What actions are needed?) to insights and predictions (What will happen next?). To move up this hierarchy, leaders need information about what will happen combined with insight about what could happen. Moving up this decision hierarchy requires metrics that track sustainable change through four principles:

- Move from general objectives to specific measures.
- Measure what's important rather than what's easy to measure.
- Ensure that metrics are transparent and timely.
- Tie metrics to consequences.

Leadership Sustainability

Leaders can use an array of nonfinancial rewards as positive and negative consequences for employees who meet or miss standards. Allie Kohn, who claims that financial rewards don't work, encourages leaders to use choice (i.e., give employees choices about what they do and how to do it), collaboration (i.e., create teams to have a positive social setting), and content (i.e., give employees autonomy, feedback, tie work to goals and values of firm, create work that is significant, and give employees the ability to develop new skills).

Consequences work. People generally do not act randomly; they act because a positive consequence reinforced the behavior or a negative consequence deterred the behavior. As leaders become clear about strategy and measures, they can creatively craft financial and nonfinancial rewards that change behavior and sustain the resulting patterns.

Chapter 7: Melioration

For the sixth discipline we found in our taxonomic research, we have chosen an unfamiliar term with a familiar message. Melioration comes from the Latin *meliорatus*, meaning "improved" or "strengthened." For leaders to sustain desired changes, they have to meliorate, or improve, build on strengths, and learn.

When we have been asked to describe this process, we use the example of two groups wanting to cross a river. The first group (call them planners) doesn't take the first step until it has specified its precise destination on the other bank and has identified each rock group members will step on to reach the destination. The second group (call them pioneers) looks across the river to a direction (not destination) and finds the first few rocks its members will step on and get started. The group has a gap between the rocks it sees that its members can step on and the other side, but it moves ahead anyway, confident that it will discover what it needs along the way.

Leaders who sustain change do the same. They often do not know exactly what the precise end state will be, but once they have enough clarity of direction, they can take the first steps and then meliorate, that is, improve, learn, and get better along the way. In the leadership field, this is often called learning agility. Learning agility has been seen as one of the single biggest personal predictors of leadership success. Those with learning agility think quickly, take the initiative, ask questions, make fresh connections, think broadly, and know their personal strengths and weaknesses. Melioration, in our terms, makes these skills an essential part of leadership sustainability because leaders who sustain change are constantly changing the rules of change. They are improving, getting stronger, and learning through four key pioneering principles:

Experimentation. Experimenting leaders challenge themselves and others to try new and different ways of doing things, to learn from them, and to make them stick. They also run lots of pilot tests with the axioms:

Leadership Sustainability

- Think big. By thinking big, leaders want to get the largest upside possible. What is the potential of what I want to get done?
- Test small. By testing small, leaders run pilots rather than taking big risks. Where can we test this potential with the smallest risk?
- Fail fast. By failing fast, leaders learn how the idea, product, or initiative might or might not meet its potential. What are the criteria for success, and how do we encourage success and learn from failure?
- Learn always. By constantly staying open to learning, leaders have a mind-set of continuous improvement with both successes and failures. What worked and did not work, and how can we learn from it?

Self-reflection. Leaders who practice self-reflection constantly observe themselves and want to improve how they come across. They ask themselves some of the following questions to help them see how they are doing:

- What insights have I gained about myself from what just took place (in that meeting, conversation, presentation)?
- Could I have misinterpreted some insights about myself? Do I need to test my insights?
- Have I discovered a specific attitude or behavior problem that leads me to be less effective than I want to be?
- When I try something new and succeed, why has my new approach been more effective than my traditional one?
- Am I consistently able to apply what I've learned when similar situations occur?

Through self-reflection, leaders can become aware of themselves and how they come across to others.

Improvisation. Improvisation is not the right solution in every circumstance. For example, you don't want your heart surgeon to start improvising when preparing for surgery. On the other hand, you do want your heart surgeon to be able to improvise if something goes wrong during the operation.

Resilience. Leaders who sustain change through resilience recognize that change is not a linear process from point A to point B. As is crossing an uncharted river, resilience requires taking risks and experimenting, reflecting on what does and does not work, improvising, and ultimately being resilient enough to continue. This cyclic process of sustained change means that each iteration

Leadership Sustainability

improves on the preceding one and that the learning, or melioration, becomes a discovery process that cannot readily be put into a spreadsheet. In French, the word for resilience is rebounder, or “to bounce back.” Resilient leaders bounce back when things go wrong rather than becoming discouraged and giving up.

Effective leaders are pioneers who seek a direction, not a destination, and move forward with values to reach the direction. Like jazz improvisers who make beautiful music, leadership pioneers start with a simple idea and experiment with it to make it work. In Roman mythology, Sisyphus was punished by being required to roll a boulder up a hill, only to have it roll down again. His endless and unavailing trial was to labor without making progress. Had he known the discipline of melioration, he might have experimented more, been more self-reflective about what was and was not working, improvised ways to find alternative solutions, and been resilient enough to keep trying. Some leaders have enormous mountains to mount, be they customer expectations, employee commitment, financial results, or personal change. If these leaders can act like pioneers who improve, get stronger each iteration, and continually learn, they meliorate. By so doing, they sustain their desired changes in themselves and their organizations.

Chapter 8: Emotion

Many people are leery of emotion and inclined to act as though life would be better if only they and those around them could act with perfect rationality. But perfect rationality is rarely the ideal response. At every level, it generally turns out that people make better decisions and pursue them with more vigor when their emotions are engaged.

Emotions may be about mood, temperament, personality, disposition, or motivation. They energize, focus, and magnify behavior. Emotions have a neurologic base that can be found in the limbic system of the mammalian brain. Scholars in psychology, sociology, and economics have tied emotions to cognition (how we think and process data), social setting (how we work with others), and decision making (how we take risks and make choices). Emotional intelligence is when we are self-aware of our emotions and how they affect others. Emotional well-being is when we know how to shape our circumstances to enhance our emotional energy.

Leaders who want to sustain behavioral change are more likely to succeed when the desired behavior is aligned with their emotions. It is estimated that as much as 80 percent of decisions are made by emotion, yet when they hope to improve their decisions, leaders tend to focus more on knowledge than on feelings. When coaching, training, performance management, or 360-degree sessions include emotions, not just facts, leaders personalize and claim the changes they intend.

We have identified six principles of emotion, each of which leads to a personal question leaders can answer to increase their emotional commitment to sustain personal change.

Leadership Sustainability

- Have clear reasons. Why do I want to lead?
- Identify energy enhancers. What gives me emotional energy and well-being?
- Connect change with personal values. How do the leadership changes I want to make tie to what I believe?
- Connect change with organizational purpose. How do I tie my leadership changes to what we need to accomplish?
- Recognize my impact. How do my leadership changes affect others?
- Celebrate success. How do we communicate and celebrate our accomplishments?

When leaders recognize and balance emotional energy with rational information and facts, they are more able to sustain changes in themselves and others. When change shifts from the head to the heart, it is more likely to be sustained because people genuinely care about it. Leaders who want to make personal behavior changes are more likely to do so when those changes draw on emotions by building on meaning and values. Leaders also are more able to drive sustained change when they allow their emotions to become part of their communication and celebration efforts.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

Leadership sustainability has become the responsibility of all leaders including leaders charged with building other leaders, human resources (HR) professionals who create the infrastructure of leadership development, and external coaches and advisors who inform the leadership process.

We strongly, yet cautiously, believe that good leaders can become better when they consciously sustain the changes they know they need to make. Most of us learn to parent by copying how our parents parented us. Many leaders lead by mimicking how their mentors and prior leaders led them. Sometimes, these multigenerational leadership efforts work well. At other times, today's leaders need to lead for current, not past realities. Each generation parents better when they consciously improve on the previous generation. Likewise, each generation of leaders also can improve on the past by adapting the disciplines and principles synthesized in this book.

Leadership sustainability occurs when leaders accept why they need to improve, recognize what they need to improve, and figure out how to make the improvements stick. Organizations can enhance leadership sustainability by practices designed to build the next generation of leaders into people who will consistently and completely deliver against strategic goals.

Leadership Sustainability

Leadership sustainability is not just a personal trait that makes some leaders inherently better than others. It is a set of disciplines that leaders can consciously master to help them do what they know they should. For each of the seven disciplines that constitute leadership sustainability, we have identified a metaphor that captures what effective leaders do to sustain their desired change.

- **Taxonomist.** Sustainable leaders create simple taxonomies by focusing on the critical items that have the largest impacts.
- **Time logger.** Sustainable leaders manage time as their most critical resource, using their calendar to make sure that they really devote their attention to the things that matter to them.
- **Responsible adult.** Sustainable leaders take personal and public responsibility for their actions and are accountable for the results they get.
- **Teammate.** Sustainable leaders work together to combine unique resources into collective results through coaching and systems.
- **Tracker.** Sustainable leaders track their progress to know how they are doing and to see how today's actions will predict tomorrow's outcomes.
- **Pioneer.** Sustainable leaders constantly learn and grow, being resilient in the face of failure and humble in the face of success.
- **Meaning maker.** Sustainable leaders recognize the value and power of their own emotions and build emotion and meaning in others.

Leaders who make improvements that become part of their normal behavior accept all these roles and apply the principles for each of the seven disciplines.

Ultimately, responsibility for being a sustainable leader rests with each individual. Every good leader wants to be better, but lasting improvement is hard to achieve. It requires knowing why improvement matters and what better leadership means, but it also requires knowing how to sustain what you start and actually doing it.

Leaders who take personal responsibility to sustain their leadership improvements constantly ask the why, what, and how questions. They recognize that leadership matters, that success as a leader requires doing the right things, and that leadership has to show up in actions more than in rhetoric. Such leaders earn the allegiance of their people, have their trust, and gain their best efforts.

Leaders do not lead without followers. Followers gain confidence in their leaders when their leaders do what they promise. Leaders who help others to fulfill their leadership potential ensure that

Leadership Sustainability

sustainability is not an isolated event but a shared responsibility. We like to talk about leadership capability being more important than individual leaders. Leaders build capability when they answer the why, what, and how questions for others.

To build leadership capability in an organization, leaders need to share why leadership matters. They also need to help every leader take personal responsibility to improve. They need to help leaders define what effective leadership means. Leaders of others also have to weave leadership sustainability into the fabric of the organization. They do so by making leadership sustainability part of the organization's leadership capability.

We end this book with a challenge and a promise. We challenge you to not just read but also ponder, internalize, and apply these seven disciplines. We promise that if you do so, your leadership will move from rhetoric to results. Your personal brand will be about getting things done, and your leadership desires will be realized.